

The logo for Naxos The Music of Brazil, featuring a blue circle with a white border. Inside the circle, the word "NAXOS" is written in a bold, serif font, with "THE MUSIC OF BRAZIL" written in a smaller, sans-serif font below it. Above the text, there is a stylized graphic of a classical building facade with columns.

NAXOS  
THE MUSIC OF  
BRAZIL

José Antônio de  
**ALMEIDA PRADO**

**Piano Concerto No. 1**

**Aurora**

**Concerto Fribourgeois**

**Sonia Rubinsky, Piano**

**Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Fabio Mechetti**



## About This Series

The series The Music of Brazil is part of the project *Brasil em Concerto*, developed by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to promote music by Brazilian composers dating back to the 18th century. Around 100 orchestral works from the 19th and 20th centuries will be recorded by the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra, the Goiás Philharmonic Orchestra and the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra. Further recordings of chamber and vocal music will gradually be added to this collection.

The works were selected according to their historical importance for Brazilian music and the existence of recordings. Most of the works recorded for the series have never had recordings available outside Brazil; many others will have their world premiere recordings. An important part of the project is the preparation of new or even first editions of the works to be recorded, many of which, despite their relevance, have only been available in the composer's manuscript. This work will be carried out by the Brazilian Academy of Music and by musicologists working together with the orchestras.



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
BRAZIL

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### About The Scores

All three works published by Academia Brasileira de Música ([www.abmusica.org.br](http://www.abmusica.org.br));  
requests at [edicoes.abm@abmusica.org.br](mailto:edicoes.abm@abmusica.org.br)

## José Antônio de Almeida Prado (1943–2010)

### Works for Piano and Orchestra

'A scandal!' – this was the word Almeida Prado, whose speech was dotted with wonderfully poetic superlatives, used to refer to something extraordinarily good.

He was a man of superlative talents as well: a musician with a solid training behind him, a brilliant composer with an intensely personal voice, and a pianist and improviser of stratospheric ability. Born in the coastal city of Santos (in the state of São Paulo) on 8th February 1943, José Antônio Rezende de Almeida Prado – the youngest child in his family – used to listen to his sister Tereza Maria playing the piano, and at the age of seven began to compose short pieces, before he himself began lessons with Lourdes Joppert. Renowned composer and pianist Dinorah de Carvalho then invited him to be her pupil and, when he was still only 14, arranged for him to study with leading composers Osvaldo Lacerda and Camargo Guarnieri.

Despite his respect for his compatriots' work, however, Almeida Prado wanted to expand his horizons. After working with Guarnieri for six years, he began to take an interest in the works of Stockhausen, Boulez and Ligeti, to which he was introduced by his friend Gilberto Mendes. In 1969, the prize money he won for his cantata *Pequenos funerais cantantes* enabled him to move to Paris, where he broadened his compositional vocabulary by studying the classical canon and its techniques of counterpoint and harmony with Nadia Boulanger, and by immersing himself in the mysticism, rhythm, modes and synaesthesia of Olivier Messiaen. His works matured, acquiring their own unique perfumes and perspectives from sonorities rooted in an 'untamed' Brazilianness, and in the multicoloured flora and fauna of his native country, earning him further awards and recognition.

### Aurora (1975)

In 1974, having returned to Brazil and after a brief period as director of the Cubatão Conservatory in São Paulo, Almeida Prado was invited to assist in the creation of the Music Department at the recently established University of

Campinas (UNICAMP). Here his work would flourish, with an early milestone coming that same year with the first of his 18 *Cartas celestes* ('Celestial Charts'), most of which are for solo piano. In this first piece, commissioned by the São Paulo planetarium, various celestial bodies are portrayed in a contrapuntal language of unwavering creativity, framed by depictions of sunset and sunrise. As in astronomy, the stars are classified according to their luminosity. Almeida Prado creates 24 synaesthetically dazzling chords and places them in the score in such a way as to allow the piano to resonate, roar and marvel at the heavens.

