

## GUITAR PRELUDES BY HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS: GENRE TRADITIONS OF BRAZILIAN MUSIC

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**SUMMARY.** Guitar cycle of Heitor Villa-Lobos “Five Preludes” is researched in terms of the national genre traditions of various etymologies – European, African, Indian. At the level of musical language, the interaction of melodic and metro-rhythmic features, connection with Portuguese Modinha, Brazilian Choro, Waltz-Choro, Afro-Brazilian Capoeira, Indian chants of the indigenous people of the country are revealed. Adaptive mechanisms of mixing genre elements on the scale of the entire cycle and each of the miniatures are designated. The features of socio-cultural environment of origin, existence of genres, as well as their participation in popular music of urban and rural life, carnival processions and tribal rituals are taken into consideration. References to Villa-Lobos’s personal experience of amateur music-making in the street Choro ensembles and ethnographic expeditions allowed correlating the timbre sound of genres in authentic folk practices with solo guitar version of their academic embodiment. Innovative technical methods of playing the guitar are indicated: shift of the stable fingering configuration along the fingerboard, introduced by the composer to modernize the language of music based on the idiomatic of the instrument. Program dedications are revealed in connection of targeted stylization of the sound atmosphere or the styles of European and Brazilian composers.

**Keywords:** Brazilian music, Guitar Preludes of Heitor Villa-Lobos, genre and style traditions, Modinha, Choro, Capoeira, stylization, performance techniques

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## 1. Introduction

The guitar legacy of Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959), who became the symbol of the largest South American “musical continent” and the main representative of its exotic sound landscape for the entire world, is an unusually bright and significant segment of the contemporary performing repertoire. In each of his works, Villa-Lobos recreated the artistic image of “his Brazil”. The latest publications indicate that he rethought sounds “filtered by traditional Brazilian sensibility in the mainstream of primitivism, present in the public imagination as a stereotype; in other words, Villa-Lobos became an icon of the representation of his country, its figurative and symbolic language, embodied in his work the portrait of Brazilian through melodies and myths imprinted in the collective consciousness, in the passion for nature, musical narratives imbued with folkloric spirit”<sup>2</sup>. Today, in musicology, in addition to multiple reprints of authoritative monographs on his work<sup>3</sup>, publications have appeared following the study of the archives of the Villa-Lobos Museum in Rio de Janeiro, as well as private collections of manuscripts. As is known, many of the original musical texts are still considered lost. This applies, in particular, to the composer’s early guitar works. Such publications are valuable for their findings for further disclosure of the author’s legacy in the works of Brazilian scholars, for example, in the works of Humberto Amorim<sup>4,5,6</sup>. Analytical essays by Fabio Zanon, Brazilian guitarist from the University of São Paulo, professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London since 2008, and the author of publications on the guitar work of Villa-Lobos, indicate

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<sup>2</sup> Mello, Ricardo C. *Concerto for Guitar and Small Orchestra by Heitor Villa-Lobos: Critical Commentary and Transcription for Two Guitars*: DMA thesis. The University of Arizona, 2019. p. 205. Link: <https://repository.arizona.edu/handle/10150/634370>

<sup>3</sup> Mariz, Vasco. *Heitor Villa-Lobos, o Homem e a Obra: 12 ed.* Rio de Janeiro, Edição do Museu Villa-Lobos, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Amorim, Humberto. *Heitor Villa-Lobos: uma revisão bibliográfica e considerações sobre a produção violonística (Heitor Villa-Lobos: a bibliographical review and considerations on guitar production)*. Universidade do rio de janeiro centro de letras e artes programa de pós-graduação em música mestrado e doutorado em música. Dissertação de Mestrado. Rio de Janeiro, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO). Rio de Janeiro, 2007, 256 p.

<sup>5</sup> Amorim, Humberto. *Heitor Villa-Lobos e o violão*. Rio de Janeiro, Academia Brasileira de Música, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Amorim, Humberto. *Canção do Poeta do Século XVIII, de Heitor Villa-Lobos: apresentação de um manuscrito para voz e violão (Song of the 18th Century Poet, by Heitor Villa-Lobos: presentation of a manuscript for voice and guitar)*, p. 116-144. Link: <https://www.amplificar.mus.br/data/referencias/ver/Cancao-do-Poeta-do-Seculo-XVIII--de-Heitor-Villa-Lobos--apresentacao-de-um-manuscrito-para-canto-e-violao>

that in this area “the number of repeated recordings of his works exceeds the total number of almost all subsequent Brazilian composers”<sup>7</sup>. Among the cyclical works, the following should be highlighted: “Brazilian Popular Suite”, “Five Preludes”, “Twelve Etudes”, and Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra.

