

Bach Festival Society

O F W I N T E R P A R K

JOHN V. SINCLAIR

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

BRAZILIAN GUITAR QUARTET

Everton Gloeden and Luiz Mantovani, 8-string guitars

Tadeu do Amaral and Gustavo Costa, 6-string guitars

Program

Orchestral Suite No.3, BWV 1068 (excerpts)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Ouverture

Air

Gigue

Quarteto de Cordas No.12

Heitor Villa-Lobos

Allegro

Andante melancólico

Scherzo - Allegretto (ligeiro)

Allegro (Bem ritmado)

Variações Sérias sobre um tema de Anacleto de Medeiros
(Serious Variations on a theme by Anacleto de Medeiros)

Ronaldo Miranda (b. 1948)

INTERMISSION

Suite Floral

Heitor Villa-Lobos

i. Idílio da rede (Idyll in the Hammock)

Cirandas

Heitor Villa-Lobos

13. À procura de uma agulha (Searching for a needle)

14. A canoa virou (The Canoe capsized)

3. Senhora Dona Sancha

2. A Condessa (The countess)

Iberia Suite (excerpts)

Isaac Albeniz (1860–1909)

El Puerto

El Corpus Christi en Sevilla

Almería

Triana

All works arranged for guitar quartet by the Brazilian Guitar Quartet.

The Brazilian Guitar Quartet appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists, www.chambermuse.com

Biography

THE BRAZILIAN GUITAR QUARTET

(www.BrazilianGuitarQuartet.com)

In Brazil they are called the “DREAM TEAM”—four of the country’s most brilliant guitarists. Since their first appearances outside Brazil in 1999, the BGQ has quickly become one of the world's most sought-after guitar ensembles, achieving record-breaking attendance, ecstatic audience responses, rave reviews, and many return invitations. They are unique in the world in incorporating two eight-string guitars in their ensemble; these innovative instruments, developed by Paul Galbraith (himself a founding member of BGQ), greatly increase the range of both sound and repertoire.

Engagements in the USA include the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the 92nd Street Y in New York City, Wolf Trap and Dumbarton Concerts in Washington D.C., a residency at the prestigious Ravinia Festival in Chicago, the Latino Cultural Center of Dallas, the Houston Performing Arts Society, the Museum of Latin American Art and the Da Camera Society in Los Angeles, Atlanta’s Spivey Hall, Baltimore’s Shriver Hall; concerts in Boston, Pittsburgh, Phoenix, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Miami, Indianapolis, Salt Lake City, and St. Louis; Pro Arte Musical of San Juan, Puerto Rico; a memorable winter tour of Alaska; the Florida International Festival; the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival; El Paso’s World on a String Festival; the Winter Park and Carmel Bach Festivals; the Chautauqua Institute; the Round Top (TX) Guitar Festival; the Albuquerque Winter Chamber Music Festival; and many others.

The BGQ were headliners at the first World Guitar Congress in Baltimore in 2004, where they and the Baltimore Symphony gave the world premiere of a specially commissioned concerto by Brazil’s Composer of the Year, Ronaldo Miranda.

International appearances include a mainstage performance at the First International Guitar Festival of Adelaide, Australia, in a program titled “Bach, Brazil and Beyond”; the Krannert Center Guitar Festival at the University of Illinois; the Hong Kong International Festival; a Canadian début in Vancouver; a tour of Germany; the Monterrey (Mexico) Guitar Festival; and concerts in England, Scotland, Ireland, Portugal, Denmark, and other countries.

Live performances and interviews by the BGQ have been broadcast numerous times on Voice of America, National Public Radio’s *Performance Today*, and many other radio shows.

BGQ’s repertoire ranges from Bach through Brazilian music of many styles through masterworks from Spain. Their latest CD, an original arrangement of the complete *Iberia Suite* by Albeniz, has received glowing accolades in the international press; the *Folha de São Paulo* called it “a recording of historical significance that deserves a place alongside that of Alicia Delarocha.” Their latest CD, released this winter, is an all–Villa-Lobos recording and includes the works performed tonight.

