

## **The City and the Country in Villa-Lobos's Prelude to the *Bachianas Brasileiras no. 2*: Musical Topics, Rhetoricity and Narrativity**

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### **Resumo**

Neste artigo, analiso o Prelúdio de *Bachianas Brasileiras no. 2* de Heitor Villa-Lobos segundo a perspectiva da teoria dos tópicos. Proponho, como ponto de partida, algumas questões teóricas relacionadas com a teoria dos tópicos e retoricidade, intertextualidade e narratividade musical. Após uma breve contextualização histórica da obra, desenvolvo alguns comentários analíticos sobre as várias secções do Prelúdio. Em conclusão, apresento uma abordagem cultural dessa análise, propondo uma interpretação da obra que complementa os dados da análise com a teoria da narratividade.

### **Palavras-chave**

Arte musical brasileira; Nacionalismo musical brasileiro; Villa-Lobos; Teoria dos tópicos; Narratividade.

### **Abstract**

In this article I examine Heitor Villa-Lobos's Prelude to *Bachianas Brasileiras no. 2* from the perspective of topic theory. I begin by raising some theoretical issues about topic theory and rhetoricity, intertextuality and music narrativity. After a brief historical contextualisation of the work, I present analytical comments on the Prelude's sections. In the conclusion, I present a cultural interpretation of the analysis, complementing the analysis' results with the theory of narrativity to offer an interpretation of this piece.

### **Keywords**

Brazilian Art Music; Brazilian Musical Nationalism; Villa-Lobos; Topic theory; Narrativity.

## Introduction

ANALYSING HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS'S MUSIC has never been easy. Throughout the twentieth century many scholars and musicians considered him a genius; for instance his colleague, nationalist composer Francisco Mignone, claimed that Villa-Lobos had a kind of irrational, feral, volcanic talent (MIGNONE 1969, 83). Others, however, claimed that he lacked compositional technique, that he failed to develop form in his compositions and that his orchestrations had too many errors. This controversy may be due to the composer's aesthetic independence, since in the first decade of the twentieth century he was already composing new music in a style that would only be fully accepted later in the 1920s under the modernist thought of Mário de Andrade, ideologue of Brazilian nationalist music (LUPER 1965). His association with the political agenda of the Vargas dictatorship also aroused suspicion and polemical criticism. Moreover, Villa-Lobos's music is semiotically intricate and full of cultural registers, and therein lies the difficulty. As Villa-Lobos himself once declared, he is a composer who paints landscapes, impressions and emotions, and his music often points to cultural phenomena considered as external to the work (*cit in* WISNIK 1977, 37-8).<sup>1</sup>

Heitor Villa-Lobos's music has recently been the object of new insights that have renewed musicological perspectives on his work, raising issues that had not been previously considered (BÉHAGUE 1994; TARASTI 1995).<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Villa-Lobos's musical language, which mixes national/regional Brazilian styles, multiple musical identities, indigenous references, modernism, quotation, pitch-sets and symmetrical structures, is a challenge to both analysts and musicologists and encourages the development and application of new investigative methods and theories.<sup>3</sup> Topic theory has been one of these new perspectives; I believe it has generated interesting insights for the comprehension of both Villa-Lobos's music and of other analytical approaches to his work. In this article, I will analyse Villa-Lobos's music using topic theory, as I have done elsewhere (PIEADÉ 2013), to comment on the Prelude to the *Bachianas Brasileiras no. 2*. Besides topic theory, I will use three perspectives: rhetoric, particularly the concept of rhetoricity, intertextuality, and music narrativity.<sup>4</sup> I begin by raising some theoretical considerations and then, after a brief

<sup>1</sup> This view will be mentioned in the conclusion of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Among many recent academic conferences on this composer I can mention the two editions of the *Simpósio Internacional Villa-Lobos* which gathered many specialists on his work, both events having occurred at São Paulo, Brazil, see SALLES - OLIVEIRA (2012).

<sup>3</sup> I have described a trait of Villa-Lobos language: a kind of semantic excess in his music that made it too dense and difficult to fully appreciate before the spread of music semiotic theories, particularly topic theory (PIEADÉ 2009).