The aim of this article is to discover in Heitor Villa-Lobos’s guitar cycle “Five Preludes” the genre traditions of Brazilian music in their relationship with authentic models, stylistic allusions within the cycle and within each of the miniatures. The chosen direction of research serves as a continuation of the author’s previous publications<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. Preludes in the context of guitar creativity of Heitor Villa-Lobos

The composer created “Preludes” for guitar in 1940, in the interval between his major works: “Twelve Etudes” for guitar (1928) and Concerto for guitar and orchestra (1951). Brazilian concert guitarist, researcher and director of the Villa-Lobos Museum in Rio de Janeiro (since 1986) Turibio Santos sees in these guitar miniatures “an endless range of deeply Brazilian feelings that convey the local climate, national character, and sound environment”. This statement is mentioned in the new anniversary reissue of Vasco Mariz’s monograph on the composer’s work<sup>9</sup>. It is assumed that there were originally six Preludes: the last piece disappeared in the residence of the Spanish virtuoso Andrés Segovia during the civil war. This version, based on a statement by a famous Mexican musician, is also recalled by Humberto Amorim. He writes: “Manuel Ponce said that in Montevideo the composer presented Andrés Segovia with a complete version of the cycle, which, together with the preceding 12 etudes, made up a collection of 18 works, but Prelude No. 6 disappeared from Segovia’s apartment”<sup>10</sup>. In the mentioned works composer created “an innovative “speech of the instrument”,

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<sup>7</sup> Zanon, Fabio. *Resenha: Humberto Amorim. Heitor Villa-Lobos e o Violão. Rio de Janeiro: Academia Brasileira de Música, 2009. 183 p.* Revista brasileira de música. Rio de Janeiro, 2011. v. 24 (jan./jun.), n. 1, p. 206.

<sup>8</sup> Filatova, Tetiana. *Baiao as a component of soundscapes of Brazil: guitar reconstructions of the genre.* Scientific herald of Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine, vol. 139, 2024, pp. 112-133.

<sup>9</sup> Mariz, Vasco. *Heitor Villa-Lobos, o Homem e a Obra: 12 ed.* Rio de Janeiro, Edição do Museu Villa-Lobos, 2004. p. 148.

<sup>10</sup> Amorim, Humberto. *Heitor Villa-Lobos: uma revisão bibliográfica e considerações sobre a produção violonística.* Rio de Janeiro, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO). Rio de Janeiro, 2007, p. 52–53.

using idiom of the guitar at the peak of its polyphonic qualities and subtlety of timbre”<sup>11</sup>. At the same, all modernizations of the technical mastery of playing the guitar organically coexisted in a typically Brazilian sound environment. Its presence is evidenced by Villa-Lobos’s personal experience of improvisation among the street musicians of Rio de Janeiro. Echoes of the local atmosphere are clearly audible in the music of the cycle. According to Humberto Amorim, its main bearers were “the bizarre syncopations of Choro, which influenced Villa-Lobos during his fascination with the art of guitar improvisation of João Pernambuco (1883-1947), who played intuitively and, like other street musicians, did not know written musical tradition”<sup>12</sup>.

The cycle of guitar preludes is dedicated to the composer’s wife, Arminda Neves de Almeida. The impetus for its creation was the author’s meeting with Segovia in Montevideo (Uruguay, 1939). The composer presented the manuscript of the First Prelude, along with the original manuscripts of the first five etudes, to the Uruguayan guitarist Abel Carlevaro, one of the first performers of the pieces. In the second volume of his master classes, Carlevaro acknowledged that in these works “the new guitar was born, truly South American, not only because of use of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic elements, but also because of the performance technique it required”<sup>13</sup>. Unlike “Twelve Etudes”, which were conceived from the outset as the cyclical unity, the Preludes are the collection of individual miniatures with personal thematic dedications: to urban or tribal local customs of Brazil, its Indian or African (Angolan) traditions, the styles of masters of musical art of the past and present. In the spirit of carnival scenes, the soundscapes of one of the most adaptive South American cultures flash before the listeners. They are filled with authentic sounds of the regions, voices of the peoples inhabiting them and, thanks to the composer’s talent, to this day adorn the palette of the guitar academic repertoire.

### **2.1. Prelude no. 1 “Homenagem ao sertanejo brasileiro – Melodia Lirica”**

*Prelude №1* was created in the tradition of Modinha – vocal lyricism that was popular in Portuguese salons of Lisbon, inspired by singing of Italian arias accompanied by piano. Having exchanged aristocratic halls for the spaces of evening city streets, Modinha became one of the sources of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Carlevaro, Abel. *Technique, Analysis and Interpretation of the guitar works of Heitor Villa-Lobos: 5 Preludes (1940), Choro No. 1 (vol II)*. Atlanta: Chanterelle Verlag, 1988.

Brazilian Choro – the popular dance melody accompanied by street musicians of Rio de Janeiro. Due to the environment and new genre-communicative situation, Modinha, instead of refined Iberian poetics, acquired folk-everyday, although quite romantic tone of musical “statements”. The atmosphere of Choro supported improvisational element of the performance: musicians demonstrated virtuoso mastery of spontaneous improvisation on their instruments. In the conditions of hybrid mixture of genre elements, the vocal chant of Modinha, with relief, extended phraseology of musical speech, was endowed with multi-tiered layer of rhythmically branched accompanying voices<sup>14</sup>.

