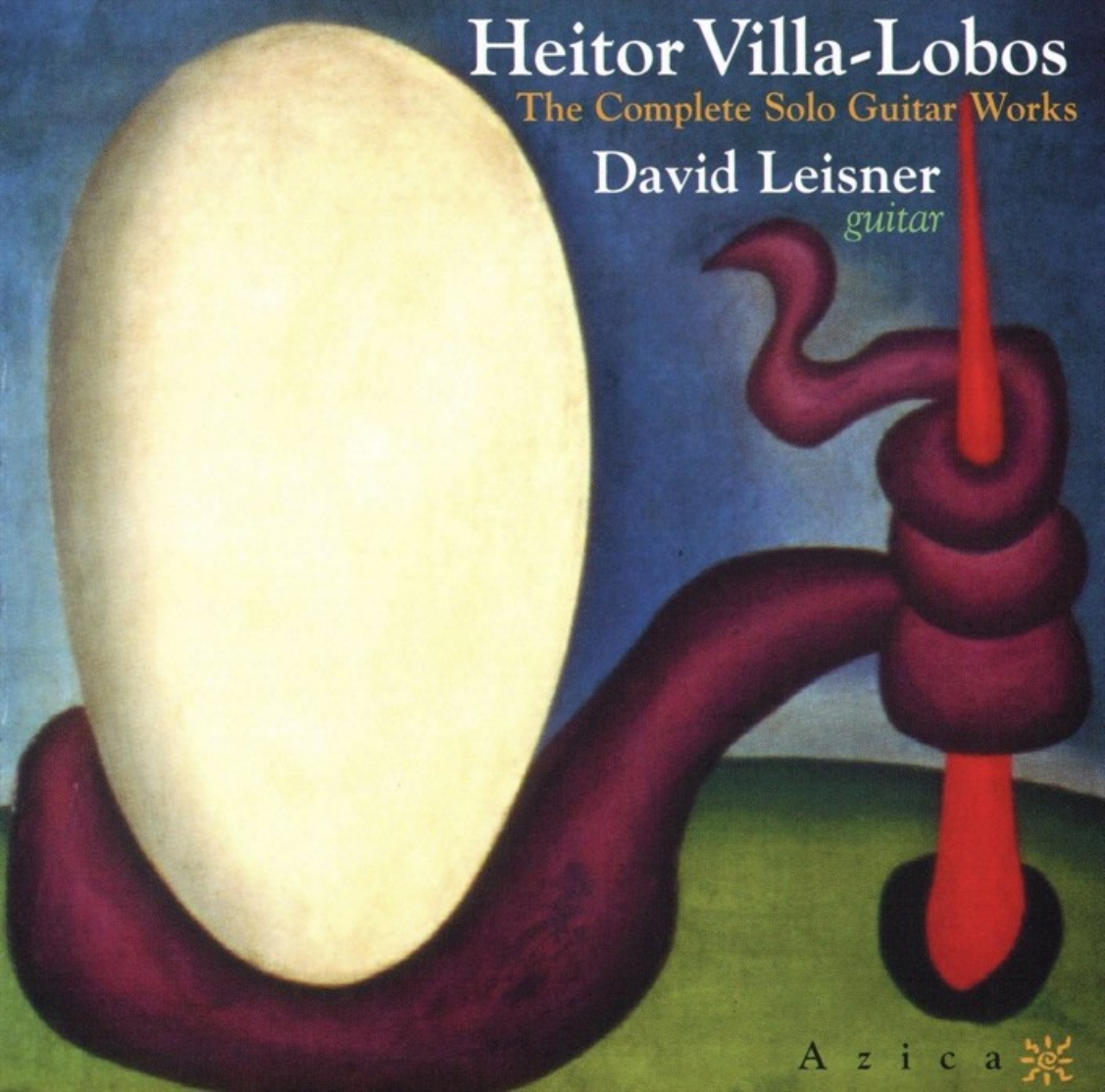


A surrealist illustration featuring a large, smooth, yellow egg-like shape on the left, resting on a thick, dark red, worm-like base. To the right, a red guitar neck is depicted, with a dark red, swirling, smoke-like or liquid-like form emerging from the headstock area. The background is a gradient of blue and green, suggesting a sky and ground. The overall style is dreamlike and abstract.