<sup>4</sup> I think these perspectives provide an interesting combination to investigate the music of nationalist composers. I will explore further some issues of the present article in forthcoming publications.

contextualisation of the work, I present my analytical comments on it. In the conclusion, I connect theory and analysis through an anthropological approach, offering an interpretation of the piece.

### **Nationalism, Musicality, Topics, and Rhetoricity**

I will review here some of the concepts I have been working on to investigate Brazilian music in rhetorical terms. I approach this repertoire more through an hermeneutic view than a formalist one: I share with many other researchers the claim that the 'sense of music' (MONELLE 2000) can only be investigated through the dialogue and integration between musical analysis and contextual socio-historic-cultural data, i.e., in the interplay of structure and meaning.<sup>5</sup>

Since I am analysing the music of a composer who is considered part of the Brazilian nationalist school, it is necessary to deal with that elusive concept: nation. Apart from considering the geopolitical notion of nation-state, many social scientists agree that nation is an arbitrary idea or even that it is imaginary (ANDERSON 1983). Besides being a pure convention that is legitimated by legislation, a nation is frequently assumed as something real in the world, and this is a kind of essentialisation that brings many paradoxes, theoretical contradictions and conflicts. This problem has been widely studied (BALAKRISHNAN 1996; GELLNER 1983; FEATHERSTONE 1990); my perspective is simple and pragmatic: even though it is a social construction, a nation is actually real for people as far as it is strongly experienced by them. A nation is a tacit consensus for those who live in it, an objective reality that is important to their lives, cultural identity and musicality. Therefore, there is a whole community for whom the idea of Brazil and Brazilian music makes sense: the sharing of assumptions on that is the basis of Brazilian 'musicality'.

I think of musicality not as the talent for music, but as a set of musical and symbolic elements that are deeply interconnected in the constitution of a socio-musical system that provides the basis of a particular musical world, this world being produced, reproduced and shared by a particular community. Musicality, therefore, refers also to a kind of musical identity, and as well as the latter, it is a contrastive concept: a musicality can only be formed insofar as it considers an opposing one. Therefore, when one talks about Brazilian musicality in a generic sense, this idea invokes other musical imaginary national identities, such as Portuguese, Argentinean or North American, which are necessary for the invention of the actual Brazilian musicality. The contrastive fabric of musicalities goes further inside a national musicality because of its different regional genres and

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<sup>5</sup> Far from being recent, this perspective was already postulated, at least by pioneers such as MEYER (1956), and it was present in formulations of the early semiotics of music (NATTIEZ 1975). The rhetorical approach that mixes topics, hermeneutics, semiotics and reception is one of these perspectives (MCKAY 2007; KRAMER 2011).

styles. A regional musicality is in opposition to one of another region, while at the same time both take part in the national musicality, whenever this construction is needed.<sup>6</sup>

These concepts of nation and musicality provide a framework for the effective application of topic theory to the socio-cultural context. There are already various definitions of musical topics: topics are conventional and consensual musical structures, or commonplaces of the musical discourse (AGAWU 1991; MIRKA 2014). In this study, I view topics less related to styles or genres than to musicalities: topics are founded in a particular musicality, where they keep some historical stability allowing this musicality's community to recognize and interpret them.

A musicality is consistent by means of the commonplaces that reside in it, and topics attain their power and effect in musicality. When topics appear in the same repertoire where they originated—for example samba topics in samba music—they are not salient for the audience because they appear as constituents of the genre, exactly in the right place where they conventionally should be. This is isotopy, the characteristic that renders acceptability and stability of conventional meaning in a chain of musical ideas. The topics that constitute the isotopic chain are low rhetoricity topics.<sup>7</sup> Any conventional element of a genre or style can be viewed as a low rhetoricity topic concerning a musicality. The criterion for becoming a topic is the fact that its performance enacts and discloses to the audience meanings that go beyond its own phenomena and which are linked to its origin; these meanings were naturalised by musicality.<sup>8</sup>

Outside the socio-cultural limits of the musicality in which it originates, a topic may not have this conventional effect, losing its topical character. In fact, it may have either no meaning at all or produce a re-signification, attributing to the topic new meanings that were not previously intended. Therefore when topics are dislocated or put in unusual moments or in different repertoires, they provoke a surprising effect caused by a rupture of isotopy: this is called allotopy.<sup>9</sup> These topics have high rhetoricity. Allotopy produces in the audience the need for an interpretation of the new meanings being generated. Therefore topics that appear as expected in the isotopic chain have low rhetoricity, whereas topics that break this homogeneous familiar field have high rhetoricity, producing new meanings. Finally, rhetoricity is the actual level of rhetorical effect that is intended

