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BRAZILIAN FOLK RHYTHMS IN HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS'S A LENDA DO CABOCLO [THE LEGEND OF THE CABOCLO] AND CICLO BRASILEIRO [BRAZILIAN CYCLE]

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BRAZILIAN FOLK RHYTHMS IN HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS'S
A LENDA DO CABOCLO [THE LEGEND OF THE CABOCLO] AND
CICLO BRASILEIRO [BRAZILIAN CYCLE]

by

Keisy Peyerl Xavier

A Doctoral Project
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Arts and Sciences
and the School of Music
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved by:

Dr. Ellen Elder, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

The objective of this doctoral project is to understand how Brazilian folkloric rhythms influenced two compositions for piano by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959): *A Lenda do Caboclo* [The legend of the caboclo], W. 166, 188, and *Ciclo Brasileiro* [Brazilian cycle], W. 374. My intent is to describe what these pieces represent, how they can be interpreted through rhythmic analysis, and how Villa-Lobos employs them in his own stylized manner.

The discussion will focus on several elements that are found in the traditional Brazilian genres of *baião*, *seresta*, *choro*, *maracatu*, and *frevo*. These genres contain distinctive musical styles and rhythms, rich history, and other traits which will be examined.

Lastly, other musical aspects linked to the two compositions will be explored, such as performance implications for the pianist.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to my advisor, Dr. Ellen Elder. My doctoral journey has been blessed by your guidance.

To my committee members: Dr. Elizabeth Moak, Dr. Michael Bunchman, Dr. Edward Hafer, Dr. Joseph Brumbeloe, and Dr. Christopher Goertzen. I hold each one of you in my highest esteem and consideration.

DEDICATION

First, I would like to dedicate this document to my pianist colleagues around the world. I hope this project opens up possibilities for these pieces to be explored and played more often.

To my partner in marriage and life, Joezer, for your immense support and staying by my side through it all.

My parents and my sister, Uesley, Marli, and Elisa Peyerl—I love you.

To the advisors of my bachelor's and master's degrees, Dr. Josely Bark and Dr. Guilherme Sauerbronn.

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INTRODUCTION

Brazilian music composed prior to the second half of the nineteenth century was regarded as “superficial” and merely “descriptive.”¹ According to musicologist Vasco Mariz, Brazilian music should represent a “true expression of the Brazilian soul.”² In his book, *A História da Música no Brasil* [The history of music in Brazil], Mariz divides Brazilian music history into several periods from the sixteenth century through the 1980s. According to Mariz, Villa-Lobos belongs to the First Brazilian National Generation. Composers before him, such as Brasílio Itiberê, Alexandre Levy, Alberto Nepomuceno, and Ernesto Nazareth, were the precursors of the Brazilian nationalistic style.³

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) is recognized as one of the country’s most representative composers, both at home and abroad. He distinguished himself through the use of Brazilian folklore in his compositions.⁴ During his travels throughout Brazil, he studied the diverse forms of traditional Brazilian music.⁵ Finnish musicologist Eero Tarasti states that when Villa-Lobos was being interviewed about the reason for his travels, he referred to a map of the country and answered: “This is my conservatory.”⁶

1. Vasco Mariz, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: Brazilian Composer* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963), 3.

2. *Ibid.*, 3.

3. Vasco Mariz, *História da música no Brasil* [History of music in Brazil] (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 2005), 111. All Portuguese translations in this document are by the author.

4. Lisa M. Peppercorn, “Foreign Influences in Villa-Lobos’s Music,” *Ibero-amerikanisches Archiv* 3, no. 1 (1977): 37.

5. Tiago de Oliveira Pinto, ““Art Is Universal”—On Nationalism and Universality in the Music of Heitor Villa-Lobos,” *The World of Music* 29, no. 2 (1987): 105, www.jstor.org/stable/43562744.

In addition, Villa-Lobos performed during the Semana de Arte Moderna in 1922 [Week of modern art], a significant cultural movement in Brazil.⁷

Villa-Lobos's music combines elements from both European traditions (for example, Impressionism) and Brazilian folk music, stylizing the latter in his own manner.⁸ He avoided traditional preconceived compositional plans and used a more spontaneous and improvised language in order to express the multiple and varied Brazilian cultural traditions.⁹

This document will discuss Brazilian folkloric rhythms in two of his compositions for piano: *A Lenda do Caboclo* (1920), W. 166, 188, and *Ciclo Brasileiro* (1936), W. 374, a cycle containing four pieces. The programmatic titles of each piece and movement are Villa-Lobos's representation of the lifestyle of the peoples in Northeastern Brazil. The discussion will focus on several elements that are found in the traditional Brazilian genres of *baião*, *seresta*, *choro*, *maracatu*, and *frevô*. These genres contain distinctive musical styles and rhythms, rich history, and other traits which will be examined.

6. Eero Tarasti, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: Life and Works, 1887-1959* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1995), 39.

7. Tarasti, 4.

8. Gerard Béhague, "Villa-Lobos, Heitor," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed 21 November, 2021, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.lynx.lib.usm.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000029373>.

9. Ibid.

***A Lenda do Caboclo* [The legend of the caboclo]**

According to musicologist Gerard Béhague, Villa Lobos' works until 1922 represent "a young composer in Brazil in search of new ideas and sonorities,"¹⁰ influenced by French composers such as Debussy and Saint-Saëns.¹¹ Even though the Impressionistic style influenced his compositions, *A Lenda do Caboclo* is still considered to have nationalistic features. The title has a programmatic connotation, and the piece employs well-known Brazilian folkloric rhythms which will be described below.

The Legend of the Caboclo is a short piano piece, roughly four minutes in length. Its title evokes a peasant man, referred to as a *caboclo* in Portuguese. *Caboclo* is a person of indigenous Brazilian and white European ancestry, a common mixed racial heritage found among Brazilian residents in the north and Northeastern parts of the country.

