
The influence of Chopin on Villa-Lobos: *Hommage à Chopin, Mazurka-Choro*, and arrangements for cello

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Abstract

The influence of Polish composer Chopin on Villa-Lobos is frequently cited by musicians and scholars, but few studies have seriously dealt with the topic. I will investigate the issue by examining two of Villa-Lobos' works that clearly exhibit the influence of Chopin, the *Hommage à Chopin* (1949) for piano and the *Mazurka-Choro* (1908) for guitar, revealing similarities between those works and various mazurkas, waltzes and scherzos by Chopin. I will examine the significant presence of Chopin's music within Villa-Lobos' early circle of friends and colleagues, especially regarding his first wife Lucília Guimarães, a pianist who studied in the lineage of Chopin; and I will address the lost transcriptions of Chopin's *Prelude in F-sharp minor* and *Nocturne, opus 9 No. 2* for cello and piano that Villa-Lobos arranged and performed himself on the cello.

Keywords: Heitor Villa-Lobos; Frederic Chopin; piano; guitar; arrangements for cello and piano; mazurka.

A influência de Chopin em Villa-Lobos: *Hommage à Chopin, Mazurka-Choro* e arranjos para violoncelo

Resumo

A influência do compositor polonês Chopin sobre Villa-Lobos é frequentemente citada por músicos e estudiosos, mas poucos estudos trataram seriamente do assunto. Nesse artigo, investigarei essa questão examinando duas obras de Villa-Lobos que exibem claramente a influência de Chopin, *Hommage à Chopin* (1949) para piano e *Mazurka-Choro* (1908) para violão, revelando semelhanças entre essas obras e várias mazurkas, valsas e scherzos

de Chopin. Investigarei a presença significativa da música de Chopin no círculo inicial de amigos e colegas de Villa-Lobos, especialmente a relação de sua primeira esposa Lucília Guimarães, uma pianista que estudou na linhagem de Chopin; e, além disso, abordarei as transcrições perdidas do *Prelude* de Chopin em F \sharp menor e do *Noturno*, *opus 9 n^o 2* para violoncelo e piano que Villa-Lobos arranjou e se apresentou tocando violoncelo.

Palavras-chave: Heitor Villa-Lobos; Frederic Chopin; piano; violão; arranjos para violoncelo e piano; mazurka.

Introduction

Chopin has exerted a profound and widespread influence on many composers and musicians since his death in 1848. Villa-Lobos, however, is rarely included among them. The Brazilian composer lived from 1887 – 1959 and is generally regarded as the first authentic and recognizable Latin American voice of twentieth-century classical music, one who successfully and prodigiously married the popular and folk music of his country with prevailing traditions and vocabularies of Western classical music. An exhaustive amount of research and scholarship has been dedicated to the subject of Villa-Lobos' music, much of it focusing on the connections and associations with Brazilian folk and popular elements. Those studies that concentrate on Villa-Lobos' influences from classical models invariably deal with Bach (as Villa-Lobos composed a series of *Bachianas Brasileiras*), with French models (D'Indy, Debussy, et al.) and with Stravinsky and other associates that Villa-Lobos knew and interacted with in Paris in the 1920s. The question of the influence of Chopin on Villa-Lobos, however, has only rarely been discussed in academic publications, and in most cases, with fleeting and sparse treatment.

This paper will show that there is a clear influence of Chopin found in the music of Villa-Lobos, especially in his works for solo piano and solo guitar. We will focus on two works in particular: *Hommage à Chopin* (1949) for solo piano and *Mazurka-Choro* (1908) for solo guitar. In addition to evidence of recognizable influence in musical style and content, the influence of Chopin on Villa-Lobos is reinforced by the presence and importance of Chopin's music in the lives of Villa-Lobos and his circle of family and colleagues, especially with regards to his first wife, the pianist Lucília Guimarães.

