

16. STYLISTIC-INTERPRETATIVE STATISTICS OF THE CREATION FOR GUITAR SOLO (Preludes no. 1-5) BY HEITOR VILLA LOBOS

Daniel Dragomirescu¹⁴²

Abstract: *In the past, more precisely in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries, both pieces for keyboard instruments (organ or clavecin) and those for the guitar's ancestor, the lute, were preceded by an introduction bearing the title of prelude. In the seventeenth century, this prelude was used as an introduction to some religious works, being synonymous to the preamble, as both were meant to prepare the atmosphere and tone of a musical piece. Johann Sebastian Bach played a decisive role in the evolution of the prelude, using it as the first part of the preclassic instrumental suite, with the intention of setting the unique tone, the tone in which the whole work will be performed. Later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, taking over the tradition of J.S.Bach, the composers will write cycle pieces for various instruments, which, through their rich, melodic, harmonic, rhythmic variety of form and genre, will enjoy success in the concert halls. Examples include the cycles of preludes of Frederich Chopin, Claude Debussy, Alexandr Skriabin, Serghey Rachmaninov, Mihail Jora, and others. Villa-Lobos preludes touch the audience's sensitivity more directly than studies. Their appearance is an essential contribution to the guitar repertoire of the 20th century. In the small form, the author proved a brilliant sense of balance, intense feelings, great conceptual originality, making the most of the technical and sound resources of the instrument. These short compositions, always present in the repertory of all great guitarists, require our attention and admiration. Written shortly before 1940, in the original manuscript these preludes were six. Unfortunately, one of them, "the best of all" as the composer said, was lost. As regards this statement, John Duarte, in his work, the Preludes of Villa-Lobos. Some notes" considers this would have an ironic character. "Just like the Three Musketeers who were actually four, so the 5 Preludes were originally six".¹⁴³*

Key words: guitar, prelude, style and guitar performance

1. Introduction

In the book about Villa-Lobos, the great classic guitar musician and performer, Turibio Santos, lists a few possibilities for the disappearance of this last prelude. The first possibility would be that this work was lost during the Spanish civil war, when Andrés Segovia's residence was bombed. Another refers to a simple wandering in an office of a publishing house during the complete printing process and to possible theft by a few confused admirers. However, the most interesting of all seems to be the explanation that the composer wrote only five preludes, recording them as six, just to fit into the

¹⁴² Associate Professor, "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași, Romania, email: dany_guitar2000@yahoo.com

¹⁴³ Turibio Santos, *Heitor Villa-Lobos and the guitar*, originally published by the Museu Villa-Lobos, 1975, first published in English by Wise Owl Music, Gurtinacloona, Bantry, Co.Cork, Ireland, 1985, p.31

musical tradition (six-track series), and the latter being only in his imagination. If this was true, then the said aspect can be considered an example of collective hallucination, because many people, including Segovia and Arminda Villa-Lobos, have confirmed the existence of the sixth prelude.

The composer, throughout his career, claimed he had a predilection for preludes, the guitar ones being dedicated to Mindinha (the diminutive familiar from Arminda), his second wife. Viewed as a whole, these wonderful pieces present a mini-spot of the rural environment in Brazil and even more, of the Brazilian people. What the published scores do not illustrate is that each prelude, taken separately, is thought of as a separate dedication of proper title: *Prelude 1 - Lyrical Melody, Homage to the Brazilian Country Dweller* (Homage to a Brazilian peasant); *Prelude 2 - The Cappadocia melody, Capoeira Melody, Homage to the Rascal of Rio, the Malandro Carioca* (Homage to a Rio pickpocket); *Prelude 3 - Homage to Bach* (Homage to Bach); *Prelude no.4 - Homage to the Brazilian Indians* (Homage to the Brazilian Indians) and *Prelude no.5 - Homage to Social Life; to the young boys and girls who go to the concerts and the Theater in Rio* (Homage to social life, young boys and girls going to concerts and the Rio Theater). This is revealed in T. Santos's monograph on Lobos guitar music, written by T. Santos.

