

# Classroom *Music by Villa-Lobos*

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The CD featured this month is *Brazilian Mosaic* (Lorelt LNT115) which was released in February 2003. The projects which follow contain information for teachers on developing, in pupils, an awareness of aspects of the music of Villa-Lobos, one of Brazil's most important composers. The projects each provide photocopiable curriculum materials for use with pupils aged 11–13, listening activities, and performing and composing activities.

## Managing the projects

The three projects each form the basis of two or three 30-minute sessions for the age range. However teachers should feel free to adjust what is suggested in the light of the abilities, experience and numbers of the pupils with whom they are working. It would be helpful if the musical outcomes of the projects were recorded and then played back for discussion with the performers.

## Villa-Lobos

As a young man, Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959) travelled to various parts of Brazil with the aim of assimilating the traditional music of his birth country. He visited Europe during the 1920s, staying for some time in Paris, and then returned to Brazil where he founded the Academy of Music in 1945. He composed 12 symphonies and 16 string quartets as well as *Bachianas Brasileiras*, a group of works for a variety of instrumental and vocal combinations in which he synthesised aspects of the style and technique of J S Bach with elements drawn from Brazilian traditional music.

## Brazilian Mosaic

Lorelt is the label of the instrumental ensemble Lontano which specialises in the performance of works by Villa-Lobos and other 20th-century composers. The ensemble is directed on this CD by Cuban-born Odaline de la Martinez who founded Lontano more than 25 years ago. The piano piece *Mintika*, by Villa-Lobos, is performed by Clélia Iruzun, who studied with Christopher Elton at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and has since become one of Brazil's leading concert pianists.

Other 20th-century Brazilian composers with works featured on the *Brazilian Mosaic* album include Francisco Mignone (*Fantasia Brasileira No 3*), Ronaldo Miranda (*Concertino for Piano and Strings*) and Marlos Nobre (*Concertante do Imaginário*).

## Project 1: Bachianas Brasileiras No 9, movement 1

*Bachianas Brasileiras No 9* by Villa-Lobos is scored for string orchestra (violins 1 and 2, violas, cellos and double basses) and is in two movements. Movement 1, the Prelude, is track 2 on the *Brazilian Mosaic* CD. Discuss the nature of the string orchestra with pupils. Then elaborate upon the following aspects of the Prelude:

- The composer's interpretative indication (in Portuguese) *Vagaroso e místico* (Very slow and mystically)
- The tempo indication ( $\downarrow=60$ )
- The time signature of  $\phi$
- The tonic key of C major
- The use of all the instruments of the orchestra in playing the opening and closing chords. It would be helpful, at this juncture, to define the terms consonant and dissonant
- The nature and significance of the opening viola melody
- The use of one bar of  $\frac{3}{2}$  metre in bar 10 of the viola melody
- The nature of the aeolian mode and its use as the basis of the opening viola melody. Explain, in particular, the mode's make-up in terms of ascending tones (T) and semitones (S): T, S, T, T, S, T, T. Point out that the sixth of the mode (F) is not used in the melody
- The use of syncopation in the double-bass melody near the end of the movement. Define this musical device in general terms and then relate your definition to the rhythm used by Villa-Lobos. This is notated in Listening box 1 in relation to question 8.

Then photocopy Listening box 1 and distribute copies for pupils' use as they listen to the Prelude. Answers to the questions posed are as follows:

(1) Dissonant. (2) No. (10) Dissonant.

Provide pupils with a copy of Composing box 1 which sets out the viola melody from the Prelude, transposed up an octave. A suggested harmonic accompaniment is also provided. Assist pupils as they learn to play the melody and accompaniment, and then as they compose their own melodies. Pupils' melodic compositions should make use of some or all of the pitches indicated and may start with the opening phrase which is provided.

## Project 2: Bachianas Brasileiras No 9, movement 2

Movement 2, the Fugue, is track 3 on *Brazilian Mosaic*. Define and discuss the

nature of a fugue with pupils. In particular, an explanation of the terms 'subject' and 'answer', together with an indication of their tonic/dominant pitch relationship, would be helpful. Establish the link between J S Bach's use of fugue as a form and that of Villa-Lobos. Then elaborate upon the following aspects of the movement:

- The composer's interpretative indication (in Portuguese) *Poco apressado* (quite fast)
- The tempo indication ( $\downarrow=90$ )
- The unusual time signature of  $\frac{14}{8}$  ( $\frac{5}{8} + \frac{9}{8}$ ). The two groupings of five and six quavers within the bar are indicated by vertical dashes in the orchestral score
- The use of the dynamic indication *sfz* in subject and answer.

Then photocopy Listening box 2 and distribute copies for pupils' use as they listen to the Fugue.

## Project 3: Mintika


Track 9 on the album, *Mintika*, is the last of three short pieces for piano entitled 'The Three Maries'. The pieces are based on a traditional Brazilian children's story about the enduring friendship of three young girls. The friendship represents the potential unity of humankind and is symbolised in the preservation of the girls as three stars in the constellation of Orion. Discuss the origins of *Mintika* with pupils. Then elaborate upon the following aspects of the piano piece:

- The composer's interpretative indication *Poco animato*
- The time signature of  $\frac{7}{8}$
- The tonic key of G# minor
- The use of ternary form
- The use of semiquavers in the right-hand part. These are maintained until the last three bars of the piece
- The presentation of the melodic lines in the left-hand part
- The use of an accompanimental drone effect in section A of the piece
- The influence of Brazilian traditional music as reflected in the simple, repeated rhythms and occasional flattened leading notes used in the melodic lines.

