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Concerto do Brasil

Evan Meccarello *conductor*

with soloists

Leona Liu *violin* Addie Canning *tuba*

[Winners of Nico Toscano Young Musicians Competition]

and

Com Expressão



Saturday, May 17, 2025 at 7:00 pm
ARTISANworks

Sunday, May 18, 2025 at 2:30 pm
School of the Arts

Concerto do Brasil

Concerto do Brasil can translate from Portuguese as “Concert from Brazil.” We also intend the English meaning of concerto, since works for instrumental soloists feature prominently in this program. These include those performed by the winners of our Nico Toscano Young Musician Competition as well as several soloists from the orchestra featured in João Rocha’s Sinfonietta Concertante.

This program is bookended by two works that quote widely from Brazilian popular music, one by Darius Milhaud—a French composer who lived in Brazil for a time—and the other by João Rocha, a living Brazilian composer. Bursting with songs from across decades, these works open a window to the great multiplicity of Brazilian culture. Both pieces quote music by foundational Brazilian songwriters Ernesto Nazareth and Chiquinha Gonzaga. We particularly suggest reading about the life of Gonzaga, a star of the early 20th century, abolitionist, and Black woman far ahead of her time.

In the traditional capoeira songs played and sung by Com Expressão we hear another outgrowth of African musical roots, created in Brazil by enslaved musicians and martial artists. I am inspired by this group’s willingness to share their community with us and show how they practice togetherness, music, and movement.

I hope you will take a little time to read about the pieces and perhaps explore further with listening or reading about the vast and deep world of Brazilian music. I am grateful to conductor Alba Bomfim for her correspondence, introducing me to excellent living Brazilian composers like João Rocha.

Thanks also to Ricardo Averbach, another Brazilian conductor, who graciously shared his materials for the very rare unpublished orchestral version of *The Martyrdom of Insects* by Heitor Villa-Lobos. There is a kind of mirrored cultural exchange between this piece and the Milhaud: *Le Boeuf sur le toit* stems from Milhaud’s two year stay in Brazil, written when he returned to France. The *Martyrdom* appears to have been written by Villa-Lobos at each end of a two year stay in France, when he was back in Brazil.

We hope you enjoy this vibrant music.

Evan Meccarello, *Artistic Director*



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Thank you to the Rochester Area Community Foundation for its support of these concerts!

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Please consider supporting Cordancia. Your gift will help us continue to bring “**Vibrant Music to our Vibrant Community**” by helping us cover the many expenses of producing each concert.

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Concerto do Brasil

Le Boeuf sur le Toit, Op. 58a (1920) Darius Milhaud
The Ox on the Roof: The Nothing-Doing Bar (1892-1974)

Três Pequenas Variações (2020). Clarice Assad
Three Little Variations (b. 1978)
Cigana [Gypsy]
Canção [Song]
Dança [Dance]

Capoeira Songs

1. Canto pra Honrar Part A by Sarah Del Favero
2. Excerpt from "Cantando Atrevessado" by Mestre Acordeon
3. O Sereia
4. Capoeira é Beleza
5. La Lae
6. Le le le Baiana/Ole le le le
7. Canto pra Honrar Part B by Sarah Del Favero

Orchestral arrangements for Canto pra Honrar and
traditional capoeira songs by Evan Meccarello

Performers - instruments

*indicates player for physical capoeira games

Ariel "Grilo" Enriquez - Viola Berimbau
Bennie "Tarde" Johnston - Pandeiro
Chris "Inspetor Bugiganga" Thompson - Gunga Berimbau
Diego "Polvo" Mejia Cordova - Agogo*
Ian "Foice" Larson - Medio Berimbau
Jen "Rebite" Clegg* (Saturday performance)
Joseph "Cachorro" Bielecki - Atabaque*
Richard "Morcego" Geisler - Pandeiro/Rebolo*
Sarah "Bambu" Johnson*
Sarah "Iara" Del Favero - Guitar