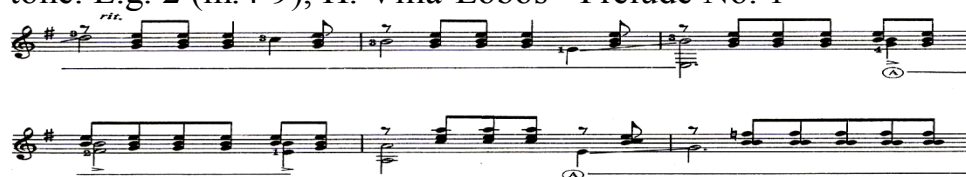
2. Prelude no. 1

Prelude no. 1, Together with *Chôros nr.1*, these are two songs most admired by the faithful audience who listen to works from the wonderful guitar repertoire given by Villa-Lobos to the universal music. From a structural point of view, the work has a *three strophic form* type **A B A**, with *da capo* (static reprise), along with a distinct melodic material, the sections differing at the tone, aggression and expressive level. The first section, **A**, consists of a unique idea that comes in varied forms, followed by a plan of enlargement and melodic development, which consists of three asymmetric periods (A A'A "), which can be grouped as a triple period. Considering this possible interpretation, as well as the size of the middle stanza, the form of prelude can be considered as a low three strophic. The three component periods of the initial stanza are made up of asymmetric phrases with multiple interior and exterior expansions. From a melodic point of view, two distinct planes are formed: the leading line, initially placed in the low pitch, subsequently extended to the acute one, and the harmonic accompaniment. The latter consists of successively arranged trisons, and the ostinato rhythmic aspect, though not identical throughout the section, strains the melodic performance, providing by repetition, a continuous pulse and a sound background whose mobility resides in the harmonic changes it manifests. *The first period* is made of two phrases, the latter having an outer enlargement, which extends semi-tempo by one gradually descending passage, which will end in the tonic sound of the next period. The essential motif the whole speech of stanza A (α) is based on has a simple melodic structure,

imposed by the anacrusic character, as well as by the rhythmic symmetry. The same reason is subsequently exposed in descending order ($\alpha 1$) and varied from an intonation perspective, by insertion of interval leaps. E.g. 1 (m.1-6), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



From a tonal perspective, the first sentence is homogeneous, being built on a pedal of tonic harmony; the second sentence introduces the functions of the subdominant, the third stage with the low seventh (the superior leading tone), the dominant seventh, which, in its turn, is also introduced by the superior leading tone. E.g. 2 (m.4-9), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



The *second period* contains the same initial reason, but in a new variant of its ascending hypostasis, which reaches a higher stage of the acute register, a process that involves a tension amplification and expressivity. At the same time, the composer uses the modal sonority using the 6th suitor altered stage, which confers the speech a Dorian coloration, also accentuated by sound superposition *do#* by tonic approval. E.g. 3, p.1, the last system (m.16-18), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



The second phrase structurally supports an extension by inner enlargement due to an ascending sequence of a two-sound cell in the main melodic plane doubled in the plane of accompaniment by a tuning progression. In close relation to the constructive process, a speech animation is performed, a tension, which is reflected in the rhythmic aspect, each symmetrically alternating with a harmony, according to the composer's indication *anim.*, as well as in the dissonant sonority generated by the successively exposed low seventh note. The ascending sequential fragment is followed by a descending solution, which harmonically ends in the dominant harmony, which, just like in the first period, constitutes the conclusion of the second sentence. E.g. 4 (m.20-28), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



The similarities to the previous sections of *the third period* are limited to the level of the first sentence, which will support a new modification of the second motif ($\alpha 1$) by extending the first interval in the acute register to the sound of the second stage, whose expressive effect is emphasized by tempo spacing, suggested by the rite *indication*. In addition, the end of the sentence is modified by attaching a tense fragment, based on repeated ostinato harmonic formulations, built by alternating the sounds of the dominance agreement with their leading tones. E.g. 5 (m.33-35), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



This last comeback of the idea brings a gradation phenomenon, the accompaniment built on broad position harmonies. The second sentence of this period presents a new material compared to the previous ones, and the repetitive construction and the harmonic tone content give it the character of a conclusion. The composer uses a VI7-V7-I type tempo, the low seventh of the 6th stage harmony involving a sensitization of the dominance harmony seventh mote, thus achieving a maximum expressiveness of the sonority. Finally, the 6th stage harmony is modified by the ascendant alteration of the fundamental, thus reaffirming, in a new context, Dorian sonority. From a tonal perspective, the section remains open and the dominant harmony was solved within the first measure in the middle section. E.g. 6 (m.47-52), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



As a conclusion on the harmony used in the first section, this reminds us of that used by Chopin in its preludes, with dissonances (seventh harmonies) solved after a whole chain of tuning successions and even harmonies with added elements (added fourth). E.g. 7 (m.51), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



