

Antônio Chechim Filho

Excursão Artística Villa-Lobos [Villa-Lobos Artistic Excursion]

Translated by Fred S. Sturm



Antônio Chechim Filho (Forward by Ciro Gonçalves Dias Junior)

The illustrious Brazilian author of this work was born in the city of Cruzeiro, in the State of São Paulo, on April 2, 1905. As a young child he moved the city of São Paulo. In that city, a little after his thirteenth birthday, he was hired as an apprentice by the Nardelli Piano Manufacturing Company, which, years later, became the Piano Manufacturing Company of Brazil (Fábrica de Pianos Brasil, S.A.) [hereafter “Piano Brasil”].

Everyone was impressed by this intelligent and extraordinarily dedicated young man, and so when he reached the age of only sixteen, in light of his rare ability, he was sent by the company to various cities in the interior of São Paulo, to correct defects in newly sold pianos. Customers were surprised, and didn’t believe that such a young man could adequately repair their instruments. But on many occasions customers expressed their happiness in finding their pianos brought into good condition again, and so Chechim’s reputation began to grow.

In 1931, at the age of twenty-six, he was selected by the company to care for the piano during the Villa-Lobos Artistic Excursion (Excursão Artística Villa-Lobos), in all of the cities to be visited during that tour. The reader will sense in this account the happy memories of contact with great artists, of the public concerts, and of his magnificent work, caring meticulously, with all the idealism of his young heart, for the piano.

In 1933, he was named General Manager of the manufacturing operations of Piano Brasil. He introduced various improvements in manufacture, including the seasoning of wood in a steam kiln. He continued in this work until 1938, when, retiring from factory work, he moved to the Office of Repair and Restoration, where he introduced a process to exterminate woodworms and termites in pianos, for the first time in São Paulo, using a gas chamber.

He constructed some pianos, all “by hand,” the first of which, with the name “Kekim,” is currently the property of D. Maria Lucy Chechim Lima, and can be found in the auditorium of the Hotel Fazenda Aguativa, in Cornélio Procópio-PR, where everyone admires the qualities of this beautiful instrument.

He had the most complete tool case imaginable, filled with specialty items, many of them rare and housed very carefully for their preservation. In 1968, after fifty years of activity dedicated to the piano, he suffered greatly, as he often related, when it was stolen from his automobile – this case that had been his companion for half a century. Overcoming the difficulties of having to use new and often inappropriate tools, he continued to work with enthusiasm and dedication until 1972, mostly for various individual artists.

When I speak with him about his life’s work, I am impressed by his love and devotion, by his profound dedication to research, discovering solutions so that the keyboard may always be faithful for the pianists. Senhor Chechim has many secrets, treasures of a long career, and which are united to an acute ear.

On November 11, 1984, I was invited to record a special program for the Radio University of São Paulo, which very successfully conveyed his memories and recollections of Villa-Lobos and the “Artistic Excursion.” He tells with pride and happiness of having been the technician and confidante of Guiomar Novaes, Antonietta Rudge, Souza Lima, Dinorah de Carvalho, Estelinha Epstein, Yara Bernette, and João

Carlos Martins. He records also his familiarity with Professor José Kliass and with Artur Rubenstein, whom he knew from recitals given in São Paulo, along with many others.

These are a few details about a man with an enchanting personality: in him are joined wisdom and humility, elegance and goodness. I remember hearing expressions of admiration concerning him from my dear and unforgettable teacher, Maestro Souza Lima, and also from other similarly talented people, who considered the most perfect technician, the best piano tuner in São Paulo, to be Antônio Chechim Filho.

Ciro Gonçalves Dias Junior
São Paulo, March, 1987

Excursão Artística Villa-Lobos ao Interior do Estado de São Paulo, 1931-1932

Memories of my time spent together with the great composer and his musicians, during this memorable musical excursion. An homage by the author, Antônio Chechim Filho, to the illustrious maestro and musician Heitor Villa-Lobos, on the centenary of his birth, this narrative is offered by the last-surviving participant in the excursion.
São Paulo, March 5, 1987

“O estilo é o homen” (The style is the man) [Editor’s note]

Living Memories of the Artistic Excursion of Villa-Lobos is not a scholarly or literary work. But its importance transcends those considerations. Just as a photograph can be not merely a moment, but a living portrait, so in the case of this narrative we see not only the facts the author describes, but the person of the author himself.

