

THE CLASSICAL GUITAR IN PORTO ALEGRE

BY DANIEL WOLFF

The city of Porto Alegre, with approximately one and a half million inhabitants, is the capital of Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul, whose position of prominence can be observed in various aspects. Politically, it was the stage for important events that altered the course of the country's history — such as the Farroupilha Revolution. Moreover, it is the state that has elected the largest number of Brazilian presidents. Economically, in addition to being a major center of agriculture and cattle breeding, it was the birthplace of some of the country's leading industries, such as VARIG (Viação Aérea Rio Grandense), Brazil's first airline company. At the present time, the state accounts for 9% of the country's gross domestic product.

Culturally, Porto Alegre is home to a number of instrumental and choral groups, including one symphony and several chamber orchestras. The Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) was the first university in the country to offer a doctoral degree in music. Its Graduate Music Program is the highest ranked in Brazil, according to the Ministry of Education's evaluation.

Due to its geographical proximity to Argentina and Uruguay, the city shares many cultural traits with these countries. Musically, such proximity can be perceived in a variety of ways. Typical folk rhythms of the *gauchos* from the River Plate, such as the *milonga* and the *chamamé*, have also evolved in Rio Grande do Sul, whose inhabitants are referred to as *gaúchos* in Brazil. During the 1970s and 1980s, a large portion of the Porto Alegre Symphony Orchestra (OSPA) consisted of musicians who had immigrated from Uruguay and Argentina. In fact, its first conductor, the Hungarian Pablo Komlós, resided in Montevideo for over ten years before permanently settling in Porto Alegre in 1950, the year of the orchestra's birth.

In regard to the classical guitar, one can again observe a strong exchange between Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, with Porto Alegre serving as the main axis. The pinnacle of this exchange took place between 1969 and 1982, at the International Guitar Seminars promoted by the Palestrina Music Lyceum. A significant benefit from the seminars was the spreading of the school of Uruguayan guitarist Abel Carlevaro (1916-2001).

The importance of Porto Alegre in the history of the classical guitar in Brazil, however, is not only due to its having

hosted the seminars. Since the first half of the twentieth-century, the interest in the instrument has grown steadily and, in the years that followed the seminars, the city has witnessed an intense guitar activity, as we shall see next.

THE CLASSICAL GUITAR IN PORTO ALEGRE UNTIL THE 1960S

Due to its strategic position between the cultural axes of Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo and Montevideo-Buenos Aires, many international artists included performances in Porto Alegre during their South American tours. Thus, the city received the renowned artists such as Arthur Rubinstein, in addition to orchestras, opera, and ballet companies. Several well-known guitarists performed in the city, including Agustín Barrios (1915-16, 1922, 1928, 1929), Isaías Sávio (1931), Andrés Segovia (1941 and 1950), Abel Carlevaro (1943 and 1946), María Luisa Anido (1954) and Narciso Yepes (1957), among others.

During this period, the greatest promoter of the classical guitar in Rio Grande do Sul was, without a doubt, Prof. Pedro Duval (Pelotas, 1912–Porto Alegre, 1994). A devoted enthusiast of the instrument, he met with Agustín Barrios, Andrés Segovia, and Abel Carlevaro on several occasions. During the years in which he lived in Montevideo (1936-39), studying agronomy, he made the acquaintance of Federico Moreno-Torróba, was a member of the Uruguay Guitar Center, and a correspondent for the Italian magazine *La Chitarra*.

At the time, Duval was in contact with Ovídio de Magalhães, Ildelfonso Thielen, and Miguel de Olivé Leite, who founded in Porto Alegre, at the end of the 1920s, the Tárrega Club. "They were middle- and upper-class gentlemen, estate owners and public employees who nourished the instrument and played it as amateurs," says Márcio de Souza. In addition, they promoted guitar recitals.

