

MERIDIAN ARTS ENSEMBLE – TIMBRANDO

Beyond the Curve (2003)

Elliot Sharp (b. 1951)

"If I were somehow deluded into thinking I recognized a strange place, then everything outside my immediate line of vision ought to have disappeared from memory – but, in fact, all that was missing was that town beyond the curve." — Kobe Abe

Composed during Winter 2002-2004, New York City

Bachianas Brasileiras #5 (Aria)

Heitor Villa Lobos (1887-1959)

(arr. Stewart)

Heitor Villa-Lobos' musical education occurred at a time in the early 20th Century when Brazilian culture was turning away from Europe, and beginning to look inward to its own native culture. Villa-Lobos himself underwent very little formal musical training, mostly learning about classical music by listening in from the top of the staircase when his father hosted evening concerts at home. He spent a decade making trips into Brazil's interior, learning folk music as he traveled (and concocting exaggerated tales of his exploits). He played cello, guitar and clarinet in street bands in Rio, and later joined the opera orchestra in that city as a cellist. His nine pieces comprising the set known as *Bachianas Brasileiras* fuse traditional Brazilian sounds with Bach-like counterpoint.

Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5, by far the best known of the set, was originally scored for 8 cellos and soprano. The solo soprano line is taken in the Meridian version by the horn and marimba playing in unison.

- Daniel Grabois

Timbrando

Hermeto Pascoal (b. 1936)

Hermeto Pascoal is one of Brazil's best known composer-performers. An extremely prolific and eclectic composer, Pascoal often incorporates elements of nature and folk styles into his pieces. His music is rooted in jazz; he came to the public's attention after his appearance on several tracks of Miles Davis' "Live/Evil" album. He wrote *Timbrando* for Meridian's 1997 appearance at the Subtropics Festival in Miami, and the work features a lively vibraphone solo part.

– Daniel Grabois

Michaelangelo Antonioni

Caetano Veloso (b. 1942)

(arr. McWhorter after Morelenbaum)

Caetano Veloso is a Brazilian singer and guitar player who began his career performing bossa nova. He later fused Brazilian pop with rock and roll, and his music became both more international and more socially aware. His leftist politics frequently earned him both enmity and censorship from the Brazilian government. *Michelangelo Antonioni* is taken from the soundtrack to the 2004 movie *Eros*, which was comprised of three short films by three different directors. Michelangelo Antonioni was the director and writer of the film from which this lush, seductive, and typically Brazilian music was drawn. Antonioni died as we were preparing to release this CD. Our version of this song is based on the original arrangement, by Jacques Morelenbaum.

– Daniel Grabois

En par de los levantes de la aurora (1996)

Ana Lara (b. 1959)

Ana Lara is a Mexican composer and promoter. She studied in Mexico City and Warsaw, Poland. Her main interest is exploring timbre and experiencing sound as a living force that embraces and transforms us. She explains her work:

"The title *En par de los levantes de la aurora* derives from Solomon's verses in the Song of Songs and freely means, 'at the same time as the dawn.' I am insomniac, so often wake up before the day breaks. It has always surprised me that when it is still very dark outside, the birds begin singing loudly, only to fall

silent again and then restart when dawn arrives. Going from darkness to light, from inner silence to outer sound, is the passage I take (don't we all?) every night and every day, and in a way this is what happens in this piece that was commissioned by the Subtropics Festival of Miami for my friends the Meridian Arts Ensemble, who played the premiere."

– Ana Lara

Intermission

Ocho por Radio (1933)

Silvestre Revueltas (1899-1940)

(arr. Nelson)

Written in 1933, *Ocho por Radio* contains all the hallmarks of Revueltas' compositional style: rhythmic vigor, a Stravinskian harmonic language, and a distinctly Mexican folk flavor. The title translates roughly as "Eight on the Radio," and was originally written for eight players (yes, for a radio performance). In our version the forces are reduced to six players, yet the flavor of Mexico is still vital and ever-present.

