

40 YEARS



ARCHIPELAGO OF LIGHT



TALI MORGULIS
piano

VILLA-LOBOS
GINASTERA
PRADO
PIAZZOLLA

40 YEARS



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ARCHIPELAGO OF LIGHT

Heitor Villa-Lobos: Children's Carnival / *Carnaval das crianças* (14:17)

1. The Little Pierrot's Pony / *O ginete do pierrozinho* (1:15)
2. The Little Devil's Whip / *O chicote do diabinho* (1:40)
3. Pierrette's Rus / *A manha da pierrete* (1:52)
4. The Little Domino's Jingle Bells / *Os guizos do dominozinho* (1:07)
5. The Little Ragpicker's Adventures / *As peripecias do trapeirozinho* (1:13)
6. The Coquette's Mischievousness / *As traquinices do mascarado mignon* (1:25)
7. The Fife of a Precocious Daydreamer / *A gaita de um precoce fantasiado* (2:37)
8. The Gaiety of a Children's Band / *A folia de um bloco infantil* (3:08)
with SunJung Lee, piano

Alberto Ginastera: Sonata No. 1, Op. 22 (13:48)

9. Allegro marcato (4:02)
10. Presto misterioso (2:30)
11. Adagio molto appassionato (4:32)
12. Ruvido ed ostinato (2:44)

Almeida Prado: Islands / *Ilhas* (16:41)

13. The island of nine volcanoes / *Ilha dos nove vulcões* (3:04)
Spitting fire, the blood of the earth, explosions of incandescent rhythms, a strange liturgy of violence, a wild song between lava and sea.
14. A stony island / *Ilha de Pedra* (1:50)
A barren stillness, strange animals run over the crevices. No vegetation to afford beauty, occasional bushes and an unrelenting heat.
15. The island of ice / *Ilha de gelo* (1:24)
Icebergs sailing on the waves like a white crystal ship, with untouched majesty, impersonal, immense and solitary.
16. A green-blue island / *Ilha verde-azul* (1:55)
Lost in a sea of intensive blue, coconut palm trees with thick foliage, birds, butterflies, the gentle song of the wind.
17. A coral island / *Ilha de coral* (3:16)
A red collar, gripped by the redness of everything. Luminous fish in the coral branches. Magical fullness.
18. Island of flowers / *Ilha das flores* (1:31)
Possible fantasy ... orchids, agapantos, magnolias, jasmine ... ruins of immense pyramids. Magic circles.
19. Islands of happiness / *Ilhas afortunadas* (1:57)
Toucans, song-thrushes, canaries, large blue butterflies which fly around in wonderful circles.
20. Arquipélago (1:44)

Notes on the Program

Astor Piazzolla: Tango Suite (17:00)

Arr. Kyoko Yamamoto

21. Tango No. 1: Diciso (5:22)

22. Tango No. 2: Andante rubato, melancolico (4:45)

23. Tango No. 3: Allegro (6:53)

Total Time: 62:05

Heitor Villa-Lobos' (1887-1959) name is essentially synonymous with Brazilian classical music, and his international success and compositional style encapsulate the culturally diverse history of his native land and, particularly, his hometown of Rio de Janeiro. Raised by a strict father, a rebellious personality was formed early, though the discipline acquired from his father's instruction ensured that the young Heitor's love and incorporation of popular idioms was always married to technical finesse. To complement the classical training on clarinet and cello insisted upon at home, Heitor immersed himself in Rio's street culture. He mastered the guitar, an instrument that was frowned upon in "polite" society, and the traditional Brazilian *choro* became an early obsession. The genre of *choro* is typically Brazilian in its inherent contradiction: the word means "cry" or "lament", but the music is often celebratory and at times even extravagantly upbeat. This duality permeates Villa-Lobos' life and music. The child of the big city who yearned for the freedom and authenticity of the Amazon grew into a composer who not only explored and collected his country's folk music, but also mastered European musical idioms in his 12 symphonies, 17 string quartets and five piano concertos.

Villa-Lobos' works of the early 1920s represent a break from the European tradition, which can be clearly seen in his temporary cessation from composing string quartets and symphonies. Instead, the focus shifted to

works whose titles and musical language were primarily Brazilian, the bulk of which make up the series of works titled *Chôros*. The 1922 “Week of Modern Art” in São Paulo, with Villa-Lobos as the chief musical representative, was the most public and concentrated exhibition of this new direction for Brazilian artists. He also composed a large amount of solo piano music during this time, likely inspired by his marriage in 1913 to pianist Lucília Guimarães as well as his 1918 meeting with the superstar Artur Schnabel, who became his lifelong friend and international champion.

