

New School Brazilian Choro Ensemble

Richard Boukas director, arranger

• ERNESTO NAZARETH • Special 150th Birthday Tribute



also featuring music of

ANACLETO DE MEDEIROS	PIXINGUINHA	
GARÔTO	BACH	RADAMÉS GNATTALI
JACOB DO BANDOLIM	HERMETO PASCOAL	
GUINGA	MÁRIO LAGINHA	MANÉ SILVEIRA

THE ENSEMBLE

Jill Ryan, flute

Yehonatan Cohen, soprano saxophone

Jasper Dutz, woodwinds

Tom McCaffrey, 6-string guitar, cavaquinho

Richard Boukas, 6-string guitar, cavaquinho

William Ruegger, 7-string guitar, cavaquinho

Enrique Mancía-Prieto, 6-string electric bass

Zan Tetickovic, drums, percussion

New School Brazilian Choro Ensemble

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presents

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PROGRAM

AINDA ME RECORDO

Pixinguinha

**BATUQUE
APANHEI-TE, CAVAQUINHO
CARIOCA**

Ernesto Nazareth

**JUBILEU
SANTINHA
OS BOÊMIOS**

Anacleto de Medeiros

LAMENTOS DO MORRO

Garôto (Anibal Augusto Sardinha)

**PRELUDE in D major *segue*
REMEXENDO**

**Bach, adapted Boukas
Radamés Gnattali**

**ASSANHADO
NÓ NA GARGANTA
SALVE COPINHA
CHORO MORENO
UM CHORO FELIZ**

**Jacob do Bandolim
Guinga
Hermeto Pascoal
Mané Silveira
Mário Laginha**

New School Brazilian Choro Ensemble

Founded in 2008 by Richard Boukas (faculty at the *New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music* (NSJCM) since 1995 and a recipient of the *Distinguished University Teaching Award*), the ensemble achieves a professional level and interactive dynamic akin to contemporary chamber music. With over fifty arrangements and authoritative transcriptions by Boukas, their repertoire presents a 125-year lineage of keynote composers and representative pieces from Brazil's unique genre of popular instrumental music. To date it is likely the only dedicated Brazilian Choro ensemble in North America under the aegis of a university music program. As one of the guitarists in the group, it is from the player's perspective (rather than that of a teacher) that vital aspects of Choro performance practice are imparted by Boukas.

Aside from its regular concerts at NSJCM and this special concert as part of Queens College's *Year of Brazil*, the ensemble has performed at *Dizzy's Club-Coca Cola* and the *Union Club*.

About Choro

Choro's roots trace back one and a half centuries to the fertile environs of Rio de Janeiro, where Brazil's aristocratic salons featured popular European trio dance forms such as *Polka*, *Minuet*, *Valsa*, *Quadrille* and *Schottische*. Incorporating Classical and Romantic melodic and harmonic influences, these forms gradually synthesized with the socially "provocative" Afro-Brazilian dances *lundu*, *batuque*, *maxixe* and *corta jaca*. Their syncopated melodic and rhythmic characteristics ushered in a new Brazilian nationalism vanguarded by composers including virtuoso flutist *Joaquim Callado*, pianists *Ernesto Nazareth*, *Chiquinha Gonzaga* (the first significant Brazilian woman composer) and later *Anacleto de Medeiros*, famous for his *bombeiro* (firehouse) repertoire. Most of these pieces are in the form AABBACCA, a modified *rondo* form.

The origin of the term *Choro* has been attributed to two main sources. Most commonly, it is derived from the Portuguese verb *chorar*, "to cry"- connoting the expressive, highly ornamented quality of the melodic phrasing. The second origin dates to a special genre of festive Afro-Brazilian songs called *xolo*. Long before accruing its own vast repertoire, Choro in its formative years was considered more *a manner of interpreting* existing European-based pieces. After the seminal Nationalist period, subsequent generations were championed by the great saxophonist *Pixinguinha*, pianist *Radamés Gnattali*, mandolinists *Luperce Miranda* and *Jacob do Bandolim* and guitarists *Garôto* and *Dilermando Reis*.

Contemporary composers of choro who lean more towards the Jazz side often abandon the traditional AABBACCA formal scheme for more compact forms amenable to improvisations upon the harmonic content. This includes the prolific *Hermeto Pascoal*, *Jovino Santos Neto*, *Guinga*, *Hamilton de Holanda* to name but a few. The informal *rodas* (choro jam sessions) and *saraus* (soirées) typify the bohemian atmosphere in which daring instrumental virtuosity and keen group interactions are demonstrated. With the exception of a few standout artists, most Choro musicians maintain separate professional careers, maintaining an uncompromising artistic integrity in the mastery of this repertoire. In broader terms, Choro is a *way of life*.