The word *caboclo* has an extramusical connotation, according to concert pianist and author David Appleby, and is associated with a specific geographic region.¹² Appleby translates the title to "The Legend of the Copper-Colored Man."¹³ In his

10. Gerard Béhague, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Search for Brazil's Musical Soul* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas, 1994), 46.

11. Ibid, 45.

12. David Appleby and Martha Appleby, "The Legend of Villa-Lobos," *Clavier* 26, no. 3 (March 1987): 20.

13. Ibid. Vasco Mariz also translates this title as "The Legend of the Backwoods-man." According to Mariz, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: Brazilian Composer* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963), 53.

opinion, this piece could represent the challenges of surviving the excruciating, tropical heat of the *sertão*, an arid region in Northeast Brazil where the rainy seasons are limited.¹⁴

According to musicologist Lisa Peppercorn, this work's nationalistic character is derived from its use of "vague rhythms and descending melodic line, which produces a nostalgic effect."¹⁵ Gerard Béhague also addresses the character of the rhythm stating that the arduous workday of the *caboclo* is portrayed through the use of the *habanera* rhythm.¹⁶ This light and buoyant rhythmic *ostinato* is of Afro-Cuban origin, and usually features a slow tempo in duple meter.¹⁷ A variant of this rhythm is also known as *tresillo*, as Figure 1 illustrates.



Figure 1. *Habanera* and *tresillo* rhythms.

14. Appleby and Appleby, 20.

15. Lisa M. Peppercorn, *Villa-Lobos, The Music: An Analysis of His Style*, trans. Stefan de Haan (London: Kahn and Averill, 1991), 9.

16. Béhague, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Search for Brazil's Musical Soul* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas, 1994), 46.

17. Frances Barulich and Jan Fairley, "Habanera," *Grove Music Online*, ed. by Deane Root, accessed 30 November, 2021, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.lynx.lib.usm.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000012116>.

Jovino Santos Neto, a Brazilian musician and teacher at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, contributes to this discussion by adding that the *tresillo* has the same “groove”¹⁸ as Brazilian Northeastern “grooves”:

This is a 2-beat rhythmic cell that divides the 8 16th notes in three groups with 3, 3, and 2 notes. It is common in many other musical cultures as well. . . . In Brazil, it underlies the family of Northeastern grooves. . . . When playing any of these, it is essential for the musician to learn how to keep this 3-3-2 cell pulsating in the background, so that the phrasing, accents, articulations and other subtle details will be coherent with the groove.¹⁹

In Musical Example 1, Villa-Lobos’s first usage of the *tresillo* rhythmic cell is highlighted.



Musical Example 1. *Tresillo* rhythm in *A Lenda do Caboclo*, mm. 1-4.

This piece is in ABA form and begins with a hesitant rhythmic figure which permeates the A sections of the work. According to Béhague, this rhythm portrays the quiet endurance of the *caboclo* life.²⁰ It is common knowledge that in this part of Brazil, a

18. According to Geoffrey Whittall, groove is “the result of a musical process that is often identified as a vital drive or rhythmic propulsion.” The term is mostly used in popular music and jazz settings. Geoffrey Whittall, “Groove,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed 27 February, 2022, <https://doi-org.lynx.lib.usm.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2284508>.

19. Jovino Santos Neto, “Ginga: A Brazilian Way to Groove,” accessed June 14, 2021, <http://www.jovisan.net/uploads/1/0/7/1/10715323/ginga.pdf>.

20. Béhague, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Search for Brazil’s Musical Soul* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas, 1994), 68.

good portion of the population lives as farmers even though the climate is very arid.

Similarly, Souza Lima states that the melancholic chords that are heard at the beginning of the piece (and throughout the A sections) portray the *caboclo* slowly working, and the accented “B” left-hand crossovers are a bird called *juriti*.²¹ For Lima, nature and peace are closely related with the culture of the *sertão*, and Villa-Lobos continually composed pieces referencing Brazil’s natural landscape.²²

The five-bar melody of the first theme utilizes a g-sharp minor pentachord and repeats twice. The second half of the phrase features one minor adjustment, by resolving downward through the use of the seventh scale degree. Please see Musical Example 2.



Musical Example 2. First-theme melody from *A Lenda do Caboclo*, mm. 15-19.

The chords in the left hand in measures 15 through 19 span the intervals of a sixth, seventh, and octave. The intervals of a seventh create an unresolved dissonance that lingers in the air, while the melody in the right hand sings in a lyrical and simple way.

21. Souza Lima, *Comentários sobre a obra pianística de Villa-Lobos* [Commentary about the piano works of Villa-Lobos] (Rio de Janeiro: MEC/DAC, Museu Villa-Lobos, 1976), 40.

22. Some of these pieces include *Uirapuru*, W. 133 (*uirapuru* is a majestic Brazilian bird); *A Cascavel*, W. 125 (*cascavel* is a type of Brazilian snake species); *Floresta do Amazonas* [Amazon forest], W. 551; *Canção da Terra* [Song of the earth], W. 200; *Saudades das Selvas Brasileiras* [Missing the Brazilian jungles], W. 226.

In the B section, which is in A minor, Villa-Lobos uses the same melody, but now heard in the left hand. Intervals of a fourth accompany in the right hand, which gives this section a quartal sonority. The tempo of this section is also marked to be played faster (*Andantino*) and in a “very expressive” (*muito espressivo*) manner, as seen in Musical Example 3.



Musical Example 3. First theme heard in the left hand from *A Lenda do Caboclo*, mm. 32-34.

