



# Cannibalizing Bach: Villa-Lobos in Europe, 1936

EDUARDO SATO 

Virginia Tech, VA, USA

## Abstract

During the 1930s, Heitor Villa-Lobos concentrated his efforts on coordinating Brazilian musical education. As such, he changed his compositional style and did not travel to Europe again until 1936. This article examines Villa-Lobos's trip to Europe in 1936, drawing on Florencia Garramuño's call to 'incorporate avant-garde voyages as founding moments' for an autochthonous national character in music. During his journey, Villa-Lobos represented Brazil in different settings: as a deputy at the International Congress of Music Education in Prague and as a composer in under-the-radar political negotiations with Nazi Germany in Berlin. Considering the authoritarian Vargas Regime, Brazilian modernism, and the dialectical relation between nationalism and internationalism, I argue that this trip served as a catalyst for a new creative phase, culminating in the series of *Bachianas brasileiras*, a resignification of J. S. Bach's music and legacy in the context of his interpretation of Brazilian *Antropofagia* (cultural cannibalism).

In 1936, the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos travelled to Europe to participate in the First Congress of Music Education, which took place from 4 to 9 April in Prague. After having spent much of the 1920s in Paris, this was his first visit to the continent since 1930 and the first time he officially represented Brazil there. He was appointed by the Brazilian government as a delegate due to his position as director of the Superintendency of Musical and Artistic Education (SEMA). Antônio Sá Pereira, a well-known music educator, was also appointed as a delegate to the event. However, unlike Sá Pereira, the composer did not arrive in time for the congress. For that reason, in a hastily arranged event, he was given the opportunity to present his ideas on music education to a mostly Czech audience two weeks after the congress was over. Prague was the first stop in what was planned as a three-city journey promoting the music and music education of Brazil in a variety of international events.

Villa-Lobos flew across the Atlantic on board the *Graf Hindenburg*, departing Brazil on 4 April and arriving back in Rio de Janeiro on 12 June. The trip was covered extensively by the

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Email: [esato@vt.edu](mailto:esato@vt.edu)

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national press, highlighting the accomplishments of the Brazilian delegation and Villa-Lobos's personal achievements. It was – so the press declared – a triumph for both the nation and the composer. Yet, the archives tell a somewhat different story to the one Villa-Lobos shared in interviews and with newspaper readers at home. It was a journey so entangled with personal and political developments that it proved transformative not only for the composer but also (albeit on a lesser scale) for broader developments in Brazilian music and music education.

While Villa-Lobos's travels to France in the 1920s have attracted substantial scholarly discussion, the 1936 journey has attracted significantly less attention.<sup>1</sup> Biographers such as Lisa Peppercorn and Gerard Béhague make brief references to the 1936 trip without discussing its musical and political contexts in any detail.<sup>2</sup> In his examination of the uses of music during the Estado Novo, historian Arnaldo Daraya Contier analyses Villa-Lobos's contribution to the conference in Prague, drawing attention to his political-ideological content, which Contier sees as more aligned with the values from the authoritarian governments in Germany and Italy, than with the internationalist framework of the event.<sup>3</sup> More recently, in his dissertation on Villa-Lobos's cultural diplomacy, Pedro Henrique Belchior Rodrigues provides more details about the composer's 1936 trip to Europe, positing an alignment between the composer and the Vargas regime's foreign policy of a 'pragmatic equidistance' from 'the Germanist paradigm', on the one hand, and the United States-based 'Americanism', on the other.<sup>4</sup> Based on archival sources, Rodrigues offers a rich description of Villa-Lobos's activities in Prague and Berlin, highlighting his ability to navigate different diplomatic contexts. While Contier and Rodrigues present important historical and ideological aspects of Villa-Lobos's trip, the musical activities during the trip and their consequences for Villa-Lobos's compositional style remain underexplored.

Using newly discovered sources in archives and the press, in dialogue with the literature on musical internationalism during the interwar period and the development of modernist musical styles, I recount Villa-Lobos's trip as it reveals the composer's strategies to mediate his prestige across borders through a process of convergence: he represents Brazilian music through himself and through his musical output. In this sense, the transatlantic journey itself forms part of his compositional process and part of the struggle for the definition of a Brazilian music domestically and abroad. I use the Brazilian modernist concept of *Antropofagia* (often translated as cultural cannibalism) as a key to interpret Villa-Lobos's

1 Eero Tarasti, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Life and Works, 1887–1959* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1995), 45–52; Anaïs Fléchet, *Villa-Lobos à Paris: Un écho musical du Brésil* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); Paulo Renato Guérios, 'Heitor Villa-Lobos e o ambiente artístico parisiense: Convertendo-se em um Músico Brasileiro', *Mana* 9/1 (2003).

2 Gerard Béhague, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Search for Brazil's Musical Soul* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), 27; Lisa Peppercorn, *The World of Villa-Lobos in Pictures and Documents* (Aldershot, UK: Scholar Press, 1996), 308.

3 Arnaldo Daraya Contier, *Brasil Novo – Música, Nação e Modernidade: os anos 20 e 30* (São Paulo: Verona, 2021), ebook, section 6.6, np. Contier briefly mentions Villa-Lobos's sojourn and reception in Germany; he does not, however, discuss further developments regarding his music.

4 Pedro Henrique Belchior Rodrigues, 'O maestro do mundo: Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959) e a diplomacia cultural brasileira' (PhD diss., Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2019), 96.

perpetually adapting style – one that constantly revises narratives and compositions. Indeed, Villa-Lobos used his travel to Europe in 1936 simultaneously to promote Brazilian music as part of a diplomatic mission and to test the reception to his own representation of Brazil, a process that he later incorporated into his own compositions, most prominently in the cycle of the *Bachianas brasileiras*.

### Villa-Lobos, Brazilian modernism, and *Antropofagia*

During his second sojourn in Paris (1927–30), Villa-Lobos attained significant success among his Brazilian peers and European audiences. By incorporating into his compositions elements of Brazilian regional folklore to develop what could be perceived as a national style – as in much of the series of *Choros* – he was able to please his Parisian audiences. On the one hand, his music fulfilled the expectations about the ‘imaginary Brazil of the Parisians’; on the other, it fitted a broader intellectual project to give an aesthetic form to Brazil as a nation.<sup>5</sup> In 1929, the compatriot critic Mário Pedrosa praised what he called Villa-Lobos’s ‘primitivism’ as a perfect representation of their country:

He has the naïve and total sincerity of a mountain torrent. Nowadays Brazil continues to find itself at a primitive stage. But its primitivism is not a matter of fashion; nor is it due to this conscious, healthy search for renewal, for rejuvenation of sources for which European intelligence, too tired and too charged with culture, has felt such a deep need. Our primitivism is simpler and less refined; it is quite simply a historical period in our process of growth and development. Intelligence is not yet our affair, but sentiment, or even sentimentality.<sup>6</sup>

Pedrosa’s claim of a more ‘authentic’ primitivism, in contrast to the modernist European trend to transform sonic Otherness into avant-garde compositions, put Villa-Lobos into a privileged position in relation to these two audiences: the Brazilian artistic community, which sought in his music a representation of its national identity, and the local audiences eager for works steeped in exoticism and difference. In discussing Villa-Lobos’s *Três poemas indígenas* (1927), a composition for voice and orchestra performed in Paris, Chelsea Burns highlights this dual character: commercial viability within larger artistic movements and the ‘exotic nationalism – a project in which exoticist stereotypes define the nation in terms

<sup>5</sup> Guérios, ‘Heitor Villa-Lobos e o ambiente artístico parisiense’, 99.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Il a la sincerité ingénue et totale d’un torrent de la montagne. Le Brésil se trouve maintenant encore dans une phase primitive. Mais son primitivisme n’est pas une question de mode; il n’est pas dû non plus à cette recherche consciente et saine de rafraîchissement, de rajeunissement des sources, dont l’intelligence européenne, trop fatiguée et trop chargée de culture, a si profondément senti de besoin. Notre primitivisme est plus simple et moins raffiné, il est tout bonnement une phase historique dans notre processus de croissance et de développement. L’intelligence n’est pas encore notre affaire. Mais le sentiment, la sentimentalité même.’ Mário Pedrosa, ‘Villa-Lobos and His People: The Brazilian Perspective’, in *Mário Pedrosa: Primary Documents*, ed. Glória Ferreira and Paulo Harkenhoff, trans. Stephen Berg (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2015), 230, originally published in French as ‘Villa-Lobos et son peuple: Le Point de vue brésilien’, *La Revue musicale* (Paris), November 1929, 23–4. All translations are mine unless indicated.

recognizable by the global and domestic cultural elite'.<sup>7</sup> As Anaïs Fléchet succinctly explains, when the composer crosses the Atlantic in the 1920s, 'he discovers Paris and he is discovered'.<sup>8</sup>

In the French capital, Villa-Lobos was part of a Brazilian community formed by a number of intellectuals and artists, including the writer Oswald de Andrade and the painter Tarsila do Amaral. This couple was at the core of a group of modernists who pursued the creative representations of Brazil's national identity in the 1920s. Their theoretical framework was cast as *Antropofagia*. The image of an intuitive albeit innovative composer that Pedrosa presented in his 1929 review was closely connected to this construction of a modernist cultural cannibalism, which is expressed in one of the aphorisms of the *Manifesto Antropófago* (*Cannibalist Manifesto*), published in 1928, which takes the Tupi, one of the most populous indigenous people in Brazil before colonization, as a stand-in: 'Tupi, or not Tupi, that is the question.'<sup>9</sup> The idealized evocation of the territory's original inhabitants was not a new national project. It had its roots as far back as the Brazilian romanticism during the nineteenth century, which finds a musical representation in Carlos Gomes's nativist operas. To suggest, however, that the absorption of foreign influences happens through the 'savage' act of ingestion complicates the division between the national and the foreign, or the Self and the Other. As Bernardo Ricupero writes: 'In contrast with the denunciation of ideas and institutions produced in Europe, since they would be inadequate to our conditions, the act of devouring what comes from outside becomes a defining mark to country like Brazil.'<sup>10</sup>

This interplay between the colonizer and the colonized – one that dissolves differences rather than maintains them – offered a powerful solution for the problem posed by the binary construction of the authentic and the appropriated. It was presented as a process through which any hierarchy of values connected to artistic practices and knowledge emanating from Europe could disappear. 'Devouring' different cultural forms and transforming them through this process into something singular, Brazilian modernists suggested, carried the possibility of transgressing a colonial past while in the process catapulting their nation into the future or at least a shared present with contemporary (European) peers. One aspect of this subversive tactic was to reinterpret the colonial encounter in the Americas from the cannibal's perspective: 'The goal of the anthropophagic rebellion is to replace a European simulacrum with native originality. Because *Antropofagia* presents itself as a route to decolonization through symbolic and irreversible acts of mixture between autochthonous Brazil and its arriving Europeans, it signifies yet another stage in their long-standing symbiotic interdependence.'<sup>11</sup>

7 Chelsea Burns, "Musique cannibale": The Evolving Sound of Indigeneity in Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Três poemas indígenas*, *Music Theory Spectrum* 43 (2021), 92.