Concerts were also organized by the Associação Rio-grandense de Música (ARM), founded in 1938 by UFRGS Professor Ênio de Freitas e Castro. The ARM was responsible for the Porto Alegre recitals by Segovia and Carlevaro in the 1940s. In 1948, Duval created and became the first President of the Grêmio Villa-Lobos, a branch of the ARM specially devoted to the guitar. Their aims included the maintenance of a library, organization of concerts, and exchange of correspondence.

Duval also played a fundamental role in the introduction of the guitar at the university. In 1946, he wrote to the then Director of the Instituto de Belas Artes do Rio Grande do Sul (today Instituto de Artes da UFRGS), Prof. Tasso Côrrea, requesting that the same course structure of other instruments be adopted for the guitar. He suggested a six-year program similar to the one offered at the Buenos Aires Municipal Conservatory, based on precepts of Segóvia and Emilio Pujol. Nonetheless, the teaching of the guitar at UFRGS would only effectively take place a quarter of a century later, at the end of the 1960s, when Duval started teaching the instrument as a minor subject for the Artistic Education degree. Only in 1973 was Duval at last granted a professorship. It was at that time that Porto Alegre consolidated itself as an important center for the guitar, through the International Seminars.

THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINARS (1969-1988)

The Porto Alegre International Guitar Seminars, promoted by the Palestrina Music Lyceum, took place annually between 1969 and 1982, with a final seminar occurring in 1988, after a six-year hiatus. They were created and coordinated by the Director of the Palestrina Lyceum, Antônio F. Crivellaro. His daughter Angela, who also took part in the organization of the seminars, says that Crivellaro "always liked the guitar, even though he did not play it. He thought it was an instrument that united people, especially youngsters.... He then had the idea, along with some Palestrina teachers, ... to make a seminar that gathered well-known names of the time, such as Isaías Sávio.... At that time he [Crivellaro] was relatively young, [he was] in his early thirties. The relation was really effective!"

It should be mentioned that the importance of the Palestrina Lyceum for the development of the guitar is not limited to the seminars. In 1971, the Lyceum acquired the status of a college, functioning as such until 1989. Throughout this period, it offered, among others, a degree in guitar performance. It is interesting to note that all of the guitar faculty members came from the River Plate. They were Álvaro Pierri from Uruguay, and the Argentines Eduardo Frasson, Nestor Ausqui, Eduardo Lablanca, and Eduardo Castañera.

As for the seminars, Fabio Shiro Monteiro, a teacher at the Badisches Konservatorium Karlsruhe in Germany, states that they were, "without a doubt, a significant milestone in the history of the guitar, not only for Porto Alegre, but for the whole of Brazil, since, to my knowledge, no other international event of this caliber had taken place in Brazil until

then." Nestor Ausqui, Professor at the Santa Fé University in Argentina, says that "the participants came from Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Cuba, the United States.... I can say that the Palestrina [through the seminars] was a very important bastion for the guitar in Latin America; I would dare to say that there was nothing equal to it in the whole world".

The list of eminent guitarists who taught and performed at the seminars is quite impressive. It includes, in addition to the above mentioned names, the Venezuelan Alirio Díaz; the Argentines Jorge Martínez Zárata, Graciela Pomponio, Miguel Angel Girollet, Eduardo Isaac, Horacio Ceballos, and Roberto Aussel; the Uruguayans Isaías Sávio and Eduardo Fernández; the Brazilians Carlos Barbosa-Lima, Sérgio and Odair Assad, Henrique Pinto, Paulo Porto Alegre, Eustáquio Grilo, Edelson Gloeden, Sérgio and Eduardo Abreu, Jodacil Damaceno, and Giacomo Bartoloni. It is the Uruguayan Abel Carlevaro, though, who is considered to have been the most important pedagogue from the seminars.

Carlevaro took part in the first six seminars, assuming the function of Artistic Director in 1971-74. In the years that followed, the teaching and artistic direction was handed over to his students, such as Girollet. Carlevaro returned sporadically to the seminars for short stays, as his growing number of professional activities prevented him from remaining in Porto Alegre for the whole duration of the event.