DISCOGRAPHY (on the Delos label)

Brazilian Guitar Quartet Plays Villa-Lobos

Albeniz: “Iberia” Suite

Encantamento (music by Brazilian composers Miranda, Oswald, Santoro, Guarnieri, and Mignone)

Bach: The Four Suites for Orchestra

Essência do Brasil (music by Brazilian composers Villa-Lobos, Mignone, Guarnieri, and Gomes)

PROGRAM NOTES

BACH

Bach's *Four Orchestral Suites* were written during the years 1717 to 1723, when he was Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. There he had one of Europe's finest orchestras at his disposal; another happy coincidence was that the prince was a Calvinist whose court's ascetic religious services did not require Bach to write weekly church music. As a result, he devoted most of his efforts during this period to orchestral and instrumental composition and produced an unprecedented string of masterpieces, including Book I of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the French and English keyboard suites, the sonatas and partitas for solo violin, the Brandenburg concertos, and the orchestral suites. The suites were composed for varied instrumental combinations, with Bach himself at the harpsichord.

The *Air from Suite No. 3* is one of the most famous pieces of classical music and has come to be known as *Air on the G String*.

VILLA-LOBOS

Heitor Villa-Lobos, Brazil's most famous composer, launched the Nationalist movement in Brazilian music when his music was featured at the pivotal Semana de Arte Moderna (Week of Modern Art) in São Paulo in 1922. Villa-Lobos's stated goal was to break away from the 19th-century European tradition, drawing inspiration instead from the folk music of Brazil.

It has become almost commonplace to say that Villa-Lobos's musical output is as vast, varied, and exuberant as the Amazon rain forest, which was his life-long inspiration. This is a picturesque analogy and also one that rings true: we find in the composer's catalogue, which comprises more than 2,000 works, an astonishing variety of forms, genres, and modes of expression that bear witness to the composer's inquisitive and adventuresome spirit.

The sheer number of string quartets penned by Villa-Lobos is remarkable in itself: there are seventeen in all, written over a period of forty-two years, and they undoubtedly represent the most important contribution to the genre by a Latin American composer. The quartets have great formal discipline, although they steer clear of the structures of the classical tradition, such as strict sonata movements, variations, rondos, etc. **String Quartet No. 12** was composed in 1950 at Memorial Hospital in New York, while the composer was recovering from his treatment for cancer. This quartet amply refutes the claim that his most daring pieces were the *Chôros* cycle from the '20s; *Quartet No. 12* demonstrates an advanced treatment of structure, harmony, counterpoint, and texture.

Idílio da rede (Idyll in the hammock) is the first piece in the *Suite Floral*, originally written for piano in 1916–18. The music shows the influences of Debussy and Fauré.

The *Cirandas* are a set of sixteen piano pieces written in 1926. They are seen by many as a pinnacle of Villa-Lobos's output. A *ciranda* is a children's circle dance, but these pieces depart from the popular melodies sung by generations of children. Villa-Lobos does not quote the folk material but rather transforms it through subtle manipulations of texture, investing traditional melodies with mysterious new readings. **A procura de uma agulha** (Searching for a needle) has a slowly exploring modal tune, accompanied by rich Satie-like chords. Sudden excitations reveal mistaken discoveries. **A canôa virou** (The canoe capsized) opens with a happy traveling theme that soon is immersed in watery whole-tone harmonies. **Senhora Dona Sancha** is depicted in a bravado melody with pulsating dissonant accompaniment in the midsection. **A Condessa** (The countess) shows the influence of the Schumann and Chopin compositions loved by the composer's wife, pianist Lucília Guimarães.