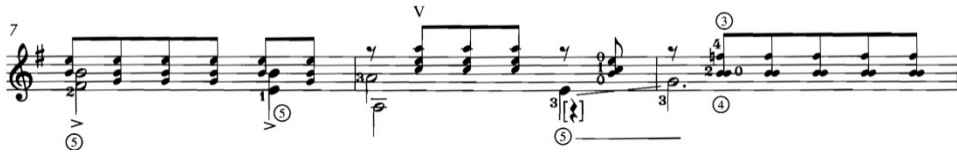
Character of the Prelude corresponds to the author’s comment: “A lyrical melody dedicated to the inhabitants of the Brazilian sertãos”. The music recreates the sound atmosphere of inhabitants of those places where nature of the environment is associated with a slow pace of life, the tiring life of arid rural provinces. This is reflected in the states of melancholy, the expectation of sorrows and losses, in the sentimental shades of expression of feelings inherent in the Brazilian model of Modinha. Intonations form the series of melodic ascents and descents, create feeling of sadness, a slow descent: after a short burst of emotion - rapid ascent and again the protracted descent, with pauses in breathing. Each new long phrase has its own melodic peak, higher than the previous one, after which the phase of dramatically excited emotional intensity unfolds. Intonations of grief, sighs penetrate the echoes of the accompaniment. The focus of attention is the melody of Modinha, extended and quite dramatic. The accompaniment fixes the ideal sound background for the solo pattern, enhancing the expressiveness of the melodic “gestures”, ascending exclamations, gradually fading into drawn-out descending lines:

## E.g. 1

*Andantino espressivo*

4 *rit.*

<sup>14</sup> Link to Prelude № 1 of Heitor Villa-Lobos performed by Polish guitarist Marcin Dylla: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pmry5uquwDI>



### H. Villa-Lobos. "Five Preludes", Prelude №1

The accompanying sound background emphasizes the melody with pedals and ostinato rhythmic figures. The accompaniment introduces the hemiole rhythm of simultaneous "swaying" of 3/4 and 6/8 pulses, characteristic of the Iberian metric and entrenched in Creole Waltzes. The melody is presented in the lower layers of the texture, in the "cello" register. Here, the experience of playing the cello, which was especially useful to Villa-Lobos in the previous decade, is clearly evident. Like Chopin's Preludes, the composer adds depth to the confessional, dramatic tone of the vocal intonations with the low timbre of solo voice. The continuity of the chordal accompaniment is achieved by the pulsation of the three upper open strings, with minimal shifts necessary for creation of a neutral sound background, over which melody reigns. Change of consonances is given in syntactically important sections of the form.

Unlike the early song *Modinha*, subordinated to equal proportions of motives and phrases, the concept of the lyrical, elegiac theme of the Prelude focuses attention on the imitation of the vocal by the descending contour of the movement of three disproportionately elongated periodic structures. They are thematically derivative of each other and are built by three phases of improvisation. The first takes 12 bars, the second - 16, the third - 23 bars. Almost a twofold increase in proportions is achieved by a steady increase in expression. In the first case, the squareness of the structure is destroyed by a short-term deviation from the sustained tonic pedal e-moll to the subdominant sphere, which is dictated by the further need for return. In the second case - by updating the phrases with the coloring of the Dorian mode, but mainly, their lengthening due to the phonic tension of the diminished seventh chords. They move in ascending sequences, without resolution, following the few-thirds moves of the melody (bars 22–26) until it returns to its initial phrase. This technique of chord shifts, parallel sliding along semitones and thirds, is achieved by mechanically transferring the fixed position of the left hand along the frets, along the guitar fingerboard, which is a favorite performance technique and, at the same time, the author's individual technique of composition. It was this technique that Villa-Lobos

developed in his cycle “Twelve Etudes” for solo guitar (1929). Along with the use of open strings and harmonics, this technique became the source of improvisational renewal in the third performance of *Modinha*, which is twice as long as the first (bars 29–51). At the end of the section (bars 33–38) the zone of sequences against the background of the ostinato of the open second string is stretched thanks to the chromatic links of descending semitone steps. This creates tension in the high tessitura and causes wave of culmination, the heavier dissonance, slowdown with an emphasized attention to the “shimmer” of modal colours. The Phrygian shade is mixed with the Dorian shade, which is often found in Brazilian music.

The contrasting middle (bars 52–77, *Piu mosso*, E–dur) embodies the instrumental nature of the dance genre beginning. This is evidenced by the motorics of the wide takeoffs of the passages, similar to virtuoso flute solos in choro ensembles, interrupted by sharp, articulated chords on arpeggiato. There is no extended cantilena in the melody: the playing is done with short chants, dance motifs, melismas, major-minor chords, and changes in time signatures 2/4, 3/4, 3/8 in almost every measure:

## E.g. 2

## H. Villa-Lobos. “Five Preludes”, Prelude №1 (bars 51–56)

The sound is reminiscent of country music, playing of the Brazilian ten-string guitar *altocaipira* with five paired rows of strings in the rural areas of the state of São Paulo. There, the instrument is idiomatic for *Músicacaipira*, *Músicasertaneja* – *sertaneja* music, the most popular tradition of the southern regions of Brazil (the sound is also characteristic of the genres of *Choro*, *Samba*, *Maxixe*). The author of the prelude considered this fragment a personal contribution, “a tribute to Brazilian country music”, a true reflection of the local “country atmosphere”, with a euphoric, “devilish” crescendo<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Amorim, Humberto. *Heitor Villa-Lobos: uma revisão bibliográfica e considerações sobre a produção violonística*. Rio de Janeiro, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO). Rio de Janeiro, 2007, p. 202.