8 Fléchet, *Villa-Lobos à Paris*, 121.

9 Oswald de Andrade, 'Cannibalist Manifesto', trans. Leslie Bary, *Latin American Literary Review* 19/38 (1991), 38.

10 'Em contraste com a denúncia da importação de ideias e instituições produzidas na Europa, já que elas seriam inadequadas a nossas condições, toma o ato de devorar o que vem de fora como definidor de um país como o Brasil.' See Bernardo Ricupero, 'O "Original" e a "Cópia" na Antropofagia', *Sociologia e Antropologia* 8/3 (2018), 875.

11 Kenneth David Jackson, *Cannibal Angels: Transatlantic Modernism and the Brazilian Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2021), 283.

One of the contradictions of *Antropofagia* as a postcolonial theory is that it preserves colonial hierarchical structures, at least in terms of who eats and who is eaten. Yet when emplaced in the colonial past, the perspective of the indigenous cannibal who consumes the colonizers' culture seems to be productive for imagining an alternative history.

Two important assumptions lie behind this kind of optimistic view on the resistance to the colony: first, the primitivist view of Brazil as an untouched paradise that was contaminated only by the landing of the Portuguese caravels crossing the Atlantic; and second, the notion that human movement – and thus culture – flows unidirectionally from Europe to the Americas. Several authors, including Roberto Schwarz, Bernardo Ricupero, and Rafael Cardoso, have pointed to the contradictions within the *Antropofagia* as a political and literary project as it attempts to mediate the division between the local and the foreign in forging the cultural foundation of the nation.<sup>12</sup> One of the aspects that I want to emphasize, building on Florencia Garramuño, is the static configuration of the colonial encounter in Brazil in this representation: the imagined colonial encounter happens in a Brazilian territory that is visited by European travellers.<sup>13</sup> What is important here is that Europeans are the ones who are active travellers, while local inhabitants await passively. Although *Antropofagia*'s recounting of Brazilian colonial history within its borders – one that emphasizes the hierarchy between the active imposing of foreign values and the passive, if resistant, assimilation of an autochthonous dormant culture – works as a myth for the nation, it is not completely effective for the metaphorical cultural cannibalism of the twentieth century. Indeed, Villa-Lobos was in Europe during a good part of the 1920s, actively pursuing a market for his music, which included his absorbing of the contemporary music he encountered there.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, *Antropofagia* needs to be understood as a transnational and historical idea rather than a fixed view on a static national image. As Garramuño writes: 'In that sense, it is not only necessary to incorporate the avant-garde voyages as founding moments in that definition [of a national autochthonous character], but also to identify in the transformations of those languages' forms the operations whereby these trajectories leave their imprint on the form itself.'<sup>15</sup> To focus on Villa-Lobos as a traveller means to engage with the transnational exchange that formed part of the struggle defining what was national in Brazilian music.

The few times Villa-Lobos travelled abroad in the 1930s – to conduct concerts in Argentina in 1935 and to represent Brazil at meetings in Europe in 1936 – limited his application of the 'cultural cannibal traveler' model from the 1920s. There are two interrelated reasons that explain the decline in the frequency of his international travels: first, the decrease in patronage

12 See Roberto Schwarz, 'Nacional por subtração', in *Que horas são? Ensaios* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1989), 37; Ricupero, 'O "Original" e a "Cópia" na Antropofagia', 891–3; and Rafael Cardoso, *Modernidade em preto e branco: arte e imagem, raça e identidade no Brasil, 1890–1945* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2022), 200–6.

13 Florencia Garramuño, *Primitive Modernities: Tango, Samba, and Nation*, trans. Anna Kazumi Stahl (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

14 Many other Brazilian artists and writers spent a significant time in Paris in the 1920s. See Ana Paula Cavalcanti Simioni, *Mulheres modernistas: estratégias de consagração na arte brasileira* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2022), 161–2.

15 Garramuño, *Primitive Modernities*, 87.

from the financial elite related to the coffee-export industry, given the fall of the commodity prices following the 1929 financial crisis; and second, the composer's steady rise through the ranks of music educators during President Getúlio Vargas's government, which started after the 1930 Revolution and which put an end to Brazil's First Republic, much of which had been controlled by the same 'coffee barons'.<sup>16</sup> Adapting to the changing sociopolitical conditions during the 1930s also prompted a considerable shift in the style and scale of Villa-Lobos's compositions. As Manoel Aranha Corrêa do Lago points out, Villa-Lobos composed almost no new orchestral music until 1937, and much of his work was dedicated to compiling and arranging music for pedagogical use in the manner of Carl Orff, Paul Hindemith, and Zoltan Kodály, including the ten volumes of the *Guia prático*.<sup>17</sup> Contrary to many authors who interpreted Villa-Lobos's compositional periods as mirroring Igor Stravinsky's career – a neoclassical shift after a period steeped in the French primitivist avant-garde – Corrêa do Lago suggests that the years between 1930 and 1936 presented a moment of reorientation, at least as regards compositions using new materials.<sup>18</sup>

Corrêa do Lago's reading of this compositional gap is based on a careful and detailed analysis of the compositional origin of the most celebrated of Villa-Lobos's compositions: the *Bachianas brasileiras*. Rather than trusting the composer's words that this nine-work cycle was composed between 1930 and 1945 – the period of the Vargas's regime – Corrêa do Lago shows that with the exception of the second and third movements of *Bachianas brasileiras* no. 1, all the other pieces within the sequence were composed after 1936 (and even the complete version of no. 1 with its added first movement was only performed in 1938). Villa-Lobos's claim seems to have been an attempt to cover up the creative gap in his compositional output. This is typical of the many instances when he manipulated information for his own benefit, such as changing the composition dates of older works so as to hide

16 The so-called 'Era Vargas' lasted from October 1930 to October 1945 and is roughly divided into three parts: civilian chief of the provisional government (1930–4), president (1934–7), and president-dictator (1937–45). In the third period, known as the Estado Novo, Vargas decreed a new constitution, dissolved congress, and ruled as an authoritarian president. During the Vargas regime, Villa-Lobos consolidated his power as the musical representative of the nation by expanding his influence into government projects of music education. As a leader of large displays of collective singing, which he borrowed from the French tradition of 'orpheon singing' (*canto orfeônico*), he was recognized by the secretary of education of the federal district of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro – who charged him with the direction of the Superintendency of Musical and Artistic Education (SEMA) – and the federal government that signed a law that required schools to teach orpheon singing. On Vargas's administration of culture, see Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). On Villa-Lobos as an educator, see Maria das Graças Reis Gonçalves, 'Villa-Lobos, o educador: canto orfeônico e Estado Novo' (PhD diss., Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2017); Gabriel Ferraz, 'Heitor Villa-Lobos e Getúlio Vargas: Doutrinando crianças por meio da educação musical', *Latin American Music Review* 34/2 (2013), 162–95; Ednardo Monteiro Gonzaga do Monti, 'Polifonias políticas, identitárias e pedagógicas: Villa-Lobos no Instituto de Educação do Rio de Janeiro na Era Vargas' (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2015).

17 Manoel Aranha Corrêa do Lago, 'Villa-Lobos nos anos 1930 e 1940: transcrições e "work in progress"', *Revista Brasileira de Música*, 28/1 (2015), 89.

18 Corrêa do Lago, 'Villa-Lobos nos anos 1930 e 1940', 88–92.



other influences, or creating the fanciful narratives that seasoned his concerts with an exotic flavor.<sup>19</sup>

### Retelling the travel itinerary

One of the challenges of reconstructing the route which Villa-Lobos took to Europe in 1936 lies in the archival sources for this trip. The composers' own reports about the trip and the press coverage present a carefully curated account of a well-organized, coherent, and successful journey to Europe. However, there are significant differences between the actual travel itinerary and the narration of the travel experiences (Table 1). Uncovering these inconsistencies is more than just a matter of biographical detail because these discrepancies point to a rich nexus of travel-related benefits for the composer and reveal Villa-Lobos's retooling of *Antropofagia* for musical practices during a period of dictatorship.

What I call the 'official' narrative about the trip is the version that circulated during Villa-Lobos's journey and immediately after his return. On 17 June 1936, he submitted a report to Minister of Education Gustavo Capanema, which provided a brief account of the activities accomplished in Europe supported by additional documents.

Among the document appended to this report – which included letters attesting his activities in Europe and the text of his speech in Prague – there is the transcription of an interview for the *Hora do Brasil*, the official radio programme of Brazilian government.<sup>20</sup> The same text also circulated in other newspapers and provides details about Villa-Lobos's account for the trip.<sup>21</sup> The interviewer asked about each visited location and for purposes of organization I follow this structure discussing each of the excerpts.

### Prague

One more time the saying that the 'last will be the first' is confirmed. As it is known, I arrived in Prague the day after the end of the Congress. I was, however, invited to give a lecture about the organization of music education in Brazil during a special session of the Congress of Music Education. Prague's Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is also the president of the Society that organized the Congress of Music Education, was immediately interested in information about our system. Understanding the value

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- 19 Paulo de Tarso Salles speculates that Villa-Lobos had changed the dates of the ballets *Amazonas* and *Uirapuru* (1917 is composition date in the catalogue, but their first performances were 1929 and 1935, respectively) to make them close to Stravinsky's collaboration with the Ballet Russes. See Paulo de Tarso Salles, *Villa-Lobos: processos composicionais* (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2009), 25. In 1927, Lucie Delarue Madrus reported Villa-Lobos's fantastic story that he had been captured by indigenous groups in Brazil and while they prepared a sacrifice ritual, he annotated the melodies they sung. As Anaïs Fléchet shows, this narrative is very similar to the colonial view of Hans Staden, a German traveller who had been in Brazil in the sixteenth century. See Fléchet, *Villa-Lobos à Paris*, 71–3.
  - 20 Heitor Villa-Lobos, 'Entrevista do Maestro H. Villa-Lobos para a Hora Oficial do Brasil', interview, annex to report from Heitor Villa-Lobos to Gustavo Capanema, 17 June 1936, Acervo Museu Villa-Lobos/IBRAM, correspondence, item 4016.
  - 21 'Teve Completo Exitto a Missão de Villa-Lobos na Europa', *Diário Carioca*, 17 June 1936, 2.