The brief summary of the first stanza is the following: STANZA I = A + A' + A' where A = 12 measures (1-12) A' = 16 measures, compared to A, presenting an enlargement constituting the culmination of the stanza; A'' = 16 measures + 7 cadential complement measures. *The second stanza* of the work is shorter than the previous one, and the contrast of character is marked at the level of all musical parameters, both on the rhythmic line, by tempo acceleration and by the introduction of an alternative metric 2/4 with 3/4 and at the intonation level, by tonal contrast E-E, typical for the European compositional thinking, leading to the creation of form. Thus, the melodic plan is more flexible, more

diversified, including arpeggio, scalar, ornamental, and tuning structures. From the tonal-harmonic point of view, this section is more homogeneous, the harmonic path being made up of the *tonic-dominant* alternance, finally affirming the subdominant area, of a plagal character, by using the 4th and 2nd descending stages. In structural terms, the section is made up of two phrases. E.g. 8 p.3, syst. 2 to the penultimate system, the penultimate measure (m.52-69), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No.1



The two phrases are differentiated to the final level, which will be dynamized for the second, by modifying the meter, and repeating the cadence formula, ending with a *rall.* indicated by the composer. Retransition has a contrasting character from the point of view of sound, due to harmonic writing, in which, by repeating the ostinato, a higher plan is highlighted, containing the fundamental and the dominant harmony tierce, thus forming a pedal. At the same time, the harmonic framework is diversified by altered harmonies, and the meter and agogic are modified (*Poco meno*). E.g. 9 (m.70-77), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



In addition, the entire repetition of the median section is followed by a coda, which, in this case, plays the role of a retransition to the retake of the first stanza. This coda is made up of an excerpt from the second phrase of the first period A, the composer also realizing an anticipation of the sound material from the first stanza, as well as a return to its characteristic melancholic, profound expression. E.g. 10 (m.78-80), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



We note that the metric asymmetry is reflected in the succession of motifs (c and d), the author choosing a way of chaining them together. E.g. 11 (m.51-63), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1

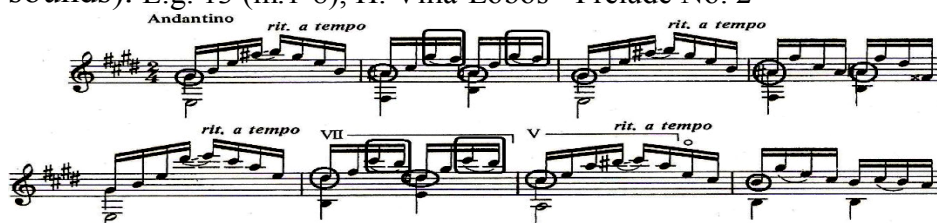


The identical retake of the first stanza ends with a cadential fragment of harmonic type, in which the harmony of the tonality homonym in *E minor* is alternated with its added high sixth. E.g. 12 (m.129-132), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 1



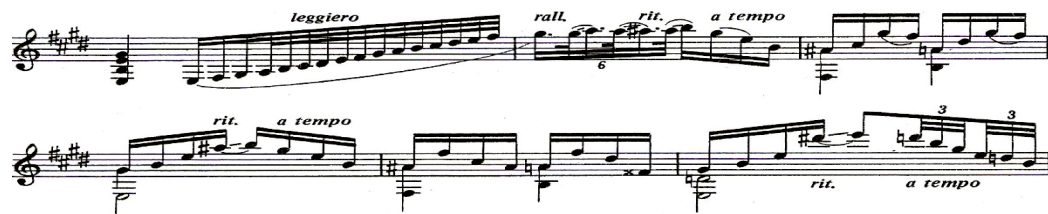
3. Prelude no. 2

The three strophic structure of the work (**A B A**) is highlighted by both the symmetry generated by the final retake of the first section and by the tonal modification signaled at the beginning of the median stanza. From a formal perspective, the first section consists of two periods, the second one having a more conclusive function. *The first period* (m.1-18) contains two similar phrases at content level, the second representing a variation of the first one. For the composer, the figural writing, as well as the isorhythm, although relatively austere at a conceptual level, represent the means to highlight a melodic sinuous line, combining the arpeggio structures and the leading tone melodic notes, underlined by the indication *rite*. In the lower area, we can identify a secondary plan, which contributes to shaping the harmonic framework in which the main melodic line develops. At the same time, there are many melodic planes that evolve either chromatically (m 2, 4, 6) or in the form of a constant (sound or group of sounds). E.g. 13 (m.1-8), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 2



From a tonal point of view, we note the predominance of the basic tonality (*E major*), the only moment of deviation being located in the first sentence (m.5-7), and represented by the inflexion towards the subdominant tonality (*A major*). The means of melodic variation used by the composer are particularly plastic,

including the figural scale passages, rhythmic variations (use of the dotted, sextolet and triolet formula) and melodic variations (replacing the scalar arpeggio, multiplying the sounds according to the time unit). E.g. 14 (m.9-14), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 2