In a 1999 interview, Carlevaro remembered the seminars with the following words: "I have a great recollection of it. A great recollection! ... I was very satisfied, because for me it was exceptional, for me it was a very beautiful time, very interesting. ... I was planting the seeds of the things I had already worked out, before the publication of the book [*School of Guitar*]."

It was therefore in the Porto Alegre seminars that Carlevaro consolidated his position as an outstanding pedagogue. The number of Carlevaro students who later assumed teaching posts at reputed institutions gives sufficient evidence of the reach of the master's teachings.

A considerable portion of the guitar instructors in Brazilian universities studied with Carlevaro. In addition to the author of this article, we may cite Giacomo Bartoloni (UNESP), Edelson Gloeden (USP), Orlando Fraga and Jaime Zenamon (EMBAP), Krishna Salinas and Marcos Corrêa (UFMS), Cristina Tourinho (UFBA), Flávia Domingues Alves (UFRGS), Afrânio Heizenreder (UDESC), Maria Haro (UNIRIO), Henrique Pinto (FAAM), Eugênio Lima de Souza (UFRN) and José Lucena (UFMG).

We should also consider that several of today's pedagogues, even if they were not direct students of Carlevaro, have benefited from his teachings by studying with his former pupils. Fernando Araújo de Paula, Professor at UFMG, says that for him the influence came "through [Prof. José] Lucena, who had contact with the Carlevaro school in Porto Alegre and, later, went to study with him in Uruguay." Mário da Silva (EMBAP) states that Zenamon played a similar role in the city of Curitiba. Fabio Zanon says that he never studied with Carlevaro, but that "the three teachers with whom [he] studied for the longest time in Brazil, Antonio Guedes, Henrique Pinto, and Edelton Gloeden, had studied with Carlevaro".

Let us take a look at the remarks of some of these teachers. Bartoloni says that "after meeting Carlevaro, my guitar technique changed radically. I can say that ninety-per-cent of my technique is still under influence from the Carlevaro school. As for interpretation, I may say the same of Guido Santórsola." According to Gloeden, "Santórsola and Carlevaro have been crucial due to the rigor of their approaches, the idea of being always attentive to new situations, the possibility of finding one's own ways and for the supreme necessity for constructive self-critique." For Pinto, Carlevaro modified and organized "my way of teaching and my technical approach... [I]n another Palestrina Seminar in which I took part, I met Guido Santórsola, who played an important role on my education."

Notice here the frequent mention of Guido Santórsola (1904-94), a prolific composer and pedagogue born in Italy who, after living in Brazil for many years, settled in Uruguay. For Fraga, "it is interesting to observe the ascendancy that Santórsola had over the guitarists. It was [an influence] as great for the instrumentalists as was Carlevaro." Santórsola first took part in the seminars in 1972, teaching courses on interpretation and harmonic principals applied to the guitar. Other composers who took part in the



Top photo: Cocktail party sponsored by the Grêmio Villa-Lobos to Segovia, after his concert on August 9, 1950. Pedro Duval is the sixth from the right, sitting next to Segovia. Second photo: the Tenth Palestrina Seminar (1978): from left to right, standing: Honório Ceballos, unidentified, Graciela Pomponio, José Mário Araújo, Jorge Martinez Zárate, Álvaro Pierri, unidentified, unidentified; below them are Henrique Belloc, Eduardo Fernández, Hector Farias. Third photo: the Eleventh Seminar (1979): Antonio Crivellaro, the Festival Director, appears at the center. Below him, on the floor, is Henrique Pinto. Abel Carlevaro is seen at the far left, behind in the background. Bottom photo: the first UFRGS Guitar Festival (2004): standing, left to right: Eduardo Castañera, Prof. Fernando Mattos, Rafael Garcia Borges, Ricardo Mitidieri, Cesar Funk, Rogério Constante, Prof. Flávia Domingues Alves, Thiago Colombo; Seated: Márcio de Souza, James Correa, Daniel Wolff (the Festival Director), and Januíbe Tejera.

seminars were the Brazilians Marlos Nobre and Francisco Mignone, both composers of various works for guitar.