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<sup>6</sup> Since musicality can be viewed as a kind of musical identity, the anthropological concept of identity can be useful. For OLIVEIRA (2006), identity is founded in opposition to alterity: it only makes sense to speak about something as 'ours' and to feel akin with other members of my group in this claim if 'we' are faced with something that belongs to another group: otherness that constitutes identity. The contrastive mechanism works on multiple levels, so that a musicality is a point of convergence of different musical identities that are crossing it diagonally. It is the world of practice and the ways of life that dictate the strength and persistence of a musicality, for it is an historically moving ground.

<sup>7</sup> The concept of rhetoricity will be discussed in this article and it can be simplified here as being the degree of rhetorical effect that is employed (PIEADÉ 2012).

<sup>8</sup> This is the case, for example, of most of the classical music topics according to RATNER (1980).

<sup>9</sup> I take these concepts from DUBOIS (1970) and the so-called *Groupe  $\mu$* .

and employed by the composer to be reproduced in the audience. Low rhetoricity topics may not be consciously perceived as such, since they appear without any surprise as obvious elements of the genre and follow the expected sequence of events. High rhetoricity topics, on the contrary, are intended to produce a shift from the isotopic chain and call the attention of the listener.

Certain characteristics of genres or styles or even simple musical clichés and formulae that ground some musical practices may crystallise in topics that navigate different repertoires, provided there is a musicality that allows for its comprehensibility. Low rhetoricity topics are generally naturalised, i.e., taken as natural. They may not be named or even perceived as such, since they simply do not appear; what is apparent is the coherency of the genre or style; there should be no surprise in that. For example, a saxophone improvisation in a jazz standard, a final cadence in a classical piano concerto, or fanfare topics in Mozart: all these facts are conventional and expected low rhetoricity topics. If instead these same elements are dislocated and presented in unexpected places within the discourse, or if they are borrowed and employed in other musical texts, they appeal for a new reading, they become high rhetoricity topics. That being said, it becomes clear that a topic is not only its general structure but also the use of this structure in a particular musicality.<sup>10</sup>

Now, what about intertextuality? In fact, topics are actually a special kind of intertext, especially high rhetorical topics. They are segments of genres, styles, gestures, formulae of a musicality, i.e., texts that appear in various other texts.<sup>11</sup> The use of topics as rhetorical phenomena concerns a kind of extended intertextuality since it is not only a question of quotation or allusion; rather, it points to the very constitution and consistency of musical texts in rhetorical terms for a particular musicality. Topics and other kinds of intertexts may also be used to create a musical plot to be followed by the audience (AGAWU 1991). This could be investigated through a theory of musical narrativity. In this sense, the analysis presupposes that all this rhetorical machinery is serving a kind of underground script of musical meanings that characterises a narrative. As some of the researchers of musical narrativity say, it tells a story (ALMÉN 2008; KLEIN - REYLAND 2013).

In short, I view musical topics as common sense structures that refer to a certain musicality, i.e., a community of musicians and listeners that share a musical-symbolical world; therefore, it is only in that world that they can be meaningful tools. Furthermore, I consider a topic not as the musical structure itself, but as the structure in the place it is located. If a topic appears in its conventional moment, it has low rhetoricity, it may not even be perceived, but it does not mean it does not produce meaning. A composer may want to change or displace this same structure in order to get

<sup>10</sup> This theoretical frame was developed in PIEDADE (2012). A forthcoming article will investigate this issue further.

<sup>11</sup> Musical intertexts may be defined as musical structures that journey from one piece to another, echoing an original *arche-text* (GENETTE 1982). KLEIN (2005) investigates intertextuality in Western Art music but not in terms of rhetorics and topics.

certain effects, and in this case the topics acquire higher rhetoricity. Intertexts usually are highly rhetorical because a whole structure from another place or musicality is brought to a new place. In this sense, one way or another, topics with high rhetoricity are always intertexts. But we can also claim that intertextuality is the basic ground for rhetoricity and for topic theory, because topics are never alone: they originate in various different texts in a communicative world. In musical analysis, to decide whether a musical excerpt is a topic or not, or whether it has low or high rhetoricity, as well as a possible musical plot in a piece of music, all these decisions constitute a hermeneutic task and therefore depend on the research and experience of musicality, intersubjectivity and contextualisation (KRAMER 2011). I have been trying to research Brazilian music of the nationalist period with these assumptions.

