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**Andrea Bissoli** on *Brasil es mucho más que samba*

Centro de Estudios Brasileños - Universidad de Salamanca

[00:30]

**Esther Gambi:** Good afternoon and welcome to another “Brasil es mucho mas que samba” on Tuesdays. I am Esther Gambi and I have here next to me Elisa Duarte. Hello Elisa, how are you? Good afternoon!

**Elisa Duarte:** How are you? Good afternoon!

**EG:** And we also have our colleague Alice Assis. Hello, Alice!

**Alice Assis:** Hello, Esther, how are you?

**EG:** Right, today we have a programme a bit different, a bit unusual. We are interviewing Andrea Bissoli, who is an Italian musician, who for ten years has studied the life and work of the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, who is also one of the very well-known Greats here at Radio Universidad and at the Centre. In particular, Andrea is going to tell us about his project, which is a set of three CDs exclusively dedicated to the Brazilian composer and was launched a few years ago, in November 2016.

What makes this project be so special, as well as the entire repertoire recorded, are the three rare works included which Andrea will tell us about later during the interview.

[06:43]

**Andrea Bissoli:** Were my brothers who guided my first steps into music. I later studied with the guitarist Giuseppe Maderni; in the summer of 95 he gave me the score of Villa-Lobos’s “Five Preludes” and I began to work on them. I still remember the feeling that the opening portamento of the first “Prelude” brought into the air that distant summer... In the winter I played all of them in my first recital; the flute professor, Giorgio Bernabò, told me: «You will do something with music...». Soon after, I also learned “Choros No. 1” and a few of the “Studies”, widening my repertoire to include works by Albéniz, Turina, Tárrega and Bach. This helped me win a few prizes at competitions for young interpreters.

In the autumn of 96, I had my first lesson with Stefano Grondona: we played the fifth “Prelude” by Villa-Lobos. Studying with him was a privilege. He is a noble and indefatigable artist, with a deep look... One day he told me that if I wanted to do something with the guitar, I should learn all of Villa-Lobos’s “Studies”. That’s what I did and I resolved to also play the “Guitar Concerto”, on which I wrote my postgraduate thesis, supervised by Michele Brugnaro, which was later published by the specialist review “Il Fronimo”.

As for my musical background, another seminal work has been Bach’s “Chaconne”; I worked on it with Grondona, Laura Mondiello, Paul Galbraith, Alirio Díaz and Oscar Ghiglia, with the latter at

the Accademia Chigiana di Siena, where I was given the Diploma of Merit for playing it at the final concert; I also recorded it for the CD “La Guitaromanie”, produced by the Conservatorio di Vicenza.

Another author I feel affinity with is Dowland: perhaps the dance and a feeling of nostalgia are what most attract me...

[08:41]

**ED:** Carrying on Andrea gives us details about the three rare works which are part of his project. The author says that, one day, when he was looking through a list of Villa-Lobos’s works, he realized that the composer had written a piece for female choir, flute and guitar...

[09:57]

**AB:** One night, before falling asleep, I was going through a list of Villa-Lobos’s works compiled by David P. Appleby, when I saw something which left me a bit astounded at first, but then, enthralled: Villa-Lobos had written a piece for female choir, flute and... guitar! Nobody had told me that!! I wanted to know more about this “Motivos Gregos” (as that was the title of such phantasmagorical work): instead of sleeping, I turned on the computer and searched the Internet till two in the morning, ‘in search of chimeras’, as poet Alfredo Ferreira would say. This is how the research process began...

I set about collecting old monographs and collating them. I was astonished: Villa-Lobos not only seemed to have had written one, but even two pieces for female choir, flute and guitar. Both had been premiered under the direction of the composer, on the same day, at the same place... The two works were, in fact, only one: this hypothesis allowed me to reconstruct the lost piece from the remaining historical documents. Maybe the score of “Motivos Gregos” was never drawn up by the author: he might have conducted it by heart! Who knows, at times, Villa didn’t put in the score what wasn’t necessary...