Villa-Lobos' repertoire for piano solo and his *Hommage à Chopin*

Villa-Lobos was a composer remarkably prolific and productive across a wide gamut of genres, and this includes a healthy catalog of music for piano. His complete works for piano solo fill eight CDs,¹ with works differing greatly in style and length. We find a number of collections of short character pieces intended for children, whether pedagogic or nationalistic;² on the other hand we have the huge and wildly virtuosic *Rudepoema* composed for Polish pianist Arthur Rubinstein.³ Villa-Lobos wrote enormous piano parts for his early chamber music works and composed five piano concertos during his late period, the *Piano Concerto no. 5* a commission from Polish pianist Felicja Blumental. Concertante piano parts also figure prominently in a number of large-scale orchestral works, especially *Choros No. 11* and *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 3*.

Villa-Lobos was not a performing pianist himself – while his conducting engagements were ubiquitous later in his life, he only performed publicly on one instrument, the cello. As a young man he worked as cellist in Rio's cinema orchestras, and performed some of his own works for cello and piano with his first wife Lucília Guimarães around Rio in 1915 and on tour throughout the states of Sao Paulo, Minas Gerais and Parana in the early 1930's, though never performing his more challenging cello works in public. A number of researchers contend that Lucília Guimarães was instrumental in the development of Villa-Lobos' piano writing, that after they married in 1913 and Villa-Lobos lived in close proximity with this excellent pianist his works took on much more command, virtuosity and idiomatic pianistic qualities (Corrêa do Lago, 2010; Cruz, 2014). He also obviously trusted Lucília Guimarães' abilities as interpreter, as she premiered many of his early chamber works with enormously difficult piano parts including the *Cello Sonata no. 2*, *Violin Sonatas nos. 1 and 2*, and *Piano Trios nos. 1 and 3* between the years 1915 – 1921 (Museu Villa-Lobos, 2009).

1 The Naxos label released a set of eight compact discs of Villa-Lobos' complete works for solo piano performed by pianist Sonia Rubinsky between 1994 and 2007.

2 Collections include *A prole do bebê nos. 1 and 2*, *Cirandas*, *Cirandinhas*, *Guia Prático vols. 1 - 11*, among others.

3 After first meeting the relatively unknown Brazilian composer playing cello in Rio's cinema orchestras in 1917, Arthur Rubinstein went on to champion Villa-Lobos' music (Kater, 1987).

Of particular interest to this paper is the fact that Lucília Guimarães studied in the lineage of Frederic Chopin (Almeida, 2007, p. 113; Cruz, 2014, p. 23). She studied piano with Elvira Bello, who studied with Alfredo Bevilacqua, who had studied with Chopin's student George Mathias (1826-1910). Marek Zebrowski writes, "George Mathias was Chopin's student for at least six years...Beginning in 1862 Mathias became a professor of piano at the Paris Conservatoire and during his tenure of thirty years trained a great number of French pianists in the Chopin tradition" (Zebrowski, 2010, p. 138).

Later in his life, Villa-Lobos was not shy to demonstrate on the piano when working on his music with collaborators and interpreters. Anna Stella Schic gives us some insight into Villa-Lobos' approach at the instrument:

Without being a pianist, Villa-Lobos obtained from the instrument an exceptional sonorous quality, because he "dared" to make the piano sound. He would attack the notes with his hands in a fist when necessary or clutch his hands on the keyboard, trying to highlight a "cantabile" with absolute equality in the middle of the rhythmic accompaniment ... Nothing irritated him more than in some works, the shyness of a touch that is percussive and dry, and above all without pedal (Schic, 1987, p. 111)⁴.

Hommage à Chopin

A Irving Schaecke 1

HOMMAGE À CHOPIN

I. NOCTURNE

H. VILLA-LOBOS
(Paris, 1919)

Moderato (69 = ♩)

PIANO

Figure 1: *Nocturne* from *Hommage à Chopin*, bars 1-3.

4 Schic, a pianist from Campinas, was the first to record the complete works for solo piano of Villa-Lobos.

Of all Villa-Lobos' music, his final work for solo piano is the piece that most obviously speaks to Chopin's influence. A commission from UNESCO to commemorate the centenary of Chopin's death, the piece was premiered at the Salle Gaveau in Paris, October 3, 1949 alongside 10 other commissions for the occasion⁵.

