

Milhaud discovered American jazz in a 1920 visit to London, where he encountered Billy Arnold's Novelty Jazz Band in a Hammersmith dance hall. By the time he arrived in New York two years later for a series of engagements, he was claiming that European composers, including himself, were strongly influenced by American jazz (even though the only evidence available consisted of very short pieces by the likes of Satie, Auric, and Stravinsky). In New York, he haunted Harlem clubs and bought as many jazz records as he could. Upon his return to Paris, Milhaud was primed to write a lengthy, jazz-inspired score and saw his chance in a collaboration with Swedish producer Rolf de Maré, designer Fernand Léger, writer Blaise Cendrars, and choreographer Jean Börlin. The subject was nothing less than the creation of the world, as seen through African myth. Léger based his scenery and costumes on African art, and Milhaud took his inspiration from the African American music then in the air: jazz. He created a score for 17 solo instruments, including saxophone, and made liberal use of syncopation and near-chaotic counterpoint with the feeling of jazz improvisation (all the notes were written out, however). The score falls into five sections performed without breaks, always underlined by percussion instruments (here including the piano) that evoke both African drums and American jazz styles. The more animated the music becomes, as in the fugal second section, the more frenetic, syncopated, and outwardly jazzy it grows. The slower, quieter passages early on have less to do with African or American styles, aside from the occasional blue note. Throughout, Milhaud makes liberal use of polytonality, as is the case with all his mature music. The curtain rises on darkness, through which can be dimly perceived in inchoate mass of human bodies. Soon, the African gods of creation, Mzamé, Mebère, and Nkwa materialize and through their incantations, various forms of life begin to emerge from the mass of bodies: trees, animals, and ultimately a man and woman. The couple performs a sassy, syncopated dance of creation; the music becomes gentler and the man and woman are left alone on-stage to welcome the first spring.



## VILLA-LOBOS

The Little Train Of The Caipira  
(From Bachianas Brasileiras No. 2)

## Ginastera

Estancia & Panambi  
(Ballet Suites)

Sir Eugene Goossens  
conducting the  
London Symphony  
Orchestra

## Milhaud

La Création Du Monde)

## Stravinsky

L' Histoire Du Soldat

John Carewe  
conducting the  
London Symphony  
Orchestra Chamber Group



"The Little Train of the Brazilian Countryman" (Port.: "O trenzinho do caipira" (Villa-Lobos 1952, 53) is the subtitle for the Toccata movement that concludes an orchestral suite written by Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos in 1930, titled *Bachianas brasileiras* No. 2. The Toccata is approximately 4 to 5 minutes long. The subtitle refers to the local trains in the small communities of the Brazilian interior, the noises of which are imitated in the composition.

In the year of composition, 1930, Villa-Lobos transcribed this movement for cello and piano, titled simply *O trenzinho do caipira*. This arrangement, which lasts about two minutes in performance, was premiered in São Paulo-Pirajuí in 1930, with Villa-Lobos himself playing the cello and João de Souza Lima the piano. The original, orchestral version was only first performed (in the context of the complete *Bachianas* No. 2) on 3 September 1934, at the Venice International Festival, with an orchestra conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos.

An opposed point of view holds that the four movements of the orchestral *Bachianas* No. 2 was made from preexistent and unrelated pieces, three originally for cello and piano ("O canto do capadócio", "O canto da nossa terra", and "O trenzinho do caipira"), the other ("Lembrança do sertão") for solo piano.

An unrelated a cappella chorus composition by Villa-Lobos, *Trenzinho*, setting a text by Catarina Santoro, was written in 1933, and premiered on 10 October 1939 by the *Orfeão da Escola Argentina*, conducted by the composer. Originally for three-part chorus, it was also adapted for four-part female chorus, in which form it was published in 1951 as number 31 in volume 2 of the composer's collection, *Canto orfeônico*.

*Estancia*, (Argentine Spanish: "Ranch") orchestral suite and one-act ballet by Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera that, through its references to gaucho literature, rural folk dances, and urban concert music, evokes images of the diverse landscape of the composer's homeland. The work premiered in 1943 in its four-movement orchestral form and in 1952 as a ballet.

The *Estancia* ballet, somewhat more than half an hour in length, tells the story of a city boy in love with a rancher's daughter. At first, the love affair is one-sided, as the girl finds the boy spineless, at least in comparison with the intrepid gauchos. By the final scene, however, the hero has won the girl's heart by outdancing the gauchos in a traditional contest on their own terrain.

The ballet was commissioned in 1941 by American dance impresario Lincoln Kirstein for the troupe *American Ballet Caravan*. The work was to have been choreographed by

George Balanchine, but the dance company disbanded in 1942, before it was able to perform the piece. *Estancia* did not premiere as a ballet until after World War II. In the interim, Ginastera extracted four dances from the score—"Los trabajadores agrícolas" ("The Land Workers"), "Danza del trigo" ("Wheat Dance"), "Los peones de hacienda" ("The Cattlemen"), and "Danza final (Malambo)"—for use as a concert suite. *Estancia* is most often heard in its orchestral version, and the concluding movement, inspired by the flamboyant malambo dance of the Argentine gauchos, has become one of Ginastera's most popular works.

This magnificent and dynamic ballet captures the spirit of native life in ancient Argentina. The legendary story is a basic one of love and divine magic. Panambí, daughter of the chieftain of a tribe on the banks of the Paraná River, is betrothed to Guirahú, the most valiant warrior. However, just before the wedding, Guirahú is kidnapped by the spirit maidens of the river. The tribe sorcerer, also in love with Panambí but rejected by her, tries to take advantage of the situation by taking revenge upon her. He claims that spirits have said that Panambí should descend into the river to search for her lover. She is ready to carry out the supposedly divine orders when Tupá, a good god, appears from above and stops her. Tupá punishes the sorcerer by turning him into a strange black bird, and then rescues Guirahú who rises from the river and throws himself into the waiting arms of his loved one.

Prior to embarking on his so-called neo-Classical period in the 1920s, Stravinsky had already pared down his style considerably from the extravagant ballet scores of the early 1910s to the economy and restraint that characterizes *L'histoire du soldat* (The Soldier's Tale). The forced economy of wartime influenced not only the work's modest resources, but its subject matter. Written in collaboration with the Swiss author C.F. Ramuz and based on a Russian fable about a fiddle-playing soldier (although the text is in French), *L'histoire* was to be narrated, played and danced, but could also be performed independent of the text as a concert suite. The first performance of *L'histoire du soldat* took place in Lausanne Switzerland on September 28, 1918.

Stravinsky and Ramuz based their subject on a collection of Russian tales dealing with the adventures of a soldier who deserts the army and the devil who eventually possesses his soul. The soldier's desertion is somewhat glossed over, but the fiddle he carries in his knapsack and which the Devil wins from him, assumes a symbolic importance that makes the story a kind of miniature version of the Faust legend.