The stylistic parallels between Choro, turn-of-century Ragtime and early Jazz are striking. Like most Jazz, Choro's instrumentation features small groups of string, wind and percussion instruments, and a repertoire that is revered by the most discerning Brazilian listeners, lay and musically trained alike. Except for more meticulously arranged pieces intended for recording, one will rarely see a single sheet of music among the players. An ever-expanding body of repertoire is committed to memory and subjected to evolving melodic, harmonic and rhythmic interpretations of its themes, basslines (*baixarias*) and chordal accompaniments. It is this interpretive aspect that characterizes Choro's symbiotic interactions among the musicians. This strong sense of tradition through repertoire mastery combined with seasoned license taken in interpretation has permitted Choro to flourish despite its continued marginalization by more commercialized Brazilian musical forms.

Today in Brazil there are schools, workshops, clubs and archival/cultural institutions dedicated to the preservation of Choro's legendary composers and their repertoire. This includes *Instituto Jacob do Bandolim* and *Instituto Moreira-Salles*, both located in Rio de Janeiro.

About the Music

Spanning almost 150 years of Choro's rich evolution, the repertoire chosen for today's performance brings special attention to the seminal works of *Ernesto Nazareth* (in celebration of his 150th birthday), *Anacleto de Medeiros* and *Pixinguinha*. This is followed by a clear lineage of composers who, alongside other Brazilian music genres, have made considerable contributions to choro repertoire: *Garoto*, *Radamés Gnattali*, *Jacob do Bandolim*, *Hermeto Pascoal*, *Guinga*, *Mário Laginha* and *Mané Silveira*. Each composer's vision demonstrates a deep assimilation of the rich choro tradition and repertoire that preceded them, while carving out new and exciting pathways of compositional and instrumental expression.

The goal of Boukas's arrangements and transcriptions is to codify into musical notation the accompaniments (countermelodies and harmonies) which would evolve intuitively over the course of time among a given group of Choro musicians, all of which is rarely if ever notated. In that sense, Choro's accompanimental styles, dynamic interaction among the musicians and nuances of melodic phrasing are primarily an oral tradition not unlike jazz. The typical Choro group (also known generically as a *regional*) can be legitimately considered the popular chamber music of Brazil. The inclusion of *electric bass* in a Choro ensemble is somewhat non-idiomatic in that the *violão sete cordas* (seven-string guitar) usually assumes the critical bassline function- not only to outline the underlying harmonies, but embellish the ends of musical phrases with virtuosic melodic flourishes known as *baixarias*. Many of these *baixarias* have been codified and written into the musical scores you will hear.

A few words must be devoted to how a concert of this magnitude and complexity is achieved. Performing these pieces with clarity and authenticity demands of the musicians a professional level of preparation and commitment which surpasses the normal expectations of an academic music program: considerable individual practice time, study of landmark recordings to assimilate the subtleties of phrasing and articulation, and weekly sectional rehearsals outside regular ensemble meeting times. All the players you will hear tonight have navigated these fresh challenges with great zeal and curiosity, and in some cases, learned how to play new instruments. This includes staple Choro instruments *pandeiro* (tambourine), *violao sete cordas* (seven-string guitar), *cavaquinho* (four-string steel string ukulele) and woodwind doubling on flute and saxophones. These fine young musicians have cultivated a selfless, true team spirit which lies at the very core of a Choro musician's humble character. Being not only the director but one of the musicians has afforded me a rich and exciting opportunity to pass along the key stylistic aspects of this great repertoire. We are indeed a musical family, and will remain as such long after these brilliant young musicians have completed their studies at New School.

Program Notes

Ainda me Recordo (I still remember) Pixinguinha (1897-1973) (maxixe)

Pixinguinha is without a doubt the most prolific and important Brazilian popular music composer in the twentieth century. His choros are motivically economical, melodically infectious and very sound in their harmonic organization. The liberal use of inverted harmonies in the B and C sections are classically-based, however also are common throughout Nazareth's seminal piano works. This bright *maxixe* from the 1930's represents the style of Choro championed by Pixinguinha's signature group, *Os Oito Batutas* (the eight wizards). It features a highly syncopated melody, using the earmark "fork rhythm" (sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth) as a melodic module. The piece's form has three thematic sections as do most choros of the period, however the more concise form (ABCA) does not employ the typical repetitions of each section followed by a reprise of the A section.