The first folk element to be examined is the use of the syncopated folk rhythm associated with *baião*, which is a popular dance that developed during the late nineteenth century in Northeast Brazil.²³ It originated from the *lundu*, a common dance of the African slaves. *Baião* comes from the verb *bailar*, meaning “to dance.”²⁴ It became a popular genre due to Luiz Gonzaga, a well-known Northeastern songwriter and musician. He incorporated the genre into commercial popular music and established the *baião*

23. Luiz da Câmara Cascudo, *Dicionário do Folclore Brasileiro* [Dictionary of Brazilian folklore], 10th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 1999), 128-29.

24. Fabio Miranda, “A História do Baião—Os Bastidores” [The history of *baião*—Backstage] (YouTube video), October 28, 2015, 2:43, <https://youtu.be/IdEPg1F7HqI>.

ensemble, consisting of a trio of instruments—*zabumba* (a type of narrow drum), triangle, and accordion.²⁵

Its melody normally has two identifying characteristics—the use of modal scales (usually mixolydian, lydian, and dorian),²⁶ as well as intervals of ascending and descending thirds. The joyful *baião* is widely used in the music and dance of popular Brazilian feasts. Please refer to Figures 2 and 3 for the *baião* rhythm and its variation.



Figure 2. *Baião* rhythm.



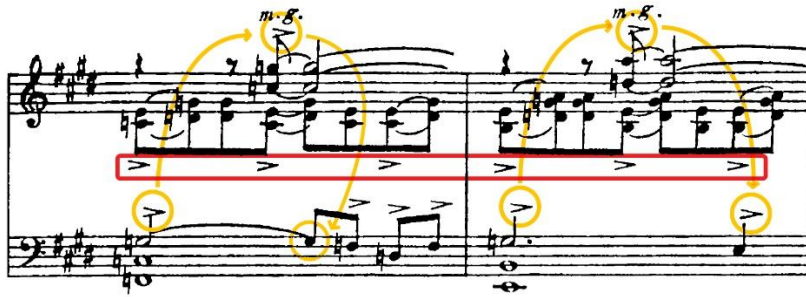
Figure 3. Variation of *baião* rhythm.

The influence of *baião* can be heard at the end of the B section in measures 48 through 51 of *A Lenda do Caboclo*. The rhythm is not only used in the right-hand accents but it can also be seen as the left hand connects the downbeat to the crossover notes in these measures. The pianist needs to perform the accents precisely for the

25. Larry Crook, "Brazil: Northeast Area," in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 2, *South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean*, eds. Dale A. Olsen and Daniel E. Sheehy (New York: Garland, 1998-2002), 332.

26. Cascudo, 128-29.

baião style and mood to be portrayed, as noted in Musical Example 4.



Musical Example 4. Use of *baião* rhythm from *A Lenda do Caboclo*, mm. 50-51.

When the *baião* rhythm is utilized, Villa-Lobos marks *um pouco alegre* [a bit happier], suggesting the elevation of the melancholic mood heard in the previous A section. The piece ends with a return of the introductory material and the A section.

***Ciclo Brasileiro* [Brazilian cycle]**

Ciclo Brasileiro has four movements: “O Plantio do Caboclo” [The caboclo’s planting], “Impressões Seresteiras” [Impressions of serenades], “Festa no Sertão” [Feast in the desert] and “Dança do Índio Branco” [Dance of the white Indian].

Written in 1936 in Rio de Janeiro, this cycle also references the *caboclo* and the culture of Northeastern Brazil. As Vasco Mariz states, this cycle (along with *The Legend of the Caboclo*) is one of the most popular works in Villa-Lobos’ compositional output, and “depicts the backwoodsman who seeds his land (‘O Plantio do Caboclo’), sings a serenade to the moon (‘Impressões Seresteiras’), then gives a hillbilly party

(‘Festa no Sertão’) and invites the white Indian (‘Dança do Indio Branco’) to it.”²⁷ In other words, the *caboclo* plants his crops and invites his community for a celebration.

“O Plantio do Caboclo” [The caboclo’s planting]

Mariz describes the imagery of the first piece from this cycle, by stating that Villa Lobos uses a “rhythmic design expressing the regular clang of the plowshare.”²⁸ In this movement which features ABA form, the left-hand chords and low bass notes can represent the steady planting movement of the *caboclo* blade. Please compare Figure 2 with Musical Example 5, and note that an augmented version of the *baião* rhythm is used.²⁹



Musical Example 5. *Baião* rhythm from “O Plantio do Caboclo,” m. 5.

27. Mariz, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: Brazilian Composer* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963), 52.

28. Ibid.

29. Eduardo Antonio Conde Garcia, Jr., “The Importance of Afro-Brazilian Music in Heitor Villa-Lobos’ Quest for a Unique Musical Style” (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 2002), 74, <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu/docview/304787000?accountid=13946>.

An *ostinato* in the right hand provides a still and peaceful harmonic background, supporting the left-hand chords and bass notes, as seen in Musical Example 6.

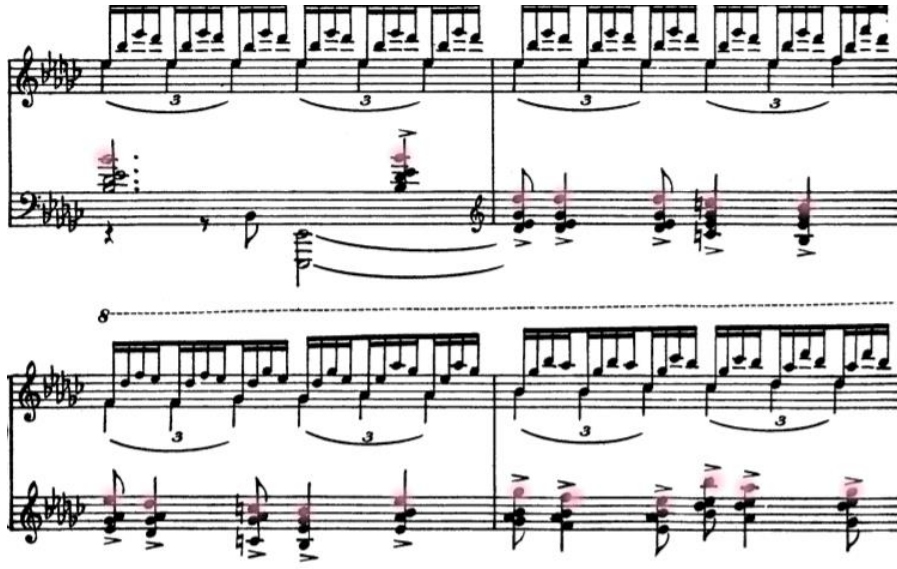
The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It is written in E-flat major (three flats) and 3/4 time. The score is divided into two systems. The right hand (treble clef) plays a continuous eighth-note ostinato pattern, often in groups of three. The left hand (bass clef) plays chords and bass notes, including some with accents. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The piece is marked 'o canto'. The first system has a key signature change to E-flat major (three flats) and a time signature change to 3/4. The second system continues the same pattern.