Heitor Villa-Lobos

The Complete Solo Guitar Works

David Leisner

guitar

A z i c a 

Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Complete Solo Works for Guitar

Born in Rio in 1887, Heitor Villa-Lobos was eight years old when he first picked up the guitar. His father, Raul, had begun coaching his son on cello at the age of six, using a viola for the purpose, and Villa-Lobos claims to have begun piano studies at the age of three. The boy's passion caused worry with his mother that young Heitor might be tempted to a career in music, at the expense of something more dignified for a Villa-Lobos, such as medicine, and correspondingly cut her son off from piano lessons. Heitor found instead a small guitar that he could hide under his bed. As he admits, "It is on the guitar that I have for a long time prepared my symphonic compositions." Indeed, by the age of 14, he had become an accomplished player, and began composing for folk groups in Brazil. At the age of 18, Villa-Lobos undertook a dangerous journey through the Amazon, in order to absorb native song, folklore, and the rhythm of the forest. It is this kinship with the sounds and spirit of his native homeland that stands as his most important legacy.

While this may be true, it also is simplistic, as Villa-Lobos first and foremost was a highly skilled classical composer (in the "serious" music sense of the word "classical") in whose music one can find familiarity with composers ranging from Bach (who held a particular fascination for Villa-Lobos), Chopin (whose music he had transcribed), Wagner and Puccini (particularly in terms of melodic inventiveness), through Vincent d'Indy (his composition teacher) and the modern Stravinsky, Varèse and Debussy, in whose music Villa-Lobos was undoubtedly immersed during his Paris sojourn of 1923-30. The poet Manuel Bandeira relates that Villa-Lobos confessed to him of the Rite of Spring, "it was the greatest musical emotion of (my) life." According to Villa-Lobos, "there is nothing folkloric in my music. It needs to be adapted in the way it is written, how one does for the (sic) classical music, like it was done of Bach." In the same interview, he drives it home with: "I never attempted to make (my music) Brazilian. If in my music you find it to be Brazilian, that's because I am Brazilian. My personality is Brazilian. But I am in no way a folklorist. Whoever interprets my music like Brazilian folk music is grossly mistaken. My *chôros* are not sambas!"

As a teenager, Villa-Lobos became fascinated with the music played by amateur street musicians in groups called *chôros*. His affinity with the *chôro* became a life-long association, and in the early 1920s he began composing fourteen *chôros* for varying instruments and ensembles, the first one being for guitar. While his catalog for guitar is remarkably small, given his overall prolific tendencies, it nevertheless is considered a vital and watershed corpus of works within the guitar world. While this recording contains all of it, the writer must point out that there were written other less significant compositions, some of whose manuscripts have been lost, and some of which are unpublished fragments.

From the producer's perspective, this writer concludes by pointing out a remarkable lineage in this, David Leisner's second recording with Azica Records. Within his Villa-Lobos interpretation can be heard the same sensitivities, contrapuntal awareness, particularly in terms of inner melodies, and innate sense of formal structure, at both the macro and micro levels, that are characteristic of his first recording with this label of J.S. Bach, transcribed for solo guitar. Given Villa-Lobos' passion for the music of Bach, it is fitting that it should be brought to life by one of the country's foremost exponents.

Etudes (see essay by Mr. Leisner).

Five Preludes - Dedicated to his wife, the Preludes encapsulate a broad swath of Brazilian texture and rhythm, sentiment and ethos. While perhaps somewhat harmonically restricted, in terms of modulation and tonal centers, they nonetheless present a colorful abstraction of Brazilian lore. The sixth Prelude is lost. Prelude No. 1, dedicated "Homage to the Countryman," contains interwoven melodic lines that typify the fabric of the Brazilian *chôros*. In Prelude No. 2 ("Homage to the Scoundrel"), the melody supports the harmonic swing of the *chôro*, while at the same time typifying the solo clarinet in a *chôros* group. Prelude No. 3 is subtitled "Homage to Bach." The arpeggiations, pedal points, and

other Baroque treatments found within this prelude indeed underpin the fascination in which Villa-Lobos held Bach's music. Prelude No. 4 ("Homage to Brazilian Indians"), evokes images of Amazon Indian culture, through a plaintive modal melody that returns, *passacaglia*-like, and is finally recapitulated with ethereal harmonics. Villa-Lobos pays tribute to that extremely popular dance in Brazil, the waltz, in his Prelude No. 5, dedicated "Homage to Social Life." In this movement he combines waltz elements with those of the *chôro*.