*Aurora* ('Dawn'), for piano and orchestra, was a natural consequence of *Cartas Celestes I*. It was written in 1975, and Almeida Prado called it an 'unofficial *Cartas celestes*, because it's not numbered in the same series, but does share the same universe, the same heart, the same *élan*'. He even thought it could form the finale of a monumental concert at which *Cartas Celestes I* to *VI* would be played in sequence ...

In this work, Almeida Prado takes his newly developed technique of 'transtonality' (which freely emphasises the overtone series, without the systematic approach of the spectralism of Murail and Grisey, his fellow students in Messiaen's classes) and clothes it in symphonic colours. Expanding the opening and closing gestures of *Cartas Celestes I* to orchestral proportions, the solo piano introduces the sunrise over the horizon, gradually bringing melodic fragments from the orchestra, in a controlled harmonic palette stemming from contrapuntal writing, to create a crescendo of sound textures from lines that move independently but co-exist on the same morning. The soloist's cadenza, whose repeated, resonant chords dissolve into an idyllic, pastoral-sylvan episode, also comes from *Cartas Celestes I*. The dawn then begins to blaze with light again, radiant and glorious, as piano and orchestra converse in a loving dialogue, an almost mystical conjoining. All the musicians come together in this 'song

to light, heat, life, movement', a gilded path carved out by the sun.

#### Piano Concerto No. 1 (1982–83)

While in *Aurora* mimicry between soloist and orchestra guides the soundscape, distancing the work from traditional concerto form, Almeida Prado's *Piano Concerto No. 1* is very different. Written in response to a commission from the pianist Antônio Guedes Barbosa, it dates from 1983, by which time Almeida Prado had established his own powerful and assured voice, and was no longer avoiding dialogue with traditional forms. It is a Beethovenian re-reading that reveals the composer's profound understanding of the classical canon, and although labelled 'No. 1', the composer never again numbered his other concertante works for piano and orchestra or ensemble (such as the *Concerto Fribourgeois*).

Conceived as a monothematic sonata-form macro-structure on a four-note motif (F, B, F sharp, C) and a theme derived from those notes, the *Concerto* opens in imposing manner with sound columns separated by piano interventions. A sober theme appears in the orchestra, followed by eight variations in which the soloist opens up, rips apart or transforms the theme from within. Grandiose chords then lead into the cadenza, in which the gestural idiom presented by the soloist thus far develops into figurations that are repeated but never monotonous, as a whole range of new possibilities for the instrument are investigated while the orchestra stays silent. Always *attacca* between movements, next comes a gentle slow section, with the emphasis on higher sonorities, in contrast to the earlier ferocity. In the *Toccata* the piano acts as mediator between elements that retain a certain delicacy and others that recall the fiery internal energy of the concerto's opening, quoting the theme from the second movement almost as a ninth variation. A brief *Interlúdio* leads to the *Memorial*, almost a recapitulation of the theme in a dreamlike landscape, full of bells, before a short cadenza for the piano prepares the way for the triumphant return of the sound columns which provide a luminous *tutti* ending.

#### Concerto Fribourgeois (1985)

The *Concerto Fribourgeois* (1985) was commissioned by Paul and Margrit Hahnloser, residents of the Swiss city of Fribourg, as a homage to J.S. Bach on the 300th anniversary of his birth. Its post-modern aesthetic uses a collage technique typical of Almeida Prado's compositional maturity. Beethovenian structural thinking and a pianism that the composer identified as 'post-Brahmsian' are combined with themes and forms that pay tribute to Bach, and which reuse sketches of a concerto for harpsichord and strings that underwent a smooth metamorphosis into the final form presented here.

The *Concerto* opens with a dramatic dotted rhythm *à la française* in the strings, followed by an ascending run in the piano that leads into a declamatory recitative cadenza. The *Passacaglia*, consisting of a theme and twelve 'variations', emerges naturally from the hands of the soloist; its theme, an *idée fixe* with echoes of *Fugue No. 14* from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, forms the basis for the material of almost all the subsequent movements. As the strings enter, they alter the atmosphere by what they superimpose on the theme. *Recitativo II* introduces the *Toccata furiosa*, in which the piano creates a textural layer using the classic B–A–C–H motif, accompanied by transtonal dissonances in the strings that sound almost electronically created. This opens into *Recitativo III* in which piano and orchestra exchange thematic roles. The beautiful *Arioso*, lyrical and dramatic, unfolds ardently above a continual melody and constant pulse, leading into the energetic *Moto perpetuo* finale, which is almost minimalist in the impassioned impulse with which it brings the work to an end. And there is no one better qualified to bring this concerto to life than the hugely accomplished Sonia Rubinsky, who has such a profound knowledge of the music of both Bach and Almeida Prado.