The second period (m.19-33) has a conclusive character, an aspect resulting from both the sound and the constructive type elements. At the sound level, we note the predominance of the basic tonality, marked by the alternance of tonic and dominant harmonics, as well as the general use of the same melodic formulas of cadential character. From a constructive point of view, the period can be delimited into three segments, two of them identical, separated by a contrasting fragment through the dissonant sonority, generated by the sequential chromatic course of all the plans, the melodic figures representing organized low seventh reduced harmonies. E.g. 15 (m.15-25), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 2



The final cadence of stanza A (m.34) is followed by a short transitive fragment, which makes the transition to the second stanza of the prelude, whose beginning is marked by the tonal change (*B major*). A diagram of the first stanza would look like this: Stanza A = period a + period a 'a' = 8 + 10 a' = 8 + 7. We note the asymmetric structure of the phrases resulting from inner widening elements, specific to the romantic style. The cursive, unitary, in arpeggio figures writing, comprises, by virtue of polyphony, the melodic line itself, contouring the motif language. The influence of preclassic style is felt in the figural writing, and the fluency of the semiquaver by-plays is sometimes interrupted for very short periods by contrasting rhythmic structures. E.g. 16 (m.13-14), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 2



The median stanza (m.35-90), a broad articulation, is characterized by continuous pulse provided by the harmonic latency figures, but especially by an ambiguous sonority generated by the unstable harmony, by successions of unexpected melodic formulas. The sound mobility of the fragment is suggested even from the beginning, the *B major* tonality not being clearly stated until the

end of the section, in a transitory mode. The harmony relative to the first measure is that of the dominant, but with added fourth, a sound that increases the sound instability. In the harmonic type lower plan, an independent line is formed, made of successive parallel fifths, an interval constituting the second unit element of the stanza. At the same time, the construction of direct harmonies and their chaining through perfect fifths parallelisms detaches the harmony of this section from the rigors of classical-romantic harmony. We could consider this as being part of the modal harmonic structures. In the continuous progress of the formulas we can identify short tonal allusions in *B minor* (due to the presence of the *D minor* harmony) or *A major* (due to the ostinata repetition of the *A major* harmony, alternatively with its superior leading tone). E.g. 17 (m.50-61), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 2



In the second part of the section, the implicit tonal center becomes concrete by the repetitiveness of the tonic and dominant harmonies (in the initial version), and the final chromatic fragment ends with the sound *B*, although the harmonic frame determined by the elements of the arpeggio figures is as ambiguous as the whole section: *B major* harmony with enlarged fifth. E.g. 18 (m.82-93), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 2



The diagram of the median section is as follows: B = b1 (8 measures) + b2 (20 measures) + b3 (12 measures) + b4 (16 measures). After this tumultuous fragment, the first stanza of the work is completely retaken, without any changes in the sound.

4. Prelude no. 3

Prelude no. 3 is the most original prelude of Heitor Villa - Lobos due to the innovative harmonic language, the improvisation character and the Spanish ethos. The work is composed of two sections (A B small bistrophic form) instead of the usual ABA ternary form, all marked with rehearsals, the delimitation of which is suggested by the modification of the writing in the second stanza. *Section A* is written in the original Villa-Lobos style, and *B* clearly illustrates Bach's music. Thus, *the first section* (m.1-22) has a quasi-recitative character, figuration and stops on harmonies, fragmented melodic-

harmonic evolution of passionate character, metric changes as well as agogic indications (pauses, *rite.*, *rall.*) contributing to the configuration of a speech in a rubato movement, the general sound by referring to the lyrical ballad. This stanza of capricious shape is shrouded in an atmosphere of great harmonious refinement, reminding of Ravel by: parallels of seventh-and-ninth harmonies, different pedals, unsolved sequences of assonant harmonies, proving an assimilation of the seventh harmony in the category of consonants. E.g. 9 (m.9-10), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 3



From a structural point of view, this characteristic is manifested by a relative fragmentation of the music, the first period being made up of a chain of relatively uneven and difficult to distinguish segments. The first two such segments (m.1 - the first harmony of white note value in m.5, the last quaver in m.5 - the first harmony of white note value in m.9) are similar at the sound content level, being made of a sequential ascending fragment (based on a transposition within the five sounds at the interval of a scalar micro-unit fourth), finalized in a seventh harmony, and a fragment that is also sequential (based on an overturned arpeggio formula), ended in a homophone type tempo. In the second sentence (the last measure in m.9 - m.12), the tempo, made up of parallel harmonies, is extended by sequencing and ends on the tonic harmony with an added sixth (characteristic for the Dorian mode). E.g. 20 (m.1-13), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 3