Chôros No. 1 - Written in 1920, it is the first of 14 *Chôros* composed for various instrumental combinations. Villa-Lobos has appropriated traditional elements of the folk *choro*, and exaggerated them, in the way that Frank Stella, half a century later, might borrow the paint skeins of Jackson Pollock and make them larger than life. The rhythmic ebbs and flows, highlighted by consecutive fermatas and sudden *accelerandos*, all combine to stylize this popular Brazilian dance form.

Suite Populaire Brésilienne - Within these five dances (Mazurka-*Chôro*, Schottish-*Chôro*, Valsa-*Chôro*, Gavotte-*Chôro*, and *Chôrinho*), Villa-Lobos has combined the essence of Brazilian and European musics. While not stretching the musical imagination through any particular ground-breaking innovations, the collection nevertheless is sparkling in its wit, stylizations, variety, and successful use of the colors of the guitar.

Dr. Gary Wright

The 1928 Manuscript of the 12 Etudes

Something New

Two articles that appeared in guitar magazines in 1996 and 1997 turned what we know of the 12 Etudes upside down. The earlier one was written by Eduardo Fernandez in *Guitar Review* and the other, published only a few months later, was by Stanley Yates in *Soundboard*. They both reported the existence of an important manuscript, dated 1928, which contains significant differences from the published edition. It had apparently been residing quietly in the Villa-Lobos museum in Rio de Janeiro for over 20 years, unnoticed! This manuscript is no rough draft, but rather a very neatly copied score in the composer's hand, with meticulous fingerings, clearly ready for publication. It contains an enormous number of notes, accents, dynamics, repeat signs, tempo and other expressive markings which are different from the published version, and in Etudes 10 and 11 there are entire sections of music that are new to us. It is my opinion that, in almost every detail, this 1928 manuscript is superior.

The published edition has always been a puzzle, to guitarists and historians alike. A large number of misprints and some mystifying markings have contributed over the years to a great deal of confusion. With the appearance of the 1928 manuscript, all of the old questions are answered, and new ones appear in their place.

The most significant question has no readily apparent answer at the moment: What is the story of the changes between the 1928 version and the one that was published and printed in 1957, almost 30 years later? The published edition contains a dedication to Segovia, but the 1928 manuscript carries no such dedication. Was it Segovia who suggested the changes, or Villa-Lobos himself who made them, or a combination of the two? If it was the revision of the composer, should we not respect his wishes and play the piece as he decided to publish it?

Most composers make a number of revisions on their work, even after they have completed the "final" draft. Some composers' revisions are clearly improvements over the original, while others (Charles Ives comes to mind) revise extensively, but their first impulse almost always proves to be the preferable one. It is my opinion that Villa-Lobos, with his gift for spontaneity and his impulsive nature, was of the second variety. So even if the changes are completely his own, I would tend to trust his initial instinct.

More likely, however, is the possibility that Segovia recommended most, or perhaps all, of the revisions. If this is so, Villa-Lobos may have incorporated all of Segovia's suggestions with little question, out of respect for this great and influential artist. It is well-known that Segovia made substantial changes in most of the published works written for and played by him. Now that other manuscripts are coming to light, one can see just how much he revised, for example, the compositions of his dear and esteemed friend, Manuel Ponce. Sometimes these editing decisions are brilliant and clear improvements over the original, and surprisingly often they are poor choices that obscure the composer's original intent.