Table 1 Villa-Lobos's travel itinerary

	International music events	Villa-Lobos's events	Villa-Lobos location	Archival documents
21 March 1936		Sá Pereira departs Rio de Janeiro		
4 April		<i>Graf Hindenburg</i> departs Rio de Janeiro	Rio de Janeiro	
4–9 April	Prague Congress			
10 April		<i>Graf Hindenburg</i> arrives in Friedrichshafen	Friedrichshafen	
12 April			Prague	Villa-Lobos's postcard with Prague stamp
18–25 April	ISCM and IMS in Barcelona			
25 April		Villa-Lobos's lecture in Prague		
7 May				Letter to German Foreign Service proposing concerts
9 May		Lunch for Villa-Lobos organized by the Brazilian legation in Berlin		Article reporting the lunch at <i>Correio da Manhã</i>
15 May			Barcelona	Telegramme from the <i>Deutscher Kurzwellensender</i> with proposal for concerts, sent to Spain
20 May		Concert with the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft in Berlin	Berlin	Contract between Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft and Villa-Lobos
25 May		Song recital with Beate Roos-Reuter in Berlin		



28 May				Letter to Lucília Guimarães from Berlin
3 June			Paris	Villa-Lobos interview to the United Press in Paris
4 June		Villa-Lobos participates in the preliminary rounds of the Vienna Competition	Vienna	
7–21 June	Vienna Competition			
8 June		Villa-Lobos boards the <i>Graf Zeppelin</i> in Frankfurt	Frankfurt	
12 June		The <i>Graf Zeppelin</i> arrives in Rio de Janeiro		

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of the work, he committed himself to distributing information about it in Czechoslovakia.<sup>22</sup>

Villa-Lobos arrived after the end of the conference. In this report he does not only admit his tardiness but also endeavours to convert any possible negative response to his negligence into a positive one. When he stressed that he was ‘invited to give a lecture about the organization of music education in Brazil during a special session’, he did not reveal other important facts: that he departed Rio de Janeiro on 4 April, the first day of the congress, and that upon his arrival, after the event had finished, he justified his lateness with the delay of the airship. Villa-Lobos’s transformation of the narrative echoes almost literally an expression that Roberto Schwarz would later use to characterize Oswald de Andrade’s *Antropofagia*: ‘a triumphalist interpretation of our lateness’.<sup>23</sup>

Given his transatlantic itinerary, Villa-Lobos would have known full well that he would not make it to Prague on time. One might thus question why he travelled to Europe, if participating in the conference, as he stated, was the main goal of the trip. One hypothesis is that he had additional reasons for his travels – a line of thought I explore below – and another posits that he never understood that being late would be a problem. Villa-Lobos’s self-confidence, backed by an overall solid prestige and strong government support, allowed him to get away with what might charitably be called his lack of organization or disregard for the collective purposes of the event. From his point of view, moreover, anything he did would, and could, be turned into a winning narrative. Indeed, the invitation to present a lecture – and, as we will see, to perform his music – during a specially called session, which occurred on 25 April, reveals both his international prestige and the efficient effort by Brazilian diplomats in Prague to arrange this event.<sup>24</sup> Since the event was not a competition and did not create any ranking for the participants, when Villa-Lobos claimed in a later interview that the ‘Brazilian music-education plan was awarded the first place among the twenty countries that took part in the congress’, he reveals his lack of understanding of the purposes of the event, judging the allegedly positive reception as a successful outcome.<sup>25</sup> For the composer, his achievement could be confirmed by the fact that the spotlights were turned on his presentation. In addition, the extraordinary session allowed him to avoid listening to the contributions of the delegates from elsewhere.

If representing Brazil in the congress indeed meant only to speak and deliberately not to listen, then it is possible to argue that Villa-Lobos was never late. Archival evidence suggests that

22 ‘Mais uma vez se confirma o adagio de que “os últimos serão os primeiros.” Como é sabido, cheguei a Praga, no dia seguinte da terminação do Congresso. Fui, porém, convidado para realizar uma conferência como sessão-extra do Congresso de Educação Musical, sobre a orientação do ensino de música no Brasil. O ministro do Exterior de Praga, que é também presidente da Sociedade Organizadora desse Congresso de Educação Musical, interessou-se, logo, pelas informações que teve sobre a nossa orientação, o qual, compreendendo o valor da obra empenhou-se, afim de que a mesma fosse divulgada na Tchecoslováquia.’ Villa-Lobos, ‘Entrevista do Maestro H. Villa-Lobos para a Hora Oficial do Brasil’.

23 Schwarz, ‘Nacional por subtração’, 37.

24 Mário Belfort Ramos, Letter to José Carlos de Macedo Soares, 30 April 1936, Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, Missões Diplomáticas Brasileiras, 40/1/8, no. 29.

25 ‘O plano do ensino de música brasileiro foi o primeiro entre os 20 países que tomaram parte no Congresso.’ Villa-Lobos, ‘Entrevista do Maestro H. Villa-Lobos para a Hora Oficial do Brasil’.

he could have travelled earlier, if the conference was a priority in his agenda, as he later states in his reports. The formal diplomatic invitation from Kamil Krofta, the Czechoslovakian minister for foreign affairs and president of the Society for Music Education, was received by José Carlos de Macedo Soares, Brazilian minister of foreign relation on 21 January 1936, and Villa-Lobos's appointment as a delegate was signed on 20 March 1936.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Antônio Sá Pereira, the other Brazilian delegate to the congress, left Rio de Janeiro the following day (21 March) on board the *Conte Biancamano* destined for Trieste, Italy.<sup>27</sup> The fact that Villa-Lobos started his journey on April 4, on board of the Graf Hindenburg, the newest German airship advertised as the fastest transatlantic transportation at the time, might suggest additional hypotheses.<sup>28</sup> That he occupied one of the cabins reserved for the Brazilian government could indicate not only his growing reputation as a cultural mediator in the Vargas regime and provide the luxury and privilege of air travel by way of Germany where he arrived for a stopover on 10 April.

## Berlin

Upon my arrival in Berlin, I was contracted by Professor Dr. von Westermann, General Director of the Reichs-Rundfunk, to organize three performances of my works.<sup>29</sup> For this reason I was interviewed by several German journalists, who already knew about the formidable victory of our music education's orientation, in a popular system, with the three main goals that characterize it: discipline, civic engagement, and art through music.<sup>30</sup>

Although there was no mention of Berlin as a possible destination when Villa-Lobos set out across the Atlantic, this was the place where the composer spent most of his time during his European trip.<sup>31</sup> The absence of the German capital from his original itinerary seems less of a

26 Mário Belfort Ramos, Letter to José Carlos de Macedo Soares, 5 December 1935, Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, Missões Diplomáticas Brasileiras, 40/1/8, no. 86, and Nomination Letter from Getúlio Vargas and Gustavo Capanema to Heitor Villa-Lobos, 20 March 1936. Acervo Museu Villa-Lobos/IBRAM, HVL 04.07.0001.

27 In a letter to the musicologist Mário de Andrade, on 31 March 1936, Sá Pereira mentioned that he probably would not arrive on time in Prague for the opening day of the congress when the programme for the event would be decided. Letter from Antônio Sá Pereira to Mário de Andrade, 31 March 1936, MA-C-CPL-5724. Fundo Mário de Andrade, Arquivo do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil.

28 German airships operated the Brazilian route as part of a partnership that included building a large hangar near Rio de Janeiro that could facilitate the on-ground operations of airships in exchange for a commitment of at least twenty departures per year for three decades. See Paulo F. Laux, 'A memorável passagem do Zeppelin pelo Brasil', *Aeromagazine*, 3 October 2012, [https://aeromagazine.uol.com.br/artigo/a-memoravel-passagem-do-zeppelin-pelo-brasil\\_737.html](https://aeromagazine.uol.com.br/artigo/a-memoravel-passagem-do-zeppelin-pelo-brasil_737.html).

29 Gerhart von Westermann (1894–1963), composer and from 1935 to 1938 director of Berlin's short-wave radio service. See Misha Aster, *The Reich's Orchestra: The Berlin Philharmonic, 1933–1945* (Oakville, ON, and Cheektogawa, NY: Mosaic Press, 2012), 35.

30 'Ao chegar a Berlim, fui contratado pelo professor Dr. Von Westermann, Diretor Geral da "Reichs-Lundfunk" [sic], afim de realizar três audições de minhas obras. Por esse motivo fui entrevistado por vários jornalistas alemães, já conhecedores da formidável vitória da orientação do nosso ensino de música, num sistema popular, com as principais finalidades que o caracterizam: disciplina, civismo e arte pela música.' Villa-Lobos, 'Entrevista do Maestro H. Villa-Lobos para a Hora Oficial do Brasil'.

31 'A partida do maestro Villa-Lobos', *Correio da Manhã*, 9 April 1936, 6.

deliberate omission than an indication of a last-minute decision to settle in that city after he was already on the move. He only started negotiating performance opportunities in May, when he was already in Berlin.<sup>32</sup> To understand the composer's detour to Berlin, it is helpful to explore the itinerary of Villa-Lobos's travel companion, Antônio Sá Pereira (Figure 1).

At the time of the 1936 trip, Sá Pereira was a professor at the Instituto Nacional de Música and recognized as an innovative music pedagogue. With an extensive number of publications on music education to his name – including a series of articles in *Ariel*, a music magazine he edited with Mário de Andrade in 1923 and 1924, and the influential piano method, *Ensino moderno de piano* (*Modern Piano Teaching*), which was published in 1933 – he was an easy choice to serve as a delegate to the Prague conference.<sup>33</sup> In these texts, Sá Pereira applies many of the ideas he encountered in his studies in Europe from 1900 to 1917, mostly in Germany and Switzerland. In this sense, the adjective 'modern' to qualify a musical pedagogy in Brazil meant not only 'rational' and 'scientific', as proposed in the German manuals on which he based his writings, but also 'European' and 'cosmopolitan'.<sup>34</sup> According to one of his students, he was 'a European born in Bahia' and a 'professor in the highest sense of the word, his purpose was to transplant to here [Brazil] the sum of overseas cultural knowledge, while preserving a Brazilian identity, a form of safeguarding strongly connected to intellectual growth'.<sup>35</sup> This description of a transnational cultural mediator who could cross borders with the goal to improve their nation's musical knowledge applied similarly to many of the other men who participated in the congress, including its organizers, Edward J. Dent and Leo Kestenberg.<sup>36</sup>

Besides his participation in the congress, Sá Pereira had additional tasks while in Europe. Since 1935, he had been part of a planning committee for the University of Brazil led by Minister Gustavo Capanema.<sup>37</sup> As part of his trip, Sá Pereira was tasked to collect information on the organization of university campuses across Europe and to identify instructors who could be part of a future exchange programme. Sá Pereira's first stop in this mission was Berlin, and he stayed there until October 1936.<sup>38</sup> Like many, Sá Pereira had an ambiguous relationship with the Nazi regime. On the one hand, he had previously expressed his concerns

32 Rodrigues, 'O maestro do mundo', 189.

33 On *Ariel*, see Flávia Toni 'A primeira fase de Ariel, uma revista de música', *Revista Música Hodie* 15/1 (2015), 154–70.

