

Guitar Music of Villa-Lobos

Joseph Bacon guitarist



fuelled his imagination which later produced an endless series of "folkloric" tunes, but all of his own invention.

Much of his music is of an improvisational character. It is said he seldom revised or worked over his compositions. However, to correct an overly romantic impression of his procedures, he once stated. "I am a sentimentalist by nature and at times my music is downright sugary, but I never work by intuition. My processes of composition are determined by cool reasoning. Everything is calculated, constructed."

Another characteristic quote (upon arriving in Paris as a young man): "Do you think I came here to absorb your ideas? I came here to show you what I had done!" And the Parisians were very impressed, indeed, and proclaimed him a genius. In turn he felt the influence of Debussy, Ravel and Milhaud, yet "As soon as I feel someone's influence on me, I shake myself and jump out of it." No doubt exists that he was a man of great originality and of great fecundity as well. He composed about 2,000 works, probably more than any other composer of the 20th century.

Opposing the native Brazilian influence was the European tradition, and as a New World composer his task was to reconcile the two. His first love was Bach and with characteristic audacity he composed a series of pieces he called "Bachianas Brazilieras," music as if written by the spirit of Bach transposed to Brazil. And he did achieve a remarkable fusion in these works, some of his most famous. In the early works, the old European dances such as the waltz receive a slightly mocking treatment, as if a group of natives were parodying these newly arrived immigrants, yet at the same time joining in with their fun.

Three distinct periods of Villa-Lobos' life are represented on this record. The Valsa-Chôro, Schottisch- Chôro and Chôros #1 date from 1912 when he was a young man playing his guitar in the street bands.

The Etudes were written in 1929 when Villa-Lobos was in Paris for an extended visit. Here he met Segovia and he wrote a series of twelve etudes for the great guitarist. In character they range from dry "finger studies" to rhapsodic and savage fantasies. Out of these I have chosen four for this recording.

In 1940 he was well-known and successful. An audacious project of his was a series of mammoth concerts; in one of these he conducted a choir of 40,000 voices! He had founded choral societies all over Brazil and his own conservatory of music in Rio. He found time to write a set of six preludes for the guitar, one of which unfortunately was lost. On this record we hear the five survivors and they are wonderful examples of his mature style.

His innovations in the techniques of guitar composition are unparalleled. His own considerable ability as a guitarist as well as his fertile imagination led to the invention of many brilliant and telling effects. And the sheer beauty and vigor of the music place these pieces at the forefront of modern guitar music.

—Joseph Bacon

JOSEPH BACON is a native of San Francisco, son of the American composer Ernst Bacon. He studied guitar with Segovia, Ida Presti, Alexander Lagoya and Julian Bream. His background also includes degrees from Stanford and Harvard Universities, exhibitions of his own paintings and sculpture, and an extended study of Indian music with Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. He is a self-taught lutenist and an authority on the musical literature for the lute. He has taught on the faculties of the University of Oregon, Mills College in Oakland, California State College at Hayward, and Music and Arts Institute in San Francisco, and has performed in London, New York, San Francisco and many other cities in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Recording engineer: Bob Shumaker / Cover art: J. Bacon / Photo: Dennis Letbetter / Design: Matt Schickele / Guitar: Robert Bouchet, 1965

Recorded at Montgomery Chapel, San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California

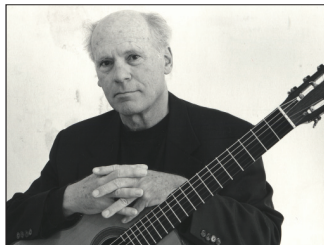
This recording was produced in M-S stereo using a Neumann SM-69 microphone and was recorded using Dolby process.

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1 Prelude #1	(1940) 5:06	7 Etude #11	(1929) 3:45
2 Prelude #2	(1940) 3:03	8 Etude #8	(1929) 2:53
3 Prelude #3	(1940) 6:13	9 Etude #7	(1929) 4:38
4 Prelude #4	(1940) 2:40	10 Valsa-Chôro	(1912) 4:44
5 Prelude #5	(1940) 3:49	11 Schottisch-Chôro	(1912) 3:42
6 Etude #5	(1929) 2:25	12 Chôros #1	(1912) 4:38

Total time: 47:46



HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS (1887-1959), the greatest of Brazilian composers, was a man of instinct, vigor and passion; the antithesis of the academic composer who writes for the eye and brain, not the ear and heart. Photographs of Villa-Lobos often show him dressed like a gangster, with a large cigar thrust in his mouth, jaw jutting forward, a gritty and virile presence. An enthusiastic billiard player, he was for a while the champion of Rio de Janeiro.

His father was a gifted amateur musician. From him he learned the rudiments of his art, but he was mostly self-taught. He left school at an early age and supported himself by playing the cello and the guitar in the *chôros* or street bands of Rio. The repertoire of these bands was the popular music of the day: European café music—waltzes, schottisches, gavottes and the like, and native Brazilian music of a lively sort. The name *chôros* itself was chosen by Villa-Lobos for a series of pieces he wrote much later evoking the music of these bands.

Later he went on expeditions to the hinterland of Brazil: the Matta Grosso, Bahia, Pernambuco, Minas Gerais. Here he absorbed elements of the abundant "primitive" or native music which was a rich mixture of Portuguese, African and Indian folklore. These

Continued inside...

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