The Segovia Problem

For all the supreme and perhaps still unequalled artistry of Segovia as a performer, his understanding of the music of his time was disappointing. One need only think of all the important 20th Century composers he neglected to commission to write for the guitar, starting with Ravel, Bartok, Stravinsky, etc., because he disliked their music. Even his friend, Villa-Lobos, was the butt of Segovia's pointed criticisms and ridicule. In *The Segovia-Ponce Letters* (published by Editions Orphee, 1989), a letter dated 1940 from Segovia reports on a chamber music concert: "The music was dreadful, Villa-Lobos's most of all...It turned out one had to congratulate the composer in approximately this manner: 'My sincere congratulations, because you attained as horrible a result as you wished for the work...'" He explains his point of view a few sentences later: "The music lover has withdrawn, because all over the world, the stridency, discord and brutal noise in some musical circles substituting for music is found less interesting each time." It was the expression of just this stridency and brutality that would prove to be the truthful musical reporting of the era, but Segovia was attached to 19th century notions of Truth as Beauty.

In the same letter, Segovia reports a visit from Villa-Lobos, in which he plays for Segovia his new Prelude #3 for guitar, a composition "of lethal boredom. It attempts to imitate Bach and by the third cycle of a descending progression – a regression, therefore – with which the work begins, it makes one want to laugh."

Despite this apparent contempt for Villa-Lobos' aesthetic, Segovia wrote over a decade later in the published Preface to the 12 Etudes, now dedicated to him, that "Villa-Lobos has given to the history of the guitar fruits of his talent as luxuriant and savory as those of Scarlatti and Chopin," an estimation with which I heartily agree. Segovia also goes on to say in the Preface that he has not changed any of the fingerings that Villa-Lobos supplied, since "he understood the guitar perfectly." But what of the extensive fingerings in the 1928 manuscript? Did Segovia forget, ignore or never see them? Beyond the technical issues, was Segovia, with his reactionary aesthetic values, a suitable editor of the work of the musically radical Villa-Lobos?

What's the Difference?

Regardless of the answers to all of these questions, we have before us the 1928 manuscript and the published edition, and can make judgments based solely on the musical evidence. One can only hope that a facsimile edition of the 1928 manuscript will soon be made available by the publisher, so that the exquisitely meticulous details of Villa-Lobos' score are there for all to see. No doubt, each individual performer will find both versions useful and will make up their own mind about which version to use at any given moment in the music.

For this recording, I used the 1928 manuscript almost exclusively, with a few minor exceptions. As I played through the manuscript in the beginning, it took me a while to be convinced, accustomed as I was to playing it differently for so many years. In the same way, the listener who is familiar with these Etudes may find it difficult or jarring to hear the original version, but patient second and third listenings should prove to be rewarding and,

hopefully, convincing. Think of it as a restoration, much like that of a fine old painting restored to its original condition after years of dust and fading, and then looking barely recognizable.

For those interested in more details, here are some highlights of the significant differences between the two versions:

Almost every measure of Etudes 1 and 2 in the published edition has a repeat sign. The 1928 manuscript has no repeats. This improves these Etudes significantly for two reasons – 1) the musical material is not strong enough to warrant repeats of each measure, and 2) the lovely harmonic progression unfolds more clearly.

The repeat scheme in the manuscript of Etude 3 is striking. In the published version, almost all measures have repeat signs, and there is a Da Capo indication to repeat exactly as is. The manuscript, on the other hand, has the Da Capo written out, with some measures repeated the second time through and many of them not. This asymmetrical structure was an innovation that Villa-Lobos used for many of his works and is typical of his compositional personality. It makes Etude 3 less predictable and a bit more radical.

There are quite a few different notes in both #4 and #5. Also, in #4, the manuscript eliminates the "Meno" marking at m. 15, which blocks the forward momentum in the published version, and, two measures later, adds new accents and a contrapuntal voicing in the treble and bass voices, giving new interest when the ear needs it. Toward the end of Etude 5, Villa-Lobos introduced a slower tempo, which lasts until the end of the piece in the published edition and only lasts for four measures in the manuscript, which improves the pacing.

Several tempo changes are added in the brief Etude 6, which give it a wild, roller-coaster quality. Again, Villa-Lobos has a more complex tempo scheme in Etude 7, where, in the slower middle section, he retards the tempo to a slower one and then retards it again before returning to the basic *Modéré* (*Moderato*) tempo of the section.

The introduction to #8 has many more detailed markings, which helped to make its mysterious atmosphere more specific, and a different rhythm in the accompaniment in the first few measures, which allows it to be less rigid and more singing.