Provide pupils with a copy of Composing box 2 which sets out a slightly simplified version of the melody from section A of *Mintika*, transposed up a semitone to A minor. A suggested bass accompaniment is also provided. Assist pupils as they learn to play the melody and accompaniment, and then as they compose their own melodies. Pupils' melodic compositions should make use of some or all of the pitches indicated.

### Listening box 1

*Bachianas Brasileiras No 9* by Villa Lobos is in two movements. The first of these is entitled Prelude. This movement is short, is in  $\phi$  ( $\frac{2}{2}$ ) metre and its tonic (or home) note is C. Here is a list of some important musical elements which can be heard during the Prelude together with questions about some of them. Several of the elements mentioned are explored in more detail in Composing box 1. Listen to the track several times. Then tick each element listed as you hear it on the recording and answer the questions which are set:

1. The movement opens with a loud chord. Is this chord consonant \_\_\_ or dissonant? \_\_\_
2. Do the notes of the opening chord last as long in all of the instrumental parts? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. Entry of violas playing the first section of a melody using notes which move up or down mostly by step \_\_\_
4. Entry of a single viola playing the second section of the melody \_\_\_
5. Entry of violins playing a slow-moving, downward sequence of notes a semitone apart \_\_\_ (Note that some of the violins play the sequence of notes an octave lower than the other violins)
6. Entry of violas playing a shorter, slow-moving, downward sequence of notes a semitone apart \_\_\_
7. Violins play a second, shorter downward sequence of notes a semitone apart, again with some violins playing an octave lower than the others \_\_\_
8. Violins, violas and cellos play a long, sustained chord while the double basses play a melodic phrase \_\_\_  
Note that the phrase uses the syncopated rhythm shown *right* 
9. Violins, violas and cellos stop playing their chord on the last note of the double-bar phrase \_\_\_
10. The movement ends with a quiet, sustained chord. Is this chord consonant \_\_\_ or dissonant? \_\_\_

### Listening box 2

The second movement of *Bachianas Brasileiras No 9* is a fugue. The movement is much longer than the opening Prelude and is in the unusual metre of  $\frac{11}{8}$ . You should begin by listening to this fugue all the way through. You should focus upon the entries of the fugue's subject and answer during the first section of the movement. The first example shows the first bar of the subject, played initially by cellos:

The second  example shows

the first bar of the answer (notated using the treble clef, although the answer is initially played by the violas which use a C-clef):

Now listen to the first section of the  movement (the

first 1'37" approximately) several times and tick each entry of the subject and answer listed as you hear it on the recording:

1. Entry of the subject played by the cellos \_\_\_
2. Entry of the answer played by the violas (note that the cellos accompany the answer with some new musical material) \_\_\_
3. Entry of the subject played by the double basses \_\_\_
4. Entry of the answer played by violins \_\_\_
5. Entry of the subject played by violins \_\_\_
6. Entry of the answer played by violins playing an octave apart \_\_\_
7. Entry of the subject played by the cellos and double basses \_\_\_

### Composing box 1

The opening movement (Prelude) of *Bachianas Brasileiras No 9* features a simple viola melody. This melody is derived from those found in Brazilian traditional music and is 12 bars long. It uses the aeolian mode (the white note scale from A to A on the keyboard) although Villa-Lobos' Prelude is in C major.

■ Here is the melody, transposed up an octave so as to avoid

leger lines. Note that, although the melody 

is in  $\phi$  ( $\frac{2}{2}$ ) metre overall,  bar 10 of it is in  $\frac{3}{2}$ .

Play the melody on  keyboard and/or other

treble clef instruments (such as flute, violin, melodica).

■ The following chord sequence can be used with the melody. Play it on keyboard and/or guitar:

$\phi$  Am / | Am / | Em Am | Am Em | Am / | Am / |  
Am / | Am / | Em Am ||  $\frac{3}{2}$  Am / Em ||  $\frac{3}{2}$  Am / | Am / ||

■ Now play the melody and chord sequence together. Watch out for the  $\frac{3}{2}$  bar.

■ The notes from the aeolian

mode which are used in the  melody are shown *right*

Now compose another 12-bar long melody which uses some or all of these notes. The melody should fit with the chord sequence and should consist of four phrases. The first and third phrases should be two bars long, the second and fourth four bars long. The melody should end on the note A. You may begin your melody as follows:

■ Finally, play  your melody


several times, varying the instrumentation, both of the melody and of the accompaniment, as you repeat it.

### Composing box 2

The piano piece *Mintika* features a simple left-hand melody during section A. This melody is 16 bars long.


■ Here is a slightly simplified version of the melody from section A of *Mintika*. The melody has been transposed so that its tonic (home) note is A rather than

the original G $\sharp$ . This  makes it easier to play.

Play this melody on  keyboard and/or other treble clef instruments. Notice that the first-

part of the melody uses a G $\natural$ , rather than a G $\sharp$ , before the note A.

This means that this part of the melody is actually in the aeolian mode (see Composing box 1). However during part 2 a G $\sharp$  is used before the note A, so this part of the melody is in A minor.

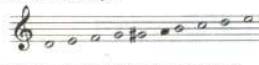
■ Here is an accompaniment, in the bass clef, for the melody. This uses elements,  including the

drone effect, from the original left-hand accompaniment.

Play the accompaniment on keyboard.

■ Now play the melody and accompaniment together. Watch out for the G $\natural$  and G $\sharp$ s.

■ Here are the notes which are used in the melody:

Now compose another 16-bar long  melody which uses some or all of

these notes. The melody should consist of two four-bar sections

each of which is repeated. It should fit with the bass

accompaniment. The melody should use crotchet and quaver

rhythms and end on the note A.

■ Finally, play your melody several times, varying the instrumentation,

both of the melody and of the accompaniment, as you repeat it.