I. Nocturne – In this context the title obviously refers to the nocturnes for piano solo of Chopin, but also implied are the *serestas* (serenades) of Brazilian music. Villa-Lobos composed *serestas* throughout his career, and the genre has been sustained and enriched by contemporary Brazilian composers such as Edino Krieger (born 1928), and Liduino Pitombeira (born 1962). Besides the expected serenity and poetry associated with a Chopin nocturne, here we find evoked the mysterious, foreboding, even dangerous Brazilian night. As with many of his works, Villa-Lobos had a remarkable capacity for creating an atmosphere of a wild and primitive nature, and this tenor permeates both movements of this work. Additionally, as we will discuss later in this paper, a young Villa-Lobos arranged one of Chopin's nocturnes for cello and piano.

II. Ballade – The second and final movement continues in the dark and dreadful vein of the first. Besides indulging his well-rehearsed ominous Amazonian *misterioso*, here Villa-Lobos taps into the *morbidezza* so characteristic of much of Chopin's music. James Melo writes, "Its theme suggests in its melodic contours the beginning of Chopin's C sharp minor *Waltz, Op. 64 no. 2*" (Melo, 1999). While Lucia Barrenechea writes, "the *Ballade*...remains closer to the French center of gravity, which reinforces the link with the production of Villa-Lobos whose early piano music reflects French characteristics in both the titles and the choices of language elements" (Barrenechea, 1995, p. 22). Barrenechea's exhaustive study of the influence of Chopin on Villa-Lobos in his work *Hommage à Chopin*⁶ finds evidence in the work's texture, melodic and harmonic content,

5 The other composers commissioned for the occasion, writing for a variety of instrumentation, were (in program order): Alexandre Tansman, Oscar Espla, Jacques Ibert, Andrzej Panufnik, Howard Hanson, Lennon Berkeley, G. F. Malipiero, Carlos Chavez, Bohislav Martinu, and Florent Schmitt.

6 "This paper aims to investigate the insinuating Chopin influence operating at deeper levels in the piano works of Heitor Villa-Lobos" (Barrenechea, 1995, p. 14), also "The musical and pianistical gestures identified with the idiom...are framed by nineteenth-century conventions and Chopin in particular." (Barrenechea, 1995, p. 18 – 19).

musical gestures and *stil brilliant*, and rhythmic content and keyboard topography, shown through numerous musical examples.⁷

While the piece is a tribute to Chopin, in fact Villa-Lobos dedicated the work to Irving Schwerke, one of the composer's American advocates who helped champion his music in the USA.⁸ It appears that the dedication was simply fulfilling an outstanding promise already made by Villa-Lobos to Schwerke. As we see in the correspondence from the composer to Schwerke on August 12, 1949, "You did very well to remind me of the dedication I promised you and you can be sure that next time I shall do some piano music for you." In a letter from November 10 of the same year, Villa-Lobos wrote Schwerke again, "I am waiting for '*Hommage à Chopin*' to be printed to send you a copy. If you want to have a manuscript copy with the dedication, tell me so and I shall send it to you at once" (Peppercorn, 1994, p. 116, 121)⁹.

The occasion of the Chopin centenary UNESCO commission provided a clear reason for ostensible and overt influence of Chopin in Villa-Lobos' *Hommage à Chopin*, and the one piece on its own would not very well justify the subject of this paper. Indeed, many other classical composers figure more prominently as models of influence in the oeuvre of Villa-Lobos. The most celebrated and obvious composer to exercise influence on Villa-Lobos' music was J. S. Bach, clearly evidenced in Villa-Lobos' most famous works, the series of nine *Bachianas Brasileiras* suites¹⁰. Villa-Lobos himself declared Haydn as his model for his string quartet writing (Salles, 2018), a genre in which he

7 Barrenechea includes examples from the following pieces by Chopin: *Nocturnes op. 9 no 2, op. 9 no. 3, op. 15 no. 1, op. 62 no. 1, posthumous in E minor; Valse op. 64 no. 2; Preludes op. 28 no 6, 15, 22, 24; Ballades op. 23 and op. 47; Improviso op. 36; Sonata in B minor op. 58, IV.*, dialoguing these with corresponding examples from Villa-Lobos' *Hommage à Chopin*.

8 The United States became the center of Villa-Lobos' musical activity in his final period, from 1945 – 1959. He received and fulfilled a remarkable volume of commissions from orchestras, soloists, choreographers, and organizations in the USA during this period, in addition to conducting numerous concerts of his works throughout the country.