> intermission <

Sinfonia Fúnebre (1790) José Maurício Nunes Garcia
(1767-1830)

Elegia, for tuba and strings [arr. Canning] Fernando Morais
(b. 1966)

Addie Canning *tuba*
[Nico Toscano Young Musician Competition winner]

O Martírio dos Insetos, W213 (1925) Heitor Villa-Lobos
The Martyrdom of Insects (1887-1959)

Leona Liu *violin*

[Nico Toscano Young Musician Competition winner]

A Cigarra no Inverno [The Cicada in Winter]

O Vagalume na Claridade [The Firefly in the Clarity]

A Mariposa na Luz [The Moth Around the Light]

Sinfonietta Concertante (2021) João Rocha
(b. 1946)

Abertura [Overture]- Deciso ed energico

Prece [Prayer] - Adagietto, Pesante ed grave

Dança [Dance] - Andante sostenuto - Molto vivace

Ubunto [Humanity] - Allegro molto vivace quasi presto

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Le Boeuf sur le Toit - Milhaud

Milhaud composed *Le Boeuf* in 1920, following his years as secretary to the French ambassador to Brazil, his friend Paul Claudel. He wrote that he had “assembled a few popular melodies, tangos, maxixes, sambas, and even a Portuguese fado, and transcribed them with a rondo-like theme recurring between each successive pair....My first contact with Brazilian folklore was very sudden. I arrived in Rio during the Carnival, and immediately sensed the mood of crazy gaiety that possessed the whole town...I was intrigued and fascinated by the rhythms of this popular music. There was an imperceptible pause in the syncopation, a careless catch in the breath, a slight hiatus....”

Milhaud had hoped that the work would be used to accompany a Charlie Chaplin film. His friend Jean Cocteau had a more grand plan and created a surrealist ballet (Pantomime Farce) based on the music. The work did not follow a particular story. Instead Cocteau devised a sequence of scenes based on the music inspired by Brazil. The stage set is that of a bar frequented by a number of characters: a bookmaker, a dwarf, a boxer, a woman dressed in men's clothing, a policeman, and a sprinkling of other characters. The first actors were in fact clowns from the Medrano circus, the Fratellini. Cocteau deliberately set the choreography at a very slow pace, in marked contrast to the lively and joyful spirit of the music. Interestingly, all twelve tones of the chromatic scale have their moment as the tonic key, and the use of polytonality and poly-melody are woven throughout. This is a tribute to Milhaud's ability to create moments of individuality and textural clarity for each instrument of the orchestra.

-adapted from notes by Rachel Lauber



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Três Pequenas Variações - Assad

“Folk music is an integral part of the heritage of many cultures around the world. For centuries, it has been passed down from generation to generation, serving as a way to connect people with their history and culture. In recent years, however, folk music has declined as new technologies and trends have led people to seek new forms of entertainment....As an artist, I feel responsible for disseminating this music and perpetuating its tradition. I hope to facilitate a deeper understanding and appreciation of the culture.”
[C. Assad, <https://clariceassad.com>]

Três Pequenas Variações (Three Little Variations) is a piece for strings based on a folk tune from Brazil called “*A Maré Encheu*.” As the title suggests, each movement is a variation of this simple melody in different guises: Variation I: *Cigana* (Gypsy Variation) is in an odd meter and reminiscent of the folk music that Bartók explored in his compositions. Variation II: *Canção* (Song) is a ballad version of the theme, and the last variation is the closest to the source, “*Dança*” (Dance), which explores the original rhythm and shape of the thematic material in its raw, syncopated form.

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Clarice Assad has lived in Brazil, France, and the United States and is one of the most widely performed Brazilian concert music composers of her generation. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Chicago’s Roosevelt University, and a Master of Music degree from The University of Michigan School of Music.

Capoeira Songs

Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art. Enslaved African people in Brazil disguised their practice as a dance to hide from the overseers and masters to avoid being severely punished. When some escaped, they would use capoeira to defend their quilombos (settlements of escapees deep in Brazilian forests and jungles) from the Brazilian military and slave-catchers. Capoeira incorporates West African movement and music with the contemporary culture of Brazil.