34 Fátima Graça Monteiro Corvisier, 'Antônio de Sá Pereira e o *Ensino moderno de piano*: pioneirismo na pedagogia pianística brasileira' (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2009), 105.

35 'Um europeu nascido na Bahia . . . professor no mais alto sentido da palavra, seu propósito consistia em transplantar para cá a soma de conhecimentos da cultura além-mar, preservando porém a identidade brasileira, preservação fortemente comprometida com o crescimento intelectual.' Maria Abreu and Zuleika R. Guedes, *O piano na música brasileira: seus compositores dos primórdios até 1950* (Porto Alegre, Brazil: Editora Movimento, 1992), 140.

36 On the internationalism of Edward J. Dent, see Annegret Fauser, 'The Scholar behind the Medal: Edward J. Dent (1876–1957) and the Politics of Music History', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 139 (2014), 235–60. On Leo Kestenberg, see Wilfried Gruhn, 'Leo Kestenberg 1882–1962', *International Journal of Music Education* 22/2 (2004), 103–29.

37 Telegram from Gustavo Capanema to Antônio Sá Pereira, 19 July 1936. Private collection Maria Teresa Moura.

38 In a letter to his mother from 7 October, Sá Pereira mentions that he was leaving Berlin and stopping in other cities in Germany and Switzerland before returning home. Letter from Antônio Sá Pereira to his mother, 7 October 1936. Private collection Maria Teresa Moura.



**Figure 1** (Colour online) Photograph sent from Antônio Sá Pereira to his mother. Maria Tesesa Moura private collection.

about its anti-Semitism, particularly regarding music, and warned about the violence of the regime against its opposition.<sup>39</sup> On the other, he admired Nazi Germany's bureaucratic structure, which he described in detail to Capanema. Such esteem for state control over one's population resonated between the rising authoritarianism in Vargas's regime and Hitler's Germany, and some of its principles are outlined in Villa-Lobos's characterization of the Brazilian music-education system as 'discipline, civic engagement, and art through music'.

It is likely that Villa-Lobos followed Sá Pereira to Germany to fill the gap in his schedule between the Prague congress and his later commitments in Barcelona and Vienna. Sá Pereira's fluency in German proved to be an opportunity for advertising his music in that country.<sup>40</sup> Villa-Lobos also had the support of the Brazilian diplomat in charge of the Berlin legation, Joaquim Moniz de Aragão, 'an anti-Semitic and anticommunist' admirer of Hitler, who most likely enabled the long stay in Germany and facilitated the composer's access to the Nazi bureaucracy.<sup>41</sup> In contrast to the multicultural and multiracial construction of Brazil among modernist artists, Moniz de Aragão defended a purely European cultural origin for his nation that aligned with Nazi Germany's racial politics.

In his letter to Capanema, Sá Pereira mentions that, upon his arrival in Berlin, he was promptly received by Moniz de Aragão, who put him in contact with upper echelons of the Nazi Party, especially in the Office of Foreign Policy (*Außenpolitisches Amt*) and the Work Front (*Arbeitsfront*).<sup>42</sup> Villa-Lobos used these same diplomatic connections to propose the following initiatives to present his music:

1. Broadcast to Brazil of a programme of regional artistic music performed by German radio artists.
2. The recording of three discs of Brazilian music for small instrumental ensembles by Telefunken.

39 In the first volume of the *Revista Brasileira de Música*, published in June 1934, Sá Pereira published an article entitled 'O atual estado da música na Alemanha'. This title is a literal translation of Alfred Einstein's 'The Present State of Music in Germany', the content of which also served as a starting point for the Brazilian article. Sá Pereira shares Einstein's concerns about the musical outcomes of anti-Semitism for German music and musicians. Antônio Sá Pereira, 'O estado atual da música na Alemanha', *Revista Brasileira de Música* 1/2 (June 1934), 158.

40 As Sá Pereira suggests in one of his reports to Capanema, his fluency in German was a key factor, not only for Villa-Lobos's period in Germany, but also for the success of his speech and performance in Prague. He reported that he had to stay for two more weeks in Prague to assist Villa-Lobos in the preparation for his talk and performance: 'As Villa-Lobos did not speak German, and that just a few people spoke French, my presence there became indispensable' ('Não falando o Villa-Lobos o alemão, e sendo poucas as pessoas que falassem francês, tornava-se a minha presença ali indispensável'). Antônio Sá Pereira, Letter to Gustavo Capanema, 26 May 1936, Arquivo Gustavo Capanema, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação da História Contemporânea do Brasil/Fundação Getúlio Vargas, GC g 1936.05.26/2.

41 Rodrigues, 'O maestro do mundo', 188. The legation was promoted to an embassy on 18 May 1936, making Moniz de Aragão the first Brazilian ambassador to Germany. Law n. 203, 18 May 1936. Moniz de Aragão is notorious for mediating the deportation of communist activist Olga Benário from Brazil to Germany in 1936, which led to her death in the Bernburg Euthanasia Centre in 1942.

42 Letter from Antônio Sá Pereira to Gustavo Capanema, 26 May 1936, Arquivo Gustavo Capanema, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação da História Contemporânea do Brasil/Fundação Getúlio Vargas, GC g 1936.05.26/2.



3. A festival of symphonic works by H. Villa-Lobos performed by the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by the composer.<sup>43</sup>

Although none of these activities would actually take place in this format, Villa-Lobos had several opportunities to have his music performed and broadcast in Berlin, which is significant given the short time available to organize the events. Indeed, the composer sent the first proposal on 7 May, and less than two weeks later, he performed his music on two occasions: on 20 May, he conducted a concert of his works broadcast by the German short-wave radio, and on 25 May, he played the piano in a song recital that included his compositions.<sup>44</sup> This efficiency to accommodate a foreign visitor such as Villa-Lobos in conjunction with the use of diplomatic channels reveals a strong investment in what Misha Aster has called *Kulturaustausch* ('cultural exchange'): the inclusion of foreign musicians and music in the programme of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and other major state institutions. 'For propagandistic, but also ideological purposes not entirely anathema to contemporary ideas about the universality of music and the value of cultural exchange, the orchestra participated in a number of concerts in the spirit of "friendship between nations", not only with Axis partners'.<sup>45</sup> For his part, Villa-Lobos reciprocated this musical friendship between Germany and Brazil in a set of new compositions that carry in their sonic material the traces of this encounter.

## Barcelona

From artistic and educational point of view, I can tell the following: on 12 May, I arrived in Barcelona to fulfil the contract with my manager Clemente Lozano. I informed myself about the results of the Musicology Congress that took place here, and to which I had the honour of being invited.<sup>46</sup>

Villa-Lobos's visit to Barcelona differs from the other locations discussed so far because he made no public appearances.<sup>47</sup> However, his account of the visit included some imprecisions and omissions that are worthy of comment. First, his reference to Clemente Lozano as his manager is suspicious if we follow other archival documents. Lozano was a composer and conductor who directed the Concerts Catalònia (later Concerts Iberia), a concert agency founded in 1925.<sup>48</sup>

43 Villa-Lobos, manuscript list, Acervo Museu Villa-Lobos/IBRAM, HVL04.07.0003, 23.

44 Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft, contract, Acervo Museu Villa-Lobos/IBRAM, HVL03.03.0038 and FE1330. In the song recital, he likely accompanied singer Beate Roos-Reuter (1899–1994), who was misidentified in the archives as 'Beate Rosenkreutzer'. Some of the songs from this recital were recorded and are preserved in the Villa-Lobos Museum.

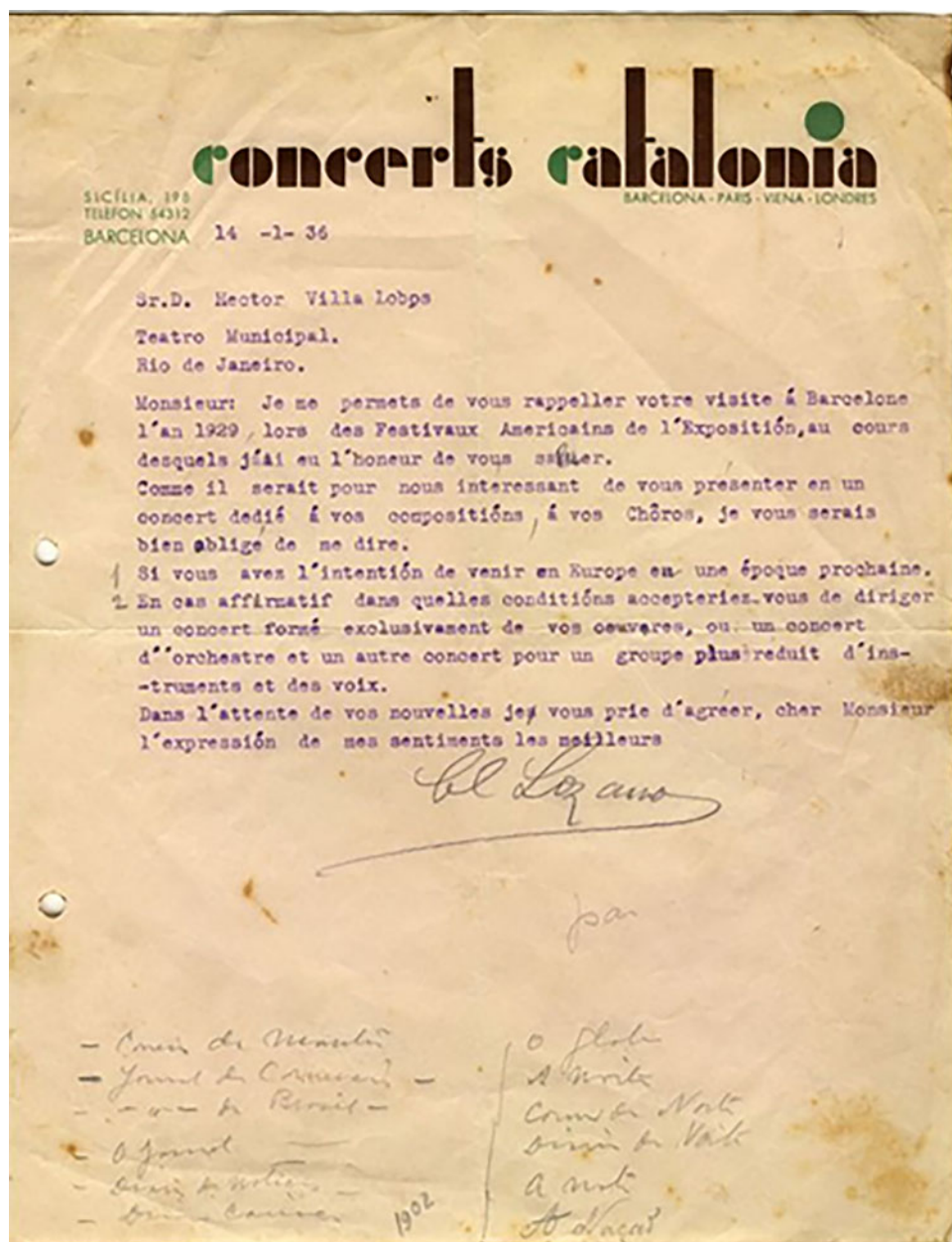
45 Aster, *The Reich's Orchestra*, 123. In his examples, Aster includes the Berlin Philharmonic concerts of Brazilian music conducted by composer and conductor Francisco Mignone in 1937.