The Prelude ends with a reprise of Da capo, in which one can distantly hear allusions to the poetics of the preludes of F. Chopin, the French elegies of G. Fauré, J. Massenet, the Italian and Portuguese Modinha. These echoes are immersed in the soundscape of Brazil's southeastern provinces.

## **2.2. Prelude no. 2 «Homenagem ao Malandro Carioca – Melodia Capadócia –Melodia Capoeira»**

Prelude №2 was created in the tradition of Choro – popular Brazilian music, the name of which simultaneously implies the genre, the ensemble of instruments (guitar, cavaquinho, flute, drums), the genre-communicative situation and the place of sound. The prelude is dedicated to the image of street vagabonds (Malandro Carioca) from Rio and Afro-Brazilian traditions of Capoeira. The rhythmic energy of choro is used for sound associations with the first picture – evening pubs for entertainment, dancing, fun of the strolling residents of Rio de Janeiro. It is charged with motor skills, freedom of play, easy recognition of motives mastered in folk and everyday practices and festive rituals. In choro ensembles, the solo instrument (flute) plays the fast melody from the continuous stream of sixteenths in a duple time of 2/4; two guitars support the bass framework of the ostinato percussion and the steady rhythm of the continuo in a dense chordal thickening; the cavaquinho pulsates at one pitch, masterfully varying the syncopating figures. The ensemble functions are precisely distributed and coordinated. The motor rhythm of the melody is close to the composer not only due to his personal experience of playing choro, which he mastered perfectly in the environment of street artists in Rio de Janeiro. In addition, the author of the music also often appealed to the baroque traditions of the rapid alternation of uniform small durations in the instrumental texture of the compositions of old European masters. The figurative type of the prelude's thematics fits into each of these strategies. And yet, here the correspondence of the music to the initially announced reference to the local ethnocultural space is obvious. It is generated by the rapid development of the rhythmic contour of the melody, rich in elements of hidden polyphony and the interweaving of rhythmic accents. As a rule, in the autochthonous setting of ensemble play of street musicians (shoroens) there are characteristic role interactions of rhythms. In practice, they may look like this:



## Scheme 1

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Flute, Cavaquinho, Guitar, and Percussion, all in 2/4 time. The Flute part is written in treble clef and features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Cavaquinho and Guitar parts are also in treble clef and play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Percussion part is in treble clef and plays a pattern of eighth notes with accents.

In the above ensemble scheme, the shoro rhythmic configurations are merged into a flow of Brazilian rhythms: with traces of Spanish (as Europeans believe) or Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian (as Brazilians believe) habanera, African lundu, Czech polka, Brazilian samba. Rhythmic cells usually pulsate in all layers and voices of the texture. In Villa-Lobos' Prelude No. 2 for solo guitar, they are given "half-hint", in the dispersed form and not in their entirety.

The exposition section (ABA) recalls Choro with its ceaseless motoric arpeggios, easily soaring along the contour of chords. The general lyrically relaxed tone is emphasized by appoggiaturas on the weak beats of each odd measure and the subsequent expressive slowing down at the end of the ascending passage (*ritenuto*). These chromatic appoggiaturas serve not only as an element of the non-chord ornament. Thanks to the ligature, it is connected with the next sound and is isolated from the general motor context by slowing down, "hanging", stopping. Such effect gives spontaneous lightness to improvisation and vaguely recalls the rhythmic syncopations within and between measures in Choro playing. In addition, the "shaking" of the elastic rhythm of the lines is intensified by frequent deviations from the main tempo: slowing down, speeding up (*accelerando*) and the appearance of sharp dotted lines in the connections between sections:

## E.g. 3

## H. Villa-Lobos. "Five Preludes", Prelude №2 (bars 1–8)

Another association can be discerned in bars 23–26. Its stylistic features are not connected either with the contour two-part Choro in the spirit of Baroque figurations or with the authentic improvisation of Choro. Here the influence of French music is felt – the imprint of Villa-Lobos's stay in Paris, where he became interested in Impressionistic harmonies. Hence the appearance of a chain of modulating sequences down the tones from the main key to distant ones with a subsequent return: [E]–C–F–B–Es–As–Des–Fis–H–[E]. Each of the four links consists of a major triad and a secondary dominant seventh. Their effective combination is a continuation of the aesthetics of coloristic hearing of harmonic colors, attention to the phonic factors of sound (bars 23–27):

## E.g. 4

## H. Villa-Lobos. "Five Preludes", Prelude №2 (bars 19–25)

Unlike the exposition of the prelude, which contains a mixture of Brazilian folk improvisation of street musicians choro, European elegant plasticity of lines and French sophistication of harmonies, the middle section of the form opens up another sound reality. It is connected with the Angolan and Afro-Brazilian energy of Capoeira:

## E.g. 5

## H. Villa-Lobos. "Five Preludes", Prelude №2 (bars 35–45)

The tradition of Capoeira, which originally involved a power struggle and competition of Angolan warriors, is now known to the world as musical, dance, acrobatic and martial Brazilian art. Here it acquired the specificity of musical phenomenon, in which the powerful primeval energy of African rhythms, percussion timbres is combined with the customs of ritual singing during the sparring of dancers in the center of the circle (Roda).<sup>16</sup> The key role of the musical component of this action belongs to the timbre of berimbau. According to its organological characteristics, it is considered a single-stringed percussion Brazilian instrument of African origin in the form of a wooden bow with an attached gourd, which acts as resonator. The sound is produced by striking the string with a stick with the right hand; The pitch is changed by pressing a coin or stone to the string with the left hand (with a slight pressure – a rustling sound; the stronger the pressure, the higher the sound), and is also supplemented by the rustling sound of shaking a wicker basket in the right hand. The pitch depends on the tension and length of the string, the size of the instrument, the volume of the resonator box (low, medium,