Referring to the harmonic context, the composer uses a tonal language rich in modal elements, its harmonies being made of added sounds or altered stages (for example, measure 4, stage 4 with the top fifth, added seventh and fourth, a harmony that can also be interpreted as a tetrachord), which have the role of preparing by sensitizing the sounds of the next immediate harmony. At the same time, tuning parallelism are a confirmation of the composer's modal thinking, which also depends on pure guitar writing (perhaps the instrument's possibilities inspired him as much as the impressive masters music). The third segment of the first stanza (m.13-22) mainly emphasizes the melodic side, evidenced by the monodic writing (m.13), by the song placed in the acute register and

accompanied by the pedal (m.14-15) or structures of four parallel sounds (m.16, 19). E.g. 21 (m.14-19), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 3



Although the whole section is characterized by harmonic mobility, an instability due to the avoidance of resolving the assonant harmonies, at the end of the stanza, the composer returns to the original tonality, the main tune, like a vocal declamation, is superimposed on a pedal on the harmony (finally, the sound *E*) the dominant of the basic tonality, *A minor*. The reference to the recitative character, rubato, to the relationship with vocal music, is clearly expressed by the last measure of the first stanza, built on the repetition of a unique sound whose expressiveness is underlined by the simplification of the writing, reduced to only two voices, as well to tempo attenuation. E.g. 22 (m.20-22), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 3



The *second stanza* (m.23 - first measure in m.36) of the form establishes the sequential symmetric discourse by chaining diatonic-chromatic descending figures, the special ethos of music being stimulated by the composer and by the expression indication "*Molto adagio e dolorido*". It is for this reason that the performers choose a rubato to capture the parallelism of the song. This segment consists of two identical sound level phrases separated by a transitive segment. Although the writing changes, becoming figural and monodic, the general expression remains in the melancholic register, the composer suggesting an accentuation of the low part by adding the following indication: "*espressivo*". In relation to the previous section, the discourse is organized symmetrically, based on the descending sequencing of a unique pattern composed of melodic figures having as their main characteristic the bifurcation of two different intonation plans: a fixed, upper plane represented by the repetition of a sound, and a mobile one with a chromatic start and a gradually diatonic continuation. E.g. 23 (m.23-28), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 3



Melodic progression is not reflected in the harmonic plane as well, as this is following a proper route, based on added seventh or sixth harmonies (subdominant) of the stages in *A minor* (including I7). Again, we note the composer's preference for the plagal relations in the IV-I sequence, apparently diluted by the ambiguity of the tonic harmony with the seventh. The same sequencing process is also used in transition, this time the main song is accompanied by a tierce parallelism by summing the sounds of the three plans resulting in a series of five parallel harmonies, four of which in minor, and the cadential one being represented by the dominant harmony. E.g. 24 (measure 4 of m.28 - m.29), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 3



5. Prelude no. 4 "Homenajem o Indio Brasileiro" (Homage to the Brazilian Indians)

Prelude no. 4, in E minor tonality, of all the Five Preludes of Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), was written in 1940. The dedication of this piece refers to the Brazilian-Indian culture. In his book, Turibio Santos, mentions one thing that one day a television producer in Paris, completely unfamiliar with both guitar and Brazilian music, asked the author if he knew anything about any musical work that would evoke the forest across the Brazilian territory. Thus, he was listed a number of different records, making sure that one of Villa-Lobos's symphonic works was chosen. To Santos' surprise, the Frenchman and his assistants took the simple decision to use the first four measures of Prelude no.4, thus materializing the composer's intentions. In spite of its simple and clear structure, the melody with which this piece begins, through a pronounced meditative character, alternates with harmonic passages, producing a special "orchestral" effect, all due to the often compassionate sound of the guitar. The organization on natural harmonics suggests how Villa-Lobos composed this piece, namely, sitting on a chair, holding the guitar in his arms, "quiet, with a cup of coffee and a cigarette in his hand"¹⁴⁴. The Brazilian musician often used to say that his creative process took place without the presence of the guitar. Of course, the melody of Prelude no.4 does not create the impression of a desperate search for sounds along the strings. Just like a musical structure, it could have been performed only by someone capable of imagining the instrument.