Etude 9 has a slower tempo indication, *Moins*, at the beginning of the enchanting 32nd-note variation, which makes it more magical.

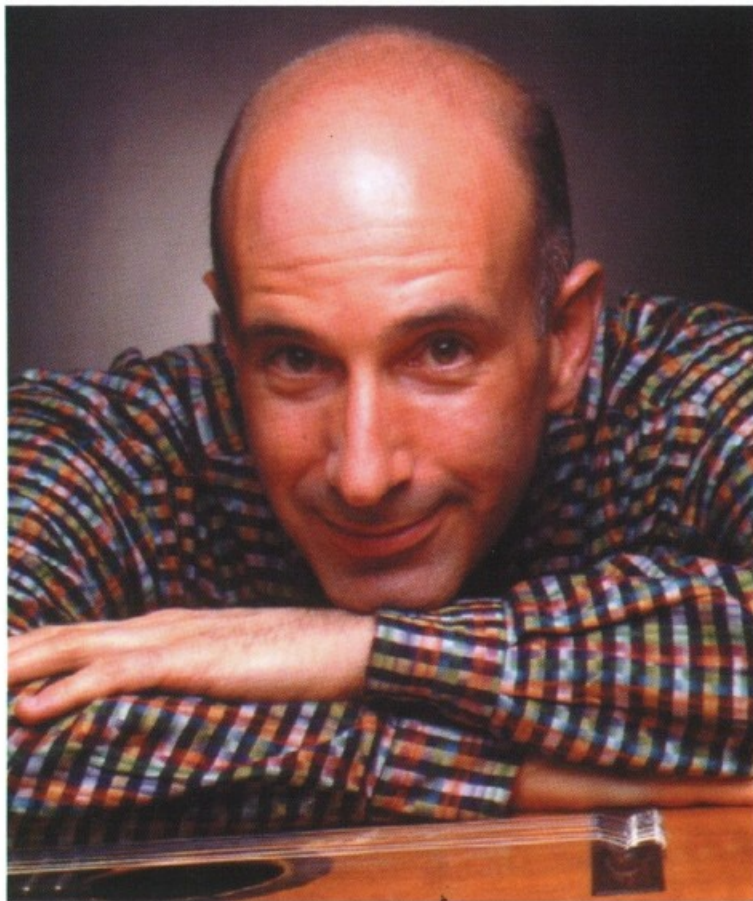
The most astonishing revision in the Etudes is heard in Etude 10, where 19 measures of new material are added. Here, the jungle-like quality of this, the most jungly, etude is expanded upon in a darkly lyrical fashion. It is followed by an asymmetrical reprise (like Etude 3) of the opening material.

Etude 11 also includes a new passage, this time 13 measures long, in the middle of the *Animé* section. It is so similar to the material that surrounds it that one might not even notice it, except for some chords and harmonics a striking little two-measure chordal passage with an accelerated tempo.

Etude 12 has fewer obvious differences than the others. The most important thing here is the much greater dynamic detail, which lends a more interesting shape to each moment and to the piece as a whole.

I have always felt that the 12 Etudes played together as a single set is the best way for player and listener alike to experience this masterpiece. An audience member approached me after a concert once and said that listening to the Etudes was like observing the unfolding of a human life, developing from its youthful beginnings to the more mature and dramatic end. This emotional evolution, coupled with the simple harmonic progression from one etude to the next and their increasing wildness and intensity makes for a cumulatively powerful journey. In this, it stands alone in the repertoire of the guitar.

David Leisner



David Leisner is an extraordinarily versatile musician with a multi-faceted career as an electrifying performing artist, a distinguished composer, and a master teacher. Regarded as one of America's leading classical guitarists, his superb musicianship and provocative programming have been applauded by critics and audiences around the world.

Mr. Leisner's career as a guitarist began auspiciously with top prizes in both the 1975 Toronto and 1981 Geneva International Guitar Competitions. In the 1980s, a disabling hand injury, focal dystonia, cut off his blossoming performing career in mid-stream and forced him to stop playing for nearly a decade. Through a pioneering approach to technique based on his understanding of the physical aspects of playing the guitar, Leisner gradually rehabilitated himself. Now completely recovered, he has once again resumed an active performing career, earning accolades wherever he plays.