9 Letters sent from Villa-Lobos to Schwerke's residence in Appleton, Wisconsin.

10 Composed between 1930 – 1945, these nine suites were a clever and successful way for Villa-Lobos to take advantage of the newly empowered Getulio Vargas regime in Brazil, elevating the composer's status to Brazilian composer non plus ultra. The works combine elements of Bach's musical language with traditional and popular Brazilian music and are scored for diverse forces, the most unusual being *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 1* for orchestra of cellos and *No. 5* for soprano and orchestra of cellos. These two works continue to be among the composer's most performed pieces, and *No. 5* is probably the best-known work of Latin American classical music throughout the world.

excelled prodigiously, composing 17 terrific exemplars. Most recognizable in his early chamber music is the influence of French music, especially that of D'Indy, Franck, Saint-Saëns, and Debussy (Salles, 2009, p. 16, 24).¹¹ The influence of Stravinsky and his three early scores for the *ballet russes* is also incontestable, as witnessed in both the musical language and the synopses of Villa-Lobos' ballet scores *Uirapuru* and *Amazonas* as well as in other works. Indeed, Villa-Lobos himself spoke of the influence of Bach, Stravinsky, and Florent Schmitt in an interview with Fernando Lopes Graça (Barrenechea, 1995, p. 17).

Despite Chopin occupying a less visible position on the list of significant influences, nonetheless we find the influence of Chopin in a variety of other solo piano works by the Brazilian composer. Castro finds the influence of Chopin in Villa-Lobos' *Impressões seresteiras* (Castro, 1972, p. 67), and Tarasti writes, "... the waltz melody of *Impressões Seresteiras* is like *Chopin in Mato-Grosso*" (Tarasti, 1981, p. 53). Cruz cites the influence of Chopin's *Etude op. 25 no. 1* in Villa-Lobos' *Ondulando (Estudo) – Romance sem palavras* (Cruz, 2014, p. 65). Chopin's influence is also recognizable in a number of waltzes for solo piano by Villa-Lobos. The remarkably beautiful *Valsa da Dor* (Valse de douleur) implies an expressive and uniquely pianistic rubato as well as communicating a profound sadness, two characteristics extending back to Chopin. And I was surprised to discover in the opening gesture of Villa-Lobos' *Valsa Scherzo* (1907) an undisguised nod to the opening of Chopin's *Ballade no. 3*, as seen below.

Villa-Lobos' *Valsa Scherzo* opening gesture:

¹¹ Cyclic form is common in Villa-Lobos' early chamber works, and he had access to D'Indy's treatise *Cours de composition musicale*.

VALSA SCHERZO.

H. VILLA-LOBOS. Op. 17

The image shows the first seven bars of the piece 'Valsa Scherzo' by Heitor Villa-Lobos. The score is for piano and is marked 'Allégro con brio'. The first system (bars 1-4) features a piano introduction with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The second system (bars 5-7) shows a more active texture with dynamics ranging from forte (f) to fortissimo (sfz) and piano (p). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various articulations and dynamic markings.

Figure 2: Villa-Lobos, *Valsa Scherzo*, op. 17, bars 1-7.

Compared with the opening gesture of Chopin's *Ballade no. 3*:

The image shows the first six bars of the opening of Chopin's 'Ballade no. 3'. The score is for piano and is marked 'Allegretto mezza voce'. The first system (bars 1-3) features a piano introduction with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The second system (bars 4-6) shows a more active texture with dynamics ranging from forte (f) to fortissimo (sfz) and piano (p). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various articulations and dynamic markings.

Figure 3: Chopin, *Ballade op. 47, n. 3*, bars 1-6.

The manuscripts of a number of early works by Villa-Lobos have been lost, most notably a three-movement *Trio in C minor* for piano, flute and cello from 1913. Among those early works that have since disappeared are a few that invoke the influence of Chopin, namely a *Mazurleska* for solo piano, composed in 1911, as well as a *Mazurka em Ré maior* for solo guitar, composed by Villa-Lobos in 1901, both lost and never published (Museu Villa-Lobos, 2009, p. 139, 148).