### Topics in Brazilian Musical Nationalism

In my research on Brazilian art music of the nationalist school, particularly on the music of Villa-Lobos, I have proposed some sets of topics that I find relevant (PIEADADE 2013). They serve as sources of a generic musical identity understood as Brazilian musicality. This musicality has been fabricated since the beginning of the twentieth century with the dissolution of Brazilian Romanticism and the establishment of modernism in the capital and big cities, responding to the need of independent national artistic languages (GOUVEIA 2013). The use of these topics was a powerful tool for nationalist composers to fertilize their music with musical-symbolical material that created and promoted music. The topics could convey meanings from various inner musicalities of Brazil as imagined at that time. Also, the coherence of this Brazilian musicality was mirrored and anchored in alterity, in this case other Latin American musicalities, as many of them were elected to a dialogue when called to appear as topics in Brazilian music. I have outlined a set of topics that I call *brejeiro*, *época de ouro*, *caipira*, *nordestina*, *afro-brasileira*, *indígena* and *sons da floresta*. In this article I will focus on the first three, since they appear in the Prelude to Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras no. 2*. However, the work also includes elements of the last topic, 'forest sounds', as will be explained below.

The *brejeiro* topic has a technical nature, related to changes in the musical structure. It is a style in which musical figures are transformed by intentional subversions of their normal condition. In the spirit of joke and challenge, like a very specific deceit, the soloist-trickster elegantly and deviously performs asymmetrical rhythmic patterns or sliding inexact melodies, as if mocking predictability. These kinds of *scherzando* gestures have been present in *choro* music since its very beginning, when the flutist as virtuoso soloist used to change some phrases in order to challenge the accompanists to follow the tempo (LIVINGSTON-ISHENHOUR - GARCIA 2005). *Brejeiro* manifests

also in *capoeira* dance with its dual condition: it was created by black slaves to practise fighting techniques, deceiving their masters into thinking that they were only dancing (ASSUNÇÃO 2005). *Brejeiro* is epitomised also by the figure of the *malandro*, the clever rogue from the world of samba at the beginning of the twentieth century in Rio. This character lived a life of bohemianism and petty crime, *malandragem* (DAMATTA 1991). The *malandro* is a seductive man, a Don Juan who has subtle, smooth body moves, loose as if to deceive and escape the police. The Prelude of the *Bachianas no. 2* is subtitled *O Canto do Capadócio*, i.e., the song of the rogue.<sup>12</sup> Hence, some characteristics of this style are devious, rhythmically shifting phrases, change of accent, chromatic slides in note attacks, *glissandi*, and effects that may give the impression of a mistake (although they are not).

*Época de ouro* ('golden age') topic is a musical evocation of nineteenth-century Brazil, the time of ancient waltzes and other genres such as *seresta* and *modinha*. This mythical old time is thought of as a time when life was full of lyricism, simplicity, and freshness. Therefore, nostalgia is a very important element of *pathos* in the *época de ouro* topic. There are some evocations of Portuguese *fado* and also embellished, flourishing melodies, with many arabesques as well as rhythmic patterns of old dances like *maxixe* and *polka*. No less important are references to *choro* music. All these elements work together within the musical text to recreate a kind of 'essential', 'deeply true' Brazil, a land whose origin myth states that the real 'authentic' and 'pure' Brazilian musicality is lost in the ashes of the past, and can be re-enacted by music. The *época de ouro* topic is widely found in the music of nationalist composers. Sometimes it appears very directly, as in the *Valsas de Esquina* by Francisco Mignone, while at others it is more transfigured.