<sup>16</sup> Link to the ritual performance of the dance in the modern Brazil:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxrCUquzhWc>

high tone). When playing, articulation of two adjacent tones is preferable. Playing on two berimbaus creates movements in parallel fifths, characteristic of the African culture of polyphony. The rhythmic basis is maintained by the dense low sound of the elongated large drum of African shamans, atabake, accompanied by the ringing of pandeiro tambourine and metal agogô.

In the middle of the prelude, the arpeggiated guitar texture contains two elements characteristic of the art of Capoeira. The lower layer of the texture imitates the sound of berimbau with semitone shifts of parallel fifths. The effect of the ringing of the bells of the agogo and pandeiro is achieved with the modulations of the upper open strings. Both layers are united by the technique characteristic of Villa-Lobos of sliding along the fingerboard of a fixed fingering configuration. The four lower strings form an expanded major triad. The two upper open strings, as they slide together along the hyphae, enter into consonant or dissonant relationships with them. The general wave-like movement of semitone swaying is interspersed with ascending expressive jerks. As a result, bright, impressive phonic contrasts of major colors of triads and seventh chords arise, familiar to Villa-Lobos from the style of Claude Debussy. But usually the French luxury of harmonic verticals arose from the polyphonic orchestral and piano "colors" of ninth chords, which did not always turn into consonances, but shifted in continuous streams in the thickness of the mixed major-minor environment or were replaced by "wandering" augmented triads. For Villa-Lobos, the source of renewal of harmonic processes was the idiomatics of guitar playing. The technique of shifting the fingers of the left hand along the fretboard in a chosen position, with its unchanging configuration on different frets, became for the composer not only a personal performing find. In fact, it opened up an individual stylistic dimension for Villa-Lobos, serving as a personal "entrance" to the exploratory world of modernist sounds. Let us recall that before his trip to Paris, several years earlier, the composer visited the festival "Week of Modern Art" in Sao Paulo (1922). There, in the modernist environment of artists, writers, composers, he received impulses for innovation, ideas about possible vectors of linguistic renewal of art and began to search for his own path in it. The guitar became his main guide in this search: parallel shifts of positions along the fingerboard gave spectacular and unexpected sounding "ribbons" of chords on the four lower strings, while the two upper open strings (h, e) were fixed for a long time in spontaneous strumming and vibrated from the touch of the fingers. Thus, chord pedals of great length were born in his music, inside which rich phonic colors were formed. They cumulatively merged into authentic fields of sounds and their overtones, giving rise to the effect of stable resonance. As a result, unexpected interactions arose between impressionistic harmonic effects and new guitar playing techniques. Finally, it was a virtuosic and impressive picture of phonic phenomena.

Here it is necessary to articulate one important detail, which escapes the attention of researchers. In the association created by the composer with the atmosphere of Capoeira - the ensemble play of all its participants, masterfully conveyed in the middle of the prelude by the solo guitar, there is another modal-tonal component. It has Moorish, Afro-Arabic origin, but has long been rooted in the depths of Iberian art in the form of the Spanish, Andalusian mode of the hemiole nature. Signs of this derivative modal formation are obvious not in the melody, but in the system of alternation of all chords. Let us pay attention to the fact that the key signs of the H-dur key, indicated in the musical text, are not provided with the corresponding centralization. In the position of supporting harmonies, the complex of consonances of dominant modes appears. There are two of them: the primary variant of the scale "fis-g-a-(ais)-h-cis-d-e-(eis)-fis", derived from "h", and the secondary, transposed variant "a-b-c-(cis)-d-e-f-g-(gis)-a", derived from "d". Both appear in turn, each allowing for the possibility of forming major colors from any of the above-mentioned degrees together with other sounds of the Andalusian mode. This clarifies the nature of the functioning of the chords within the system - in modes that are significant for Spanish culture, with the constant gravitation of dominants embedded in them. Due to their strong tendency towards the center (with its weak sound implementation), a feeling of an ardent, passionate, hot "emotional climate" appears, as in many examples of flamenco culture. Of course, Villa-Lobos, being the heir of a large Spanish family, could use them unconsciously, instinctively. However, this arsenal became important among other sources of the formation of original pitch structures. But still, the fundamental idea and generalizing principle of the modernization of the harmonic thinking of Heitor Villa-Lobos remains the technical method of playing the guitar discovered by him, and the consequence - all the modernist sound effects caused by it.

The reprise of the prelude *Da capo* literally returns the material of the exposition. The listener is again immersed in the atmosphere of street traditions of Choro. On the stage of the academic concert hall, the sharp contrast between the sections of the Prelude can be interpreted in different ways: guitarist prefers to enhance the romantic, sentimental track of the image or, on the contrary, to emphasize the primordial nature of the national Brazilian genre sources.