Villa-Lobos' music for solo guitar, and the *Mazurka-Choro*

After Chopin, composers outside Poland began composing mazurkas as well. Notably in Russia, mazurkas count among the works of Glinka, Borodin, Tchaikovsky, and Scriabin. Mazurkas were also produced by Latin Americans – the Mexican composer Manuel Ponce (1882-1948) wrote a number of mazurkas for solo piano, and Brazilian composer Alberto Nepomuceno's (1864-1920) opus 1 was in fact a *Mazurka for cello and piano in a minor* (1887). In *fin de siècle* Brazil, especially in the erstwhile capital city of Rio de Janeiro, an urban instrumental music style similar in practice and ancestry to jazz in the United States began to evolve, *choro*, melding African rhythms with European harmonic and melodic characteristics. Particular European popular dances and musical styles were appropriated, including the polka, waltz, schottische, and the mazurka. By the time that a teenage Villa-Lobos was sneaking out of his parents' house to the bars, selling his father's books to buy drinks for the *choro* musicians in exchange for an informal musical education, mazurkas were part of the Brazilian popular instrumental musical language. And at these nocturnal jam sessions, it was the guitar that Villa-Lobos played (Hoefs, 2010).

Whereas the name Chopin is synonymous with the piano the world over, Villa-Lobos' name enjoys a similar if less ostensible status relative to the guitar. Just as Chopin created a style of music specifically pianistic, music at once highly expressive and uniquely idiomatic to the instrument, Villa-Lobos succeeded in a similar coup with his works for solo guitar, leaving a newly elevated repertoire for this likewise polyphonic and non-sustaining instrument. Two collections of works for solo guitar by Villa-Lobos already beg comparison to Chopin's preludes and etudes in their titles: *Doze Estudos* (Twelve Etudes) composed in 1929 in Paris, and *Cinco Prelúdios* (Five Preludes) written in 1940 in Rio de Janeiro.

The collection of twelve etudes for guitar came about at the request of guitarist Andrés Segovia, with whom Villa-Lobos had contact in Paris in the 1920s. Segovia asked the composer for an etude, and the ever-fertile Villa-Lobos supplied him with a series of twelve. Segovia wrote that they could be compared to the etudes of Chopin and the sonatas of Scarlatti (Negwer, 2008, p. 177). More recently, a number

of musicians and scholars have also commented on the influence of Chopin in these guitar etudes. Fabio Zanon writes, "With these etudes, Villa-Lobos was the first composer to let the musical ether emanate from the guitar's fingerboard. This can be noticed already in the first etude, with a unique pattern of arpeggios in thirds, alluding to Bach and Chopin's *Etude no. 1*" (Zanon, 1997). Paulo Salles writes, "It should be noted that the fingering symmetries were employed by composers prior to Villa-Lobos, such as Chopin, for example. Villa-Lobos's symmetries of phrasing resemble Chopin's symmetries more than those of serialists" (Salles, 2009, page 51). And about the opening of Villa-Lobos' first guitar etude, Salles writes, "The first section does not present great compositional interest, if only its latent harmonic proposal is observed. The harmony proceeds to the dominant in a conventional way, by way of a traditional harmonic progression, while the instrumental gesture repeats the figuration of certain piano etudes of Chopin" (Salles 2009, page 58).

Besides the *Cinco Prelúdios* and *Doze Estudos*, Villa-Lobos composed two other works for solo guitar: *Choros No. 1*, and *Suite Popular Brasileira*. The latter consists of five movements, the first of which is a *Mazurka-Choro*.

Mazurka-Choro

Composed in 1908 and dedicated to Maria Tereza Teran,¹² Villa-Lobos' *Mazurka-choro* would become the first movement of his *Suite Popular Brasileira* for solo guitar, together with four more movements: II. *Schottisch-choro* (1908), III. *Valsa-choro* (1912), IV. *Gavota-choro* (1912), and V. *Chorinho* (date unknown) (Museu Villa-Lobos, 2009, page 149).

The *Mazurka-choro* follows a simple ABACAD plan, where D functions as a coda. Marek Zebrowski¹³ brought to my attention the following examples of Chopin's influence in this piece.

12 Maria Tereza Teran and her husband, Spanish pianist Tomas Teran, were close friends of Villa-Lobos. Maria Tereza would later present Villa-Lobos with a guitar by the Parisian luthier Joseph Bellido (Bissoli, 2015).