Batuque Ernesto Nazareth (1863-1934) (tango caraterístico)

An ambitious piece dating to 1912 by the illustrious pianist and arguably Brazil's seminal nationalist composer. *Batuque* refers to that common Afro-Brazilian dance form—he and composers of the era rarely entitled pieces or stated their sub-genre using Afro-Brazilian dance names—hence the sub-genre "tango caraterístico". The piece has a unique rhythmic vitality driven by an etude-like melody and typical *habanera-based* accompaniment. Its form is not that of a usual choro (AABBACCA)—rather, it interweaves thematic sections in a through-composed, episodic fashion. This arrangement remains faithful to the piano original, enriched with additional counter melodies, seven-string *baixarias* and a new transitional modulation section.

Apanhei-te, Cavaquinho (I've caught you, cavaquinho) Ernesto Nazareth (polca)

One of Nazareth's best-known pieces probably composed in the 1920's, this polca features a *moto perpetuo* melody in 16th notes in the highest register of the piano, accompanied by an ostinato left-hand figure (a variant of the *habanera* rhythm so commonly used in this period) mimicking the *cavaquinho*'s strumming. Adapting this piece for the ensemble posed some fundamental challenges which were solved by distributing the main melody among the three woodwinds. Some additional *baixarias* (basslines) and counterpoints are added to enrich the otherwise static texture of the piano original.

Carioca Ernesto Nazareth (tango, 1913)

The term *carioca* refers to any aspect of life or the denizens of Rio de Janeiro. Compared to the previous two Nazareth works, this lovely tango in minor tonality imparts a more flowing and lyrical sentiment— which is partially achieved by a legato arpeggiated accompaniment (versus an ostinato left-hand rhythmic pattern) and a sweeping Romantic-period melody whose main motivic cell is the ubiquitous 16th-8th-16th “fork rhythm”. The main A section shows a brief move to the *Neapolitan sixth* (bII region), the kind of harmonic surprises which were capitalized upon by all choro composers to follow. Its form is essentially the classic AABBACCA, using an introductory phrase which also precedes the final A section statement.

Jubileu (Jubilee) Anacleto de Medeiros (1866-1907) (dobrado)

A vital link in Choro's early generation of composers, Medeiros was the son of a freed slave, conservatory-trained in both composition and conducting. He is best known for his symphonic band repertoire written for the group *Corpo de Bombeiros* (firemen) who would routinely rehearse and perform in competitions with other firehouses. The group made some of the earliest recordings of this genre in the early twentieth century. *Jubileu* is a spirited march whose melodic and rhythmic gestures evoke the parallel American repertoire of John Philip Sousa (1854-1932). Its form is standard AABBACCA, with a C section based in Ab major (bVI). A brief modulatory progression using ascending minor 3rd root movement (Ab-B-E-G, similar to Coltrane's Giant Steps) is used as transition to the final A statement. This arrangement and the other two Medeiros pieces to follow are loosely adapted from a symphonic band period recording made in Brazil in the 1990's.

Santinha Anacleto de Medeiros (schottische)

A more lighthearted genre of *bombeiro* music, the more courtly dotted rhythm melody typical of *schottische* (contrasted with the more syncopated rhythms of *maxixe*) likely later became the basis for northeast Brazil's popular form known as *xôte*, which is reminiscent of *reggae*. As is done frequently in the performance of choro, the classic trio form (AABBACCA) is extended by an additional BA statement.

Os Boêmios (the Bohemians) Anacleto de Medeiros (maxixe)

Of the three Medeiros pieces in the program, *Os Boêmios* is by far the most Brazilian nationalist in character. A catchy *maxixe* whose melody is built almost exclusively on the “fork rhythm” motive (see above) is balanced by *bombardinho* counterlines which outline the *maxixe* rhythmic pulse with triadic shapes. Such lines were customarily played by baritone horn, here reassigned to seven-string guitar. The C section melody divides between *bombardinho* and the higher woodwinds. Again, the performance extends the (AABBACCA) form with an additional BA statement.

Lamentos do Morro (laments from the hills) Garôto (Anibal Augusto Sardinha) (1915-55) (samba-choro)

This lively piece dates back to the 1940's, originally written for solo guitar. Garôto was a pioneer guitarist-composer whose works for solo guitar incorporated not only a dazzling virtuosity but a far more sophisticated harmonic language informed by Jazz and the French Impressionists Debussy and Ravel. One could say his oeuvre contained the primary elements of Bossa Nova which appeared in the mid to late 1950's after his death in 1955. This arrangement is based upon brilliant guitarist *Marco Pereira* and bandolim (mandolin) virtuoso *Hamilton de Holanda*. The use of a prolonged dominant pedal preceding the main theme is quite unique in both choro and samba repertoire.