#### The recordings

Rubinsky, from the city of Campinas, is an artist whom Almeida Prado greatly admired. Her interpretative qualities and nuanced virtuosity reveal the sophistication that characterises his piano writing. Synaesthetic counterpoint perfumes the works, revealing new layers in

the composer's complex writing: 'Sonia brings colour to the piano!' Her artistry is matched by that of Fabio Mechetti, as the music dances symbiotically between soloist and orchestra, with all superlatives here precise and fully justified.

A devout catholic, with the soul of a mystic, my dear friend and teacher used to joke that on arriving in heaven he would immediately seek out Beethoven. I like to imagine that on 21st November 2010, when that

monumental heart of orchids and salamanders stopped beating in São Paulo, the first voice that he heard was indeed that of Beethoven, saying, 'Come along in, there's a place waiting for you here with us'. And I'm sure that if he could hear these recordings, Almeida Prado would laugh aloud and say 'A scandal!'

Cristiano Melli

English translation: Susannah Howe

## José Antônio de Almeida Prado (1943–2010)

### Obras para piano e orquestra

"Um escândalo!" Assim Almeida Prado, com um dos superlativos de poesia particularíssima tão usuais em sua fala, se referia a algo positivamente extraordinário.

Superlativos também eram seus talentos: músico de sólida formação, compositor genial com uma voz intensamente pessoal, pianista e improvisador de habilidade estratosférica. Nascido na litorânea Santos (SP) em 08 de fevereiro de 1943, o caçula José Antônio Rezende de Almeida Prado escutava sua irmã Tereza Maria ao piano enquanto brincava, e aos 7 anos de idade começa a compor miniaturas, antes mesmo de iniciar os estudos de piano com Lourdes Joppert. Logo, a renomada compositora e pianista Dinorah de Carvalho o convida a ser seu aluno, depois encaminhando o agora jovem de 14 anos a estudar com os importantes compositores Osvaldo Lacerda e Camargo Guarnieri.

Mas ele queria, respeitosamente, ir além; e após seis anos com Guarnieri, se interessa pelas obras contemporâneas de Stockhausen, Boulez, Ligeti que o amigo Gilberto Mendes lhe apresentava. E com o dinheiro do prêmio que lhe foi outorgado por seus *Pequenos Funerais Cantantes*, em 1969 Almeida Prado se lança a Paris. Lá, sua sólida base lhe permite ampliar seu vocabulário no estudo do Cânone clássico e suas técnicas de contraponto e harmonia com Nadia Boulanger, e no misticismo, ritmo, modos e sinestesia de Olivier Messiaen. Suas obras amadurecem, ganham perfumes e perspectivas únicos com sonoridades

inspiradas no "fuá" da brasilidade, na multicolorida fauna e flora de seu país natal, rendendo-lhe mais prêmios e reconhecimento.

### Aurora (1975)

De volta ao Brasil em 1974, após breve passagem como diretor do Conservatório de Cubatão, Almeida Prado é convidado para o quadro fundador de professores da UNICAMP, em Campinas (SP). Aqui sua obra floresceria, e um importante marco vem com a composição, ainda em 1974, da primeira das 18 *Cartas Celestes* (a maioria para piano solo), fruto de uma encomenda do Planetário de São Paulo. Nela, emoldurada pela tradução sonora do pôr e do nascer do Sol, os objetos celestes desfilam em um contraponto gestual de criatividade inabalável. Assim como na Astronomia as estrelas são classificadas de acordo com sua luminosidade, Almeida Prado cria 24 acordes sinesteticamente brilhantes, e os dispõe na partitura de forma a fazer o piano ressoar, gritar, se maravilhar ante o firmamento.