The evocation of the *Caipira* universe retains a crucial aspect of the inner side of Brazil, particularly the countryside of the south-eastern region. The figure of the *Caipira* was considered by intellectuals and artists from the beginning of the twentieth century firstly as a rude ignoramus who should be educated, a kind of personification of underdevelopment. Two decades later, however, with the Herderian influence on modernist thinkers, the *Caipira* was accepted as the 'authentic' Brazilian peasant, and one started praising his way of life, his sincerity and simplicity. Villa-Lobos strongly evokes this universe in his *Trenzinho do Caipira* ('Countryman's little train'), the fourth movement of the *Bachianas no. 2*, as well in many other pieces. He often uses orchestral emulation of techniques of the typical country guitar, called *viola caipira*, always in very simple harmonic progressions (I-V<sup>7</sup>), and long stepwise melodies, sometimes embellished with parallel thirds and sixths.

<sup>12</sup> I have commented before (PIECADE 2013) that the score provides translations in five languages and in all of them the meaning of *capadócio* appears as countryman, though the term was used in Portuguese at that time to mean rascal.

### *Bachianas Brasileiras no. 2*

*Bachianas Brasileiras* is a cycle of nine compositions for different instrumental combinations composed between 1930 and 1945. During this period, Villa-Lobos returned from France to Brazil and was engaged in the political agenda of the dictatorial regime of President Getúlio Vargas. He was considered a Brazilian national musical symbol. This phase of his work is marked by a more Neoclassical style after the earlier avant-garde adventures, as one can see from the title of this series, which refers to the music of J. S. Bach. At the same time, he continued in his efforts to develop a national music, so the general intent of the *Bachianas Brasileiras* is to mix the Bachian style with Brazilian musicality (PEPPERCORN 1991; SALLES 2009). The primitivism of earlier phases is abandoned in favour of a Neoclassical style, which also marks the change from the first Brazilian musical Modernism, in the 1920s—with its *Anthropophagite Manifesto* from 1928<sup>13</sup>—to the second, namely the nationalist one from the 1930s. Now the aesthetic experiences and avant-garde reaction against tonal romanticism are left behind and the focus is on the development of a national music.

*Bachianas Brasileiras no. 2* was written for orchestra in 1930 and has four movements: the first movement, which will be analysed here, is titled—as mentioned—*Prelúdio: O Canto do Capadócio* ('Prelude: The Song of the Countryman'). The second and third movements are called respectively *Aria: O Canto da Nossa Terra* ('Aria: The Song of our Land') and *Dansa: Lembrança do Sertão* ('Dance: Remembrance of the Countryside'); while the fourth is called *Toccata: O trenzinho do caipira* ('The Little Train of the Brazilian Countryman'). It is noticeable that, according to these titles, all four movements of this work are intended to depict the Brazilian countryside, though in the music distinct sets of topics and intertexts are put into dialogue. Here, therefore is the objective of this article. The piece is in ABA form; the sections are shown in Table 1 with their respective bar numbers.

	Opening Adagio	1-3
Section A	1 <sup>st</sup> theme	4-26
	1 <sup>st</sup> theme (repetition)	26-40
	1 <sup>st</sup> theme (repetition)	40-54
Section B	2 <sup>nd</sup> theme	55-77
	Evocation of Adagio	77-8
Section A'	1 <sup>st</sup> theme	79-99

**Table 1.** Sections and bar numbers

<sup>13</sup> The 'Anthropophagite Manifesto' is a central protagonist of Brazilian Modernism that introduces the notion of cultural cannibalism (BARY 1991, from which follows a translation of the *manifesto* in English).



## Analytical Comments

The opening Adagio presents a short theme in a dark atmosphere that seems to foretell a dramatic music. In fact, it is a prelude to the *Prelúdio* that contributes to the darkening scenario to come, and which will be evoked again just before the recapitulation (Example 1).<sup>14</sup>



**Example 1.** Opening Adagio (bb. 1-3)

This is a two-voice phrase in A $\flat$  minor: the melody in the upper voice resolves around A $\flat$  and the lower voice around E $\flat$ , but it ends a half step higher, destabilizing the structure, as if it were a VI of A $\flat$  minor. This little half step at the end of a phrase or theme, which completely shifts the sense of the music, is an element Villa-Lobos will use again in this piece in a very meaningful way, as we will see. For now, we retain the sober and obscure character of this short Adagio, with the break at the end that provokes instability. In fact, this enigmatic Adagio enacts a tragic atmosphere that imprints some darkness on the following scenario: the exposition of the first theme by the tenor saxophone. The harmony here presents many dominant seventh chords in a cycle of fourths in the strings (E A D G C F E) as the harmonic basis for a very prominent saxophone solo (Example 2).