The construction of the work differs by two composition techniques that are specific to the guitar. The first consists of exchanges of arpeggio harmonies (harmonic or planar parallelism) on a pedal of free string. The second involves the use of natural harmonics in both horizontal and vertical drawing. We shall next discuss in detail these two techniques. The prelude follows a ternary scheme: section A (m.1-10), section B (m.11-26) and section A '(m.27-43). The

¹⁴⁴ John Duarte, op.cit., part.2, p.1

first section (A) is divided into two main phrases. The first phrase (m.1-4), which generates the basic structure for the whole prelude, is characterized by an alternation of the melodic and tuning texture. In the following example, the lyrical melody, outlined by a descending triad on tonic, seems to be asked by its own verticalization within measure 2 - an organization that is further enhanced by dynamic contrasts and by extensions of the sound material. E.g. 25 (m.1-2), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



The performance of this song by applying an exaggerated broad vibrato could very easily destroy the meditation atmosphere, strongly contrasting with the "amusement" present in the first part of "Nocturna" by Benjamin Britten. Many performers interrupt phrases using pauses that, besides not being noted, do nothing, and this is because the fragment is too short for such an interpretative idea, shading the indications of tempo and alternations of measures. Similarly, the central arpeggio section must run smoothly, without requiring any rallentando because it is not required, and if one is due to the technical difficulty, the fragment requires additional study to eliminate it. No such concession must be made in the name of "performance". E.g.26¹⁴⁵



From the analysis of the first ten measures of Prelude no. 4 (see E.g. 25), one can observe the specific structural background the work was built on. Three distinct aspects can be distinguished in establishing the structure. Thus, frame 1 treats a leading voice while frame 2 focuses on the graphic marking of the motif that uses the fourth distance. The 3rd frame eliminates the blend of beauty and harmony present within frame 2. Here, we can say that white notes, which constitute the broad outline of the superior plan, make up the same motif unity as the eighths of the second plan (the lower plan). Thus, the top goes down from E to B, then from F-sharp to E minor, all linked by a superior bar, describing the same trajectory as each of the four units in the lower area. The sequential repetition of the four-note structures that represent the basic motif idea sets the first section of this prelude.

¹⁴⁵ Alan Goldspiel, *A New Look at Musical Structure and the Guitar in the Music of Villa-Lobos*, GFA Soundboard, Fall 2000, p.10

The descending melodic line of measure 1 is extended over measure 3 by using two decorative heights (neighboring group: F and D) surrounding the tonic. Later, the D sound appears in the next harmony as part of the sub-segment of the minor structure - 7 minor. Moreover, the final note of the song (measure 2, tempo 1) continues to vibrate along the second measure, functioning as an internal pedal for the harmony in the *pp* tone. The rhythmic organization of measure 2 is practically an extension of tempo 3 in the first measure, with a new one. We must point out that both sections A and A' are characterized by the mixture of measures 3/4 and 4/4. Villa-Lobos intensifies the tonal color of this lyrical melody, indicating that the initial sounds E, B, sol and D are not intonated on free strings. Instead, by using the high positions on Sol, D and A strings, they allow the use of vibrato that helps create an intriguing rich sound. With respect for the vertical structure, I would say that the three seventh tonic harmonies of the second measure can be considered as either a single tonic extension, or an unstable tonic (then, the patterns of the other three new harmonies in measure 6 play the role of a tonic obscuration). The first main phrase (m.1-4) concludes by repeating the first two measures. In measure no.3, Villa-Lobos varies the lyrical melody by increasing the rhythmic movement. E.g. 27 (m.3), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



The second sentence (m.5-10) contains the same structure as the previous one plus an extension of two measures as a final part of Section A, using the natural harmonics. As it can be seen from the following example, the melodic variation is mostly accomplished by gradual movement, with a decorative sound positioned on the first measure, followed by a new rhythmic triolet figure. E.g. 28 (m.5 - first tempo in m.6), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4

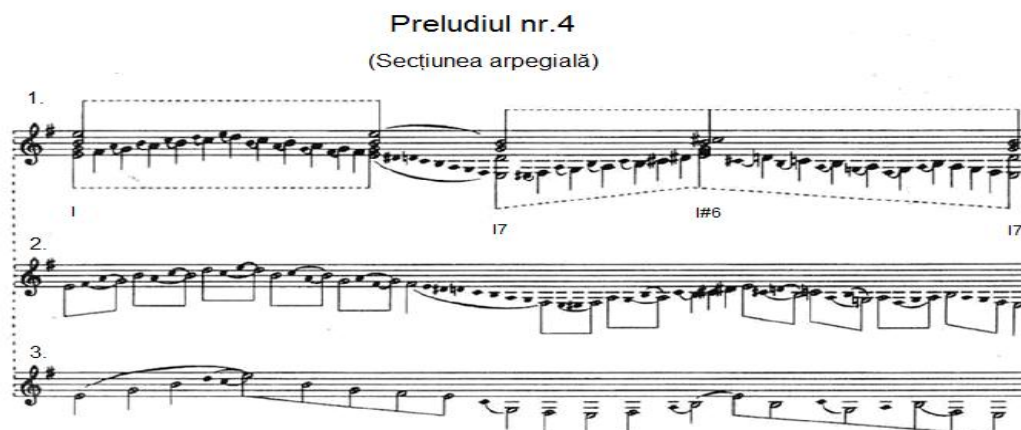


Within the tonality, the harmonic sequence of this phrase highlights the subdominant stages, the Neapolitan (with the second stage lowered) and the dominant. However, Villa-Lobos masks the basic movement of the melody by using vertical organization. For example, a possible interpretation of the harmonic structure of measure no.8 suggests a bicordal scheme: on the one hand, the implicit harmony of the melody and on the other the vertical texture marked by *pp* tone. E.g. 29 (m.8), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