### **2.3. Prelude no. 3 «Homenagem à Bach»**

*Prelude № 3*, unlike the first two miniatures of the cycle, does not contain Brazilian genre and style references. On the contrary, it has a precise, targeted dedication to J.S. Bach, the author of brilliant pages of the European Baroque heritage. The assimilation of the academic experience of the old masters served as a priority creative strategy for Brazilian composers. Adaptive

mechanisms were aesthetically welcomed and declared by a range of neoclassical technical devices: quotation, stylization, allusion. The processes of recreating the linguistic paradigms of European music of the past in the conditions of such an adaptive culture as the Brazilian one were accompanied by vivid contrasts. This prelude by Villa-Lobos, obeying the European improvisational organics of the genre, presents it in the form of a stylized dialogue of two musical languages: impressionistic French sound painting and baroque harmony, plasticity, diatonic sequential unfolding of the fabric.

This sharp stylistic contrast is the basis of the composition. In the scale of the two-part form ||: AB :||, the most common in pre-classical music, it marks the boundaries of the sections. At first, echoes of the preludes of C. Debussy are heard, then - the preludes of J.-S. Bach<sup>17</sup>. The initial section of the composition opens with an introductory two-part passage. In its upper layer, the intonations of minor seconds recall the rhetorical figures of sighs (*suspiratio*). They are connected with each other by tense tritone leaps of exclamation figures (*exclamatio*), forming a line of *appoggiaturas*. The lower voice builds the foundation of the sounds of open guitar strings:

## E.g 6

The musical score consists of three systems of notation. The first system begins with a treble clef, a 2/4 time signature, and a dynamic marking of *mf*. It is marked *Andante* and includes a *rall.* section followed by a section marked *A tempo*. The second system continues the piece, marked *rit.*, and ends with a double bar line and the Roman numeral *II*. The third system starts at bar 8 and includes the instruction *[le même doigté]*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 and circled numbers. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

## H. Villa-Lobos. "Five Preludes", Prelude №3 (bars 1–10)

<sup>17</sup> Link to the Prilude № 3 performed by Montenegrin guitarist Goran Krivokapic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lf8lzHTWQ-E>

The series of passages with fading on the expressive colours of major triads, seventh chords, the ninth chords allows one to listen to the beauty of their sound. The change of time signatures creates the effect of fluidity, smoothness, unhurried improvisation. Consonances drift in a calm, dreamy state of sporadic reflection. Hence the feeling of blurriness, uncertainty, wandering, devoid of a specific goal; an increase in the value of colorful phonic moments, and not the functional purposefulness of consonances. Shifts in pitch give the ninth chords different vectors of gravity (a-moll, h-moll). However, the avoidance of resolutions, the strengthening of the dissonant properties of the chords due to their sliding in a single fingering configuration (on the tonic bass of the open 5th string “a” or on the dominant organ point on the open bass string “E”) brings this sound atmosphere closer to the chromatic space of the Preludes of C. Debussy (“The Sunken Cathedral”).

The second section of the form is devoted to the stylization of the pages of Bach’s work. It gives birth to gentle streams of descending diatonic sequences. Here, as before, there is a high concentration of baroque rhetorical figures. But their harmonic background is as close as possible to the conditions of its era:

**E.g. 7**

Molto adagio e dolorido

23 *f espressivo*

25

**H. Villa-Lobos. “Five Preludes”, Prelude №3 (bars 23–26)**

The beauty of the melodic fabric is assembled from the stepped descending figures of catabasis in the lower line of the hidden two-part chord, as well as the following exclamations of exclamation - an ascending sixth leap against the background of soft minor seventh chords. This is a stylization of Bach’s models of baroque writing, permeated with the movement of diatonic “golden” sequences with a second descending step. They contain characteristic signs of academic improvisation, especially widespread in the conditions of prelude genres. Such stylization works with the historically fixed collective memory of beauty as universal, going through the centuries beyond the horizons of different continents.

## 2.4. Prelude no. 4 «Homenagem ao Indio Brasileiro»

*Prelude № 4* conveys the impression of the music of the Brazilian Indians. Unlike the first prelude, the melody here is laconic, like many Brazilian melodies of the indigenous peoples. It consists of five tones, but does not form an anhemitonic system, characteristic of most Indian chants. The sad, lonely “flute solo” smoothly and melodiously (*cantabile*) glides down the silhouette of the tonic triad E-moll, picking up the end of the phrase with a dotted motif. The performer could use open strings in playing the monophonic solo, but this reserve is saved for the development phase. Here, the expressiveness of the Indian intonation is emphasized by the vibration of the closed strings. The moment of the end of the phrase is associated with a change in size from 3/4 to 4/4. Then this algorithm of metric pulse is repeated until the end of the exposition section:

E.g. 8

### H. Villa-Lobos. “Five Preludes”, Prelude №4 (bars 1–6)

In each even measure, long pauses on the supporting tone of the melody (tonic, subdominant, “Neapolitan”) are accompanied by a quiet bass syncopated resonance. The fullness of the texture is provided by chords on open buzzing strings. They fill the seventh chords surrounding the melody with soft colors. In turn, all chord combinations are generated by the melodic pattern. If we try to collect the sounds of the melody in the main key into a single structure, we get e7 and e9. Their sound absorbs minor and major shades, on the phonic play of which the end of the prelude will be built. Here, in the zone of exposition of the material, the source and resource of its development is the variant principle: the rhythmic transformation of motives, their transposition to a new height, the combinatorics of intervals between sounds while maintaining the general line of the melodic pattern



ensures the recognition of the melody when it is updated. Contrasting changes in volume and regular metric fluctuations enhance the sensations of spontaneous improvisation inherent in oral aboriginal cultures. The sound of the beginning of the prelude creates the impression of the absence of bar line. Together, these means form associations with the genuine archaism of the authentic sound landscape<sup>18</sup>.