On the one hand, we have a treasury of numerous interesting aspects and curiosities of the life and personality of a great composer, which would be lost to us were it not for the courageous and tenacious persistence of a piano tuner-technician, not a writer. On the other hand, we come to know the man “Kekim,” always ready to serve his fellow man: the professional who scrupulously carries out his duties, into the smallest details; the husband, dedicated to the point of heroism; the father, loving and always calm; the friend, ready and willing to help.

Therefore, in editing these pages, I took care to respect his style rather than revise it. I hope that the reader will not simply be entertained, enjoying the panorama of the excursion, but will also find here a life message.

Pe. Antonio Marcos Girardi

Presentation

Justification for this work:

- My esteem for the people and for the work of the group
- The desire to make certain such important data on the history of music in Brazil are not lost
- The example of public spirit and selfless love of art displayed by the protagonists in the excursion

- Homage to the members of the team, of whom I am the last survivor

Contents:

A description of the adventures experienced by the participants of the Villa-Lobos Artistic Excursion, through more than one hundred cities in the interior of the state of São Paulo in the years 1931-1932.

Members of the team:

- Heitor Villa-Lobos: organizer and chief of the excursion
- Antonieta Rudge: pianist
- João de Souza Lima: pianist
- Nair Duarte Nunes: singer
- Anita Gonçalves: singer
- Lucilia Villa-Lobos: piano accompanist
- Cleto Rocha: secretary and public relations of the excursion
- António Chechim Filho: piano tuner

Difficulties:

- The distance in time from when the events occurred. The *Excursion* took place in 1931, 56 years ago.
- It is impossible to obtain further information from other participants, as all are deceased.
- All the documents in my possession concerning the *Excursion*, from stage to stage, city to city, programs, tickets, a large number of photographs, after being safely kept for more than 40 years, were lost.
- More than a year of searching my memory to recall events of many years ago.

Encouragement:

- Dona Conceição Pereira Chechim – school teacher [his wife]
- Ciro Gonçalves Dias Junior – professor of music and pianist

My children:

- Paulo Eduardo Chechim – doctor
- Dona Maria Lucy Chechim Lima – concert pianist
- Dona Maria Emília C. Ruzsicska – ham radio operator PY2 TME
- Antonio Sérgio P. Chechim – electronic engineer

Collaborators:

- Ciro Gonçalves Dias Junior – professor of music – musical information
- Maria Lucy C. Lima – editing and musical information
- Maria Emília C. Ruzsicska – history of Brazil
- Vera Spagnolia – teacher of Portuguese language – editing
- Gláucia Pantaleão da Silva – professor of biology – information concerning the theater of Ribeirão Preto
- Maria Elísia Borges – professor of art history - information concerning the theater of Ribeirão Preto

- Agenor Pereira – doctor - information concerning the theater of Araraquara
- José Cézar P. F. Alves – ham radio operator, Cruzeiro-SP, PY2-GYX – information concerning Cleto Rocha
- Carlos - – ham radio operator, Belo Horizonte-MG, 4-CF – information concerning Cleto Rocha
- Maria de Lourdes G. Pereira - ham radio operator, Bauru-SP, PY5-TG – information concerning the Hotel Centro of Bauru-SP
- Francisco Ricardo Filho - ham radio operator, PY5-CV – for furnishing the Mexican book entitled *Music and Musicians*, relating activities of Villa-Lobos
- Margareth Coelho de Oliveira Lima – typing
- Fernando de Almeida – advertising executive – cover

Special homage:

To my wife, Dona Conceição Pereira Chechim, who, though physically disabled since 1972 due to a cerebral hemorrhage, 50% paralyzed, spared no effort to help in this work.

To Senhorita Marisa Gasparini and to Pe. Antonio Marcos Girardi, who spared no effort in creating the conditions under which this work could be presented to the public, the profound gratitude of the author, Antônio Chechim Filho and his family.

Biographical Data

Paternal Heritage

Villa-Lobos was born in Rio de Janeiro on March 5, 1887. He was baptized with the name Heitor. His mother, Dona Noêmia, called him Tuhú, because he was a very lively and mischievous boy.