**Example 2.** Section A (bb. 4-10)

<sup>14</sup> Musical examples in this article are analytical reductions intended only for ease of reading.

The saxophone begins with a strategic *glissando* in an ascending minor sixth, an important interval in this piece, as I will argue, and continues with this sliding style that points to *brejeiro*. It is here, I believe, that the *capadócio* manifests itself: it is the figure of the *malandro* himself that speaks in his loose way.

Let us consider the timbre, as it is also a tool for signification and rhetoricity. Villa-Lobos astutely uses orchestral instruments to convey meaning through timbre evocation, transfer and the highlighting of key instruments. The sound of the solo tenor saxophone here refers itself to the world of *choro* music and not to jazz. One reason for this is the fact that the great master Pixinguinha introduced the saxophone in the *choro* during the 1920s (BASTOS 2005), thus installing the sound of this jazz instrument in the heart of the *choro*. A saxophone solo right at the beginning of an orchestral piece of Brazilian art music repertoire of this time was something very rare, and that is why it is notable and highly rhetorical. The allusion to this musicality appears also in the phrase in bars 8-9, a kind of formula largely employed by *choro* musicians. The general topic here is *época de ouro*, but other elements play important roles, like the dramatic dark Adagio—which I regard as a hint of European expressionism—and the *brejeiro* style. This semantically dense beginning, however,<sup>15</sup> includes even more topics. In fact, in all its appearances, the theme is accompanied by either the clarinet or the oboe, playing a musical phrase that, due to its repetitive melody and irregular rhythm, may be characterized as a bird song, i.e., the forest sound topic mentioned above.<sup>16</sup>

The exposition of the first theme proceeds with *apoggiaturi* and zigzags, producing a melodic design that is consistent with the *época de ouro* topic, here reinforced by the saxophone timbre. There is also a series of timbre transfers between key instruments: saxophone, violoncello and trombone. The importance of the violoncello in this piece reflects the notable role Villa-Lobos attributed to this instrument in all his compositions.<sup>17</sup> Example 3 shows these first timbre transfers.

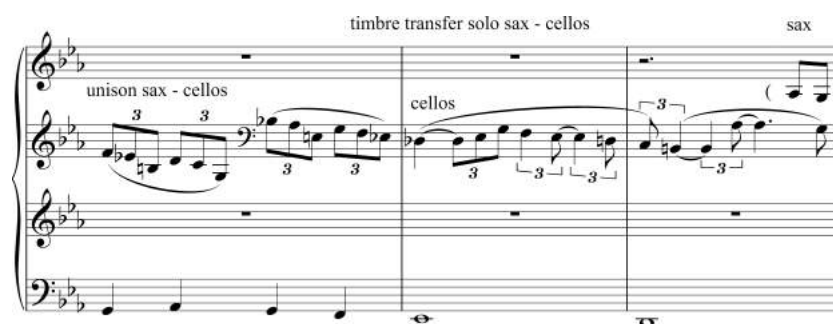
In its initial moments, this Prelude is already charged with a considerable web of meanings: a brief dark and dramatic Adagio opens a scene where a *brejeiro* saxophone presents a swinging theme in an *época de ouro* atmosphere, with a hint of the forest. Example 4 shows how the melody is metrically stretched, one more hint of *brejeiro*. See also the ascending minor sixth in the violins at bar 13: I call it here the Tristan motive (T).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A characteristic of Villa-Lobos' musical language (see PIEDADE 2013).

<sup>16</sup> This figure, irregularly repeated notes in instruments like clarinet and oboe, appears in several pieces by Villa-Lobos, and is sometimes called the *araponga* motive (name of a Brazilian bird whose song is a repetitive, single, metallic tone).

<sup>17</sup> In fact, he is responsible for the development of a particular language for the violoncello that brought it deeply into Brazilian popular music, launching an important tradition in many repertoires and influencing composers like Tom Jobim.