46 'No ponto de vista artístico e educacional, posso relatar o seguinte: no dia 12 de Maio cheguei a Barcelona afim de cumprir o contrato com o meu empresário Clemente Lozano e pude informar-me do resultado do Congresso de Musicologia lá realizado, para o qual tive a honra de ser convidado.' Villa-Lobos, 'Entrevista do Maestro H. Villa-Lobos para a Hora Oficial do Brasil'.

47 My research in newspapers from that city and related to the conference of the International Musicological Society with the assistance of María Cáceres-Piñuel, to whom I am grateful, did not find any register of his presence in the city.

48 Censo Guía de Archivos de España e Iberoamérica, <https://censoarchivos.mcu.es/CensoGuia/productordetail.htm?id=25234>.





**Figure 2** (Colour online) Clemente Lozano, Letter to Heitor Villa-Lobos, 14 January 1936. Acervo Museu Villa-Lobos/IBRAM, Correspondência, Concertos Iberia 1 FE 1902.

As the director of the company, he engaged such musicians as Bela Bartók and Alfredo Casella to perform concerts in Barcelona. Lozano, who had met Villa-Lobos during his previous visit to the city in 1929, wrote a letter with the goal to reconnect with the Brazilian composer on 14 January 1936 (Figure 2).

In the letter, Lozano asks Villa-Lobos whether he had plans to come to Europe and, if that was the case, under what conditions he would conduct a concert featuring his music. Whereas the letter suggests a speculative approach, Villa-Lobos publicized this ‘invitation’ to perform in Europe as a fact to some Brazilian newspapers.<sup>49</sup> ‘The recent success by maestro Villa-Lobos echoed in Europe with an ample repercussion . . . The national composer just received an honorable invitation by the Concerts Catalonia, based in Barcelona, Paris, Vienna, and London to conduct a series of concerts in the first of those cities’.<sup>50</sup> The archives of the Villa-Lobos Museum hold dozens of letters between the composer and the Catalan manager, but with the exception to the one mentioned here, all others date from the late 1940s and 1950s. This gap and the information on the 1936 introductory letter suggest that at the time of the travels, there were no immediate plans for either a concert or a partnership.

Villa-Lobos’s reference to the Congress of the International Musicological Society (IMS) that took place in Barcelona from 18 to 25 May also raises questions. It is very likely that Villa-Lobos had received an invitation to attend the conference since many of the participants also had taken part in the Prague Conference. Not only is there an odd wording when he mentions that he ‘informed’ himself about the conference and its outcomes, but he also omits to mention that it was a joint event with the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM). Among all the professional organizations in the field of music, the ISCM is the one that might have seemed best to fit Villa-Lobos’s main occupation as a composer. Indeed, even though he was not at the 1925 meeting of the ISCM in Venice, his *Epigramas ironicos e sentimentais* was performed there by the Canadian-American soprano Éva Gauthier.<sup>51</sup> However, Villa-Lobos was never a member of any international musical organization – neither of musicologists nor of composers – and he participated only sporadically in their events, and only when he could draw some benefit.

## Vienna

I arrived in Vienna on 4 June at 11 am, and at 2 pm I took part in the first eliminatory session of the International Contest of Voice and Piano, for which I was invited long ago, as a member of the jury. . . . From the Americas, only Brazil was invited, and I represented it from the distinction of an official invitation from the Congregation of the Vienna Academy of Music, which makes me very proud. Although I was not able

49 The manuscript notes at the bottom of the page are names of newspapers: *Correio da Manhã*, *Jornal do Comércio*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *O Jornal*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Diário Carioca*, *O Globo*, *A Noite*, *Correio da Noite*, *Diário da Noite*, *A Noite*, and *A Nação*. I suspect that this is the list of all the newspapers that received the information about this invitation.

50 ‘Teve a mais ampla repercussão na Europa o eco dos sucessos ultimamente obtidos pelo maestro Villa-Lobos . . . Acaba o compositor patricio de receber honroso convite da organização dos “Concerts Catalonia” com sede em Barcelona, Paris, Viena e Londres para dirigir uma série de concertos na primeira daquelas cidades.’ ‘A Europa e a música brasileira’, *Correio da Manhã*, 15 February 1936, 7.

51 Anton Haefeli, *Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM), Ihre Geschichte von 1922 bis zur Gegenwart* (Zurich: Atlantis Musikbuch-Verlag, 1982), 482–3.

to stay until the final stages of the Contest, because I had to take the Zeppelin on the 8th in Frankfurt to arrive with urgency to Rio, so I could take part in the artistic celebrations of the commemorations for Carlos Gomes's centenary, I still was able to participate in six eliminatory sessions, having examined 72 of the 350 candidates in voice and piano, from many foreign countries.<sup>52</sup>

Villa-Lobos's description of his activities in Vienna sets a different tone to his previous comments. Whereas before he was vague about the timeline of events, with Vienna, he refers to exact dates and even hours: 'June 4 at 11am, and at 2pm'. He also offers precise numbers: '72 of the 350 candidates'. Like the elusiveness of the other descriptions, the precision works as a rhetorical device to hide an incomplete task. The competition took place from 7 to 21 June, so if Villa-Lobos boarded the airship in Frankfurt on 8 June, he did not participate in the main phases of the jury, but only in the preliminary stages.<sup>53</sup> Villa-Lobos's emphasis on the honour of being invited to the jury and on his busy schedule de-emphasizes his minor participation in only the early stages of the contest and his absence during the main phases of the jury. Like his inbound trip, the airship schedule seems to dictate his priorities. By configuring the story to fit an extraordinary airplane journey, he solved the problem that he did not complete his assigned tasks.

In addition to these cities – Prague, Berlin, Barcelona, and Vienna – Villa-Lobos also passed briefly through Paris, where the Brazilian Embassy hosted a dinner for him.<sup>54</sup> In an interview, he mentions that he had met the Paris Opera director, Jacques Rouché, and negotiated some performance of his works. However, these programmes were never performed, nor are there traces of such meetings in the archives.

All the inconsistencies in Villa-Lobos's telling of the trip are indicative of his multiple interests while travelling to accomplish combined personal and national goals. His work as a cultural diplomat relied on a particular view of himself as the embodiment of musical Brazil. Rather than a conflict between the private and the public, the conflation of both energized the composer's musical persona. In a sense, he was already cannibalizing his own nation when representing it abroad. The digestion of his country meant a form of capturing its sonic core and transforming it into his very being. When the German newspaper *Die Musik-Woche* introduced Villa-Lobos, he was 'not the leader of any orchestra or merely a

52 'Cheguei em Vienna, dia 4 de junho, às 11 horas, e às 14 horas, tomei parte na primeira sessão eliminatória do Concurso Internacional de Canto e Piano para o qual fui convidado há muito tempo, na função de Membro do Juri. . . . Das Américas, foi somente convidado o Brasil, cuja representação me coube pela distinção de um convite oficial da Congregação da Academia de Música de Viena, o que me sinto extremamente desvanecido. Apesar de não poder ficar até as provas finais desse Concurso, por ter de tomar o Zeppelin, no dia 8 próximo passado, em Frankfurt, para chegar, com urgência, ao Rio afim de me ocupar do preparo dos festejos artísticos em Comemoração ao Centenário de Carlos Gomes, ainda pude tomar parte em seis sessões eliminatórias, tendo examinado 72 dos 350 candidatos de canto e piano, de muitos países estrangeiros.' Villa-Lobos, 'Entrevista do Maestro H. Villa-Lobos para a Hora Oficial do Brasil'.

53 When the French magazine *Le Ménestrel* reported the results of the competition and the composition of the jury, Villa-Lobos was not included. See 'Le Mouvement musical à l'étranger', *Le Ménestrel*, 98/25, 19 June 1936, 203.

54 'Villa Lobos em Paris, fala do Brasil', *Diário da Noite*, 4 June, 1936, 1–2.

choir, but the leader of Brazil's artistic and musical education in general.<sup>55</sup> In what follows, I will move from the logistics of the trip to the matter of Villa-Lobos's representation of Brazil in his speeches and performances in Europe.

### Internationalism, music education, and the Brazilian presence in Prague

During the 1934 ISCM meeting in Florence, Leo Kestenberg approached Edward Dent, then-president of the society, with the proposal of founding an international society for music education. As Frederic B. Stiven, the US delegate at the 1936 congress, summarized: 'the purpose of this proposed society was to become acquainted with the trends of musical education in other countries, to foster all worthy means of furthering musical interests, and to create a central bureau for the gathering and dissemination of materials, advice, and information which were to be placed at the disposal of anyone interested in the problems of musical education'.<sup>56</sup> After leading the German music education during the Weimar Republic, Kestenberg had returned to Prague in 1933. With local support, mainly from Kamil Krofta, the Czech minister of foreign affairs, he conveyed the new organization and, later, the first conference in 1936.<sup>57</sup> The plan, approved by ISCM constituents in 1934, echoes the general discussion of internationalism in music led by Dent, one of the British delegates to the 1936 congress in Prague and president of both the IMS and the ISCM, for whom internationalism meant a fine balance between an aspiration for musical universalism and the belief in individuals' ability of crossing borders.<sup>58</sup>

Internationalism was a shared value among participants in these networks, particularly as a form of resistance against what Benjamin George Martin called the 'New Order for European culture', which represented not only the 'soft power of Nazi and fascist imperialism' but also a threat to the liberal international order.<sup>59</sup> Order – which means both organization and hierarchy for Martin – is the keyword to understanding the contradictions of the international institutions that pursued an opposition to the highly hierarchical and organized Nazi cultural system. Anne C. Shreffler characterizes the political stakes of the 1935 ISCM meeting (also hosted in Prague) and highlights that international musical institutions had found their limit as a resistance space in the 'chimera of political neutrality' enshrined in their very organizational structure.<sup>60</sup>

55 'So ist Herr Villa-Lobos nicht Leiter irgendeines Orchesters oder lediglich eines Chors, sondern der Leiter der künstlerischen und musikalischen Erziehung Brasiliens überhaupt.' 'Musik in Brasilien', *Die Musik-Woche* 23/24, 6 June 1936, 35. I am grateful to Erin Pratt who assisted me in accessing a copy of this periodical.