Uma consequência natural dessa obra seria *Aurora*, para piano e orquestra. Composta em 1975, em suas palavras esta é "uma *Cartas Celestes* informal, porque não está numerada como elas, mas compartilha o mesmo universo, as mesmas cores, o mesmo élan", inclusive cogitando que poderia ser tocada para encerrar um gigantesco concerto onde as *Cartas Celestes* volumes I a VI seriam apresentadas em seqüência...

Em *Aurora*, o transtonalismo de Almeida Prado (técnica composicional onde os harmônicos superiores e inferiores das notas são livremente realçados, sem a sistematização do espectralismo de Murail e Grisey, colegas seus nas aulas de Messiaen) se veste com cores sinfônicas. Expandindo a proporções orquestrais o gesto que abre e fecha as *Cartas Celestes I*, a aurora surge no horizonte com o piano solo, a cujas sonoridades paulatinamente somam-se fragmentos melódicos nos instrumentos orquestrais, em uma controlada palheta harmônica fruto de um gestual contrapontístico, um crescendo de massas sonoras vindo de linhas independentes mas vivendo em uma mesma manhã. Também das *Cartas Celestes I* vem a cadência do solista com seus ressonantes acordes repetidos, diluindo em um momento idílico, de temperos pastorais, uma ambiência florestal pintada em madeiras e melodias. O alvorecer então retoma o foco, glorioso, brilhante, em um diálogo de amor entre o piano e a orquestra, num entrelaçamento quase místico. Os músicos, todos, se unem neste "canto à luz, ao calor, à vida, ao movimento", um caminho dourado desnudado pelo Astro Rei. Apesar do nome *Concerto n.1*, o compositor nunca mais daria números a suas obras concertantes para piano e orquestra ou ensembles (como o *Concerto Fribourgeois*).

#### Concerto n.1 (1982–83)

Enquanto em *Aurora* o mimetismo entre solista e orquestra dirige a paisagem sonora e se distancia dos tradicionais concertos, o *Concerto 1* pertence a outra esfera. Escrita em 1983 por encomenda do pianista Antônio Guedes Barbosa, esta obra já se apresenta dentro de uma realidade composicional onde Almeida Prado possui uma voz forte e segura, e não mais evita o diálogo com as formas tradicionais, uma releitura beethoveniana que bebe de uma compreensão profunda do cânon clássico.

Construído como uma macro-estrutura de sonata monotemática sobre um motivo de 4 notas (F, B, F#, C) e um tema delas derivado, o *Concerto* abre de maneira imponente com grandes colunas sonoras separadas pelo piano. Um sóbrio tema aparece na orquestra, seguido por 8 variações onde o solista rasga, abre, transforma desde

dentro o tema. Acordes grandiosos levam à cadência, onde o gestual apresentado até o momento pelo solista se desenvolve em figurações repetidas mas nunca monótonas, discursando sem a orquestra, apresentando toda uma gama de novas possibilidades para o instrumento. Sempre *attaca* entre os movimentos, segue-se uma terna seção lenta, realçando sonoridades agudas, contrapondo-se à ferocidade desenhada anteriormente. Na tocata o piano se apresenta como mediador entre sons ainda reminiscetes da delicadeza anterior e da energia interna telúrica do início do concerto, citando o tema do segundo movimento à maneira de uma Variação IX. Um curto interlúdio conduz a uma quase reexposição Memorial do tema em uma paisagem onírica, plena de campanas, até que uma breve cadência para o piano prepara o triunfante retorno das colunas sonoras em um luminoso tutti final.

#### Concerto Fribourgeois (1985)

Fruto de uma encomenda em homenagem aos trezentos anos de nascimento de J. S. Bach por Paul e Margrit Hahnloser, residentes em Friburgo (Suíça), o *Concerto Fribourgeois*, composto em 1985, usa em sua estética pós-moderna uma colagem típica da maturidade composicional de Almeida Prado. A um pensamento estrutural beethoveniano e um pianismo que o compositor identificava como "pós-Brahms" se juntam temas e formas que homenageiam Bach, reutilizando esboços de um concerto para cravo e cordas que naturalmente se metamorfoseou nesta forma final aqui apresentada.