Lyrics & Symbols: “Canto pra honrar a historia...a jornada...a comunidade” means “I sing to honor the history, the journey, the community.” These lyrics describe our intention in sharing this art form we practice with you. You’ll be witnessing our versions of traditional aspects of a capoeira roda: a “*Ladainha*”, or Litany, and a “*Louvação*” to honor our teachers and those who came before us. As you see the physical capoeira games, the 3 berimbau instruments play a traditional toque, or rhythm, called Angola. The lyrics of the songs touch on a variety of themes including the history of enslavement in Brazil; “*o sereia*”, the legendary mermaid with a beautiful but sometimes dangerous song; as well as Orixá deities such as Ogum and Iemanjá.

Note that it is traditional in Capoeira to use nicknames, hence the names in quotation marks in the list of performers and their instruments.

Our academy, **Com Expressão**, led by Mestre Carcara, has been offering classes and events in Rochester NY since 2004 and has sister schools in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Oregon. We strive to give you a new way to move your body, but also to learn about the robust history and the traditions of those who came before us to cultivate capoeira and keep it alive and thriving from its beginnings roughly 600 years ago. You can find more information, including our class schedule, on Instagram or Facebook (@comexpressao) or on our website (www.comexpressao.com).

-notes provided by Com Expressão

Sinfonia Fúnebre - Nunes Garcia

Afro-Brazilian composer José Maurício Nunes Garcia has been called the “father of Brazilian classical music,” and compared to Mozart and Haydn. Born in Rio de Janeiro, both his parents were children of slaves. Although he was a hugely influential teacher of music, he frequently encountered racism.

The talented youth wrote his first extant composition, the antiphon *Tota Pulchra Es Maria*, in 1783, at age 16. He decided to become a priest as a means to a better life, and hence sacred music became his primary genre. In 1784, a group of Rio de Janeiro musicians founded the Brotherhood of St. Cecilia, a professional guild for musicians. Garcia was one of the founding members, as he already was a teacher. He continued composing while he furthered his studies. His 1790 composition, *Sinfonia Fúnebre*, brought him wide recognition. It was this piece that was apparently performed at his funeral 40 years later (in 1830).

Elegia - Moraes

Fernando Moraes is a significant contemporary Brazilian composer of works for brass instruments. He earned a Bachelor's degree in music from the Mozarteum Faculty of São Paulo and also graduated from the UniCEUB in Brasília. He won a scholarship to study at the Hart School of Music, University of Hartford where he studied horn and chamber music. He was appointed principal horn and resident composer of the Orquestra Sinfonica Nacional of Brazil. Many of his more than 70 compositions have been performed in Argentina, Germany, Romania, U.S., as well as Brazil. *Elegia* was originally written for trumpet; the arrangement for tuba heard in this performance was by the soloist, Addie Canning.

O Martírio dos Insetos - Villa-Lobos

Immensely prolific Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos is considered perhaps the most significant creative figure in 20th-century Brazilian art

CORDANCIA PERFORMERS

FLUTE

Laura Smoller
Jennifer Trimble Ford

OBOE

Kathleen Suher
Tiffany DiPiazza

CLARINET

Carl Galland
Ryan Reiss

BASSOON

Krista Rodean
Jacob Auchman

TRUMPET

Matt Osika
Shawn Halquist

HORN

Steven Landgren
Lori Osgood

TROMBONE

Scott Quinlan
Lou Osgood

PERCUSSION

Adam Joslyn
Katherine Hutchings

VIOLIN

Pia Liptak
Lia Kettlekamp
Sherry McCarthy
Ellen Henry
Raúl Munguía
Michaela Sandness