His father, Professor Raul, taught music, clarinet and cello. Because music alone didn't bring in enough money to support four children, Heitor and his three siblings, he found work as a librarian in the National Library of Rio de Janeiro.

Professor Raul, a lover of music, founded along with some colleagues the first Music Society in Rio, which later became known as the Society of Symphonic Concerts of Rio de Janeiro.

Heitor inherited from his father a love for music. Very nervous and uneasy as a child, he only became comfortable at the side of his father, listening to him play the clarinet or cello.

One day, Professor Raul, seeing the boy had such interest in music, gave him a cello reduced in size for his age, which pleased him greatly.

In 1898, the child Heitor, then only 11 years old, suffered the first hard blow of his life: his father died.

Heitor was very sad and depressed due to the loss of his father, who had been both friend and encourager.

He didn't allow himself to be shaken, he recovered his spirit and, more than ever, dedicated himself to music.

His mother, Dona Noêmia, needed to make a great effort to raise her four children. She had to bring in work as a seamstress to support the family. At this time

Heitor had completed elementary school, in addition to the music his father had taught him.

First Difficulties

Dona Noêmia always wanted her son to have a career that wasn't in music. She told him, "You should study to become a doctor some day." But Heitor preferred music.

When he was 13 years old, in 1900, he began to study the guitar. His mother didn't approve.

In 1903, still an adolescent of 16, Heitor would often study in his room, in the depths of the house, preparing to enroll in a course in medicine. With very little will to study, and with a guitar close at hand, he would pick up his instrument and begin playing the music which came into his head. He played very softly, so that his mother wouldn't hear, as he didn't want to upset her.

Villa-Lobos, in order to become a musician, had to overcome serious difficulties. To pay for his studies, he had to play in theaters and cinemas. The guitar also helped. He began to teach, making 4000 Reis, which was good money in those days. By that time, at the age of 16, he had composed several pieces for guitar.

Artistic Liberty

In 1905, when he was 18, he abandoned the study of medicine and wanted to leave Rio to get to know other states, other people, other customs. But with what financial resources? He sold the music books of his late father, saying, "What good are these books gathering dust on the shelves?"

He became cellist for a theatrical company which went on a tour in northern Brazil. And thus the young Heitor was able to fulfill his dream, getting to know Minas Gerais, Bahia, Mato Grosso, Goiás, Belém, Manaus, and all the northeast. The countryside fascinated him with its colors, its people, its characteristics. What attracted him most was the folk and country music of various places. He didn't miss the opportunity to play the guitar with local musicians.

In the north, after a period of time, he fell out with the theater company and left it. He continued traveling through the area for some time, but on his own. He suffered many difficulties. Little money, lack of understanding, bad friends, and he even caught malaria, which made him shiver and shake.

Stages of his Career

With his strong will, he conquered all. On return to Rio, at 19, after staying in the north for a year, he composed *Fantasias for Guitar*, and some other pieces for voice and piano.

Wanting to improve his capabilities in composition, he enrolled in the course of Harmony at the Instituto Nacional de Música of Rio de Janeiro, to get to know more deeply the secrets of composition.

In Rio, the same economic problem returned. Music only gave pleasure, it didn't make money. How could he make a living and at the same time learn better to compose?

In 1915, at 28, after studying for a while at the Instituto de Música, having learned what he needed, he left it. He found work as representative of a match factory in Rio. It was a novelty, matches with two heads. "One on either end of the stick. The same match could be used twice to light a cigarette." At that time lighters were rare. The consumption of matches was enormous. They needed to be made good use of. This job required that he travel to the south of the country. This was just what Villa-Lobos wanted. To have the opportunity to get to know other places and customs. He also took the opportunity to give some concerts and display his music, to play with colleagues of the south, and to collect themes for new compositions.

From these new experiences Villa-Lobos gained new vitality, more facility, and a new enthusiasm for his new compositions. Any experience was an opportunity for a new composition.

In 1918, at 31, Villa-Lobos continued playing the cello, in cinemas and orchestras. In this era films were silent. An orchestra played in front of the screen, in the dark, with lights that just projected over the music on the stand. In large movie theaters, this orchestra played in a pit below the level of the screen. The musicians played while the film rolled. The musicians more or less accompanied the type of film. For a happy film, happy music, for a romantic film, suave music, etc. There were cinemas with large orchestras. Many times the orchestra provided a bigger spectacle than the film.