Musical Example 6. Right-hand *ostinato* supports the left-hand chords and low bass notes from “O Plantio do Caboclo,” mm. 4-7.


These left-hand chords are interesting from a harmonic perspective. Villa-Lobos uses several seventh chords marked with accents, which corroborates the movement of the *caboclo* blade and the planting scene (see Musical Example 6 where the Db7 chords lead to Gb Major). The melody in the top voice of these chords moves by whole and half steps.

In addition to its syncopated rhythm, another trait of the *baião* style is represented in the B section of the piece: the use of dorian mode. E-flat dorian is

featured in the top voice of the left-hand chords in measures 21 through 32.³⁰ Villa-Lobos utilizes this exotic scale in the form of a simple melody that repeats as if it were a chant. Also, the repetitive nature of the simple melody in the top voice of the left-hand chords in this section suggests the *baião* genre. Please see Musical Example 7 for these elements.



Musical Example 7. Dorian scale in the top voice of the left-hand chords, from “O Plantio do Caboclo,” mm. 28-31.

Also worthy of note is the use of syncopation and cross rhythms heard throughout the movement, as well as the *garfo* rhythm³¹  which is prominent in the B section. The *garfo* rhythm is commonly used in Brazilian music, represented by a sixteenth note, eighth note, sixteenth note pattern. Villa-Lobos uses an augmented version of the *garfo* in this section (eighth note, quarter note, eighth note as

30. Ibid., 75.

31. Jovino Santos Neto, “The Rhythmic Language of Brazilian Music” (video of lecture, Berklee College of Music), 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HP1oz-7NPg>. Jovino Santos Neto describes the *garfo* rhythm during this lecture video.

seen in measures 29 through 31 of the previous example), but the syncopated feeling remains. While the left hand features syncopation, the right hand features sixteenth notes, grouped in triplets. These cross rhythms can be difficult for the performer to align when first learning the movement. However, the true beauty of the section is the combination of the triplets in the right hand with the syncopated *garfo* rhythm in the left hand. The pianist must also bring out the top-voice melody of the left-hand chords, while keeping these right-hand sixteenth-note triplet groupings in the background.

This use of cross rhythms is a characteristic of Villa-Lobos's writing in the cycle and can be noted in movements 1, 2, and 3.

“Impressões Seresteiras” [Impressions of serenades]

The second movement of the cycle employs two folk genres, the *seresta* and the *choro*. *Seresta*, according to musicologist Mário de Andrade, is a synonym of *serenata*.³² Both genres involve the act of singing and playing after sunset,³³ as a way of paying homage to a loved one.³⁴ *Serenata* is typically shorter in length and sentimental in character, expressing love, tragic love, and sadness.

Seresta combines sentimental song with traces of the popular Portuguese genre *modinha*,³⁵ an art song cultivated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with

32. Mário de Andrade, *Dicionário Musical Brasileiro* [Dictionary of Brazilian music], ed. Oneyda Alvarenga and Flávia Camargo Toni (Belo Horizonte: Editora Itatiaia, 1989), 471-72.

33. *Ibid.*, 471.

34. Cascudo, 818.

35. Valéria Gomes de Souza, “A seresta e a serenata nas cidades de Conservatória e Niterói, no Estado do Rio de Janeiro” [The *seresta* and the *serenata* in the cities of Conservatória and Niterói, in the estate of Rio de Janeiro] (Diss. Master of Music, Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro, 2010), 81, <http://www.unirio.br/ppgm/arquivos/dissertacoes/valeria-de-souza>.

Portuguese origins. *Modinha* eventually evolved into a strongly lyrical folksong, incarnating the Brazilian romantic spirit, according to Béhague.³⁶ *Choro*, on the other hand, has its roots in the more popular European waltz genre and the polka, and it features plaintive melodies³⁷ along with a rondo-like form (for example, ABACA).³⁸

Choro literally means a “cry” or “lament.” Mário de Andrade states that *choros* and *serestas* are generic names for music played at night with a popular character.³⁹ According to Béhague, instrumental ensembles of serenaders were popular in the city of Rio de Janeiro between 1875 and 1900. They were known as weepers (*chorões*), and performed dance music like the *maxixe*⁴⁰—a popular dance with rhythmic elements

36. Gerard Béhague, “Modinha,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed 29 November 2021, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.lynx.lib.usm.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000018840>.

37. Ricardo Cravo Albin, *O livro de ouro da MPB: a história da nossa música popular de sua origem até hoje* [The MPB golden book: The history of our popular music from its origin until today] (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Ediouro Publicações S.A., 2003), 40.

38. Fabian C. Moss, Willian Fernandes Souza, and Martin Rohrmeier, “Harmony and Form in Brazilian Choro: A Corpus-Driven Approach to Musical Style Analysis,” *Journal of New Music Research* 49, no. 5 (August 2020): 417, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09298215.2020.1797109>.