– Daniel Grabois

Echo Dimensions (2005)

Dafnis Prieto (b. 1974)

A native of Santa Clara, Cuba, New York based drummer, composer and percussionist Dafnis Prieto has been recognized as one of the most important young jazz drummers of today. He has received awards as a composer from Chamber Music America, was a Meet the Composer / Van Lier Fellowship Award Recipient, and has recently been commissioned by the Ethos Percussion Quartet, and The Consortium for New Trumpet Music. His second solo CD Absolute Quintet was recently released on the Zoho label. He writes of *Echo-Dimensions* as follows: "*Echo-Dimensions* is a composition based on the sounds and textures that each instrument creates, becoming an echo in different dimensions, essentially the transformation and development of concise musical motives. The piece is not literally an imitation of the name itself, but a reflection of potential fluidity and juxtaposition of voices, and the rhythmic balance between sections. This compositional process is designed to give the piece a character of never ending momentum. This piece was commissioned for the MAE in 2006 by New Music @ ECU, with assistance from the State of North Carolina."

– Dafnis Prieto

Caballito Nicoyano

Traditional Costa Rican

(arr. Nelson)

Occasionally we go on a tour that is not just musically rewarding, but magical in some other way as well. Our trip to Costa Rica in 1997 was such a trip. Two of the people we met there became Meridian spouses. We saw monkeys in the wild. We ate an endless supply of fresh mangoes. We went on a catamaran trip with our audience to play a concert on the deserted Nicollan Peninsula, accessible only by boat. And we heard a group of marimba players, lined up playing on a single long, hand-made marimba, in the central square of the capital city, San Jose, outside our hotel. One of the pieces they played, and recorded on the cassette we bought, was *Caballito Nicollano*, or The Cowboy from Nicolla, the peninsula where we had performed. Our version is a testament to the joy of that trip and of traditional Costa Rican music.

– Daniel Grabois

Saoko

Tania Leon (1943)

Born in Havana, Cuba, Tania Leon is one of today's preeminent composer/conductors. She wrote *Saoko* for the Meridian Arts Ensemble's week-long residency at the 1997 Subtropics Festival of Miami. Like much of her music, *Saoko* finds its language in the sounds of Afro-Cuban music, but here the sounds are fractured, perceived only fleetingly as if walking quickly by a building with an open window through which a salsa record can be heard (at the same time, a brass band is warming up across the street). Meanwhile, bits of street sounds are echoing at the same time. "Saoko" is a strong and festive drink that is consumed in Cuba at appropriately festive occasions. – Daniel Grabois

Oblivion (1984)**Astor Piazzolla (1921 – 1992)**
(arr. Stewart)

Astor Piazzolla was undoubtedly the greatest tango composer of all time. A virtuoso bandoneon player, he single-handedly transformed traditional tango dance music into “nuevo tango,” a mix of the traditional style with classical music and jazz. *Oblivion* was originally written for the soundtrack of the 1984 movie *Henry IV* (Henry IV), but it has taken on a life of its own as a tremendously popular and beautiful Argentine ballad.
– Daniel Grabois

Um a Zero (1946)**Pixinguinha (1897-1973)**
and Benedito Lacerda (1903-1958)
(arr. Stewart)

The Brazilian “choro” (“cry” or “lament”) style arose in Rio de Janeiro in the late 19th Century as a mixture of yearning Portuguese melodies with West African rhythms. The style developed and changed through the first half of the 20th Century, and virtually died out by the 1960’s, with the development of bossa nova. Choro music regained popularity in the late 1970’s, and still has a strong following in Brazil today. Pixinguinha (born Alfredo da Rocha Vianna Filho) was the most important choro composer of all time. In the 1940’s, after Pixinguinha’s band folded, he became the tenor sax soloist in Benedito Lacerda’s band. *Um a Zero* was written during this period and is therefore credited to both composers. “Um a Zero” means “One to Zero” – the score of a soccer game in which Brazil defeated Paraguay in an important match. This piece neither a “cry” nor “lament,” but rather a bubbly upwelling of lighthearted pleasure.
– Daniel Grabois

Meridian Arts Ensemble records for Channel Classics (Netherlands) and 8bells.

All of the works on tonight’s program have been recorded by Meridian Arts Ensemble for Channel Classics Records.

The works by Sharp, Lara, and Prieto were commissioned by Meridian Arts Ensemble.