The Odeon Cinema stood out, not only for its films, but especially for its large orchestra and for the musicians which were part of it, who were mostly professors.

On tour in Rio de Janeiro, the great pianist Artur Rubenstein, at the invitation of some friends, went there, more to hear the orchestra than to watch the film. Rubenstein didn't like it. He said to his friends, "An orchestra like this should play much better music, not waltzes, tangos, maxixes, and other things of little value." They were just leaving, when some new music started. It was *Danças Africanas* by Villa-Lobos. "This," said Rubenstein, "is the music for this orchestra." He sat again, after hearing the first chords, and stayed until the end of the music. When the lights were turned on for intermission, Rubenstein wanted to compliment the musicians. His friends presented him to Villa-Lobos, composer of the music and great cellist. Rubenstein, knowing of the controversy surrounding modern music, wanted to know something about it. Villa-Lobos didn't believe that such a famous artist as Rubenstein was interested in his music. He was used to criticisms, boos, and incomprehension. He expected only irony on the part of great artists. Villa-Lobos, irritated, responded in a rude and violent tone, "You can't possibly understand me! Pianists here don't want to play my music, only music by foreigners." He turned his back and left. In fact, Villa-Lobos always had a nervous and explosive temperament. Rubenstein, very annoyed, left satisfied with the music, but repelled by the composer.

"Next say," says Rubenstein, "in the morning, while I was still sleeping with the shades drawn, because there were many mosquitoes and it was hot. I was awakened by the doorbell, thinking it was a telegram. But what a surprise! It was Villa-Lobos. But he wasn't alone. He came accompanied by four or five other musicians." Villa-Lobos said, "Didn't you say you wanted to know my music? I brought the musicians here to play, because later they are busy." And they played various pieces, and then, saying good-bye, they left. Villa-Lobos as well.

Rubenstein recognized the courage of the composer, and also the reasons he was so nervous, because his work was always criticized, and only a minority appreciated it.

In 1922, a *Week of Modern Art* was organized, in the municipal theater of São Paulo. Painters, sculptors, plastic artists, writers and composers took part. Villa-Lobos was also invited to present his music. He was received with thunderous boos and implacable criticism. But if the boos and the criticisms made him suffer, they also served to get the newspapers to open a dialogue about his new music.

In 1926, at 39, Villa-Lobos went to Europe and presented his music in the major capitals. In Paris, among modern composers, Villa-Lobos found a more favorable environment. His standard of living also improved. He had various pupils, among them some recommended by the great professor Marguerite Long, who was also the teacher of Maestro João Lima Souza, when he was there, studying at the Conservatoire de Music in Paris.

In 1927, at 40, he presented various compositions in the Salle Gaveau in Paris. Opinions of the public were mixed. Some criticized, some booed, but a good portion of the more modern applauded. His music began to be understood.

In 1930, at 43, Villa-Lobos lived with his wife Dona Lucilia Villa-Lobos in São Paulo at the Hotel Regina, situated in Largo Santa Efigênia at the end of the viaduct of that name. He worked happily and satisfied, because his compositions began to be more appreciated and sought after.

It was in December of that year, after the victory of the Getulista revolution, which happened on Christmas eve, that he received in his apartment in the hotel a visit from a military officer. The officer gave him a letter inviting him to present himself at the Palácio dos Campos Eliseos, residence of the Federal Interventor [governor] of São Paulo, the then Lieutenant João Alberto Lins de Barros. Villa-Lobos hurried to attend the invitation of the Interventor.

Lieutenant João Alberto accepted his petition to underwrite a voyage through various cities in the interior of the state, not only to spread his own music, but to present to the inhabitants of these localities musical artists of great renown. "It was a true Christmas present." From this meeting with the Interventor was born the *Excursão Artística Villa-Lobos*, begun in the second half of January, 1931, and which will be described later on.