13 Marek Zebrowski is director of the Polish Music Center at the University of Southern California and a frequent chamber music collaborator and long-time friend of the author.

In the opening two bars of Villa-Lobos' *Mazurka-choro*, we already find the influence of Chopin's mazurkas in the rising arpeggio shape of the melody, and a dominant 7th chord on top of a tonic pedal:

SUITE POPULAIRE BRÉSILIENNE
Nº I. MAZURKA-CHÔRO

Pour Guitare

H. VILLA - LOBOS



Figure 4: Villa-Lobos *Mazurka-choro* opening.



Figure 5: Chopin *Mazurka op. 6 no. 3*, bars 9-12 (rising arpeggio shape).



Figure 6: Chopin *Mazurka op. 7 no. 1*, bars 7-10 (dominant 7th chord on top of tonic pedal).

Villa-Lobos' first phrase (bars 5 – 8) concludes with still another allusion to Chopin's mazurkas, this time in descending melodic shape:



Figure 7: Villa-Lobos *Mazurka-choro* bars 5-8.



Figure 8: Chopin *Mazurka op. 67 no. 4* bars 1-4 (melodic shape).



Figure 9: Chopin *Mazurka op. 67 no. 4*, bars 9-12.

After repeating the opening phrase of his *Mazurka-choro*, Villa-Lobos continues with the B section (bars 9 – 12), almost a direct quote from a Chopin waltz:



Figure 10: Villa-Lobos *Mazurka-choro*, bars 9-12.



Figure 11: Chopin *Waltz op. 34 no. 2*, bars 37-40.

For the C section of the *Mazurka-choro*, Villa-Lobos shifts from A minor to the parallel major, and here the harmonic progression resembles that of the Polish Christmas carol *Lulajże Jezuniu*, the same progression of which Chopin availed himself in his *Scherzo no. 1, op. 20*. Marek Zebrowski writes, “The extraordinary drama of the B-minor Scherzo is offset by its middle section, where Chopin inserted a well-known melody of one of the most touching Polish Christmas carols, *Lulajże, Jezuniu* [Sleep Baby Jesus]” (Zebrowski, 2010, page 77). Villa-Lobos uses this touching harmonic progression for his *Mazurka-choro* in the same way - as a major key middle section, to offset and contrast the melancholy minor mode of the rest of the piece.



Figure 12: Villa-Lobos *Mazurka-choro*, C section.

Molto più lento. (♩ = 10♩.)
sotto voce e ben legato.

p *a tempo, poco a poco cresc.* *ritenuto* *ff*

Figure 13: Chopin Scherzo no. 1, op. 20, bars 305-319

For the coda of the *Mazurka-choro* (Figure 14), Villa-Lobos alternates the harmony between A minor and D minor (i and iv), employs an ostinato vanishing figuration, and lands on a chord of ambiguous harmony in the third-to-last bar. We see these traits in the codas of two Chopin mazurkas below (Figures 15 and 16).

a tempo (Final)

mf *rall.* *8 harm.* *ff*

Figure 14: Villa-Lobos *Mazurka-choro*, D section (coda).

The image shows three systems of musical notation for the coda of Chopin's Mazurka op. 33 no. 2. The first system includes piano (p) and cello (cl) parts. The piano part features a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the cello part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. Annotations include 'accel.' in the piano part and 'cl.' with an asterisk in the cello part. The second system continues the piano and cello parts. The third system shows the piano part with 'smorz.' (ritardando) and a final flourish, and the cello part with 'cl.' and an asterisk.

Figure 15: Chopin *Mazurka op. 33 no. 2* coda, ostinato vanishing figuration, alternating i – iv harmony, ambiguous final harmony.

The image shows a single system of musical notation for the coda of Chopin's Mazurka op. 24 no. 3. It features piano (p) and cello (cl) parts. The piano part has a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked 'dolciss.' (dolcissimo). The cello part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes, marked 'perdendosi' (diminuendo). Annotations include 'cl.' with an asterisk in the cello part.

Figure 16: Chopin *op. 24 no. 3* coda, vanishing figuration.