Another rarity in the project is “Valsa Concerto No. 2”, for solo guitar. The manuscript had gone astray, but came back up to surface in ‘95 thanks to a find by the pianist and composer Amaral Vieira. It’s the earliest of Villa-Lobos’s guitar works to have been unearthed up to now. The manuscript opens with an “Andante”, followed by a “Brilliant Waltz” with a first theme emanating the ardour of youth, a second, more delicate theme and just the beginning of a third theme in minor key. At this point the manuscript stops. At the suggestion of the composer Federico Zandonà, I completed the score drawing my inspiration from the writing of the “Andante”; I introduced a ‘da capo’ and a coda, in homage to the reminiscences of Chopin present in this work.

As for “Canção do poeta do século XVIII”, Villa-Lobos transcribed it for voice and guitar in 1953. This transcription was premiered in ‘62. How could it have gone missing already?!? I set about searching for old vinyls where the song was performed with guitar accompaniment; I found, then, a recording dating back to ‘67 where the instrumental part was played by Jodacil Damaceno, who five years earlier had premiered the transcription created by Villa-Lobos. Hermínio Bello de Carvalho reported, on the sleeve notes, that the version therein recorded was from ‘53... I took down the score, but only recorded it after learning that Damaceno had made a copy of the original manuscript for the premiere and had used it in the recording... The revelation was made to Humberto Amorim by Damaceno and it appears in his book “Heitor Villa-Lobos e o violão”.

Incidentally, this book by Amorim is seminal, it's the fruit of a research work among the more careful and passionate, which, by the way, received accolades from personalities such as Ricardo Tacuchian, Turibio Santos and Fabio Zanon.

The repertoire of the project also includes the title of a piano work which flirts with the guitar manuscripts: the "Tarantela", from 1911. Above each of the last three chords, the manuscript of the "Tarantela" shows a curious E within a circle... This symbol in guitar fingering indicates that this note is to be played on the first or on the sixth string of the instrument: an identical sign in the 1928 manuscript of the "Studies" requires the use of the first. I transcribed the passage to play it on the guitar and realised that the most effective solution was exactly the one that the manuscript seemed to suggest... Encouraged, I transcribed the whole piece, which, in the meantime, appeared to return to its origin, as if it were born on the guitar. Villa-Lobos himself confided to his friend Alceo Bocchino, distinguished pianist and conductor: «Well, in 1911, I didn't know much about piano!... I was only basing myself on the guitar.» This might explain the 'guitar' feeling in the piano writing of some of his early works, such as the song "Dime perché", from 1901: it is the earliest of Villa-Lobos's works that we have found, which I recorded after having transcribed it for the guitar. I find that in this version, the guitar stamp of the writing is shown throughout and that the same happens in my transcription of the "Tarantela". Maybe the two pieces are a testament to the beginning and to the end of an epoch respectively: in 1912, Villa-Lobos met his first wife, Lucília Guimarães, eminent pianist who introduced him to the piano...

[15:18]

**AA:** We asked Andrea to tell us about the other works featuring in the project and the reason why he decided to include them in the tracklist. He tells us that, even though the project has the purpose of presenting the lesser-known guitar pieces of Villa-Lobos's work, he also intended to present pieces whose instrumentation didn't include the guitar, such as "Choros No. 6" and "O Papagaio do moleque"...

In addition Andrea confides to us that he's currently working, with the guitarist Federica Artuso, on a project which is aimed at recording a CD with a tracklist entirely made up of works by Villa-Lobos that he has transcribed for two guitars and, of course, his desire of having the opportunity to present his work on the Brazilian composer's music.

**AB:** The project brought about the recording of other rarities, such as the "Valse-Choro" (discovered in 2005 by Frédéric Zigante), the little "Valsa" (a fragment of intense sentimental inspiration, found in Lucília's archive), the transcriptions by Emilio Pujol for two guitars (approved by the author)... There is all that Villa-Lobos wrote for guitar with the exception of the three collections which – along with "Choros No. 1" – represent the nucleus of his fame as a composer for the guitar: the "Five Preludes", the "Suite populaire brésilienne" and the "Twelve Studies" in the 1953 version. This is why "The Guitar Manuscripts": the title of the project is intended to evoke the research path which underlies my decision to show some lesser-known sides of Villa-Lobos's guitar work. But the project is more than that. As I said, the tracklist even features pieces which, in spite of having been written for other instruments, somehow speak to us of the guitar: I wanted to highlight the osmosis process which involved the six strings, the composer's life and his oeuvre. This explains the rationale behind the presence, among the works recorded, of two symphonic poems whose scores don't have even a fingering indication for the guitar: "O papagaio do moleque" and "Choros No. 6".