His recent seasons were highlighted by an innovative three-concert series at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York City, which included the first all-Bach guitar recital in New York's history. In addition, he made acclaimed debuts in Greece, the Philippines and Mexico, and performed on concert series throughout the US and Europe. He is also a regular at the Santa Fe, Vail Valley, Bargemusic and Angel Fire Chamber Music Festivals, performing with flutist Eugenia Zukerman, baritone Kurt Ollmann, violinist Ida Kavafian and many others. Celebrated for expanding the guitar repertoire, David Leisner has premiered works by many of today's most important composers, including Virgil Thomson, Ned Rorem, Philip Glass, Richard Rodney Bennett, Peter Sculthorpe and Osvaldo Golijov.

Mr. Leisner is himself a highly respected composer noted for the emotional and dramatic power of his music. His *Dances in the Madhouse*, in both its original version for violin and guitar and as an arrangement for orchestra, has received well over 200 performances. Recent commissioners include the Fairfield Orchestra (CT), Red Cedar Chamber Music (IA), and the Twentieth Century Unlimited Series (NM).

A distinguished teacher, David Leisner is currently on the faculties of the New England Conservatory and the Manhattan School of Music. Primarily self-taught as both guitarist and composer, he briefly studied guitar with John Duarte, David Starobin and Angelo Gilardino and composition with Richard Winslow, Virgil Thomson, Charles Turner and David Del Tredici.

For more information, please visit David Leisner's website at: <http://davidleisner.com>

Acknowledgements

This album is dedicated to Mildred Brown, my first guitar teacher and mentor, who taught me much about breathing life into music, and who was also the first to introduce me to the guitar pieces of this wild and refreshing composer.

Bundles of gratitude to Marcelo Rodolfo of the Villa-Lobos Museum for his enthusiastic assistance with the manuscripts; Luciana Carvalho and the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, Guilherme Augusto do Amaral and Gilberto Chateaubriand for permission to reproduce the cover painting; Sonia Rubinsky and Luiz Mantovani, my generous Brazilian liaisons; Nick Underhill and Mary Kay Fink, my intrepid hosts in Cleveland; and Ralph Jackson, my rock and chief listener.

Guitar by John Gilbert. Strings by D'Addario.

This Azica release was recorded "live to two-track" at the recording sessions. No mixing was done subsequent to the recording sessions. The intent of this technique is to capture the artist's performance without alteration by the recording process. There have been no analog stages since the original analog to digital conversion at the sessions. All editing and transfers have been done in the digital domain to preserve the sound quality produced during the artist's performance.

Heitor Villa-Lobos

The Complete Solo Guitar Works

Twelve Etudes (1928) 32:21

1. No. 1 in e minor 1:19
2. No. 2 in A Major 1:03
3. No. 3 in D Major 2:42
4. No. 4 in G Major 3:15
5. No. 5 in C Major 2:39
6. No. 6 in e minor 1:35
7. No. 7 in E Major 2:30
8. No. 8 in c# minor 3:07
9. No. 9 in f# minor 3:30
10. No. 10 in b minor 3:26
11. No. 11 in e minor 4:11
12. No. 12 in a minor 2:16

Five Preludes (1940) 17:46

13. No. 1 in e minor 4:44
14. No. 2 in E Major 2:51
15. No. 3 in a minor 3:15
16. No. 4 in e minor 3:19
17. No. 5 in D Major 3:17

18. Chôros No. 1 (1920) 4:33

Suite Populaire Brésilienne (1908-1912) 21:26

19. Mazurka-Chôro 2:37
20. Schottish-Chôro 3:35
21. Valsa-Chôro 4:33
22. Gavotta-Chôro 4:56
23. Chôrinho 5:29

TOTAL RUNNING TIME 1:16:28

David Leisner,

guitar

Producer: Gary Wright

Recording Engineer: Bruce Egre

Digital Editor: Bruce Egre

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David Leisner, guitar Heitor Villa-Lobos

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Features the first
recording of the
1928 manuscript
version of the
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