56 Frederic B. Stiven, 'High Lights of the First International Congress of Music Education at Prague, April, 1936', in *Volume of the Proceedings of the Music Teachers National Association* (Hartford, CT: Music Teachers' National Association, 1936), 84.

57 Gruhn, 'Leo Kestenberg 1882–1962', 107–9.

58 Annegret Fauser, 'Edward J. Dent (1932–49)', in *The History of the IMS (1927–2017)*, ed. Dorothea Baumann and Dinko Fabris (Kassel: Bärenheiter, 2017), 45.

59 Benjamin George Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1–5.

60 Anne C. Shreffler, 'The International Society for Contemporary Music and Its Political Context (Prague, 1935)', in *Music and International History in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 80.

The solution sought by the Society for Music Education and its 1936 congress was to preserve the internationalist goals of the ISCM while changing its focus from music composition to education. This change allowed for the inclusion of a broad range of musical styles and projects. Rather than pursuing the different ways of articulating politics and differences among musical idioms, it expanded the modes of presentation, ranging from demonstrations of pedagogical methods by way of children's choruses to discussions of the role of contemporary music in general education. The inclusion of many different contributions in a multilingual event – with presentations in French, German, English, and Czech – contributed to a more expansive (if not global) scope of the event, especially in comparison to similar initiatives in the past that were circumscribed by linguistic barriers, such as the Anglo-American conferences in 1929 and 1931.<sup>61</sup>

Christiane Sibille offers a model to represent the various viewpoints of actors in international networks of musical organizations. She proposes a two-axes rhombus, 'with nationalization and internationalization as its vertical and politization and standardization as its horizontal axis'.<sup>62</sup> This model is useful not only for understanding the general goals of musical international organizations during the 1930s, but also for explaining the unique participation of Brazil in the event. On the one hand, Brazil was the only nation from the southern hemisphere to participate in the congress, and one of the few non-European nations to be represented in the event. On the other hand, Villa-Lobos, the nation's musical figurehead, missed the congress altogether, requiring an extra-official event to accommodate his participation. In this sense, the inclusion of Brazil in the event was beneficial for its internationalist purposes, even if its participation differed from others and required specific accommodations. The preface to the edited volume of the texts read at the International Congress of Music Education explained the inclusion of Villa-Lobos's speech, read on 25 April, more than two weeks after the conclusion of the event – even inventing (or replicating) the excuse of a damaged airship:<sup>63</sup>

Brazilian delegates arrived in Prague shortly after the conclusion of the closing, because of damage to the airship that brought them. They talked about the multiple forms of music education in their country during a special meeting held in the festival hall of the faculty of philosophy of the Charles II University. Their presentation was accompanied by screenings and by examples of Brazilian popular song, in which the children from the Miličův dům [boarding school in Prague] kindly participated.<sup>64</sup>

61 Marie McCarthy, 'The Birth of Internationalism in Music Education, 1899–1938', *International Journal of Music Education* 21 (1993), 11–12.

62 Christiane Sibille, 'The Politics in International Organizations in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', *New Global Studies* 10/3 (2017), 254.

63 As I argued earlier, Villa-Lobos would not be able to attend the congress even if the airship did not have mechanical issues on its way to Europe.

64 'Les délégués du Brésil sont arrivés à Prague un peu après la clôture, à cause d'une avarie survenue au dirigeable qui les amenait. Ils ont parlé des formes multiples que prend l'éducation musicale dans leur pays au cours d'une reunion spéciale tenue dans la salle des fêtes de la faculté de philosophie de l'Université Charles II. Leur conference a été



The exceptional character of Brazil's inclusion in the volume is reflected in the tone of the article. As Arnaldo Contier argues, 'only Villa-Lobos[']s text] preached an alliance between choral singing and politics as a strategy to promote to large human concentrations the notions of civism and discipline'.<sup>65</sup> In contrast with the internationalism advocated in the congress, with delegates using their own national education system to establish dialogues among each other, Villa-Lobos intended not only to offer a portrait of his project for Brazilian musical education, but also to demonstrate that it was (the most) effective. The conditions for this demonstration were ideal: more than just words, his address included the playback of recordings, slide projections, the demonstration of educational methods for conducting children's choirs, and the performance of his music.

Martha Krásová, a soprano from Prague's National Opera, sang arrangements of songs accompanied by Villa-Lobos, who wrote short descriptions for each of the songs, emphasizing its ethnic origins:

'Itabayana' (melody from northern Brazil. Indigenous influence).

'Guriatan do coqueiro' (popular song from Pernambuco. Indigenous-African influence).

'Um canto que saiu da senzala' (Black song from Bahia).

'Nhapopé' (lyrical song from Rio de Janeiro, Italian influence from the nineteenth century).

'A cobra e a rolinha' (children's song from the countryside of Maranhão).

'Pobre peregrino' (children's *ronda*, sentimental genre).

'Minha gatinha parda' (children's *ronda*, happy genre).

'Xango' (mestizo's fetishism from Rio de Janeiro).<sup>66</sup>

The variety of genres and origins of the songs portrays the heterogeneous ethnic makeup of the country's population, appealing to the internationalist goals of the conference with music examples that might represent the combination of the diverse identities – racial, ethnic, regional, national – as embodying a nation.<sup>67</sup> It is not hard to imagine the enthusiastic reception of Villa-Lobos's presentation in the face of the exclusionary identity politics of the Third Reich. This idea of Brazil as a modern nation able to find harmony between past and present racial relations through a process of heterogeneous cultural miscegenation, later known as the 'myth of racial democracy', has reverberated through the country's foreign policy since the 1920s and was brought about by Villa-Lobos in the internationalist context of the

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accompagnée de projections et de spécimens de chanson populaires brésiliennes, pour lesquelles les enfants du Miličův dům se sont mis aimablement à leur disposition.' *L'Éducation musicale, trait d'union entre les peuples* (Prague: Orbis, 1937), 9.

65 'Somente o de Villa-Lobos pregava a aliança entre o canto coral e a política como uma estratégia para se divulgar às grandes concentrações humanas, as noções de civismo e disciplina.' Contier, *Brasil Novo*, section 6.6, np.

66 'A ação do Brasil no Congresso Internacional de Educação Musical, em Praga', *Diário Carioca*, 28 July 1936, 6.

67 Maria Alice Volpe argues that this 'Brazilian musical map' ('mapa musical brasileiro') was conceived as a 'syncretic and synthetic unity of regional diversities' ('unidade sincrética e sintética das diversidades regionais'). Maria Alice Volpe, 'Traços romerianos no mapa musical do Brasil', in *Música e história no longo século XIX*, ed. Antonio Herculano Lopes, Martha Abreu, Martha Tupinambá Ulhoa, and Monica Pimenta Velloso (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, 2011), 16.

congress.<sup>68</sup> The presentation featured Brazil as the very embodiment of internationalist principles without sacrificing national unity. Brazil's path showed the way of the future.

### Adapting the narrative for the audience: from Prague to Berlin

Arnaldo Daraya Contier points out that out of all the texts published in the volume, Villa-Lobos's proposal was the only one to merge choral singing and politics strategically to promote civic responsibility and national unity.<sup>69</sup> On a conceptual level, Villa-Lobos relied on the notion of music education as a 'civic-artistic education': 'Civic, because through music we awaken a broader interest in the folk, for the love of the homeland and humanity, and we discipline the many social layers to better understand the artistic music.'<sup>70</sup> Villa-Lobos's celebration of Brazilian music education centred on choral singing is based on two supplementary assumptions: first, the artistic value of music contains an intrinsic element that can be extended to all humanity; and second, music always has the power to enhance national values, as it relates to specific local goals. Rather than a contradiction, this dual mode is framed as an idealist solution for the antagonistic disputes among nations: 'The importance of music . . . will only be understood when its place as a vital element of social, civic, and artistic cooperation for the progress of nations is established.'<sup>71</sup> In the composer's mind, one of the consequences of this mediation of music and civic engagement through music education was an interdependent relationship between singing and citizenship: since everyone could learn music through singing – as he had demonstrated with the children's performance – and music was necessarily related to civic duties, so music education was a powerful tool to lead to (Brazilian) national progress.

One might argue that Villa-Lobos's passionate defence of the nation as the central unit for humanity's progress presents a naïve view of the contemporary tensions between internationalism and (authoritarian) nationalism. In that case, Brazil's geographical distance from (European) diplomatic spheres could be a justification for this lack of awareness. This argument, however, is difficult to sustain when the presentation in Prague is compared with his view on Brazilian music as expressed in Berlin, where the discourse moved from a perspective of future progress to one of a shared musical past.

68 On the myth of racial democracy, see Lamonte Aidoo, *Sex Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 21–5; Micol Seigel, *Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 6–10; and Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 216–17. As Denise Ferreira da Silva argues, the search for a synthesis on the racial formation of Brazil is related to a white supremacist process rather than an equal consideration for racial differences. Denise Ferreira da Silva, 'À brasileira: racialidade e a escrita de um desejo destrutivo', *Estudos Feministas* 14/1 (2006), 62–3.

69 Contier, *Brasil Novo*, section 6.6, np.

70 'Cívico, porque com a música, nos despertamos maior interesse no povo, pelo amor à pátria e à humanidade e disciplinamos a várias camadas sociais para melhor compreenderem a música artística.' Heitor Villa-Lobos, *Organização da educação musical no Brasil*, manuscript, Acervo Museu Villa-Lobos/IBRAM. HVL 04.07.0003.

71 'L'importance de la musique . . . ne sera comprise que du moment que sa place comme élément vital de coopération sociale, civique et artistique pour le progress des nations sera établie.' *L'Éducation musicale*, 27.



