

Diálogos Duo

Louis Arques clarinet, bass clarinet

Richard Boukas guitar, composer

Homages to Brazilian Masters

Contemporary Brazilian Music

CD Liner Notes & Ensemble Bio

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About the music

Diálogos for Clarinet and Guitar (2017)

1 Sombras de Ontem (yesterday's shadows) (toada) dedicated to Toninho Horta

Toninho Horta has made an indelible mark on Brazilian music for almost fifty years. His sophisticated, deceptive harmonies and soaring melodies capture the essence of music from his native state of Minas Gerais. *Sombras de Ontem* is a *toada* set in **ABA form**, contrasting the placid A section with a turbulent B section set in the southern Brazilian genre *guarânia*.

2 Sempre Jacob (forever Jacob) (choro) ded. Jacob do Bandolim

Jacob do Bandolim (1918-69), a prolific composer and mandolin virtuoso was arguably the most important Choro musicians of the mid-twentieth century. *Sempre Jacob* unfolds in traditional **AABBACCA Choro form**, balancing its jaunting melody with typical choro accompaniment gestures: vigorous rhythmic chordal accents, harmonic inversions and moving basslines (known as *baixarias*).

3 Valsa Azul (blue waltz) (valsa) ded. Guinga

The first piece composed for the *Diálogos Clarinet and Guitar* cycle, this *valsa* is inspired by the intuitive genius guitarist-composer *Guinga* (1950-). Set in **ABA form**, the dark melodic and harmonic aspects reflect upon Guinga's signature mood. The faster B section offers a glimmer of hope, only to be followed by the inexorable return of the A section and its dark, elusive harmonies.

4 Madrugada em Ouro Preto (daybreak in Ouro Preto) (serenata) ded. Sérgio Santos

Sérgio Santos (1956-) is another prolific composer-singer-guitarist from Minas Gerais. His blend of lyrical melody, rich harmony and Afro-Brazilian rhythms is ingenious. After a solo guitar introduction, the piece is basically two varied statements of the same material. The harmonic language is quasi-impressionistic and the innocent melody unfolds in a simple, almost folk-like manner.

5 Maracatuque (maracatu) ded. Jovino Santos Neto

This piece is written in the ebullient style of my longtime colleague and former duo partner *Jovino Santos Neto* (pianist with *Hermeto Pascoal* 1977-93). A guitar percussion introduction leads to the main *maracatu* melody in Lydian Dominant mode, anchored by abrupt tonal shifts. The organically unfolding form is **AABC D (slow section) A**.

6 O Ravel acima, o Guinga abaixo (Ravel above, Guinga below) (modinha)

Dedicated to *Guinga* and *Maurice Ravel* (1875-1937), this piece depicts a hypothetical musical conversation between them. By far the most non-tonal piece in this set of seven, the solo guitar statement repeats with the clarinet offering florid triplet melodies- adding further to the dissonance and non-tonal harmonic vocabulary. The contrasting B section is more tonal in character, leading to a final A and coda.

7 Desafio e Recordação (baião)

Dedicated to *Hermeto Pascoal* (1936-), a traditional *baião* (staple genre of Brazil's northeast), a Lydian dominant modal melody leads to a plaintiff solo guitar interlude before the recapitulation of the main theme. An alternate guitar tuning of D-G-D-G-B-E is used to capitalize on the tonic pedal texture and arriving at harmonies that stray from *baião*'s essential modal character.

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Diálogos for Bass Clarinet and Guitar (2017)

8 Diálogo do Sul (dialogue of the south) (guarânia) dedicated to Claude Debussy

Set in the southern Brazilian dance *guarânia*. the piece's form is roughly **ABBCDA**, where C and D are slower and more introspective. Although the harmonic language is still tonal in some respects, there is no clear sense of key center- but rather a series of localized colors supporting melodic gestures.

9 Retrato de Radamés (portrait of Radamés) (choro lento) ded. Radamés Gnattali

Alongside *Villa Lobos*, *Gnattali* (1906-88) is the most important 20th century Brazilian composer. A virtuoso pianist and stylistic chameleon who routinely wrote for his elite circle of musicians, this *choro lento* pits a relaxed groove against virtuosic bass clarinet passages and oblique harmonic shifts. The ambiance of the piece is similar to the opening movement of his masterwork, *Retratos*.

10 Gafieira Suingada (swinging gafieira) (samba) ded. Zé da Velha

Gafieira is a dancehall form of samba blending *choro* and jazz and featuring horns and rhythm section. *Zé da Velha* is the most celebrated trombonist specializing in the genre. The form is a variant of **AABA**. Although the highly syncopated melody seems quite tonal at first listening, there are numerous modulatory passages that all but destroy any sense of one key center.

11 Saudades do Leblon (longing for Leblon) (valsa lento) ded. Guinga

This dark waltz tries to capture the uniquely Brazilian feeling of *saudade*- missing good times past and lost loves. Set in **AABA** form, the B section is a faster waltz that flirts with fleeting hope, only to return to the inexorable final A. The guitar uses a **C-G** tuning in the bottom two strings to achieve an orchestral depth and expanded palette of harmonic colors.

12 Chão do Batuque (roots of batuque) ded. Heitor Villa Lobos

Batuque is an Afro-Brazilian dance form closely related to *maxixe*. The form is a series of harmonic variations below a repeating diatonic theme- reminiscent of *Villa Lobos*' use of folk material in his more serious works. There is a contrasting *baião* section, followed by a guitar solo and expansive Brahmsian texture before returning to the *batuque* tempo. Guitar tuning is same as piece no. 4.