39. Mário de Andrade, *Pequena História da Música* [Short history of music] (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2005, Adobe Digital Editions PDF), 177.

40. According to Marco Pereira, *maxixe* was a popular dance with sensual connotations from the end of the nineteenth century in Rio de Janeiro. Its rhythm was born from a mixture of the *polka* and *habanera*, as well as rhythmic elements borrowed from the Afro-Brazilian genres *batuque* and *lundu*. Marco Pereira, *Ritmos Brasileiros para violão* [Brazilian rhythms for guitar] (Rio de Janeiro: Garbolights Produções Artísticas, 2007), 18.

borrowed from Afro-Brazilian genres—and the *polka*.⁴¹ Also, the weepers played arrangements of *modinhas* and performed with great improvisation and virtuosity.⁴²

In the book, *Heitor Villa-Lobos, o homem e a obra* [Heitor Villa-Lobos, the man and his work], Mariz describes how the *choro* influenced many of Villa-Lobos's compositions, since Villa-Lobos performed this music during his youth. Mariz describes Villa-Lobos as a *chorão*, or “weeper,” a nickname for those who played the *choro*.⁴³ Additionally, Villa-Lobos's employment of the *seresta* and the *choro* is witnessed in the song cycle *Serestas* (fourteen sentimental short songs written from 1926 to 1943) as well as in his *Chôros* (a series of compositions written for several instruments, composed between 1920 and 1929).

Both the *seresta* and *choro* genres have a sentimental connotation, according to Mariz. Additionally, Mariz adds that the main difference between the two is that the *seresta* would be performed by voice, while the *choro* is performed by instruments. Mariz also notes that the *seresteiro* was someone recognized by his or her natural ability, while the *chorão* was recognized for their improvisational skills.⁴⁴

41. According to Gracian Černušák, Andrew Lamb, and John Tyrrell, a *polka* is a European dance in 2/4 time, and one of the most popular dances of the nineteenth century. Gracian Černušák, Andrew Lamb, and John Tyrrell, “Polka,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed 24 November, 2021, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.lynx.lib.usm.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000022020>.

42. Gerard Béhague, “Afro-Brazilian Traditions,” in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 2, *South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean*, eds. Dale A. Olsen and Daniel E. Sheehy (New York: Garland, 1998-2002), 350.

43. Vasco Mariz, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: o homem e a obra* [Heitor Villa-Lobos: The man and his work], 12th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Francisco Alves Editora S.A., 2005), 45.

44. *Ibid.*, 49.

“Impressões Seresteiras” is a waltz in ABACA form, featuring a sentimental guitar-like melody interspersed with fast arpeggios in an improvisational style. The guitar was a popular instrument among the serenades and the *choro* ensembles, and the introduction of the piece also seems to reflect the impromptu strumming of guitar chords, perhaps inviting someone to the serenade. This improvisatory guitar introduction can be seen in Musical Example 8.



Musical Example 8. Improvisatory guitar introduction from “Impressões Seresteiras,” m. 1.

In measure 2, Villa-Lobos presents a short musical idea that becomes the waltz accompaniment of the A section. This section returns three times throughout the piece, and features a “crying,” melancholic melody, showing the influence of the *choro*.

Musical Example 9 illustrates the waltz accompaniment, as well as the plaintive melody.



Musical Example 9. Musical motive that becomes the waltz accompaniment, and plaintive right-hand melody, from “Impressões Seresteiras,” mm. 2-8.

Musical Example 10 demonstrates the rhythmic difficulty of the C section. The top voice of the left-hand chords plays the melody, while the right hand accompanies with two groups of sixteenth-note quadruplets. This challenging example also features changing meters, and in some measures, the right hand is in 3/4 while the left-hand melody is in 6/8.

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system contains five measures, and the second system contains four measures. The music is characterized by complex polyrhythms, including quadruplets of sixteenth notes. In the second system, a green box highlights a measure where the right hand is in 3/4 time and the left hand is in 6/8 time, illustrating the rhythmic complexity mentioned in the text.

Musical Example 10. Rhythmic complexity in C section, from “Impressões Seresteiras,” mm. 164-172.

“Festa no Sertão” [Feast in the desert]

The third movement of *Ciclo Brasileiro* features ABACA Coda form, and is the most animated and festive movement of the cycle. It is also technically one of the hardest for the pianist to play. Villa-Lobos has a particular fondness for the use of polyrhythms (as seen in other movements of the cycle), as well as mixed meter and accents, and often three layers of musical ideas are presented. “Festa no Sertão” showcases three main folk rhythms that are associated with *maracatu*, *baião*, and *frevo*.

Maracatu is a symbolic Afro-Brazilian ceremony, a procession involving the coronation of a king and queen, along with other main characters such as the *dama-do-paço* (court lady) and the *baianas* (female dancers). The *dama-do-paço* is the main character of the parade, and she carries *calunga* dolls, an allusion of an African deity.⁴⁵ Originating in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the region now known as the state of Pernambuco, African slaves created this procession in an effort to maintain their traditions and keep their communities united.⁴⁶ *Maracatu* is also performed during Carnaval and rural religious feasts.

An integral part of the *maracatu* procession is its musical accompaniment, featuring several percussion instruments including the *agogo* (two bells of different pitches), *zabumba* (a drum worn over the shoulder and performed with a mallet and the bare hand), *caixa* (snare drum), *repique* (a version of a snare), *cuica* (a friction drum which produces different pitches), *surdo* (a large drum), *alfaia* (a medium-sized drum with a deep sound), and *ganza* (shakers).⁴⁷

45. According to Gerard Béhague, a *calunga* doll portrays a totem of fetishistic cult and a symbol of authority, alluding to African deities. Gerard Béhague, “Brazil,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed 16 November, 2021, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000003894>.