During Villa-Lobos's stay in Berlin, *Die Musik-Woche* – a German periodical aligned with the Nazi Party – conducted an interview with the Brazilian composer.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to the internationalist view that characterized Brazil as a model for a multicultural society, the emphasis in this article is on an imagined common origin of a folk music that could connect German and Brazilian pasts. When asked about music education in Brazil, Villa-Lobos mentioned its basis in choral singing, but rather than exemplifying his points with Brazilian music, as he did in Prague, he used as his examples successful performances in Brazil of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and Bach's B minor Mass. The focus on choral compositions by two canonical German composers does more than serve as just a diplomatic act of establishing connections: it considerably subverts the meaning of the whole project of universal music education by focusing on a national style that expresses a national history. The German journalist who conducted the interview summarized Villa-Lobos's use of his *Bachianas brasileiras* as an example of the imaginary historical and stylistic entanglement between Brazil and Germany:<sup>73</sup>

By the way, the 'Bachianas' (etudes in the style of Bach) already mentioned above are, as strange as it may sound, very similar to the Brazilian folk tone. At least, that is how the Brazilian feels. And this is the reason for the strong interest in Bach and, of course, the great interest of Mr. Villa-Lobos himself and his conviction that Bach's music is most likely to lead people to good musical feelings. The connection – that is the perceived connection between Bach and the Brazilian folk song – is also illuminated by a nice story that flows into the conversation. People open to new impressions were given works by Bach and Brazilian works. When people were told that they were written by a German composer, they said that the composer must have been to Brazil.<sup>74</sup>

The rhetorical strategy of associating Bach with Brazil allowed Villa-Lobos to earn cultural capital in multiple fields: on the one hand, he inscribed himself into a canonical tradition of Western music; on the other, he obtained the sympathy of German audiences both by agreeing on the national project of building on a folkloric past and by elevating Germanness as a transnational cultural value.<sup>75</sup> In Prague, Villa-Lobos had framed the

72 This interview only circulated in translation in Brazil in an abbreviated version published on 18 February 1937.

73 As I showed earlier, at that point, the *Bachianas brasileiras* consisted of two movements, a prelude and a fugue, composed for violoncello ensemble. Later, these two pieces will become the second and third movements of the *Bachianas brasileiras* no. 1.

74 'Übrigens sind die schon oben erwähnten "Bachianas" (Etude im Stile Bachs), so merkwürdig es klingen mag, dem brasilianischen Volkston sehr ähnlich. Jedenfalls empfindet dies der Brasilianer so. Und aus diesem Grund erklärt sich auch das starke Interesse für Bach und natürlich kommt hinzu das grosse Interesse von Herrn Villa-Lobos selbst und seine Überzeugung, daß Bachs Musik am ehesten die Menschen zu guter musikalischer Empfindung führen kann. Den Zusammenhang, also den gefühlten Zusammenhang zwischen Bach und dem brasilianischen Volkslied, erhellt zudem eine nette Geschichte, die ins Gespräch einfließt. Neuen Eindrücken offenstehenden Menschen hat man Werke Bachs und brasilianische Werke gehalten. Als man den Leuten bedeutete, sie stammen von einem deutschen Komponisten, wurde der Bescheid, dann müsse dieser aber in Brasilien gewesen sein.' 'Musik in Brasilien', 36.

75 On the relationships between folk and art music in Germany, see Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of 'Folk Music' and 'Art Music': Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 225–8.

collective singing as a path towards Brazilian national progress, which would accelerate its modernization; in Berlin, he claimed that Brazil was already modern because it shared a musical origin with Germany via Bach.

In the article published in *Die Musik-Woche*, the contention that Bach could have visited Brazil looks like a whimsical anecdote. However, for Villa-Lobos, this was an opportunity to explore this imagined encounter creatively. He had already devised the title *Bachianas brasileiras* for what would be the first in the sequence of compositions. The positive response in Germany to this scheme might have catalysed the transformation of the singular into a multiplicity, from the prelude and fugue into a suite, and from one composition into a series.

### Expanding the *Bachianas brasileiras*, or how to make Bach Brazilian

Upon his return to Brazil, Villa-Lobos not only continued his activities as music educator but also returned to the frenetic rhythm of composition that had characterized his pace in the 1920s. The series of nine *Bachianas brasileiras* are the most representative works of this period, being extensively performed all over the world and consolidating the composer's reputation abroad. A text in Villa-Lobos's catalogue, presumably written under the supervision of the composer in 1947, after all the pieces had been completed, tries to explain the unusual combination between Bach's universalism and local folklore:

The *Bachianas brasileiras*, numbering nine suites, are inspired by the musical atmosphere of Bach, which the author considers as a universal source of folklore knowledge, rich and profound, with typical musical elements from all countries, representative of all peoples. For Villa-Lobos, Bach's music comes from the astral infinity and infiltrates the Earth as folk music, a cosmic phenomenon which reproduces itself over the lands, subdividing itself over various parts of the globe, bound to become universal.<sup>76</sup>

When Villa-Lobos evokes Bach's universality and associates it with an atemporal idea of folklore, he suggests a musical connection that works outside of history and politics. This kind of mythical narrative serves not only as a marketing strategy for commercial purposes but also suggests that Villa-Lobos himself – as the discoverer of this connection in his compositions – inhabits the same out-of-time and out-of-place location. The corollary: if Bach's music is universal and the national folklores are local expressions of this universalism, then Villa-Lobos, through his unification of Bach's 'musical atmosphere' with his own Brazilian folk music, 'is bound to become universal'. Norton Dudeque succinctly affirms this procedure in Villa-Lobos's musical procedures in his *Bachianas brasileiras*: 'By reinterpreting Bach's technical procedures, Villa-Lobos legitimized his own compositions'.<sup>77</sup>

76 Museu Villa-Lobos, *Villa-Lobos, sua obra* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu Villa-Lobos, 1972), 187, cited in Norton Dudeque, *Heitor Villa-Lobos's Bachianas Brasileiras: Intertextuality and Stylization* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 24.

77 Dudeque, *Heitor Villa-Lobos's Bachianas Brasileiras*, 25.

Yet as the materials I have uncovered in this article reveal, Villa-Lobos's grounded travel experience in Europe in 1936 is foundational for his new compositional style. The interview in Berlin is the first document to mention this heterological merging between Bach and Brazilian folk song. If the story of Bach visiting Brazil sounds unbelievable, Villa-Lobos acts to represent it musically to make it credible. Furthermore, after his compositional alchemy, he can then use his own music as proof in reconfiguring history. In this sense, the *Bachianas brasileiras* turn into sound the principles of *Antropofagia* entangled in the rhombus of international networks as presented by Sibille, where national and international axes intersect with the personal and political.

Not so different from the strategies deployed in telling his trip to Europe, where all the narrated activities are plausible and not completely wrong, Villa-Lobos works with viable possibilities in the aesthetic manoeuvres that frame his compositional developments. Regarding the use of the dance suite as a form that connects Bach and Brazil, he follows the canonical *Ensaio sobre música brasileira* (*Essay on Brazilian Music*), published in 1928 by musicologist Mário de Andrade.<sup>78</sup> In the chapter about form, Andrade criticizes the use of the term 'brasileiro' for any music intended to make a national reference and instead suggests the adoption of Brazilian folk dances organized as suites to mark Brazilianness. He provides an example of what such a suite might look like:

- *Ponteio* (prelude in any metric or movement);
- *Cateretê* (fast binary);
- *Coco* (slow binary), (choral polyphony), (substitute to the Sarabande);
- *Moda* or *Modinha* (ternary or quaternary), (substitute to the antique Aria);
- *Cururu* (to use an Amerindian motif), (we can imagine an African dance to employ an Afro-Brazilian motif), (without predetermined movement);
- *Dobrado* (or Samba, or Maxixe); (fast binary or imponent end).<sup>79</sup>

Villa-Lobos follows and slightly transforms Andrade's formula for his new version of the *Bachianas brasileiras* no. 1. The 1938 version adds a newly composed introduction that received a subtitle inspired by a Brazilian folk genre 'Introdução (Embolada)', and subtitles for the previously existing movements 'Prelúdio (Modinha)' and 'Fuga (Conversa)' (Figures 3 and 4).

In the *Bachianas brasileiras* no. 4, Villa-Lobos uses a similar principle of combining pre-existing music and newly composed pieces. It is also structured as suite form, with each of the movements expressing the juxtaposition of a double title: 'Prelúdio (Introdução)', 'Coral (Canto do Sertão)', 'Ária (Cantiga)', and 'Dança (Miudinho)'.

78 Dudeque, *Heitor Villa-Lobos's Bachianas Brasileiras*, 28.

79 'Ponteio (prelúdio em qualquer métrica ou movimento); Cateretê (binário rápido); Coco (binário lento), (polifonia coral), (substitutivo de sarabanda); Moda ou Modinha (em ternário ou quaternário), (substitutivo da Ária antiga); Cururu (pra utilização de motivo ameríndio), (pode-se imaginar uma dança africana pra empregar motivo afro-brasileiro), (sem movimento predeterminado); Dobrado (ou Samba, ou Maxixe); (binário rápido ou imponente final.' Mário de Andrade, *Ensaio sobre música brasileira*, ed. Flávia Camargo Toni (São Paulo: EDUSP, 2020), 111.



**Figure 3** Announcement of the first performance of the first version of the *Bachianas brasileiras* (No. 1), *Diário de Notícias*, 11 September 1932, 12. Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira, Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – BNDigital.

One of the differences between the first and the fourth *Bachianas brasileiras* is that the music Villa-Lobos uses had no apparent connection to Bach. The third movement quotes almost literally ‘Itabayana’, an unpublished song performed during his lecture in Prague.<sup>80</sup> The song, which in Prague was described as a ‘melody from Northern Brazil’ of ‘indigenous influence’, becomes, with minor adaptations, the A section of the ‘Ária (Cantiga)’.<sup>81</sup> The added B section where the first motif is played faster and in staccato has no explicit reference to Bach. Although the origins of the melody and the text are unclear – perhaps the attribution of an indigenous origin was another labelling strategy employed by Villa-Lobos in Prague – the removal of the lyrics and the transformation of the title from ‘Itabayana’ (which probably refers to the region where the song was collected) to an unmarked ‘aria’ suggests the deterritorialization of the song and is part of this process of cannibalization employed by Villa-Lobos. The year 1935 that appears as the composition date in its first publication in 1941 accuses the permanence of the original material for the song, while being imprecise about the date of adaptation to the new version.

80 According to the Villa-Lobos Museum, the song was planned as the twelfth song for the cycle of the *Chansons Typiques Bresiliennes*. Nahim Marum, *Revisão crítica das canções para a voz e piano de Heitor Villa-Lobos: publicadas pela Max Eschig* (São Paulo: Editora UNESP; Cultura Acadêmica, 2010), 35.