In April, 1932 Villa-Lobos brought to a close his artistic excursion to the interior of the state of São Paulo. The closing ceremony Villa-Lobos called the "Civic Exhortation of Villa-Lobos." It included a grand chorus of male and female voices, accompanied by a large orchestra and by the Armed Forces Band. The band and orchestra played together to accompany the Orpheonic Chorus. Villa-Lobos was very satisfied with the performance of all, and with its magnificent reception. It was the most beautiful spectacle of his excursion.

After this concert, which inspired great enthusiasm for the music, especially among the young, Villa-Lobos bid farewell to the Excursion and to São Paulo, moving temporarily to Rio de Janeiro.

There, he was preparing a new excursion which was intended to go to the state of Paraná or Minas Gerais, when, on May 23, 1932, the Constitutionalist movement of the state of São Paulo had its prelude in the capital, with the deaths of four students: Mário, Miraguaia, Dráusio and Camargo. These students gave to the movement, in addition to

their lives, the initials M.M.D.C – emblem of the Constitutionalist Revolution. With this movement, all preparations for the new excursion were cancelled.

Villa-Lobos didn't stop. In 1936 he traveled by Zeppelin from Rio de Janeiro to Czechoslovakia, where he represented Brazil in the Congress of Artistic Education in Prague.

In 1944, he traveled for the first time to the United States of America, and there conducted one of the major orchestras of the world, the Boston Symphony.

In 1956, at 59, Villa-Lobos lost his dear mother, who was very old and nearly blind.

On March 5, 1957, Villa-Lobos celebrated the completion of 70 years of life, very well lived, between struggles and glories.

He received from the Municipal Prefecture of São Paulo the great homage, in the Municipal Theater, of a plaque with his name. A marvelous concert, with large orchestra and two choruses, one male and one female, conducted by Maestro João Lima Souza, included the tenth symphony of Villa-Lobos *Sumé Pater Patrium*.

At the end, much applause. The Maestro and the musicians bowed. With the applause continuing thunderously, everyone standing, Maestro Lima Souza pointed in the depth of the theater, in one of the boxes, together with family and friends, to the figure of Villa-Lobos, also on his feet, applauding.

On November 17, 1959, maestro Villa-Lobos died in the city of Rio de Janeiro, 72 years old, having left to posterity all his work done with great sacrifice, but with great love.

He was an inspired innovator of Brazilian music.

Approval of the Idea, Elaboration, and the Objectives of the Project

Supporting the idea of Villa-Lobos, to carry out an artistic tour through the interior of the state of São Paulo, the Interventor asked him to present a detailed plan of what he intended to do.

In the formulation of the project, Villa-Lobos gave the intention of taking his music to the farthest reaches of the state of São Paulo, and, at the same time, of bringing to the inhabitants of those places contact with musical works of great genius, and also with great Brazilian artists. He would show how a musical concert was presented, musical instruments like the cello and grand piano, “which many people aren't familiar with,” the stage, acoustics, lighting, and silence. It would be called “*EXCURSÃO ARTISTICA VILLA-LOBOS*.”

The artists would be: him, playing cello, his wife Dona Lucilia Villa-Lobos, piano accompanist, along with a helper to turn the pages; a classical singer and a concert pianist.

There also needed to be as part of the team a tuner technician to take care of the piano, and a secretary to organize the concerts in the various cities. The team would travel only by train. It would need a small rail car to carry the piano from city to city.

Its concerts would be presented in all the cities of the interior of the state.

All that was needed was the patronage of the Interventor, free passage on the railroads to any city, and free freight for the transport of the piano. All this without any subsidy from the government.

The prefectures which presented the concert in their cities would furnish: the theater for the concert; a truck with several men to transport the piano from the railcar to the theater and back. Also without any subsidy. They would also be charged with selling tickets. The ticket proceeds would revert to the Excursion as income to pay the artists and for other expenses.

Villa-Lobos attended an audience in the Palacio dos Campos Elíseos and was received personally by the Interventor Lieutenant João Alberto. He then presented the project he proposed to undertake with the Excursion, and guaranteed its success.

The Interventor, who was a music lover and composer of several pieces for piano, quickly accepted the plan, especially because it was aimed at the interior of the state.

He ordered his adjutant to send a circular telegram to all the railroads that operated in the state of São Paulo, containing authorization to furnish on account of the state, seven first class tickets with right to beds, cushions, and in Pullman cars, and meals in the dining car for all.