D major Prelude Revisited Bach-Boukas SEGUE **Remexendo** (flirting) Radamés Gnattali (1906-88)

A segue of two entirely different pieces which share the same tonality and some melodic characteristics as well. First, the original two-voice structure of Bach's D major Prelude from the *Well-Tempered Clavier, Book One* is expanded by Boukas to include four new counterpoint lines composed in Bach's style. The original *moto perpetuo* melody unfolds completely in the second guitar while the woodwinds trade four-bar melodic segments with the new counterpoints. This approach to the arrangement grew largely out of the simple necessity for the woodwind players to breathe!

Remexendo is a lively choro by *Gnattali*, arguably one of Brazil's most important 20th century composers alongside Villa-Lobos and Pixinguinha. A prolific composer, virtuoso pianist, conductor and quite decent guitarist, Gnattali was a stylistic chameleon, demonstrating an equal affinity for full orchestra, various chamber ensembles, jazz trio and quintet. The arrangement is loosely based on that recorded by Rio's cavaquinho master and Choro historian *Henrique Cazes* and his brilliant CD *Bach no Brasil* (Bach in Brazil).

Assanhado (sassy, witty) Jacob do Bandolim (Bittencourt) (1918-69)

A signature classic from the famous mandolinist and leader of the group *Época de Ouro* (Golden Age) which included the great guitarists *Dino Sete Cordas* (seven-string) and *César Faria* (six string). *Assanhado's* AABB form sports a bluesy A section and a Bebop-like bridge melody supported by a cycle of fifths harmonic structure. A new "shout chorus" by Boukas caps off this arrangement, incorporating crossrhythmic groupings and a generous dose of chromaticism.

Nó na Garganta (lump in the throat) Guinga (b. 1950)

One of Brazil's most unique and influential compositional voices and brilliant guitarists over the last twenty years, Guinga's profound impact has redefined the parameters of contemporary Brazilian music. Having penned over two hundred pieces both instrumental and in collaboration with premiere lyricists including *Aldir Blanc* and *Paulo César Pinheiro*, his unique acrobatic melodies often outlining an unorthodox harmonic vocabulary emanate from his guitar in totally intuitive fashion—defying most conventional theoretical examination. *Nó na Garganta* (in C minor and AAB form) possesses a dark, longing quality (what most Brazilians call *saudade*) and a contrasting bridge in Ab minor whose poignancy and inexorability emit a fresh elegance and sensitivity.

Salve Copinha (hail, Copinha) Hermeto Pascoal (b. 1936)

A dazzling choro by arguably Brazil's singular instrumental musical genius over the last five decades. This performance is based on a note-for-note group transcription of the landmark 1987 recording *Brasil Universo* by Pascoal's brilliant group including pianist *Jovino Santos Neto*, bassist *Itiberê Zwarg* and saxophonist-flutist *Carlos Malta* (whose prolific musical output and groups have made their own strong stamp on contemporary Brazilian music). *Copinha* was a flutist who had an early and strong impact on Pascoal's affinity for the instrument. This piece is highly reminiscent of Bach, its virtuosic melody adorned by inverted harmonies and striking counterpoints in the piano, bass and other woodwinds.

Choro Moreno (dark choro) Mané Silveira (b. 1960)

A mainstay on São Paulo's thriving contemporary instrumental music scene (*música instrumental*), Silveira is co-founder of the artist-run label *Núcleo Contemporâneo* and the heralded *Orquestra Popular de Câmara* (OPC, popular chamber orchestra), *Choro Moreno* is an elegant piece whose winding melody and elusive harmonies show a clear nod to the French Impressionists. Originally sung by *Mônica Salmaso* with OPC, this arrangement employs rich woodwind and ethereal guitar writing which is a nod to heralded guitar quartet *Maogani* and arranger *Paulo Aragão* based in Rio.

Um Choro Feliz (a happy choro) Mário Laginha (b. 1960)

Probably the most acclaimed jazz pianist-composer in Portugal, Laginha recorded this piece with virtuoso singer *Maria João* in 2000. A clever hybrid of choro, baião and samba, its dazzling *moto perpetuo* melody is reminiscent of *Egberto Gismonti's* piece *Lôro*, modulating effortlessly through uneven phrase lengths to obscure any clear divisions in the form. The reality that there is hardly a sixteenth note of rest in the entire melody is no small feat accomplished by the woodwinds.

Notes by Richard Boukas

**For more information about the Choro Ensemble and Brazilian music in general,
E mail Richard Boukas at boukasr@newschool.edu or visit:**

<http://boukas.com/special-projects-and-ensembles>