The ethnic origin of the melody is confirmed, in addition to the author's remark of dedication to the Brazilian Indians. Local researchers testify that during the years of Villa-Lobos's guitar preludes, Brazilian ethno musicology was taking its first steps.

Artists and musicians were looking for modernist ways to renew the language of art, emphasizing national traditions with non-standard silhouettes and shades of lines, colors, sounds, which often contradicted the tastes of the general public. At the same time, composers, borrowing one or another example from the baggage of folk collective creativity, did not focus all their attention on the original. They sought to capture and convey its essence in the conditions of an assimilated cultural environment. The composer spent the next two years traveling through the south of Brazil, and then through the Amazon regions (Manaus). Nestor Guestrin confirms that "to study the music of indigenous peoples, one of the constituent foundations of the musical landscape of Brazil and South America, he went to the Amazon jungle"<sup>19</sup>. According to the composer's confession, his "first book" was a map of Brazil with personal marks of cities and states where he wandered, listened, studied, and distinguished the musical voices of his land and the peoples inhabiting it. His tribute to the native people Caboclo<sup>20</sup> Villa-Lobos expressed through meditation state, atmosphere of deep tension and reflection, filled with quiet, distant overtone echoes. The famous Uruguayan guitarist Abel Carlevaro recalled that the melody of the first few bars of this prelude reminded the author himself of the Amazon region<sup>21</sup>. The Brazilian researcher of the composer's guitar work, Humberto Amorim, suggested that "the melodic basis of the prelude could have served as the Indian folk song Tutú Maramba (Que Caboc Cantador), recorded and published in one of

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<sup>18</sup> Link to the Prelude № 4 performed by German guitarist Peter Graneis:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2c8B\\_2eSC0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2c8B_2eSC0)

<sup>19</sup> Guestrin, Nestor. *La Guitarra en la Música Sudamericana*. 2011. p. 58. Link:  
<https://www.laguitarra-blog.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/19627529-La-Guitarra-en-la-Musica-Sudamericana1.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Caboclo – the large ethnic group of Tupi Indians from Amazonia (Portuguese *caboclo* – "those who came from the forest", Portuguese Indian mestizos.

<sup>21</sup> Carlevaro, Abel. *Technique, Analysis and Interpretation of the guitar works of Heitor Villa-Lobos: 5 Preludes (1940), Choro No. 1 (vol II)*. Atlanta: Chanterelle Verlag, 1988.

the albums of the guitarist, teacher, professor of the Conservatory of São Paulo Isaiás Savio”<sup>22</sup>.

In the middle section of *Animato* (bars.11–25) leisurely contemplation gives way to a cascade of stormy ascending arpeggios. Two phases can be distinguished in their alternation. The first of them is based on traditional models of tonal-harmonic connections of chordal figurations within the links of sequences. The second leaves the usual track of gravity and resolution due to the composer’s traditional methods of transit of a stable chord structure. When shifting, some of the sounds on the closed strings form identical interval ratio, while the repeated sound of the open second string (h) each time modifies the acoustic silhouette of the Chord.

The reprise returns the listener to the original material. The effect of distant memories, ghostly echoes of the melody is achieved at the beginning by the use of natural harmonics, and then by a literal repetition of the exposition.

### **2.5. Prelude no. 5 «Homenagem à Vida Social–Aos rapazinhos e mocinhas fresquinhos que requeentam os concertos os teatros no Rio»**

*Prelude No 5* is dedicated to young concert and theater goers in Rio de Janeiro and is the most accurate reflection of the typically Brazilian musical every day and social atmosphere of the city. According to the compositional parameters of the structure of the ABCA form, the prelude stands out from the general outline of the cycle. The hidden factor of such a difference, according to the Italian guitarist and editor of the preludes Frederic Zigante, is the discrepancy between the early manuscript and the later published versions. In the comments to the Milan edition<sup>23</sup>, he links the original form of the rondo ABACA for the author’s urtext with similar structures in the “Popular Brazilian Dances” (1908/1923), in particular, in the “Waltz Choro”. Subsequently, the central repetition of the refrain in the prelude was omitted and its composition lost the organic nature of the rondo-like circular trajectory.

The Prelude opens with the sounds of an intimate, lyrical Brazilian Waltz in D major. Harmonies traditional for the everyday musical atmosphere, accepted in the playing of popular music on the city streets, accompany the extended, light, thoughtful melody with the intonations of a sigh. Its solo

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<sup>22</sup> Amorim, Humberto. *Heitor Villa-Lobos: uma revisão bibliográfica e considerações sobre a produção violonística*. Rio de Janeiro, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO). Rio de Janeiro, 2007, p. 209.