<sup>18</sup> The Tristan motive is reminiscent of the melodic design of the first notes from Wagner's Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde* in which the motive (A F E D#) is played by violoncellos alone. This is widely known in Western Art music and its



**Example 3.** Section A (bb. 11-3)



**Example 4.** Section A (bb. 12-3) (modified version)

The next figure (Example 5) shows other timbre transfers in the *Canto do Capadócio*: at bar 15 from saxophone to trombone. The melodic curves and the fermata climax point to a lyricism from the old *Seresta* singing style, an *época de ouro* topic. Trombone and saxophone descending zigzags are scored with an ascending harmony in the strings. This sliding trombone has a particular place in Brazilian musicality: it is a *brejeiro* effect of looseness that constitutes what one may call Brazilian trombone, an important character of the *Gafieira* bands that would appear in the 1940s. From then on, the *trombone brasileiro*, with its sliding melodies and metallic sound, has played an important role in *samba* and *choro* music.<sup>19</sup> Example 5 below shows the score from bars 14 to 26, the end of this first exposition. The trombone drops out of the scene at bar 21, leaving the end of the first exposition with the cellos in the low register, recreating the dark and dramatic aura from the Adagio. In this obscure moment, one can hear two allusions to the Tristan motive in the high register by the violins.

Example 5 also shows, at bars 25-6, a complete reference to the Tristan motive: the violoncellos end their descending melody on the low C and go from there, with a rapid scale of

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presence here is clearly an allusion to this masterpiece and the meanings it may convey. It is a musical intertext abundantly used by many composers, and that Villa-Lobos employs in several pieces. I argue that this ascending minor sixth is, though incomplete, already a reference to Tristan.

<sup>19</sup> As one can hear in the famous song *Na Glória*.

thirty-second notes, up to  $A\flat$ , thus completing a composite ascending minor sixth. This continues with two chromatic steps down: there is the full Tristan motive, as shown in Example 6.

The musical score for Example 5, Section A (bb. 14-26) is presented in three systems. The first system shows the oboe, sax-cellos, trombone-cellos, strings-horns, and bass. The second system shows the 1st violins, cellos, and 2nd violins. The third system shows the cellos. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

**Example 5.** Section A (bb. 14-26)

The musical score for Example 6, Tristan motive, is presented in a single system. It features a bass line with various musical notations including triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

**Example 6.** Tristan motive

From this point on, there are two other presentations of the first theme, each with small changes, particularly in the orchestration, but maintaining several ascending minor sixths. As stated before, in this piece I regard this very interval as the Tristan motive because of its rhetorical role as an allusion to Wagner's famous work. As is well known, its famous first chord, a half-diminished chord, is called the Tristan chord.<sup>20</sup> This chord appears in the Prelude to *Bachianas no. 2* as the final chord of the first and last expositions of the first theme, and it is also the last chord of the piece. It is remarkable that this placement of the Tristan chord is very salient and unique: it appears as tonic in root position after a chromatic descending step of the fifth in the tonic C minor seventh chord. This melodic stepwise slide has the same destabilizing effect as the aforementioned one in the Adagio. Moreover, it is rare to find a piece of the musical repertoire of that time that closes with a cadence on a half-diminished tonic chord. Villa-Lobos's highly rhetorical intentions here point to an interior restlessness that replicates the dark Adagio, both moments aiming at a return to the musical expressionism of which the Wagnerian world is a forerunner. I argue elsewhere that the half-diminished chord itself has played a crucial role in the musical aesthetics of the transition between tonality and atonality, which I refer to as the 'transfigured night of tonality' (PIEADADE 2008).

After the *brejeiro* and *época de ouro* topics, the close of the A section with its inconclusive Wagnerian Tristan tonic chord, there is a sudden change abruptly opening up a completely different scenario. Section B, beginning in bar 55 (Example 7), starts a sunny and joyful dancing scene. The harmony turns to E $\flat$  major and is much simpler, basically a I-V<sup>7</sup> progression and a stepwise diatonic melody: the innocence of *caipira* topics comes into play. The rhythmic pattern used here is typically *caipira*, like the *pagode de viola* sub-genre; some of its rhythmic accents are orchestrated in the woodwinds.

The expressive content in this entire section is totally different from the first, bringing some pastoral spirit and *caipira* simplicity to the piece. It goes from E $\flat$  through D minor and ends at bar 77 with a cheerful plagal cadence in B $\flat$  major seventh. Then, in bar 78, there is a brief evocation of the dark atmosphere of the Adagio, acting as a kind of inner window that darkens the scene and brings it to the recapitulation of the first theme by the saxophone and violins. After this last exposition of the first theme, the curtain falls with the transformation of a C minor tonic in C half-diminished chord by means of the lowering of the fifth. A final filtering of this chord leaves only a *pianissimo* E $\flat$  in the cellos and horns disappearing into silence.