Um dramático ritmo pontuado a *la française* nas cordas abre o concerto, seguido por uma flecha no piano que leva a uma cadência "recitativa", declamatória. A Passacaglia naturalmente nasce das mãos do solista, escrita em forma de doze variações cujo tema, uma "idéia-fixa" com ecos da Fuga XIV do *Cravo Bem Temperado*, é base para o material de quase todos os seguintes movimentos. As cordas entram sucessivamente, alterando a ambiência sonora por superposição ao tema. Um novo Recitativo prepara a Tocatta Furiosa, onde o piano cria uma faixa de textura sobre o clássico motivo B-A-C-H, acompanhado por dissonâncias

transtonais nas cordas que trazem uma sonoridade quase eletrônica, desaguando em um novo Recitativo onde piano e orquestra trocam de papéis temáticos. Um bellissimo Arioso, lírico e dramático, sobre uma melodia contínua e um pulso constante, se desenvolve apaixonado, abrindo caminho para o excitante Moto Perpetuo, quase minimalista no ardoroso impulso com que fecha a obra. E ninguém melhor poderia trazer vida a este concerto do que a genial Sonia Rubinsky, profunda conhecedora da obra de Bach e Almeida Prado.

#### As gravações

A pianista campineira Sonia Rubinsky sempre foi uma artista altamente admirada por Almeida Prado. Suas qualidades interpretativas e seu matizado virtuosismo mostram o refinamento da escrita pianística tão característico desta música. Contrapontos sinestésicos

perfumam as obras revelando novas camadas sob a complexa escrita do compositor: "A Sonia colore o piano!". E na regência de Fábio Mechetti, ela encontra um par à altura, a música em simbiose dançando entre solista e orquestra, todos os superlativos aqui justos e precisos.

Profundamente católico, de alma mística, meu querido Professor e amigo dizia, brincando, que chegando ao Paraíso iria direto conversar com Beethoven. Imagino que, em 21 de novembro de 2010, em São Paulo, quando este monumental coração de orquídeas e salamandras parou seu trabalho corpóreo, a primeira voz que ele escutou foi o mestre de Bohn lhe dizendo "vem, teu lugar conosco te espera". E tenho certeza que hoje, o mestre de Santos exclama, alegre, rindo, sobre estas gravações: "Um escândalo!".

Cristiano Melli

## Sonia Rubinsky

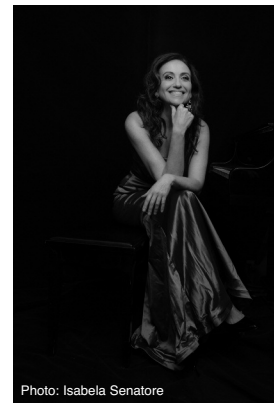


Photo: Isabela Senatore

Sonia Rubinsky was awarded Best Classical Album at the 2009 Latin GRAMMY Awards for the eighth volume of the complete works of Heitor Villa-Lobos, recorded for Naxos (8.570504). Thrice a recipient of the prestigious Carlos Gomes Prize in her native Brazil, Rubinsky was nominated by Murray Perahia to be artist-in-residence at the Edward Aldwell International Center for Piano Performance and Musicianship in Jerusalem, where she regularly gives masterclasses. Her discography includes works by Debussy, Messiaen, Scarlatti, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Jorge Liderman and Gabriela Lena Frank. Her recordings of works by Bach entitled *Magna Sequentia I, II and III*, released by Naxos, were critically acclaimed. Composer Almeida Prado has dedicated several of his works to her, including *Cartas Celestes XII*, *Três Croquis de Israel* and *20 Flashes de Jerusalém*. His *Sonata for Cello and Piano* was commissioned by and dedicated to Rubinsky and cellist Antonio Meneses. Rubinsky holds a Doctor of Arts degree from The Juilliard School. She lives in Paris, and gives masterclasses and performs as a soloist and a recitalist around the world.