13 Marchinha de Esperança (march of hope) marcha rancho, 3/4) ded. Itiberê Zwarg

Although the *marcha rancho* is typically in 4/4, this 3/4 version in **AABACA** form joins a graceful eighth-note melody with a rich harmonic vocabulary that capitalizes on having one, two or three harmonies per bar, and bass note inversions to navigate momentary modulations. The piece is dedicated to *Itiberê Zwarg*, the innovative bassist-composer with Hermeto Pascoal since 1977.

14 Frevo Na Praça (frevo in the plaza) (frevo) ded. Pixinguinha

Frevo is the furiously-paced music played during *carnaval* in northeast Brazil, which features wind and brass instruments. The **ABBACA** form unfolds with melodic and rhythmic gestures typical of *frevo*, and embedding surprising harmonic shifts to remote tonal areas. The **C** section melody is played by guitar supported by a bass clarinet counterpoint.

15 Choro Branco for Bass Clarinet Solo (choro lento) ded. Bach (2017)

Although not part of the Diálogos Duo set for bass clarinet and guitar, this solo piece was composed in the same period and an appropriate way to conclude the CD. Cast in **ABACA** form, *Choro Branco* is written in the spirit of Bach's suites for solo violoncello while embodying the lyrical melodic aspects of the *choro lento*. *Louis Arques*'s virtuosity is on full display, demonstrating the bass clarinet's broad melodic range, intervallic agility and dark expressivity.

notes by **Richard Boukas**

October 2018

Diálogos Duo ***contemporary Brazilian music***

ensemble bio

Clarinet and guitar possess a rich and unique sonic affinity- yet upon examination, precious little contemporary music exists for this fertile instrumental tandem- let alone *Brazilian* works. *Diálogos Duo* was formed in fall of 2016 when *Louis Arques* and *Richard Boukas* met in New York City. Their musical chemistry was magnetic and immediate. Both musicians recognized the tremendous potential of this new collaboration, hence “*diálogos*” which means “*dialogues*” in Portuguese.

The Duo’s primary mission is to create and present a diverse body of contemporary Brazilian music as a focal point for artistic, educational and cross-cultural exploration and enrichment. Representing a panorama of traditional Brazilian genres including *samba*, *choro*, *baião*, *marcha*, *maracatu* and *valsa*, Boukas’s original works synergize highly syncopated Brazilian rhythms with through-composed classical forms and jazz vocabularies.

Arques’s uncanny natural virtuosity on clarinet and bass clarinet permits him to negotiate Brazilian music’s complex rhythms and melodies. Boukas’s sculpted guitar accompaniments create rich pianistic/orchestral textures imbued with a modern harmonic sophistication. His longtime penchant for duo playing is well documented in recordings and performances with Brazilian pianist *Jovino Santos Neto* and Croatian tambura virtuoso *Filip Novosel*.

Boukas’s prolific compositional output for the Duo currently includes five multi-movement works totaling over forty pieces: *Diálogos for Clarinet and Guitar*, *Diálogos for Bass Clarinet and Guitar* (both 2017), *A Dozen Choro Tributes*, *Século* and *Impressions of Minas* (2018). *A Dozen Choro Tributes* will be the featured work on their second CD, slated for fall 2019 release.

Diálogos Duo is an ensemble member of *Chamber Music America*, and both are members of the *International Clarinet Association*.

LOUIS ARQUES (clarinet, bass clarinet) is a multifaceted woodwind virtuoso from Grenoble, France. He taught in French music schools for ten years including the *Paris Conservatoire*. Moving to New York City in fall 2016 to pursue his MA at *Mannes/New School for Performing Arts*, he has rapidly become one of New York City’s most in-demand chamber and orchestral soloists and ensemble musicians- including the *String Orchestra of Brooklyn* (SOB), *Mannes Orchestra* (Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall) and co-founded the Brooklyn-based *NewOrch* with conductor *Daniel Zinn*.

Louis is a frequent New Music collaborator, including composer *Elizabeth Hoffman* and *Mannes American Composer Ensemble*. He also performs Afro-Cuban music with *Grupo Irek*, *Sonido Costeño*, *New School Afro-Cuban Orchestra* and with diverse jazz ensembles in club venues including *Birdland*. He performs early music on *Von Vittorelli’s* replicas of 18th Century instruments and is an artist endorser for *Vandoren* reeds and mouthpieces.

RICHARD BOUKAS (guitar, composer) is an internationally recognized guitarist, vocalist, composer, educator and scholar of Brazilian music. In addition to *Diálogos Duo*, he is leader of Brazilian jazz groups *Quarteto Moderno*, *Trio Brasileiro* and *Duo Brasileiro*. Apart from his multi-movement works for *Diálogos Duo*, he has composed chamber commissions for ensembles including *La Catrina String Quartet*, *PUBLIQuartet String Quartet*, *Berklee World String Orchestra*, *Atlantic Brass Quintet* and *Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble*. Other recordings as leader and co-leader include *Quarteto Moderno Live! Ao Vivo!*, *Balaio* (with pianist *Jovino Santos Neto*), *Live at St. Michaels* (with Croatian tambura virtuoso *Filip Novosel*), *Amazôna*, *Embarcadero* and *Commitment*.

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Boukas is faculty at *New School for Performing Arts/School of Jazz* since 1989, where he is director of *Brazilian Choro* and *Brazilian Jazz* ensembles. In 2010, he received the New School *Distinguished University Teaching Award*. He has been guest artist-educator at numerous universities and festivals throughout the U.S. (*New York Guitar Seminar, Harvard, Cornell*), Brazil (*Campos do Jordão, UFMG/Belo Horizonte*) and Canada (*York College, Univ. Toronto*). He is a composer member of *Chamber Music America* and *La Bella Strings* artist endorser since 1980.

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