The requisitions, on the stationery of the Palace of the Interventor, were assigned to Villa-Lobos for six people, and one additional for Cleto Rocha, because he had to travel separately from the team.

To all the Prefectures was sent a letter, asking them to welcome the Excursão Villa-Lobos in their cities in official character, to furnish lodging for seven people for three days, the theater, and to undertake the organization of the concert. They should furnish a truck with several men to move the piano from the station to the theater and back. And that the expenses should be paid by the Prefecture, and ticket proceeds should go to the Excursão for income and expenses.

Organization of the Excursion, Selection and Invitation of the Artists to Participate in this Tour

With a green light from the Interventor's Palace, Villa-Lobos began to organize his team. The excursion would be called "Excursão Artística Villa-Lobos."

For the cello, without any question, he himself would be the soloist. For piano accompaniment, his first wife, Dona Lucília Villa-Lobos. For a singer, what was needed was someone with both a classical and a folk repertory. Among others, Nair Duarte Nunes was chosen. And for piano? The biggest names of the time were Guiomar Novaes Pinto, Magdalena Tagliaferro, Antonieta Rudge and João de Souza Lima, who had returned recently from Europe with the grand prize of the Conservatoire de Musique in Paris. Guiomar Novaes was invited, but couldn't accept due to commitments in São Paulo and in the United States. Antonieta Rudge was selected, agreeing to go on just a portion of the excursion. She had a single daughter, Helena, whom we couldn't leave alone in São Paulo. She needed to come along, and could be made use of as page turner of the piano accompanist.

Villa-Lobos, very satisfied at having resolved the most important part of the excursion, that of the artists, turned to look for a secretary/impresario: Senhor Cleto Rocha, married to his niece Clélia, a functionary of the railroad Viação Sul Mineira. He lived and worked in Cruzeiro, and would serve well.

It would be the duty of the secretary to get in contact with the Prefects of the various cities, in the first place to find out whether they wanted the excursion to present a concert in their city.

If so, he would need to arrange with the Prefect for the reception, hotel reservations, the theater, printing of posters, announcements, and everything else necessary so that the concert would be a success.

It was also necessary to arrange for tickets to be sold in advance. For this purpose, the secretary would need to be in the city ten to fifteen days before the date of each concert. When the team arrived, they would find everything ready. The excursion would be divided into several stages. Always with the help of Dona Lucilia, the organization went smoothly.

He turned next to the instruments. The cello he had was very good. He simply needed to have an acoustic platform built, on which to play. And the piano?

When he was in Paris, he got from the Gaveau factory a beautiful parlor grand piano, of special construction. Among other improvements, it had an ivory keyboard and something very few pianos have: seven and a half octaves instead of seven and a fourth, or ninety keys in place of eighty-eight, as pianos commonly have. This piano was kept in a furniture storage facility of a moving company in Rio de Janeiro.

Villa-Lobos didn't want to use this piano because it was merely a parlor grand. He wanted a full concert grand piano, to better enhance the concerts.

The Piano Brasil Company rented him a vertical piano, a small one, for use in his apartment in the Hotel Regina, in São Paulo, where he lived.

And so he thought he would contact Senhor Tirso Capiluppi, sales director of the company, to ask for the loan of a concert grand piano for the concert, and for a tuner technician to care for it during the journey, and in turn he would promote Piano Brasil.