"O papagaio do moleque" is based on a story, invented by Villa-Lobos, of a fight between the kite (also known as "papagaio") of a boy who's having fun on the roof terrace of a skyscraper and the

fighter kites of some children appeared from the adjoining roofs. The spectacular images evoked by the narration are inspired by an old passion of the composer; in the summer of 1928, Villa-Lobos was dragged for several metres by a huge kite he had built, before his friend Tomás Terán managed to cut the ropes and set him free... The kite came down three or four kilometres away! In those very days Villa-Lobos was living another great adventure: he was preparing the first complete version of the “Twelve Studies”, which I recorded for the project.

The “Choros No. 6” opens with a ‘tearful and suburban’ flute theme, as the composer described it. This theme animates the second guitar cadenza in the “Introdução aos Choros”: it’s a sign of how much the guitar can give voice, in the composer’s sensibility, even to the feelings which he confided to other instruments. In this specific case, maybe the guitar is the origin of everything: the “Choros No. 6”, the French composer Suzanne Demarquez informs us, who knew Villa-Lobos, in 1929 was an ensemble of piccolo clarinet, trumpet, baritone horn and... guitar!

Villa-Lobos conducted these two symphonic works in the last concert of his life: they closed the first and the second parts of the programme respectively. The guitar was present that night and not only as a source of inspiration: the composer also conducted “Canção do Amor” for soprano, guitar and orchestra, which I had the opportunity of recording with Brazilian artists of great calibre: the soprano Gabriella Pace, Maestro Fabio Mechetti and the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra.

I’m currently working, with the excellent guitarist Federica Artuso, who I’ve shared an intense artistic collaboration with, on the recording of a CD whose tracklist is entirely made up of Villa-Lobos works which I transcribed for two guitars.

I’m also editing some of the scores that I prepared to realise the project “The Guitar Manuscripts”, scores which I’d like to publish. In addition, naturally, I hope to have the opportunity of presenting my work on Villa-Lobos’s music live.

Finally, Bach and Debussy are the other authors who I’d like to dedicate my efforts to in the near future.

[20:19]

**EG:** To conclude, Andrea tells us about the history of the work titled “Concerto”...

**AB:** In regard to the ‘guitar manuscripts’, I’d like to talk a little bit about a work that was published while the composer was still alive, whose manuscript, as well as containing the solution to the doubts aroused by the edition, bears the marks of History with a capital H: I’m referring to the “Concerto for Guitar and Small Orchestra”.

Arminda Neves d’Almeida, the composer’s second wife, tells us that Andrés Segovia always requested: «Mindinha, remind Heitor to compose my Concerto». Villa-Lobos composed a “Fantasia Concertante”, without the guitar cadenza. Segovia desired it, but Villa didn’t write it... At last Segovia made an ambush: he went and attended the première of the “Concerto for Harp and Orchestra”, commissioned and performed by Zabaleta, under the direction of the author. Villa-Lobos had written a cadenza for the harp: he had to do the same with the guitar! Villa-Lobos wrote the cadenza, scratched out the word “Fantasia” on the manuscript and transformed “Concertante” into “Concerto”...

I think that the work I did on the “Concerto” with Mechetti and the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra reflects the ‘concertante’ origin of the work, which I’d like you all to hear. I’d like to thank the Villa-Lobos Museum and their musical consultant Marcelo Rodolfo, Maestro Mechetti and the Minas Gerais Philharmonic for believing in the project of shading light on these Villa-Lobos pearls, through the sound of the guitar...

[22:16]

**EG:** Well, many many thanks to Andrea Bissoli for being here with us today at Radio Universidad, for having talked to us about Heitor Villa-Lobos, a Brazilian composer, perhaps the best known outside Brazil, who is a classic among the classics, who we already talked about on more than one occasion...

[https://www.ivoox.com/andrea-bissoli-arte-interpretar-y-comprender-audios-mp3\\_rf\\_26629440\\_1.html](https://www.ivoox.com/andrea-bissoli-arte-interpretar-y-comprender-audios-mp3_rf_26629440_1.html)