<sup>23</sup> Villa-Lobos, Heitor. *Cinq Preludes / nouvelle édition revue et corrigée par Frederic Zigante*. Milano, ESCHIG, 2007. 24 p.

phrases are imitated in the bass line and echo each other. Non-chord sounds in the accompaniment skillfully decorate the fabric with expressive, gentle backing vocals. Syncopated soft pedals emphasize the second beat in each measure. This gives the music a feminine touch and reminds us of its Brazilian Topos. The genre is based on the Waltz, but in 6/4 time, with hemiolas from duple and triple pulses and syncopated chord figures of the accompaniment<sup>24</sup>:

## E.g 9

**Poco animato**

## H. Villa-Lobos. “Five Preludes”, Prelude №5 (bars 1–6)

The next section B is even more refined, nostalgic and sentimental. These sensual shades are expressed by the sound environment of the parallel key (B minor). The textural palette is colored by the play of highlights of light and shadow, the colors of major and minor. Intonationally, it is close to the previous melody, but now its descending phrases are twice as short, and the subsequent motives are syntactically organized according to the principle of dividing the initial two bars into half bars. The changes in the tempo gradation are also noticeable: the initial accelerations (*Poco animato*) now slow down considerably (*Meno mosso*). Dynamic excitement arises closer to the climax. The melody reveals singsong vocal origin and is reminiscent in character of a sad confession sung in a low female voice – the Portuguese *Modinha*. The guitar accompaniment, in the traditions of this genre, leads the bass line with support on the strong beats, and with its chord layer prolongs the syncopations on the light beats of the measure:

<sup>24</sup> Link to the Prelude № 5 performed by Spanish guitarist Anabel Montesinos:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5FyuZxr3eQ>

## E.g. 10

Musical score for E.g. 10, showing two staves of music. The first staff starts at bar 17 with a *Meno* marking and a fermata. The second staff starts at bar 19. Both staves feature complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and various articulations.

## H. Villa-Lobos. "Five Preludes", Prelude №5 (bars 17–20)

Section C (bars 33–41, A major) is a fast waltz, which contrasts most with the general context of the prelude in its tempo, rhythm, and dance genre basis. The nature of the motor movement is accompanied by contrasts between pairs of adjacent bars. In one bar, segments of syntactic and rhythmic couplings of two chords in a triple periodicity of quarter notes (bar 33) prevail. In the adjacent bar, on the contrary, a fast virtuoso passage of an ascending arpeggio intensifies the metric of a two-part division. Hemiolias are formed, characteristic of Iberian Brazilian rhythms. The order of their alternation is constantly changing. This achieves a carnival effect, characteristic not so much of an academic social environment and the atmosphere in a concert hall, but of a lively city party:

## E.g. 11

Musical score for E.g. 11, showing two staves of music. The first staff starts at bar 33 with a *Più mosso* marking and a fermata. The second staff starts at bar 36. Both staves feature complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and various articulations.

## H. Villa-Lobos. "Five Preludes", Prelude №5 (bars 33–38)

Humberto Amorim clarifies the specific nature of dedication of the Prelude, finding links with the music of the Brazilian composer João Pernambuco: specifically, with his Waltz “Sonhoda Magia”<sup>25</sup> (1920). Turibio Santos also sees parallels with the Waltz Choro from the earlier “Popular Brazilian Suite”. He associates this prelude with “return to a well-mannered, peaceful, bourgeois melody; if it were not for its second part, where the melody is sung by voice of the cello, this prelude would be natural within the framework of the early suite”<sup>26</sup>.

### 3. Conclusions

The guitar music of Heitor Villa-Lobos is an integral part of contemporary academic Brazilian art, fully reflecting its specific features, genre traditions, as well as various elements of the motley picture of the folk and everyday sound landscape. The flexibility and high adaptability of the national culture played a key role in the formation of the latter. It ensured the interaction and interweaving of genres of different ethnic etymology - European, African, Indian origin. All these features can be traced in the musical thinking of the composer. Numerous ethnographic expeditions, assimilation of the creative experience of European musicians of the past and present influenced the compositional style of Villa-Lobos, significantly enriching it with various genre-style mixtures. The cycle “Five Preludes” for solo guitar serves as a vivid confirmation of this. It echoes the drawn-out melodies of the Portuguese Modinha (Preludes 1, 5), Brazilian Choro (Prelude 2), Waltz Choro (Prelude 5), Angolan Capoeira (Prelude 2), and the motifs of Indian chants (Prelude 4). In his lexicology, the author embodies the models of Baroque rhetorical figures, inherits the stylistic allusions of Bach’s writing (Prelude 3), Chopin’s poetics (Prelude 1), impressionistic sound painting (Preludes 3, 4), and modernist textural colours of the musical fabric. The guitar cycle reflects the author’s original style and represents the special Brazilian aesthetics - a kind of concatenation of various genres and styles. Today, the Five Preludes are recognized as classics of academic guitar art and are undoubtedly highlight of the concert repertoire for almost every virtuoso.

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<sup>25</sup> Amorim, Humberto. *Heitor Villa-Lobos: uma revisão bibliográfica e considerações sobre a produção violonística*. Rio de Janeiro, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO). Rio de Janeiro, 2007, p. 211.

<sup>26</sup> Santos, Turibio. *Heitor Villa-Lobos e o violão*. Rio de Janeiro, MEC/DAC/Museu Villa-Lobos, 1975, p. 28.

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