81 The main differences are the removal of lyrics and the adaptation of the melody for the piano’s idiom.



**Figure 4** Announcement of the first integral performance of the *Bachianas brasileiras* (No. 1). *Diário de Notícias*, 10 November 1938. Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira, Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – BNDigital.

If the third movement was primarily a folk song rearranged, the first movement portrays Villa-Lobos using a theme inspired by Bach. In the ‘Prelúdio (Introdução)’, he uses an ascending arpeggio that seems to stem directly from the ‘Ricercar a 6’ that opens Bach’s *Musikalisches Opfer*, BWV 1079 (Examples 1 and 2).

Music analysts agree that in this movement, Villa-Lobos draws on stylistic techniques derived from Bach’s music, such as the use of tonal tension as a dramatic gesture and the employment of a counterpoint between the soprano and bass voices.<sup>82</sup> However, there is no agreement about any specifically Brazilian technique; at best there are vague suggestions that the bass line works contrapuntally in a similar way as it works in the popular style of *choro*.

If we take the *Bachianas brasileiras* no. 1 and no. 4, the first two to be completed after the composer’s return from Europe, as models for this assemblage between Bach and Brazilian folk music, the method used seems to be the juxtaposition of works within a suite that are unified by the names of each of the movements as pairs of baroque and Brazilian musical genres or dances. This loose association was noticed by contemporary critics. After the first

82 See Tarasti, *Heitor Villa-Lobos*, 203, and Acácio Tadeu Piedade and Gabriel Moreira, ‘Estrutura em Villa-Lobos: uma análise do prelúdio das *Bachianas Brasileiras* n° IV’, *DAPesquisa* 3/5 (2008), 691.



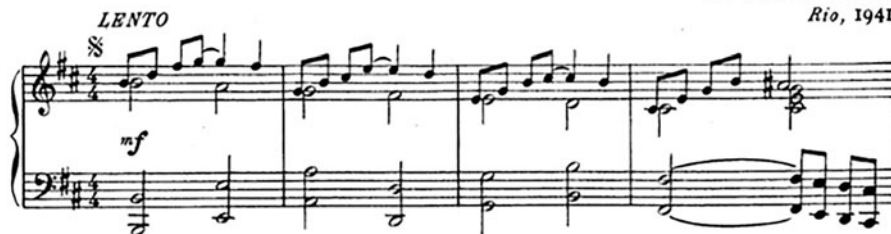
# Bachianas Brasileiras, nº 4

PRELUDIO -(INTRODUÇÃO)

(Para Piano Solo)

H. VILLA-LOBOS

Rio, 1941

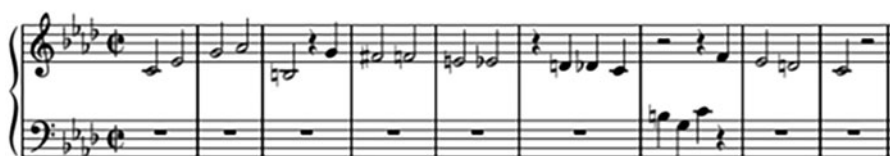


**Example 1** Heitor Villa-Lobos, *Bachianas brasileiras* no. 4 (1941), 'Prelúdio (Introdução)', bb. 1–4.

## Ricercar a 6

From The Musical Offering

J. S. Bach



**Example 2** Johann Sebastian Bach, *Musical Offering*, BWV 1979 (1747), 'Ricercar a 6', bb. 1–9 (adapted).

performance of the complete version of the *Bachianas brasileiras* no. 1, Mário de Andrade questioned the ambiguity of Villa-Lobos's claim that Bach was related to Brazilian folk music:

In any case, it seems that the intention of the author was not only to pay a tribute to the great Bach, our maximum God of all musicians. Someone who has heard from the composer told me that Villa-Lobos finds a lot of analogies between the Bach's musical inventions and Brazilian popular music, and from this he derived the enigmatic title. Is this resemblance true? Perhaps we should differentiate between coincidence and resemblance . . . The Brazilian popular music is a chaotic world, not yet definitively formed. . . . There is a good amount of Bach in Brazilian popular music, but it is bewildering is that there is a good amount of everything. Its incompleteness, which still is debated among our own people, allows for the most strange and astonishing coincidences.<sup>83</sup>

83 'Em todo caso, parece que a intenção do autor não foi somente fazer uma homenagem ao grande Bach, nosso deus máximo de todos os musicais. Pelo que me informou alguém, que ouviu do próprio compositor, Villa-Lobos acha muitas analogias entre a invenção musical de Bach e a música popular brasileira, e disso derivou o seu título

A few years later, in 1943, the journalist Lisa Peppercorn was also suspicious of the procedure of imposing Bach as a kind of programmatic music, and shared her concerns with international audiences:

*Bachianas brasileiras*, no. 3, has yet to be written. But why not write a fourth one in the meantime? In 1941 the titles were ready, composed as usual of a neo-classical heading and a Brazilian title in the brackets. Pieces for piano solo, written during the last decade, were combined, and a prelude, composed in 1941, was added for the publication of the heterogeneous set. In a way, one feels inclined to presume that a certain inconsistency exists between some of the musical works as they stand and the intellectual conception of the composer. On the one hand are the compositions and on the other a bunch of explanatory notes written many years afterwards. It is difficult to say whether Villa-Lobos wrote these works with a programmatic idea in mind which he merely put into words on a later occasion, or whether he felt a prefatory text would make his music better understood. I tend, however, to the conclusion that in a number of cases a preconceived plan must have existed, otherwise the many explanations would be irrelevant, since the music intended for them has still to be written.<sup>84</sup>

These critical comments uncovering the composer's procedures that at times clashed with his discourses were harmless for his reputation. As a good and experienced 'cultural cannibal', Villa-Lobos consumed whatever he had available and transformed himself, his music, and his biography to accommodate the different situations. Although his cannibalism had no clear method – the way that the consumed what would be embodied and transformed varied according to each occasion – there seems to be a procedure related to travel that allowed him to change skins. Similar to the colonial explorer who visited the Other and was 'inspired' by the cultural encounter, Villa-Lobos always found different ways to resignify himself while visiting different places. However, the location of the encounter – on both sides of the Atlantic – is important because it subverts the usual relationship between European colonizer and colonized Other.

Villa-Lobos's chameleonic personality, which expresses musically what Gerard Behague pointed to as a 'national eclecticism', requires a multicentred approach to understand his ambivalent position that alternates between colonizer and colonized.<sup>85</sup> In his travel to Europe in 1936, rather than acting as the normative antropophagist, in which the colonized by consuming the colonizer is no longer colonized, he radicalizes this position by acting as if

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enigmático. Será verdadeira essa parença? Talvez haja que distinguir entre coincidência e parença . . . A música popular brasileira é um mundo caótico, ainda não formado definitivamente. . . . Há um bocado de Bach na música brasileira popular, mas o desnorteante é que há um bocado de tudo. O em se fazer e, que se debate ainda o nosso próprio povo, permite as mais estranhas e espantosas coincidências.' Mário de Andrade, 'As Bachianas', *Estado de S. Paulo*, 23 November 1938.

84 Lisa Peppercorn, 'Some Aspects of Villa-Lobos' Principles of Composition', *The Music Review* IV/1, February 1943, 28–9.

85 Behague, *Heitor Villa-Lobos*, 24.



this division at the same time never existed and was always and already there. This meant the composer could insert himself into a modernist present built on shared, seemingly universalist concepts of national identity.

## Conclusion

Writing on board the *Conte Biancamano*, Sá Pereira explained his plans for the trip to Europe to musicologist and poet Mário de Andrade: 'It is the first time (and hopefully not the last!) that Brazil goes to a music congress to learn about what is done and the new developments in the matter of music education!'<sup>86</sup> Among the twenty-one nations participating in the International Congress of Music Education, Brazil was the sole representative from the southern hemisphere and, with the United States, the only other participant from the Americas.<sup>87</sup> If the presence of such a large array of nations at the meeting was seen as legitimizing the establishment of an international common ground for music education, there were specific national interests expressed by each member. The unprecedented Brazilian participation in the international network of music education was part of the efforts gradually to implement a cultural-diplomacy project during the 1930s with the goal to publicize Brazilian cultural production abroad.<sup>88</sup> Yet the two Brazilian deputies held different views on how to engage with other musicians, composers, and educators in this diplomatic context. Villa-Lobos saw this as an opportunity to speak about his ideas on music history and to perform his compositions as a way to promote new music from Brazil; even if most of his international peers were not listening, he claimed it was an uncontested success. For his part – as Sá Pereira continues in his letter – 'The main [goal] however is not to talk, but to listen.'<sup>89</sup>

One of the challenges of studying travel as foundational moments for national styles, as Florencia Garramuño proposes, relates to the temporality of travel: when does a journey begin and when does it end? In practical terms, the border between inside and outside is given by the geographical position on a map, and one might argue that the limits of an international trip relate to this simple dichotomy. However, acts of crossing borders happen at specific moments that relate to different overlapping temporalities. The 1936 trip of two Brazilian music educators to Europe offers insight into this complex matrix of movement through time and space. Sá Pereira refers to a *longue durée* wherein Brazil remained mostly outside international musical institutions, considering the trip as an opportunity to learn and – though this process of listening and absorption – gradually to enter the international community. For Villa-Lobos, travel created the possibility to act deliberately with the goal of subverting the established rules, at the same time generating an acceleration and a reversion of chronological national time: in his mind, he was never late to the Prague congress, and other nations

86 'É a primeira vez (e que não seja a última!) que o Brasil vai a um congresso de música tomar conhecimento do que se faz e se ensaia de novo em matéria de ensino da música!' Antônio Sá Pereira, letter to Mário de Andrade, 31 March 1936, Fundo Mário de Andrade, Arquivo do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros/Universidade de São Paulo, MA-C-CPL, 5724.

87 *L'Education musicale*, 227–34.

88 Juliana Dumont and Anaís Fléchet, "'Pelo que é nosso!': a diplomacia cultural brasileira no século XX", *Revista Brasileira de História*, 34 (2014), 205–6.

89 'O principal não é falar, mas sim *ouvir*.' Sá Pereira, letter to Mário de Andrade.

must listen to what he and his nation were doing. The subversion goes further, as he rewrote not only his own trip and music, but also the whole of music history by claiming that Bach could be Brazilian, a process happening simultaneously synchronously and diachronically: before, during, and after his journey. In a sense, Villa-Lobos's *Antropofagia* inhabits a utopian history, in which he acts as a Brazilian colonizer to Europe. His way of consuming Europe in its different forms, ignoring or even embracing contradictory ideologies, was not only an opportunistic behaviour to make his music heard, but also a strategy to turn himself into an emblem for his nation.

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