46. Mateus Melo, “Maracatu esse som é massa: uma história ritmada de Pernambuco” [*Maracatu* this sound is awesome: A rhythmic story of Pernambuco] (YouTube video about the cultural movement and the music), March 6, 2021, 14:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_KP7qgrkxo.

47. Jeff Gardner, “Muito Axé!: Infuse Your Keyboard Grooves with Brazilian Rhythms” [Very much Axé!: Infuse your keyboard grooves with Brazilian rhythms], *Keyboard* 27 (November 2001): 50-51, <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu/magazines/muito-axe-infuse-your-keyboard-grooves-with/docview/1364056/se-2?accountid=13946>.

Each instrument of the *maracatu* ensemble has its own rhythmic part. Figure 4 illustrates a typical *maracatu* rhythm, usually performed by the *caixa*, or sometimes the *agogo* or the *surdo*.⁴⁸



Figure 4. *Maracatu* rhythm.

The introduction and first theme of “Festa no Sertão,” is characterized by its lively sixteenth-note rhythm in the high and middle registers of the piano. This section utilizes the *maracatu* rhythm from Figure 4 and suggests the idea of a festive Brazilian parade. Villa-Lobos not only uses this rhythm in the introduction and first theme but throughout the movement in both the melody and accompaniment (see Musical Example 11). Beginning in measure 4, the rhythm of *maracatu* is also implied in the right-hand as seen in Musical Example 12. Please note Villa Lobos’s use of syncopation in these examples and how the melody or accompaniment features upbeats, which helps to provide a high level of energy. This liveliness is a typical trait of Brazilian folk music and *maracatu*.⁴⁹

48. This video illustrates a traditional *maracatu* percussion band. DJ Blue, “Evolução de Bateria—Maracatu Estrela Brilhante do Recife” [Percussion band evolution—*Maracatu* of the brilliant star of Recife] (YouTube video demonstrating music from the album *Caipirinha do Brasil*, vol. 1), February 18, 2012, 3:08, <https://youtu.be/GmuOoeuubs>.

49. Jovino Santos Neto, “The Rhythmic Language of Brazilian Music” (video of lecture, Berklee College of Music), 2007, 39:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HP1oz-7NPg>.



Musical Example 11. Festive introduction and use of *maracatu* rhythm, in “Festa no Sertão,” mm. 1-3.

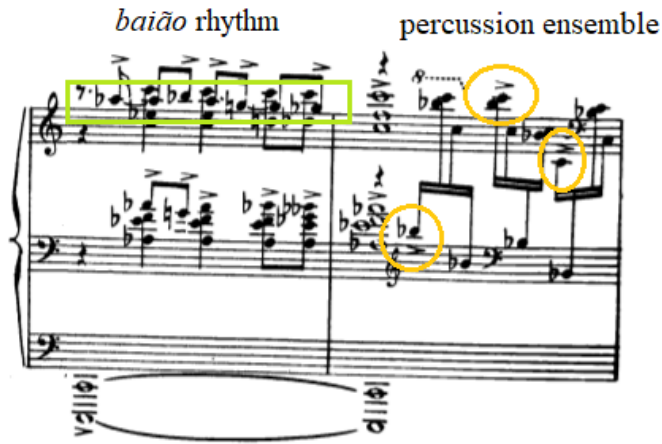


Musical Example 12. Use of *maracatu* rhythm in “Festa no Sertao,” mm. 4-5.

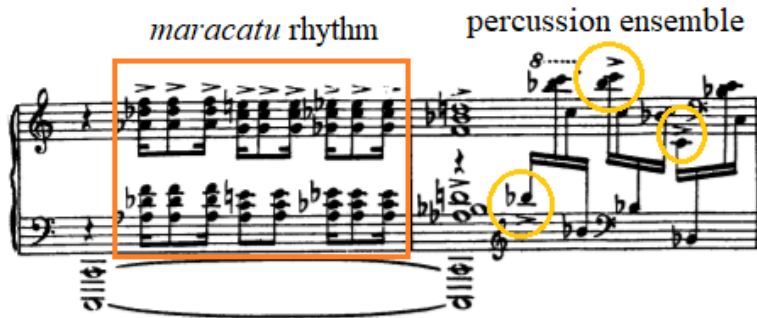
Villa-Lobos is following a pattern we have noted in the waltz accompaniment of “Impressões Seresteiras,” which maintains its rhythmic importance throughout the movement. The festive, toccata-like introductory material of “Festa no Sertão” also continues its importance throughout the work.

The next musical examples show the influence of *baião* and *maracatu* rhythms. In measures 20 and 23, the middle voice of the right-hand chords uses the *baião* rhythm, which is repeated twice. Furthermore, each downbeat of the group of four sixteenth notes in measures 21 and 25 is accented, as if it was performed by a percussion ensemble. *Maracatu* rhythm is also employed in measure 24, and the same

percussion ensemble is still featured. Musical Examples 13 and 14 highlight all of these aspects and suggest the atmosphere of a Brazilian parade or *festa*.



Musical Example 13. Use of syncopated *baião* rhythm and accented downbeats of the percussion ensemble in “Festa no Sertão,” mm. 20-21.

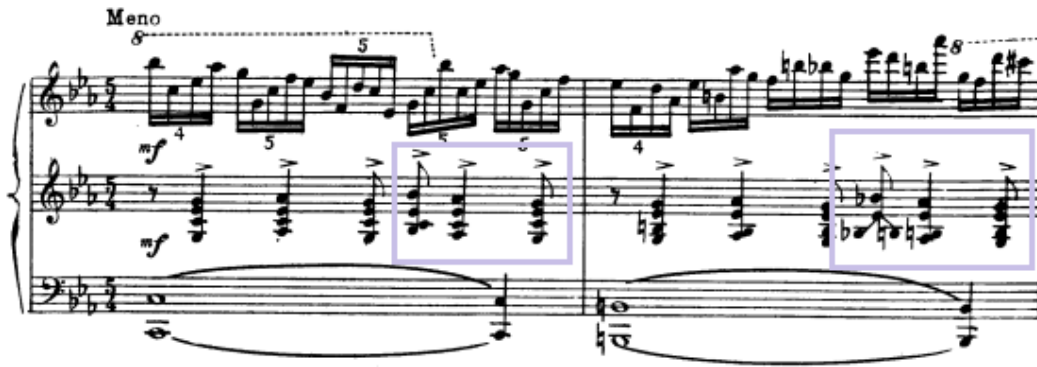


Musical Example 14. Use of syncopated *maracatu* rhythm and accented downbeats of the percussion ensemble in “Festa no Sertão,” mm. 24-25.