[www.soniarubinsky.com](http://www.soniarubinsky.com)

## Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra



The Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra was established in 2008 and has become one of the most successful cultural institutions in Brazil. Led by artistic director and principal conductor Fabio Mechetti, the orchestra comprises 90 musicians from across Brazil, Europe, Asia, and South and North America. The ensemble has received numerous accolades and awards, including the Grande Prêmio Concerto 2015, Prêmio Carlos Gomes de Melhor Orquestra 2012, and the Melhor Grupo Musical Erudito 2010 awarded by the Associação Paulista de Críticos de Artes. The orchestra presents a diverse range of performances, including educational concerts, open-air presentations, programmes that identify and develop new compositional and conducting talent, and national and international tours. The orchestra's discography includes an album featuring the works of Alberto Nepomuceno, part of *The Music of Brazil* series on Naxos, as well as various other releases. The ensemble is on track to become the first South American orchestra to record all of Mahler's symphonies. Minas Gerais Hall, the orchestra's headquarters, was inaugurated in Belo Horizonte in 2015, and is one of the main concert halls in South America. [www.filarmonica.art.br](http://www.filarmonica.art.br)

## Fabio Mechetti



Fabio Mechetti has served as the artistic director and principal conductor of the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra since its creation. The orchestra has received numerous awards, recorded nine albums, including several on Naxos, and toured across South America. In 2014, Mechetti became the conductor of the Malaysian Philharmonic, the first Brazilian principal conductor of an Asian orchestra. In the US, Mechetti directed the Jacksonville Symphony for 14 years, and is currently their Conductor Emeritus. He also served as music director of the Syracuse and Spokane Symphony Orchestras, was resident conductor of the San Diego Symphony and Mstislav Rostropovich's associate conductor with the National Symphony Orchestra, leading concerts at venues such as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He made his debut at Carnegie Hall conducting the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and continues to lead several North American orchestras. He has also appeared with numerous international orchestras. Born in São Paulo, Fabio Mechetti holds Master's degrees in conducting and composition from The Julliard School. He was awarded, in 1989, the First prize of the International Nicolai Malko Competition for Young Conductors, under the patronage of Prince Henrick of Denmark. [www.fabiomechetti.com](http://www.fabiomechetti.com)

At the time of his death in 2010, Almeida Prado was one of Brazil's most internationally admired composers, one who created music of unique sonority and colour, rooted in his native country. In *Aurora* ('Dawn') he employs his newly developed 'transtonality' to radiant effect, while the *Concerto Fribourgeois* features a collage technique. In his *Piano Concerto No. 1* Almeida Prado explores a cogent structure in which the soloist opens up, rips apart or transforms the theme and variations, in a work that is both grandiose and luminous.



José Antônio de  
**ALMEIDA PRADO**  
(1943–2010)

<b>Piano Concerto No. 1</b> (1982–83)	<b>25:43</b>	10 <b>Aurora</b> (1975)	<b>18:46</b>
1 <b>Apelo I –</b>	2:05	<b>Concerto Fribourgeois</b> (1985)	<b>27:16</b>
2 <b>I. Heróico, épico (variações) –</b>	5:41	11 <b>Introduzioni –</b>	0:17
3 <b>Monólogo (cadência) –</b>	2:07	12 <b>Recitativo I</b>	2:03
4 <b>Interlúdio –</b>	0:55	13 <b>Passacaglia –</b>	7:10
5 <b>II. Transparente floral</b>	4:13	14 <b>Recitativo II –</b>	2:10
6 <b>III. Granítico, intenso (tocata)</b>	5:29	15 <b>Tocata furiosa</b>	4:18
7 <b>Interlúdio: Onírico, entre a realidade e a fantasia –</b>	0:46	16 <b>Recitativo III</b>	2:29
8 <b>Memorial</b>	1:55	17 <b>Arioso</b>	5:35
9 <b>Apelo II</b>	2:32	18 <b>Moto perpetuo</b>	3:12

**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**

**Sonia Rubinsky, Piano**

**Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Fabio Mechetti**

The series **The Music of Brazil** is an initiative of the **Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**.

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