

DIÁLOGOS DUO

A Dozen Choro Tributes (2019) by Richard Boukas

• Composer Commentary •

This set of pieces is dedicated to **Choro**- its brilliant musicians, composers and a multi-genre body of virtuoso repertoire spanning 150 years. **Choro** has perennially inspired me to study, compose, arrange and perform this incredible music. Much more than a style, it is a *way of life*.

- 1. Não Diga Agora** Dedicated to the great **Pixinguinha** (1897-1973), "Don't tell me now" is a **Choro-Maxixe** marked by a syncopated, less dense melody and earmark maxixe guitar accompaniment. The form is the traditional ABBACCA. The thematic tonal scheme is the very common descending third (Gma-Emi-Cma or I-VI-IV).
- 2. Anacletozinho** This playful **schottische** (meaning "a little like Anacleto") captures **Anacleto de Medeiros'** (1866-1907) "bombeiro" (Brazilian firemen) music which was performed in symphonic band competitions with other fire stations across Rio de Janeiro. The form is traditional ABBACCA, which is also the most common form for Choro, Valsa and other Choro-related genres.
- 3. Solstício de Verão** Translating to "Summer Solstice" and dedicated to the seminal nationalist pianist-composer **Ernesto Nazareth** (1863-1934), this valsa (as with Nazareth's own) is steeped in Chopin's melodic gestures and Romantic harmony. The C section of the theme is a valsa brilhante (fast waltz) in Gb major (III^{ma}) whose melodic character is far less lyrical and more étude-like with running eighth notes. The form is a shortened ABBACCA. The absent initial repeat of the A section is a practice common in some Choro repertoire.
- 4. O Bandolim Sabe Tudo** This ABBACCDDA choro "The Mandolin Knows All" is dedicated to the brilliant mandolinist **Luperce Miranda** (1904-77). Too often overlooked by those more familiar with **Jacob do Bandolim's** work, Miranda was more from the Neapolitan school of playing, whose phrasing is less elastic than Jacob's. He penned dozens of choros and made an impressive comeback towards the end of his life. The tonal scheme of the three thematic sections is quite traditional, using descending diatonic thirds (Cma, Ami, Fma).
- 5. Meu Violão É O Chorão** Meaning "My guitar is the real Choro musician", this is the only solo guitar piece in the suite. A tribute to the brilliant virtuoso **Garôto** (1915-55), the piece is chock-full of his thematic and textural mannerisms, penchant for Jazz and Impressionist-leaning harmonies and slippery modulations. The traditional ABBACCA form is maintained, however, the harmonic scheme is a less traditional Dma-F#ma-Gma (I-III^{ma}-IV).
- 6. Manhoso** This ABBACCA choro "Sly" is dedicated to the legendary mandolinist **Jacob do Bandolim** (1918-69). His catchy compositions and all-star group **Época de Ouro** in the 1960's was the preeminent representative of the music. The tonal scheme of the three thematic sections is half-traditional (Bbma-Dmi or I-III) but the C section is in G major (VI^{ma}). This sets up a final A section modulated to C major, a practice rarely used in Choro composition.

(Continued)

7. Requiem Dedicated to **Heitor Villa-Lobos** (1887-1959), the prolific and most famous twentieth century classical composer in Brazil. Requiem evokes "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5", whose tribute to Bach contrasts a slow-moving lyrical melody with continuous 16th-note accompaniment. Although recognized mostly for his classical work, he also composed a series of choros, each with a different instrumentation. Requiem is not actually a choro but a *modinha*- a somber midpoint amidst predominantly upbeat pieces comprising the suite.

8. Choro do Sol "Sun Choro" is dedicated to the cavaquinho virtuoso **Waldir Azevedo** (1923-80), who was the first to elevate the steel-string ukelele to a soloistic prominence and popularity. This choro is a bit less syncopated than the others in the suite, connoting Azevedo's penchant for composing pieces that were technically challenging. The traditional form is modified to ABACA, where each thematic section is 32 bars through-composed rather than repeated 16-bar sections. The tonal scheme is the familiar I-VI-IV (or Gma-Emi-Cma).

9. Dois Irmãos No Céu This choro-canção is a double dedication to clarinetist **Paulo Moura** (1932-2010) and brilliant short-lived guitar virtuoso **Rafael Rabello** (1962-95). Their duo CD "Dois Irmãos" was the first of its kind and for years has inspired me to explore a Brazilian duo with this instrumentation. "Two Brothers in the Heavens" also is a nod to choro clarinetist-composer Abel Ferreira (1915-80), whose famous choro "Chorando Baixinho" served as a point of departure for my piece. The tonal scheme of this AABACA form is Dmi-Fma-Dma, the outer two tonalities matching Ferreira's.

10. Sambando Na Praia This jazzy samba-choro "Beach Samba" is a tribute to the prolific composer-pianist-guitarist **Radames Gnattali** (1906-88). Although not as heralded as Villa-Lobos, he was just as prolific and stylistically versatile in any musical style or ensemble. The AABACA form is girdled by a Bmi-Emi-Dma tonal scheme rife with Gnattali's harmonic sophistication and slyness.

11. Choro Sussuro This choro-canção is dedicated to the genius guitarist-composer **Guinga** (1950-), whose music and persona has had a profound impact on my composing- especially pieces which involve guitar. The form of "Whispering Choro" is AABBCA framed by a brief intro-outro, capturing Guinga's dark harmonic vocabulary and angular melodies which have an innate expressivity.

12. Som Livre Dedicated to the singular prolific genius of Brazilian contemporary music, **Hermeto Pascoal** (1936-), "Free Sound" is playful but technically challenging. Modeled after Hermeto's own choro, "Intocável" (1987), Pascoal has been the most profound Brazilian musical influence in my music for almost four decades.

Richard Boukas

richard@boukas.com

dialogosduo@boukas.com

<http://www.boukas.com/dialogos-duo>