Whereas the influence of Chopin is abundant in Villa-Lobos' *Mazurka-choro*, I do not presume that the Brazilian composer was necessarily aware of the Chopin examples cited above. It's possible that he knew the pieces and channeled their influence subconsciously, or even that by this point the flavor and style of the mazurka had so infiltrated Brazilian *choro* music that Villa-Lobos was intellectually unaware of making direct connections to Chopin's works.

Villa-Lobos wrote remarkably well for the guitar and indeed composed more than 800 works for an eclectic and varied pool of performers and instrumental formations,

but one instrument always remained closest to him, and that was the cello. Villa-Lobos began learning to play the cello from his father at age 6, he supported himself as a young man by playing cello in the cinema orchestras in Rio de Janeiro, and he later laid the foundation for the cello ensemble genre with his groundbreaking works *Bachianas Brasileiras Nos. 1 and 5* (Hoefs and Suetholz, 2018).

Arrangements for cello – a natural extension

The entire catalog of Chopin's works is almost exclusively dedicated to piano solo, with one important exception: the cello. The cello was the only instrument besides the piano for which Chopin wrote significant music, and those works add up to roughly an hour of music. It was only natural that other instrumentalists would arrange Chopin's piano music for them to play on their instruments, and this held especially true for cellists. Auguste Franchomme, Chopin's dear friend and the cellist for whom Chopin composed the g minor *Cello Sonata* and with whom Chopin collaborated in composing the *Grand Duo Concertante*, made many arrangements for cello and piano of Chopin's solo piano music. Others to arrange Chopin's piano music for cello and piano included Alexander Glazunov; cellists David Popper, Emanuel Feuermann, Gregor Piatigorsky, and yes, even Heitor Villa-Lobos.

Among the aforementioned lost mazurkas listed in the catalog of works by Villa-Lobos at the Museu Villa-Lobos, the catalog also lists two arrangements of Chopin by Villa-Lobos for cello and piano: the *Prelude in F sharp minor*, and the *Nocturne, opus 9 No. 2*. The scores of both arrangements by Villa-Lobos have also been lost and never published, but their onetime existence is of special interest, showing clearly the importance of Chopin for Villa-Lobos not just as a composer but as a performing cellist. Villa-Lobos made many arrangements of works by Bach: in particular, he arranged various preludes and fugues from Bach's *The Well-Tempered Klavier*, some arranged for cello and piano, some arranged even for an orchestra of cellos. But the only other composer whose music Villa-Lobos arranged for cello and piano was Chopin. And we know that Villa-Lobos performed on the cello his arrangement of the nocturne on at least one occasion, at the Teatro Amazonas in Manaus in 1912 with pianist Joaquim

França (Pilger, 2013, p. 273). Continuing in the tradition and practice of Franchomme and Villa-Lobos, as a natural extension, I commissioned arrangements for cello and piano of the two works examined in this paper, Villa-Lobos' *Hommage à Chopin* and *Mazurka-choro*, from composers Marek Zebrowski and David Ashbridge, respectively.¹⁴

The presence of Chopin's music in Villa-Lobos' early circle

Besides the recognizable influence of Chopin's music scattered across Villa-Lobos' works for solo piano and solo guitar, Chopin's music was present in the lives of Villa-Lobos and his circle of friends and colleagues and held a revered place within Brazil's early 20th century musical milieu. The most intimate place for Chopin's music in Villa-Lobos' life was filled by his first wife, the abovementioned pianist Lucília Guimarães, witnessed already in the first encounter of the would-be-couple with Lucília performing Chopin. Guimarães told of that first meeting,

“It was on All Saints Day (01/11/1912) that we received the visit of Villa-Lobos brought by a friend of my parents, Arthur Alves, the reason was that we would listen to a boy who played the guitar very well...The evening of music went very well, extremely pleasant and for us the guitar in the hands of Villa-Lobos was a success. At the end of his performance, Villa-Lobos expressed a desire to listen to the pianist, and I then touched on some of Chopin's pieces, the performance of which seemed to me to have impressed technique and interpretation. Villa-Lobos however, felt embarrassed; perhaps even inferior, because at that time the guitar was not a concert hall instrument, of real music, but a vulgar instrument of *chorões* and *seresteiros*. Suddenly, as if overcoming a depression, he declared that his true instrument was the cello, and he made a point of arranging a meeting in our house to make himself heard on cello” (Guimarães, 1972, p. 223).