While the previous examples remind the reader of a carnival of rhythms and sounds associated with the procession feast, the C section becomes more introspective in sound and mood. This complex section features polyrhythms, 5/4 time signature, and a syncopated melody in the middle staff heard in the top voice of the left hand. The melancholic mood we have noted in “A Lenda do Caboclo” and “Plantio do Caboclo” is also clear here. A rhythmically slower version of the *garfo* rhythm



sometimes occurs at the end of each measure of this section (the eighth note, quarter note, eighth note figure seen in Musical Example 15).



Musical Example 15. Section C featuring polyrhythms and *garfo* rhythm in “Festa no Sertao,” mm. 38-39.

The rhythmic complexity of this particular section is an emotional high point, and also one of the most challenging sections of the movement. The pianist needs a good understanding of the independence of the hands because of the numerous polyrhythms that are used, as well as the ability to properly voice the melody of the left-hand chords. The use of the sostenuto pedal can also be helpful in this section.

Villa-Lobos also implies a third folk rhythm in this movement, which is associated with the *frevo* genre. *Frevo* originated in Recife (located in the state of Pernambuco), during the late nineteenth century, and first emerged as a Carnival rhythm. Additionally, due to the fact that slavery was abolished and the Brazilian republic was established, combined with urban sprawl, Carnival gained more in size and importance, empowering the lower classes to express themselves in public spaces in the form of parades with music.⁵⁰

50. Marcos Lacerda, “et al.,” “Frevo,” University of São Paulo Ethnomusicology department, accessed June 28, 2021,

In the late nineteenth century, class boundaries were undergoing change and reconfiguration. The music and parades during Carnival festivities provided an opportunity for all social classes to intermingle.⁵¹ *Frevo* is also influenced by the music and parades of the Brazilian military band regiments that commonly marched in the streets and hired *capoeira* fighters to protect them. *Capoeira* is a Brazilian martial art developed by African slaves and forbidden to be practiced until the abolition of slavery in Brazil.⁵²

The term *frevo*, from the Portuguese word *ferver*, meaning “to boil,” incorporates fast-paced, *moto perpetuo* music with highly acrobatic dance featuring *capoeira* movements, and dancers holding small umbrellas.⁵³ One of the most important characteristics of *frevo* is the marching band that accompanies the parade. The instrumentation of the *frevo* band includes a prominent presence of brass instruments, as well as clarinets, saxophones, and percussion (drums, snare drum,

https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/5827122/mod_resource/content/1/Frevo%20_Caio%2C%20Ellen%2C%20Lorena.pdf.

51. Kate Spanos, “*Frevo*: A Reflection on Dances of Resistance During Times of Protest,” *Smithsonian Folklife Festival* (festival blog), September 30, 2020, <https://festival.si.edu/blog/frevo-dances-of-resistance-protest>.

52. Ibid. According to Kate Spanos, *capoeira* is a Brazilian martial art developed by African slaves in Brazil. From 1890 until the 1930s, it was forbidden to be practiced. The *frevo* dance developed from early *capoeira* techniques. To this day, acrobatic movements are part of the *frevo* dance.

53. Ibid.

pandeiro [a small hand drum], and *surdos*).⁵⁴ One of its characteristic rhythms, seen in Figure 5, is played by the snare drum.⁵⁵



Figure 5. *Frevo* rhythm.

In measures 82 through 84, the “boiling” feeling of the *frevo* rhythm can be noted in the accented and energetic E-flat left-hand repeated notes, as seen in Musical Example 16. Please compare this example with Figure 5.



Musical Example 16. *Frevo* rhythm in “Festa no Sertão,” mm. 82-84.

The use of the E-flat melodic minor scale adds an exotic flavor in measures 84 through 86, as well as measure 89. The left hand accompanies in a frenzy of Ab Major second inversion and Eb Major seventh chords over an E-flat pedal that continues the *frevo* rhythm. Please see Musical Example 17.

54. Larry Crook, “Brazil: Northeast Area,” in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 2, *South America, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean*, 336-38.

55. Lacerda, et al., 3.



Musical Example 17. E-flat melodic minor scale accompanied by E-flat pedal using *frevo* rhythm in “Festa no Sertao,” m. 85.

A percussive passage follows featuring the low register of the piano. This leads to an explosion of thick chords in the upper register of the piano, reminiscent of fireworks during a celebration (see Musical Example 18).

Musical Example 18. Percussive passage featuring the low register of the piano, followed by thick chords in the upper register of the piano in “Festa no Sertão,” mm. 98-103.

After this explosion of sound and color, the A section returns for the final time, followed by the Coda. The *baião* rhythm and its variant are suggested in this closing

section. Both hands employ the folk rhythm, while the right hand also includes several scalar sixteenth notes throughout the section, resulting in a frenetic musical loop that is stretched to its maximum potential. Please compare Musical Example 19 with the *baião* rhythm and its variant (Figures 2 and 3).



Musical Example 19. Coda featuring *baião* rhythm and its variant in “Festa no Sertão,” mm. 125-127.