Nicole Walton

Hannah Bartley
Shana Stewart
Elissa Moy
Joshua Stead-Dorval

VIOLA

Keiko Vann
Gretchen Judge
Christina Thomas
Donovan Snyder

CELLO

Rachel Mills
Meghan Lambert
Oliver Hood
Aaron Lieberman

DOUBLE BASS

Humberto Colon
Bruce Goldman

HARP

John Di Fatta

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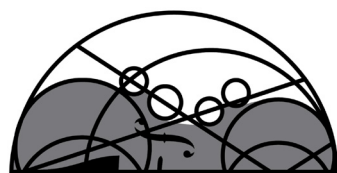
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music. He was born in Rio de Janeiro at a time of great social upheaval in Brazil - including abolition of slavery and overthrowing the Empire of Brazil. Music was also impacted, expanding from the previously dominant European traditions of counterpoint and harmony. Villa-Lobos had very little of that traditional training, learning mostly by “illicit” observation of the musical evenings regularly arranged by his father in their home. He learned to play cello, clarinet, and classical guitar. After his father’s sudden death in 1899, he helped support the family by playing in cinema and theatre orchestras in Rio. He played with many Brazilian street-music bands, and for a while was a cellist with a Rio opera company.

His compositions reflect both Brazilian and European influences. He met Darius Milhaud in Rio in 1917 and introduced him to Brazilian street music. Milhaud in return brought the music of Debussy, Satie, and Stravinsky.

The *Martyrdom of Insects* is an interesting character piece looking at three insects. The first is the cicada - an insect of summer whose brief adult life is known for its buzzing. Villa-Lobos imagined the end of life for a cicada, still buzzing as it dies. The melody moves in half steps interrupted by brief brilliant florid passages. The beautiful firefly appears in the 2nd movement. It darts around vainly seeking another.... The piece closes with the self-immolation of a moth, which dies due to its fascination with the light of a candle. The fluttering of wings is reminiscent of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Flight of the Bumblebee*, though much less focused — and in a flash, it’s all over.

Sinfonietta Concertante - Rocha

Brazilian maestro and composer João Rocha has emerged as one of the most versatile and active artists of his generation. He holds a Bachelor’s degree in music from Unicamp, where he won awards as well as conducting and composition competitions. As a guest student at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Rostock, he was invited to conduct works from the Brazilian colonial period in a special concert dedicated to that era in Brazil. He also holds a Master’s degree in orchestral conducting (Conservatory-College of Music at University of Cincinnati), and Doctor of Musical Arts from University of Kentucky.

About the piece, the composer provides this note: “*Sinfonia Concertante* was composed August 23 - 27, 2021, to fulfill a commission by the University of São Paulo Orchestra (OSUSP) through its current artistic director, Professor Dr. Fabio Cury, whom I thank kindly. ...[T]he orchestra reserves a concert in its season for themes related to the celebrations of November 20 — Black Consciousness Day in Brazil. To my delight, the premiere of the piece was conducted by my colleague and friend, Maestra Alba Bomfim, to whom, along with Prof. Cury, I dedicate this work.

“Initially planned as a Fantasy, the *Sinfonietta* ended up allowing me a thematic cohesion - initially unplanned - which I gave vent to. An old friend,

upon hearing the work for the first time, said: "...there is hope in this music of yours..." I believe they are right. As much as the technical elements have been carefully planned and applied -- Afro-Brazilian rhythms, quotations from great Black composers of the past, "concertante" use of the quintet, and emoticons in the score to communicate expressive ideas to the instrumentalists -- this Sinfonietta came to be created in a spirit of "cry of revolt." Let me explain: I believe that one way to "shout" and, by protesting against the "times of cholera" in which we live, is by creating Good Music. The Sinfonietta, more specifically, aims to celebrate and reflect on the memory of the many Brazilian Black artists, those giants of the past and present who have maintained and maintain themselves "alive" despite the difficulties. Similarly, such a "cry" occurs through music that represents the resilience and strength of Brazil's Black population. This population, against everything, but not necessarily against everyone, after more than 400 years of oppression, continues singing, dancing, and surviving."