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, ROTHGEB (1995).

ANDANTINO MOSSO  
estremamente ritmado (sic)

fl., oboe, clar., sax

2nd vln., vla.

piano, bassoon, cello, bass

1st vln., cello



**Example 7.** Section B (excerpt: bb. 55-64)

## Conclusion

Perhaps because of its final half-diminished chord, the piece ends with an interrogation. To comment on this, I will discuss some aspects of Brazilian culture and musicality, i.e., a kind of socio-musical system that produces and conforms to a musical world understood as Brazilian, which is shared and reproduced by a particular historically-situated community.

In these terms, let us consider a founding dichotomy in Brazilian identity and culture: the city and the country, a pervasive *topos* in the literature and in the imagination of Brazilians. The category 'city' embraces and mixes several ideas of progress, civilisation, foreign, non-domestic, Europe, the developed world and cosmopolitanism, whereas the notion of 'country' poses a counterpoint to that with the representation of inner roots, nature and wilderness that composes the identity. There is, for instance, the tropical forest and the indigenous world, topics that are present in the musical world since the end of the nineteenth century in the romanticized Indian of Carlos Gomes's 1870 *Il Guarany*, in the Amerindian literary influence in the already-mentioned Modernist movement called *Antropofagia* (from 1928), and particularly in many works by Villa-Lobos such as *Uirapurú* and *Amazonas* (both from 1917) (VOLPI 2001). Thus, there is a Brazil that is urban, cosmopolitan and connected to European culture, and simultaneously there is a Brazil that is rural, more intimate, internal, native and deep.<sup>21</sup> This opposition is rooted in the dualism culture/nature that Claude Lévi-Strauss emphasizes in his analysis of Amerindian myths (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1962). In this direction, anthropologist Roberto DaMatta speaks of contradictory and complementary spheres of the House and the Street in Brazilian culture. House is the private, clean, orderly, secure, family-centred unity, and the Street is the public, dirty, disordered, dangerous life of the streets (DAMATTA 1991).

<sup>21</sup> This logic is certainly present in other Latin American cultures, see IANNI (1988).

If we analyse the whole first movement of the *Bachianas no. 2* taking this dualism into consideration, we feel the contradiction and the balance between two scenarios. We can imagine a kind of journey, departing from the European-influenced *fin de siècle* Brazilian capital and going inland to deep Brazil, visiting a rural area in the countryside, then coming back to the city. This depiction is based on the topics and intertexts shown in the analysis, which may serve as pillars for the narrative of the piece. In fact, topics are a special type of intertext and they are active agents in the construction of the musical narrative. The notion of musical narrativity is controversial and has been discussed in the last decades (GRABÓCZ 2009; KLEIN - REYLAND 2013). Almén has investigated the role of topics in narrativity, proposing nine types of interaction, of which the number III seems to be the one that fits here: a narrative with two topical fields that constitute poles of narrative opposition (ALMÉN 2008, 81-2).

Music topics and intertexts are the necessary tools to compose this narrative of the first movement of the *Bachianas Brasileiras no. 2*. The drama starts with a tragic spirit, bringing the sliding personage of the *malandro* and the nostalgia for the Brazil of old times, typically connected to the urban imagination. Then suddenly, with no transition, a sunny countryside takes the scene, with a delightful *Caipira* dance, but it seems not to avoid the return of the urban dark clouds of the initial environment. The two landscapes painted by Villa-Lobos<sup>22</sup> reveal their impermeability and fragility, epitomized by the harmonic instability of the final tonic: a half-diminished C minor chord. The *Canto do Capadócio* is thus a kind of symphonic poem that brings up this opposition between Home/City and Street/Country, permeated by dramatic influxes with dark expressive Wagnerian depictions, *brejeiro*, *época de ouro* and *caipira*. The main characters of this story are thus enacted by means of Villa-Lobos' skilful use of the rhetoricity of musical topics and intertexts.

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<sup>22</sup> See his statement in the first paragraph of this article.



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