“Dança do Índio Branco” [Dance of the white Indian]

“Dança do Índio Branco” is accompanied by an interesting story. Villa-Lobos himself relates a colorful tale about a white Indian he met in a Brazilian forest during one of his expeditions. The Indian danced repeatedly for him, and then suddenly collapsed and died.⁵⁶ It seems slightly difficult to believe that this scenario actually occurred, maybe due to the lack of details surrounding it.

This movement features ABAB form and contains a short coda. The opening five measures of the introduction establish the rhythmic design and character of the movement, as seen in Musical Example 20. The sixteenth notes heard in the low register throughout the A sections have an exotic character and sonority, that

56. Villa-Lobos, *sua obra: Programa de Ação Cultural*, 1972 [Villa-Lobos, his works: A cultural act program, 1972], 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: MEC/DAC, Museu Villa-Lobos, 1974), quoted in Eero Tarasti, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: Life and Works, 1887-1959* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1995), 258.

musicologist Gabriel Ferrão Moreira related to indigenous music because of its use of intervals of a second and third and its repeated note *ostinato* figure.⁵⁷



Musical Example 20. Opening five measures from “Dança do Índio Branco,” mm. 1-5.

Moreira explains that Villa-Lobos developed his own way of incorporating certain musical characteristics to evoke an Amerindian, an indigenous character of the Americas. For example, Moreira states that Villa-Lobos accomplished this “a) through the utilization of melodies and texts of indigenous character; b) intervals of the second and modalism, and the constant pulse in the melodic construction; c) structures of fourths/fifths; d) parallelisms; e) *ostinatos*; f) melodic fluidity; g) and a kind of ostentatious texture.”⁵⁸

Also important to note is Villa-Lobos’s ability to market himself abroad, particularly in his travels to Paris, which was largely due to his exploration of the exotic Brazilian figure, the indigenous aesthetic Moreira described earlier.⁵⁹ This image

57. Gabriel Ferrão Moreira, “O Elemento indígena na obra de Heitor Villa-Lobos: Uma pesquisa em finalização” [The indigenous element in the works of Heitor Villa-Lobos: Finalizing research], *Anais do SIMPOM—I Simpósio Brasileiro de Pós-Graduandos em Música*, no. 1 (November 2010): 909, <http://www.seer.unirio.br/simpom/article/view/2787>.

58. Gabriel Ferrão Moreira, “O Estilo indígena de Villa Lobos (Parte I): aspectos melódicos e harmônicos” [The indigenous style of Villa-Lobos (Part I): Melodic aspects and harmonics], *Per Musi*, no. 27 (June 2013): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1517-75992013000100003>.

59. *Ibid.*, 26.

seems to have influenced Villa-Lobos's musical aesthetic in "Dança do Índio Branco." This same focus on primitivism can also be seen in Igor Stravinsky's compositions. According to Moreira, Stravinsky uses parallel fourths and fifths to reference the pagan Russian based on folkloric tradition, building up an association between the exotic sonority with the people it represented, and modifying this in his own style. In the case of Villa-Lobos, Moreira proposes the same idea—that the composer took advantage of this musical representation and rearranges it to portray his own aesthetic sonority of a native indigenous Brazilian culture.⁶⁰

Several fundamental musical elements bring the exotic figure to mind when listening to this movement. For example, Villa-Lobos uses a minor key (A natural minor), a melody that moves in seconds and thirds, employs quartal and quintal harmonies, and fast, syncopated rhythms that provide momentum throughout.

Villa-Lobos creates a rhythmically complex movement in which the melody of the first theme is very similar to the *frevo* rhythm, as illustrated in the next two musical examples. The meter changes several times, so it is essential for the performer to be aware of the integrity of the downbeat pulse, and evenness of the constantly moving sixteenths is challenging. Please compare Musical Example 21 with Figure 5.

As seen in Musical Example 21, the melody of the first theme is related to the *frevo* rhythm in Figure 5; however, in place of the ties in Figure 5, Villa-Lobos uses rests.

60. Ibid.



Musical Example 21. The *frevo* rhythm is implied in the first theme from “Dança do Índio Branco,” mm. 14-15.

In Musical Example 22, it is possible to notice how Villa-Lobos treats the second statement of the first theme—he varies it melodically and rhythmically. Please note how the second statement features the rhythm of the *frevo* variant. Please compare Figure 6 with Musical Example 22.



Figure 6. *Frevo* variant.



Musical Example 22. The *frevo* rhythmic variant is implied in the first theme from “Dança do Índio Branco,” mm. 32-33.

Beginning in the B section at measure 85, as the movement and cycle reach their final moments, the relative key of C Major is used, and a different character is portrayed from the previous section. Perhaps this is Villa-Lobos’s way of recalling the

tranquil and peaceful persona of the *caboclo*, heard at the beginning of the cycle in “Plantio do Caboclo.” This final summoning of the *caboclo* is a way of connecting the entire cycle, portraying the tenderness of the humble *sertão* resident. Please see Musical Example 23.



Musical Example 23. B section melody representing the *caboclo* figure, from “Dança do Índio Branco,” mm. 85-96.

Pianistically speaking, there are several challenges that are worthy of mentioning—the movement is primarily rhythmically driven, with much use of syncopation, as well as transitions that use fast triplet repeat notes. The performer will need to be well-versed in the use of sostenuto pedal for the sustaining of bass notes when multiple layers of musical lines are featured.

This doctoral project aimed to enlighten the reader by providing an analysis of Brazilian folk rhythms in Villa-Lobos’s *A Lenda do Caboclo* and *Ciclo Brasileiro*. This discussion focused on rhythms that are found in the traditional Brazilian genres of *baião*, *seresta*, *choro*, *maracatu*, and *frevo*.

Sometimes the use of these rhythms is hidden between complex polyrhythms, virtuosic passagework, as well as melody and accompanimental lines, in Villa-Lobos's own stylized manner. However, through a thorough analysis and understanding of the cultural history of each genre, the performance of these works will be enriched.

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