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Cordancia Chamber Orchestra, led by conductor Rachel Lauber, performs classical music concerts throughout the year at various locations in the greater Rochester region. Cordancia was formed in 2009 by violinist Pia Liptak and oboist Kathleen Suher. Its award-winning programming blends eclectic, vibrant, lesser-known music with more traditional classical repertoire. The orchestra's mission is to bring new and rarely heard music into perspective of the familiar, to illuminate and to share the abundance of the lesser-known and the newly-created repertoire, as chosen by artistic director Evan Meccarello. The full chamber orchestra consists of up to 40 talented performers who are brought together from many areas of the Rochester community, including many local music teachers, as well as fine amateur musicians whose primary occupations are in other fields of work. Cordancia has collaborated with many other Rochester music and dance ensembles including BIODANCE, comedians Abby DeVuyst Park and Kerry Young, as well as guest soloists including Eastman tuba professor Justin Benavidez. www.cordancia.org

Evan Meccarello, Artistic Director, is committed to new explorations in classical music and engaging with communities across the Northeast. He is Music Director of the Binghamton Community Orchestra (BCO), Founder and Director of the Hochstein Alumni Orchestra, and served as Conductor of the Thames Valley Youth Symphony at Connecticut College. He has led ensembles and taught conducting courses at Nazareth University and Eastman School of Music's Summer Classical Studies, and has conducted NYSSMA Area All-State and All-County orchestras.

In 2023 Meccarello was Artist in Residence at Breadcrumbs Productions in Syracuse NY, where he conceived and built the team that produced String

Quartet Theatre, an experience bridging the worlds of chamber music and immersive theatre with a professional quartet of actor-musicians. Along with the BCO, Meccarello was a National Finalist for The American Prize in virtual performance, for the innovative program Music Outside the Box - a festival for high school musicians during the pandemic lockdown. Meccarello holds a master's degree in orchestral conducting from Bowling Green State University and a violin performance degree from Nazareth University, where he twice won the concerto competition.

Addie Canning, a native of Pittsford NY, recently finished her third year at the Eastman School of Music, where she is pursuing a degree in Tuba Performance as well as Certificates of Achievement in Arts Leadership and Chamber Music. Additionally, Addie is a Dual Degree student at the University of Rochester, majoring in International Relations and minoring in French and History. She can be heard performing in her brass quintet, QuinTed, the Eastman Wind Ensemble, the Eastman Philharmonia, and the Empire Film and Media Ensemble. She is a member of the studio of Dr. Justin Benavidez and has also studied with Don Harry and Craig Sutherland. Addie is an S.E. Shires Rising Artist.

Leona Liu earned her Bachelor of Music this spring studying with Robin Scott at the Eastman School of Music and will begin her M.M. at the Yale School of Music this fall, studying with Tai Murray. She recently made her solo debut with the Eastman Musica Nova playing Augusta Read Thomas' Violin Concerto No. 2, *Carillon Sky*. She has attended summer festivals at Bowdoin, Lake George, Sarasota, Madeline Island, and the Maine Chamber Music Seminar. As a member of the Locus Trio, she won second prize at the MTNA National Chamber Music Competition and was awarded the Mentorship Grant from the Eastman Institute of Music Leadership to commission a new work for clarinet, violin, and piano. Leona served on the board of OSSIA New Music for two years. She also graduated with a B.A. in linguistics and minor in mathematics from the University of Rochester.

The **Nico Toscano Young Musician Competition** is sponsored by the Toscano family in memory of Nico Toscano. Music played a significant role in Nico's short life, providing him with community participation and emotional and spiritual sustenance. Even as his physical abilities progressively decreased due to a long-term mitochondrial disorder, attending student performances, RPO concerts, faculty recitals, and especially Cordancia concerts, gave him great joy and comfort and became his main source of communication with the world around him. This competition, by providing financial support to students who plan to pursue music either as a career or avocation, celebrates the power music can have for healing, connection, and community.