MIRANDA

Ronaldo Miranda, a native of Rio de Janeiro, was awarded the Carlos Gomes Prize as Brazil's Composer of the year in 2001. One of the most active Brazilian composers alive today, he is also a journalist and for many years was a critic for the *Jornal do Brasil*. His career was launched in 1977 when he received the First Prize for Chamber Music at the 2nd Biennial for Contemporary Brazilian Music. Numerous national and international prizes followed. His works, which range from atonal to neo-tonal, include solo instrumental pieces, chamber works, symphonies, and the opera *Don Casmurro*. They have been performed in major venues, such as the Salzburg Mozarteum, Carnegie Hall, and the Zurich Tonhalle.

The title **Variações Sérias** (Serious variations) alludes to Mendelssohn's piece of the same name. The piece was originally composed for wind quintet and has also been transcribed for piano duo. The theme comes from the ballad "Rasga o Coração" (Tear my heart), which was very popular in the early 20th century (Villa-Lobos used it in his *Chôros No.10*).

The Variations are featured on BGQ's CD, *Encantamento*. Miranda wrote a concerto for the BGQ, who gave its world premiere with the Baltimore Symphony in 2004.

Albeniz

Isaac Albéniz was born in 1860 in Catalonia, Spain. "The colorful stories of Albeniz's youth," writes Stanley Yates, "his being denied entry to the Paris conservatory at age six after throwing a ball through a pane of glass, concert tours as a runaway from age eight, stowing away to the New World aboard a steamship, studies with Franz Liszt, etc.—are legendary, but fictitious. Albéniz appears to have invented the whole story . . . Incredibly, virtually all subsequent biographies of Albéniz derive from this source." It is true, however, that when he settled in Paris, Albeniz became close friends with, and deeply inspired by, the major impressionist composers. In recognition of this debt, Albeniz gave *Iberia* the French subtitle "12 nouvelles impressions." Debussy said, "Never has music achieved such manifold, such colorful impressions; one shuts one's eyes as though dazzled by beholding such a wealth of imagery." Years later, Olivier Messiaen would praise *Iberia* as "the masterpiece of Spanish music."

The majority of the twelve pieces that make up *Iberia* can be described as musical impressions of places, traditions, or dances from the Andalusian region of Spain. However, although inspired by folkloric elements, Albéniz rarely quotes them literally, preferring to create his own.

No composer increased the repertoire for an instrument more without writing a single note for it. Albeniz' music sounds so idiomatic for the guitar that many non-guitarists still believe it to be original guitar music. (Some of his pieces, such as *Asturias*, are even better known today in their guitar versions than in the original piano ones.) Historically, the practice of arranging Albéniz' music for guitar dates back to the composer's own day, from the hands of the renowned guitarist Francisco Tarrega. Of their arrangement, BGQ writes, "Adapting *Iberia* for guitar quartet seemed, at a first glance, a daunting, if not impossible, task. However, perseverance and practice proved the contrary. Our unique formation, which combines two traditional six-string guitars and two eight-string guitars with expanded bass and treble ranges, allowed us to find solutions to the technical, interpretive, and acoustical obstacles we faced. Listening to the piano version, we frequently heard suggestions of guitaristic arpeggios and strumming techniques, modal harmonies intrinsic to flamenco guitar, rhythmic articulations and melodic patterns that instinctively remind us of the sound of plucked strings. Our *Iberia* keeps the work's musical essence intact while emphasizing its folk roots through the instrument universally associated with Spain and its culture, the guitar."

El Puerto and **El Corpus Christi en Sevilla** are from the first of *Iberia's* four books. *El Puerto* takes the listener to the port of Cadiz, full of vibrant rhythms and festive colors, while *El Corpus Christi en Sevilla* portrays a religious procession through the streets of Seville, the capital of Andalusia. (It is the only piece in the set that quotes actual folk material, the melody "La Tarara.") The following two pieces on tonight's program are from Book 2. The allusive **Almería** juxtaposes moments of great tenderness and great passion. **Triana**, with its sounds of clapping, castanets and *zapateados* (stamping feet), evokes the Gypsy quarter of Seville, one of the birthplaces of flamenco.