

*“A truly creative musician is capable of producing, from his own imagination, melodies that are more authentic than folklore itself.”* —Heitor Villa-Lobos

In 1919 Heitor Villa-Lobos reached a critical point in his musical career. He had established a substantial body of compositions, employing many sizes of ensembles and combinations of instruments. He had absorbed the melodies, forms and harmonic palettes of both his native Brazil and the European traditions. But the full blossoming of his distinctive musical voice would not come until after his first trip to Europe in 1923. We can see the ingredients for that synthesis in earlier works.

### **Histórias da Carochinha**

From 1911 to 1921 Villa-Lobos found time between large orchestral compositions to write much smaller suites for solo piano. Several embody a theme of childhood in their tunes, titles and scope. One of these, the first *A Prole do Bebê* (“The Baby’s Family”), became his most enduring piano composition despite a less than auspicious debut in Rio de Janeiro by none other than Arthur Rubinstein. Rubinstein recalled that the performance was booed, but Villa-Lobos responded, with characteristic self-confidence, “I am still too good for them.”

One of the small suites of this period, *Histórias da Carochinha* (“Fairy Tales” or “Children’s Stories”), is less known, indeed, it is scarcely mentioned in several standard biographies. Consisting of four short pieces, the *Histórias da Carochinha* is entirely suited for transcription for guitar. I found considerable similarity to such sets composed by other famous composers especially the *Album for the Young*, Opus 39 by Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky. One selection from that collection, *In Church*, was featured in this space in the Winter 1997 edition of *Soundboard*.

Whether or not Villa-Lobos knew of that collection or used it as a model cannot be known, but Lisa M. Peppercorn, perhaps the most prolific writer about Villa-Lobos, makes an extensive and persuasive case for influence by Russian composers, and Tchaikovsky in particular. She does also note that “Villa-Lobos had always rejected the notion to have been influenced by the Russians. He even claimed that he disliked them. Obviously, he reacted in this way because he refused to admit the similarity in character between himself and the Russians as far as the music is concerned.”

### **Villa-Lobos Transcription Possibilities**

Although many compositions from his nearly 50 productive years are potential sources for transcription to the guitar, only a portion of his output is in the public domain. In the

United States, anything composed before 1923 is eligible; anything later requires permission from the copyright holder. Solo piano scores to consider include *Danças características Africanas* (1915), *Suite floral* (1918), *Histórias da carochinha* (1919), *A Lenda do Caboclo* (1920), *Carnaval das crianças* (1920), *Prole do Bebê*, first series (1920), and *Prole do Bebê*, second series (1921).

### **The Transcriptions**

The transcription of both pieces presented here was quite straightforward. Unusual for piano music, the pitch ranges fell almost entirely within the range of the guitar. Only an occasional reduction of doubled pitches was necessary. *A Cortesia do Príncipezinho* (“The Courtesy of the Little Prince”) was originally in F major, a perfect fourth higher, while *E a Princesazinha Dançava* (“And the Princess Danced”) was transcribed in the original key, although an octave lower.

The simple textures allow multiple options for fingering, and I made the choices that I did based largely on efficiency and ease of playing. One fancier fingering is in *A Cortesia do Príncipezinho* at measure 24. The melodic leap of a major sixth up the fourth string to the piquant dissonance on the second beat seemed to call for a slide, if only as a nod to the similar figures in Villa-Lobos’ guitar compositions. Smaller hands may have trouble sustaining the bass note C at measure 28 of *E a Princesazinha Dançava*. Alternate solutions include cutting the bass note short (which also focuses attention on the octave melodic leap) or fingering the C on the sixth string (along with necessary adjustments earlier in the measure).

### **References**

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Peppercorn, L.M., ‘Foreign influences in Villa-Lobos’s Music,’ *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv*, 3(1), 1977, 37–51

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List of Compositions by Heitor Villa-Lobos, In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved July 28, 2009.

Wright, Simon, *Villa-Lobos*, Oxford University Press, 1992.

If you have suggestions, comments or contributions, please send them to:

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# E a Princesazinha Dançava

Histórias da Carochinha (1919)

Transcribed for guitar  
by Richard Yates

Heitor Villa-Lobos  
(1887–1959)

Tempo di gavotta

8 *p*

3

6 *poco rall.*

9 *mf a tempo*

12 *rall.* *a tempo*

15

18

21

Meno mosso

*poco rall.*

24

27

30

Tempo 1

33

36

Lento

39

# A Cortesia do Principezinho

Histórias da Carochinha (1919)

Transcribed for guitar  
by Richard Yates

Heitor Villa-Lobos  
(1887–1959)

Quasi movimento di gavotta

8 *mf* *gracioso*

4 *cresc.* *f*

8 *mf*

12 *rall.*

16 *a tempo* *p cantabile*

20

24 *rall.* *f*

28 28 *V<sub>3</sub>*

32 32 *rall.* *Poco più mosso* *V*

36 36 *V*

40 40 *rall.* *a tempo* *V* *①*

44 44 *I<sub>3</sub>*

47 47 *III<sub>3</sub>* *rall.* *mf* *a tempo*

50

53 53 *Lento* *rall.<sup>3</sup>* *VIII* *f* *ff*