The 1920 piano suite *Carnaval das crianças* is an excellent illustration of this point in Villa-Lobos’ musical development. Its subject matter is the fantastic Rio de Janeiro *Carnaval* celebration as seen through a child’s eyes. It is telling that Villa-Lobos chose the juvenile perspective to explore this new compositional direction, presenting many delights in the collection, but also many moments that reflect the bewilderment a child would certainly feel immersed in such a chaotic festival. Like Robert Schumann’s *Kinderszenen*, there is a thread of nostalgia running throughout, and the work’s technical demands make it clear that this is not a piece *for* children but *about* children.

The movements of the suite are structurally simple, allowing the listener to focus on imaginative pianistic effects and rhythmic and harmonic twists and turns. The galloping of “The Little Pierrot’s Pony” launches us into a rhythmically vibrant series of movements that traverse a variety of moods. “The Little Devil’s Whip” reminds us that childhood is not exclusively idyllic, employing complex chords and dramatic dynamic changes. This scene is followed by the capriciousness of “Pierrette’s Ruse,” in which pungent dissonances interrupt a more elegant framework. The

bell sounds of the fourth movement (“The Little Domino’s Jingle Bells”) underlie a simple folk-like melody – and the dramatic structure of “The Little Ragpicker’s Adventure,” with its innocent frame, contains a “polite” member of society’s indignantly exaggerated and dissonant reaction to a street-urchin rummaging through refuse. The sixth and seventh movements, “The Coquette’s Mischievousness” and “The Fife of a Precocious Daydreamer,” give further examples of Villa-Lobos’ imaginative use of the piano for illustrative purposes. The momentum of the former is foiled by the wispy flute-like figures of the latter, and both movements are underpinned by piquant, Ravel-like harmonies. In the finale, Villa-Lobos calls for a second pianist to join the party, and “The Gaiety of a Children’s Band” delights in the energy of the youthful march. Villa-Lobos was clearly fond of the suite and was prompted to create a version of the work for piano and orchestra, *Momoprecoce*, which was presented in Amsterdam in 1929.

Alberto Evaristo Ginastera (1916-1983) followed a clear compositional path that is typically broken into three periods. He made his name in the late 1930s and early 1940s as a composer of “objective nationalism,” unveiling works in a tonal style that celebrated the rhythmic vitality of Argentinian folk music. In the late 1940s, Ginastera’s nationalism became “subjective,” as he moved toward more traditional formal models: crafting neo-Classical structures infused with South American melodies, harmonies and rhythms. His last period saw an exploration of the most advanced avant-garde techniques, including serialism and aleatoric music. His musical upbringing was largely traditional, which makes each work impeccably structured, regardless of style.

Ginastera's first **Piano Sonata** dates from 1952. Its commissioners, the Carnegie Institute of Technology and Pennsylvania College for Women – and its dedicatees, the American composer Roy Harris and his wife, Johana – are among many indications of the composer's increasing international prominence. It is easy to hear the influence of Sergei Prokofiev in the work: especially the Russian composer's 1940 sixth sonata, which shares the same key center (A minor) and similar rhetorical gestures, particularly in the first and last movements.

The first movement is in a straightforward sonata form and features a syncopated, chordal first theme and a more elegant second theme that is generously embellished with grace notes. The movement's development section builds to a violent climax that ushers in the recapitulation. The sparkling, mysterious scherzo that follows only breaks out of its shell once. It is a mesmerizing movement, challenging the pianist to play with dizzying velocity but at a mostly soft dynamic level. The slow movement begins with deceptive simplicity, but the "molto appassionato" of the tempo marking dominates the mood, and Ginastera creates out of the opening upward arpeggios a fantasia reminiscent of similar structures in the piano works of Beethoven and Brahms. The finale is a vertiginous, nonstop toccata. To give the pianist (and the listener) a firm footing, the initial statement is entirely played on the white keys of the piano, after which the composer gradually introduces Prokofiev-like "wrong notes" that increase the harmonic intensity. The headlong rush to the final cadence is intoxicating and exhilarating.

José Antônio Rezende de Almeida Prado (1943-2010) belonged to a later generation of Brazilian composers that was tasked with confronting the legacy of Villa-Lobos as well as the multitude of new compositional techniques and technological resources that emerged in the 1960s and '70s. His initial musical studies, spurred in part by hearing his sister playing Villa-Lobos' *Cirandinhas*, took place in Brazil and led to early success. In his native Santos, the composer Gilberto Mendes introduced him to the modernist works emerging in Western Europe, prompting Prado to seek out and obtain an impressively diverse European pedigree. In the early 1970s, he travelled to Paris to work with the legendary pedagogues Olivier Messiaen and Nadia Boulanger, and also attended the venerable Darmstadt summer course, where the Hungarian György Ligeti and the American Lukas Foss, among others, made an impression on him. Out of this widely varied background, the influence of Messiaen seems to be predominant in Prado's own language, both in the sheer worlds of sound he created and in his choices of subject matter.