In addition to the classes and concerts, the seminars often included guitar and composition competitions. Prizewinners of the guitar competitions include Roberto Aussel, Eduardo Fernández, Álvaro Pierri, Eduardo Castañera, Eduardo Isaac, and the brothers Everton and Edelson Gloeden.

Edelson summarizes his experience at the seminars thus: "Many Brazilian who took part in the Porto Alegre Seminars ... are today acting in our most important institutions, notably in public universities. The instruction of our students passes almost obligatorily through Carlevaro's postulates, even by those who reject him. Any academic work related to the guitar in its technical aspects and the recent history of the instrument in Brazil and in South America, mentions the Uruguayan master. For that matter, one must emphasize the experience in Rio Grande do Sul led by Antônio Crivellaro, who set a landmark by gathering the greatest international exponents of the guitar together in Porto Alegre."

The importance of Porto Alegre for the development of the guitar in South America, through the labor of Carlevaro and his followers, is thus made clear. To conclude, we shall next examine the history of the instrument in Porto Alegre in the years that followed the seminars.

THE CLASSICAL GUITAR IN PORTO ALEGRE AFTER 1980

As we have seen, guitar teaching at UFRGS started in the early 1970s as part of the Artistic Education degree. When Flávia Domingues Alves assumed a teaching post in 1982, the university began offering a bachelors degree in the instrument, hence raising the musical and technical standards. In the same year, the Prelude Project was created, dedicated to the instruction of music for children and teenagers, which included, among other instruments, the guitar. Since 1991, I have had the privilege of occupying the teaching post which had belonged to Prof. Duval at UFRGS, where, in 2002, I created the Masters Degree in Guitar Performance. Prof. Paulo Inda joined the guitar faculty in 2006.

Along with its regular degree programs, UFRGS promotes recitals, masterclasses, lectures and short term events, such as the Meetings with the Guitar and the UFRGS Guitar Festival. Similar events, dedicated to or including the guitar, are organized by nearby institutions as well, such as the Federal Universities of Pelotas and Santa Maria, the University of Passo Fundo and the Rio Grande do Sul State University. A number of UFRGS graduates teach at these universities and participate at such events. During the 1990s, two stable guitar

ensembles were created at UFRGS: the Camerata Consort and the Music Department's Guitar Octet.

Such an intense activity does not take long to produce copious results. In 1999, the Rio Grande do Sul Guitar Society, Associo, was founded. Since 2006, graduates from UFRGS have organized the International Guitar Seminars promoted by the Estação Musical school. Throughout the last decade, guitar CDs were recorded and released in Porto Alegre by the author of this article, by Eduardo Castañera, Marcus Bonilla, Daltro Kennan Jr., Márcio de Souza, James Corrêa, Thiago Colombo de Freitas, Paulo Inda and the ComTrastos Quartet.

Almost all of these recordings include works by composers from Porto Alegre in their repertoire. They are: Radamés Gnattali, Bruno Kiefer, Octávio Dutra, Fernando Mattos, Ricardo Mitidieri, Yanto Laitano, Rogério Constante, Felipe Adami, Celso L. Chaves, Antônio C. B. Cunha, Angelo Metz, Dimitri Cervo and Paulo Guedes. The CDs by Bonilla, Corrêa, and myself include our own compositions as well. In addition, there are classical guitarists who have released recordings with popular or folkloric repertoire, such as Felipe Azevedo, Mário Barros, Marcos Corrêa, Maurício Marques, and the Batuque de Cordas duo.

An in-depth discussion of the work of these composers would exceed the scope of the present article. Nevertheless, their mention here serves as a testimony to the fecund guitar activity in Porto Alegre, a result of a lengthy tradition of promoting the development of the instrument.

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