The median segment reminds us of Prelude no. 2 and Study no. 11, where the melody placed on the bass strings is accompanied by the arpeggios on the acute strings. The entire fragment is based on a left hand pattern that calls up

and down movements along the keyboard. The analysis of this arpeggio segment (m.11-25) - (see example no.36) - reveals a somewhat boring extension of a E minor harmony, which constitutes both the background harmony for the entire fragment (mostly intended to be elaborated during the discourse) and almost a constant pedal on E (1st string free). Paragraph 2 brings to attention an arrangement of suggested arpeggios by grouping the sounds within each measure, and the third highlights a background structure based on these groups, which in fact represents the skeletal structure of these arpeggios. E.g. 30¹⁴⁶, H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



We can see that within this background structure there is a basic motivational structure found at the beginning of the melody. E.g. 31¹⁴⁷, H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



Section B (m.11-26) is divided into two sentences. Here we have a new indication of tempo (*Animato*) incorporating the series of continuous changes of sixteenth value sounds on a non-accented pedal of the free string. Thus, the first sentence contains inverted triads that follow a parallel movement (harmonic parallelism à la Debussy) with the main pedal on tonic (thin E). The arpeggio pattern is derived from the sound material of the lyrical melody, now being reversed. This is clearly observed by analyzing measure 11, tempo 1, in the example below (see notes in brackets). E.g. 32 (m.11-12), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



This example also illustrates another important melodic idea. In addition to the line in the low register voice, a secondary melody occurs in the upper plane,

¹⁴⁶ Alan Goldspiel, op.cit., p.11

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem

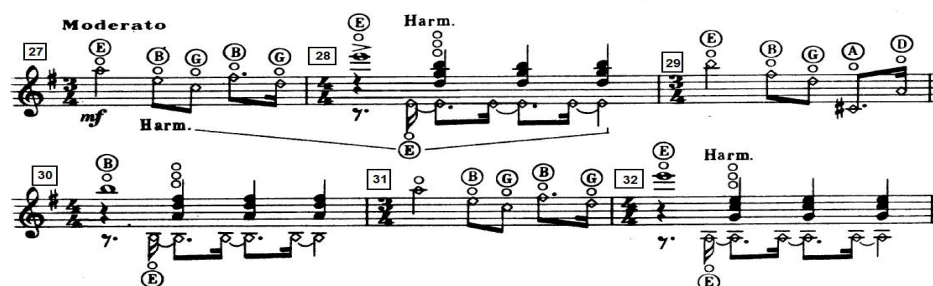
generally having a similar movement to the lower one (both melodic lines are indicated by arrows). The second sentence of the median section (measure 2 of m.18 - 26) is in contrast to the previous sentence. In this context, the primary melodic line is enhanced by the use of high positions on the thick E string. Moreover, the tension of discourse is greatly increased by the use of diminished triads in the first overturning, contributing to the instability of the section. E.g. 33 (m.20-21), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



In addition, Villa-Lobos incorporates another free pedal on the free string that assumes its dominant role, namely the B pedal. The arpeggio section, with a strong contrasting character, reminds of the beginning of the work in this specific way. The set harmonies correspond to some elements present in the internal composition of the musical text and the pedal on the free string (thin E) assigns its function of affirmation of harmony. By a structural tempo on the dominant, the end of Section B is announced. This is reinforced by marking the tempo indication (rall.) present from the first time of measure 25 as well as by replacing the sixteenths with a new textural drawing. E.g. 34 (m.25-26), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



Section A '(27-43) is organized in three phrases. The first of them (m.27-32) exhibits its own miniature structure - "a" (m.27-28, tonic), the second "b" (m.29-30, dominant) and the last is practically a repetition of the first phrase "a" (m.31-32, tonic). The intriguing and ingenious side of this segment lies in the elegant redevelopment of measures 1 and 2, using natural harmonics. E.g. 35 (m.27-32), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