Prado's 1973 suite for piano, *Ilhas* ("Islands") shows an accomplished merging of the composer's interest in nationalist and spiritual subject matter with a contemporary compositional language. The ecology and enormity of Brazil is expertly represented in the work, which starts in the primordial depths of the piano's lowest "A" and ascends into a shimmering series of nine chords spaced across the entirety of the instrument. The dramatic contour of this opening "Island of nine volcanoes" is counterbalanced by the stasis of the following "Stony Island", which is an exploration of a single six-note chord locked in place. "The island of ice" revolves around a tone-cluster in the piano's middle range, with "shards"



appearing above and below. The fourth and fifth movements shift perspective to the surrounding waters and natural inhabitants of the islands. “Green-blue island” is clearly indebted to Messiaen in its evocations of birdsong, while “A coral-island”, takes us underwater and represents the undercurrents of ocean life with constant undulations. The repeated note figurations that dominate the “Island of flowers” bloom into magisterial chords, and birdsong returns for the “Islands of happiness,” appropriately the most harmonically consonant movement of the suite. The final “Archipelago” systematically moves through the chords of each island, presenting a panoramic overview of the entire suite.

The rich and varied life of **Astor Pantaleón Piazzolla** (1921-1992) is reflected in his compositional style and output. As a child, he impressed audiences with prodigious performances on the bandoneón, an accordion-like instrument that forms the backbone of traditional “típicas” (tango orchestras). A gift from his father during their stay in New York City in the late 1920s, his precocious mastery of the instrument gave Astor an entrée into the local tango scene upon their return to Argentina. At the same time, Piazzolla furthered his classical studies with Ginastera at the suggestion of Rubinstein, who was living in Buenos Aires at the time. In 1944, he founded his own ensemble to perform his tango compositions, but left again in the 1950s to study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Under her guidance, Piazzolla began to fuse his classical studies into the Argentinian tango tradition, producing a style called “tango nuevo,” which included late-Romantic and jazz harmonies, fugues, and instruments not usually associated with the genre. Though looked down upon by some purists in his native country, the tango nuevo style quickly caught fire

internationally – especially in France, Italy and the United States.

Piazzolla’s *Tango Suite* was composed in 1985 for the virtuoso guitarist brothers Sergio and Odair Assad. By this time, Piazzolla was an expert at mimicking the sonic possibilities of his favored quintet formation (bandoneón, violin, piano, electric guitar and double bass) with any instrumental combination. The classically balanced triptych features a brief yet richly seductive central movement enrobed by two lengthier fast movements. The opening tango, marked “deciso,” derives its energy largely from a classic tango rhythm, with a slower central section featuring improvisatory melodic statements over pungent chromaticism. The energetic opening material then returns, embellished with more virtuosic flourishes. In the “andante” second movement, a singing melody exudes nostalgia, with bittersweet modal shifts flavored by sinewy accompaniment figures. The final “allegro” is propulsive, featuring wonderful contrasts between interlocking rhythmic patterns and assertive rhythmic and melodic unisons. Kyoko Yamamoto, who has transcribed many of Piazzolla’s works for solo and duo piano, crafted the superb, virtuosic arrangement of the suite on the present recording.

— Marcus Karl Maroney

Tali Morgulis

has appeared in Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Croatia, UK, Israel, China, Taiwan and the United States as a soloist and chamber musician. After her recent recital at St Martin-in-the-Fields in London she was described as “a pianistic firecracker” and her performance of the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the Thüringen Philharmonia (Germany) as “full of power and emotion.” Tali’s additional orchestra engagements have included performances with the Kaohsiung Symphony in Taiwan, Haifa Symphony Orchestra in Israel, Padova and Veneto Orchestra in Italy, Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra in Croatia and the Malaga Symphony Orchestra in Spain.

Morgulis holds top prizes and awards from piano competitions in Croatia, Italy, Spain and the US. She has been a featured artist on WQXR radio in New York and WBGH radio in Boston. She has also recorded works of Rachmaninov, Janacek, Shostakovich and Lutoslawski for the IPA label.

In the fall of 2008 Tali joined the faculty of Moores School of Music, University of Houston, as an Assistant Professor of Piano. Prior to this position, she served on the faculty of Fort Hays State University in Kansas. Variety of teaching activities has taken Morgulis to Taiwan, China, Israel, Croatia and across the US.



A dedicated collaborative artist, Morgulis has appeared in concerts with Shlomo Mintz, Vadim Gluzman and Stefan Jackiw. As a guest artist, she performed with the Borromeo Quartet in Jordan Hall in Boston, and with the Jupiter Chamber Players in New York.

Tali began her music studies at the age of four in her native Ukraine. At 15, she immigrated to Israel where she continued her music education. She received her Bachelor and Master Degrees from the Samuel Rubin Academy of Music in Tel Aviv and a Doctorate in Piano Performance from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Her studies were generously supported by the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. She has studied with Esther Balasha, Michael Boguslawsky, Wha Kyung Byun, Lev Natochenny and Patricia Zander.



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