Ernesto Nazareth was another close associate of Villa-Lobos in early 20th century Rio de Janeiro with a tremendous affinity for the music of Chopin. A celebrated composer of Brazilian tangos, *choro*, and all kinds of Brazilian popular music, Nazareth worked together with Villa-Lobos in cinema orchestras for silent film theaters in Rio

14 These arrangements were premiered in Krakow at the Historical City Museum in July 2016 by pianist Malgorzata Podstawska and the author on cello, and performed again in Pasadena, California for the 3rd annual Villa-Lobos International Chamber Music Festival by pianist Marek Zebrowski and the author on cello in January 2017, and in Campinas, Sao Paulo, at the 2nd annual Festival de Musica Polonesa at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas in April 2017 by pianist Marek Szlezer and the author at the cello.

de Janeiro, Villa-Lobos still basically unknown as a composer, playing cello; it was in this context that Villa-Lobos met the illustrious visiting musicians Darius Milhaud and Arthur Rubinstein. Villa-Lobos and Ernesto Nazareth even performed together on at least one occasion Saint-Saëns' *Le Cygne* for cello and piano at a concert in June of 1909 at the Instituto Nacional de Música in Rio de Janeiro (Pilger, 2013, p. 274). Villa-Lobos called Nazareth "the true incarnation of the Brazilian soul" (Machado, 2007, page 175). Nazareth held Chopin's music in extremely high regard and felt a personal connection to it, as evidenced in his meeting with Arthur Rubinstein in 1918. The visiting Polish virtuoso pianist wished to hear Nazareth's own Brazilian tangos, but Nazareth insisted instead on playing Chopin for him! Yet curiously on the subject of the affinity of his own music with that of Chopin, Nazareth said that he would be fired if he played Chopin in the lobby of the cinema theater. Guiomar Novaes testified that, "Nazareth interpreted very well Chopin's waltzes, from which nothing separated his Brazilian affinities" (Machado, 2007, p, 27, 94, 96 – 97, 182).

The same Guiomar Novaes, one of Brazil's most celebrated pianists, herself had a close connection to Chopin's music. At the *Semana da arte moderna* (Modern art week) in Sao Paulo in 1922, a landmark event for Villa-Lobos where his music was heard for the first time by Sao Paulo's artistic elite, Novaes was personally offended by the performance of a work by Satie satirizing Chopin's funeral march, writing, "I felt sincerely saddened by the public exhibition of satirical pieces alluding to Chopin's music" (Mariz, 2005, page 88). And much later, performing in 1963 for a Human Rights Day concert at the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York, Novaes chose for her repertoire works by two composers: Chopin and Villa-Lobos.

Conclusion

The music of Chopin, his nocturnes and preludes and etudes and mazurkas, along with generic European forms such as the mazurka, waltz, schottische, and polka, have become part of Brazilian music. The way and the extent to which these European dances were adopted, appropriated and transformed by Brazilian popular music and turned into Brazilian forms such as the *maxixe*, Brazilian tango, *choro*, and *samba*,

is a topic well beyond the scope of this study. But the links between Brazilian music, European forms, and Chopin are tenable and substantiated. We see the influence clearly in various works by Villa-Lobos, as explored in this paper. Barros relates that Villa-Lobos even recognized Chopin in folk music from Northeast Brazil, “In the Bahian capital, for example, he appreciated *modinhas* that reminded him, unmistakably, of Chopin’s lyric melodies” (Barros, 1951, p. 35).

Since the death of Villa-Lobos the influence of Chopin has continued to leave its mark in Brazil. The celebrated *bossa nova* musician Antonio Carlos Jobim claimed Chopin as a major influence for him, calling him a genius and going so far as to say that Brazilian music seems very similar to Chopin (Ripke, 2018). And when I play musical examples of Chopin’s mazurkas for the Brazilian students in my music history class at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, the students invariably respond by telling how much Chopin sounds to them like Brazilian *bossa nova*. Even in the heart of Rio de Janeiro, at the foot of the city’s iconic Sugarloaf mountain on *praia vermelha*, a statue of Chopin stands on the beach, looking out to the ocean – a musical figure whose influence continues to travel across oceans and hemispheres, across cultures, and across centuries.

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