The quality of the guitar to make it possible to interpret this type of material in flageolets is completely specific for the instrument. In an article by Steven Zvengrowski he states that "Villa-Lobos uses only the greater resonance of natural harmonics as a contrast to the weaker sound of artificial harmonics such as Britten Nocturnal, Dreaming¹⁴⁸. The way to produce natural harmonics follows the same way as in other string instruments. For guitar, these are

¹⁴⁸ Steven Zvengrowski, *Structural Patterns found in Prelude number 4 by Heitor Villa-Lobos*, GFA Soundboard, August, 1979, p.88

available on any of the six strings, namely the perfect octave, on the twelfth key; the perfect fifth, higher on the seventh space; again, the perfect octave, the 5th key and the major tenth corresponding to the 4th or 9th space. Of all possible natural flageolets along the pegbox, these have the most clear and full sound. As it can be seen in the example above, the composer uses each of the previous sound categories of these harmonics, their efficiency consisting in the fact that they have a function both in the melodic and in the tuning organization. The second and third sentences of section A represent an identical repetition of the first section (A). The use of closed, low sonority from the end of the prelude may be interpreted as a structure of a seventh tonic harmony in the second overturning, a bicord consisting of moderate and tonic or as a major ternary with added sixth. In any case, this organization contributes to the confirmation of the idea of harmonic and tonal obscurity. E.g. 36 (m.43), H. Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 4



Although written in the 20th century, the harmonic, tonal and melodic structures of the Prelude no.4 are representative for this type of analysis that represents the synthesis of the composer's entire musical effort (works, work style). In the following example, Steven Zvengrowski depicts the deployment of the tonic ternary, gradually descending an octave and emphasizing the sound of dominant harmony, thus revealing the harmonic tone structure of the basic melody. E.g. 37¹⁴⁹



In conclusion, I want to mention that Villa-Lobos exploits some of the most effective and specific techniques of guitar performance, viewed from a contemporary perspective. The goal is that this analysis will bring more insight as regards the composition and interpretation modality of the prelude, while suggesting some new ideas pertinent for a quality artistic performance. "Villa-Lobos's guitar music illustrates the composition design developed on the ideological mechanism and, of course, this ability to use guitar tones and techniques must influence the composition process"¹⁵⁰.

6. Prelude no. 5

"Homenagem a Vida Social" "Aos repizinhos e mochinas fresquinhos que frequentam os concertos e os teatros no Rio". This charming dedication addresses "Social Life," "Young boys and girls going to Rio concerts and

¹⁴⁹ Steven Zvengrowski, op.cit., p.89

¹⁵⁰ Alan Goldspiel, op.cit., p.11

theaters". It should be mentioned here that the use of the word "fresh" (here, meaning very young) by Villa-Lobos refers to the not surprising appearances of Rio de Janeiro youths who are in love with music. Prelude no.5 is like a surprise, completing the cycle of guitar compositions. Unlike any of the five preludes, it is divided into three sections, the first being identically repeated in the end: thus, the prelude scheme is ABCA. The B, where the melody is presented by a pure cello evocation, is fully performed on the second page (m.17-32) while section C, represented by the first three staves plus the first measure of the fourth, is placed on the third page (m.33-42). Section A (m.1-16) together with Section C as a particular feature are covered in a popular air, a reason why they should be performed in a simple manner without any attempt to make them more than they represent in reality - two beautiful and attractive "popular" songs. The whole piece could easily be introduced into the Brazilian People's Suite due to elements such as the melodic line in Section B, marked by the indication "meno", which, in other words, should be interpreted as slower than A (but without using an exaggerated tempo). However, the work is part of the Brazilian portrait of Villa-Lobos so it could not be omitted from the prelude genre. This is an eloquent example of the composer's extraordinary ability to remember a theme or idea for many years, being ready to use it at the right time. Therefore, the whole discourse must be cursive, seen the author's desire to be performed without *rallentando* before the end of the measure. E.g. 38 (m.1-2), H.Villa-Lobos - Prelude No. 5



As regards "Poco animato" at the beginning of the piece, I suggest that throughout the performance, the term *poco* should be memorized, in order not to turn into a "musical romp".

7. Conclusions

Analyzing the guitar works by Villa-Lobos, we note that he explored many of the interpretative possibilities of the six-string instrument, contributing to the Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra. In their essence, *Preludes* for the guitar depict a series of musical portraits that portray people and lands, especially peasants and the countryside. They do not only illustrate one person, as the composer has done in the extraordinary and brilliant piano improvisations. The interior of these five pieces is dominated by the infinite variety of deep Brazilian feeling, even without the use of superficial local color or ordinary folk dances. Instead, they simply illustrate the essential atmosphere, temperament and spirit of Brazil.

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