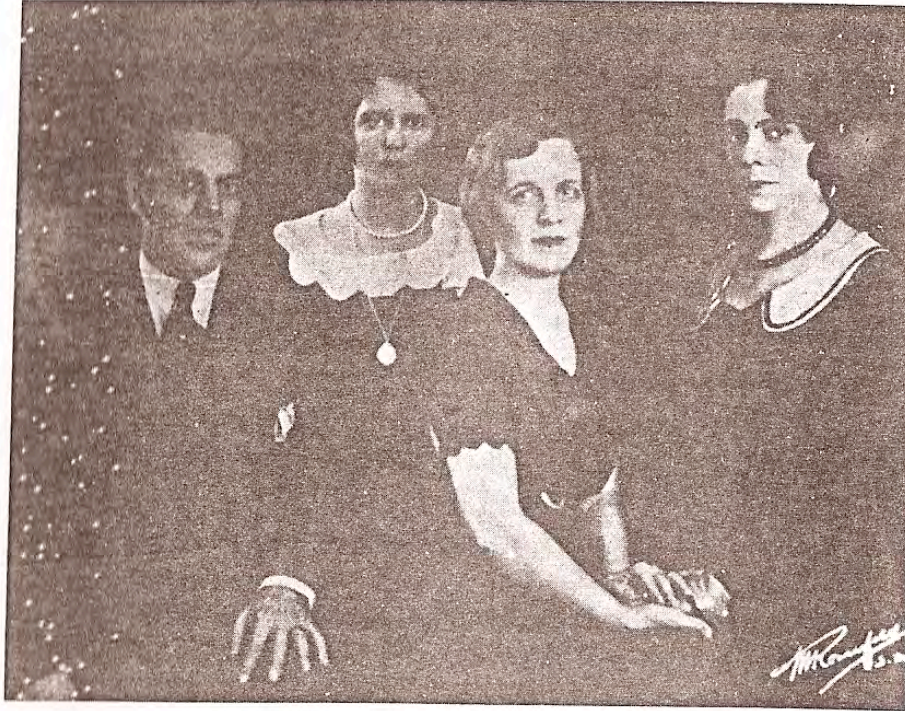
The Piano Brasil Company did not manufacture this model of piano. So Senhor Tirso Capiluppi said to him, "Maestro, use your own piano. It will give very good results. A concert grand piano, even if we had one, would cause you many difficulties. A piano of this size is very large and very heavy, and very problematic for the service you require. I know very well the interior of the state and the difficulties of transporting pianos." And he added, "I will provide you a fine technician to take care of your piano, and in turn we will receive good publicity for Piano Brasil. I will send you Antônio Chechim Filho, a technician able to prepare pianos for great artists."

Villa-Lobos accepted the suggestion of Senhor Capiluppi, and considered the question closed. "Two birds killed with one stone," he had resolved the question of both piano and technician.

And so now Villa-Lobos got to work. He obtained from the Viação Sul Mineira Railroad an indefinite leave of absence for his nephew Cleto Rocha. Cleto, given leave, went into action immediately. Within a few days, he was already in Campinas, preparing for the opening concert. This concert was planned for the second half of February, just after Carnaval.

First Part

The Artists



*EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS
Janeiro de 1931*

- 1 – Maestro Heitor Villa-Lobos*
- 2 – Nair Duarte Nunes*
- 3 – Antonieta Rudge*
- 4 – Lucila Villa-Lobos*

Heitor Villa-Lobos

Organizer and chief of the excursion. He was very good at his role. All the members were conscious of the responsibilities which weighed on his shoulders.

ARTIST: Indisputably a great musical genius. A great soloist on cello and guitar. He also played piano, principally to perfect his compositions.

COMPOSER: His facility at composing was immense. He wrote music on the staff like one writes a letter. Any excuse was an opportunity to write a piece of music. Personally, he was very nervous, but in general good humored: smiling and very kind, when things were going well, very angry and energetic when anything went against him. He didn't know how to dissemble. He had a rough frankness.

He spoke much about the adventures of his journeys in the north and south of Brazil, and abroad. He suffered a great deal. He often said to whomever would listen, “Don’t be surprised at seeing a Christ without a beard.”

Antonieta Rudge

Great pianist. Although she played with great delicacy, she brought a grand sonority from the piano.

PERSONALITY – Always happy, with a smile on her lips. Extremely delicate, incapable of offending anyone. She treated me with very special courtesy.

Souza Lima

A brilliant and very vigorous pianist. He didn’t worry in the least about what he was going to play until the time of the concert. He had an extraordinary technique. One day, after he had performed *Alegria na Horta* by Villa-Lobos, the composer asked him, “How can you play so many notes, at the same time and with such speed?” Souza Lima responded, smiling, “Only God knows.” Meaning, I guess, that in the intuition of the artist, the fingers run faster than the mind.

PERSONALITY – He was a jewel. Extraordinarily courteous. Always in a good humor, with a very youthful spirit. Lively, conversed a lot, and liked to make puns on occasion. He told many stories of his stay in Paris.

Nair Duarte Nunes

A singer with a smooth voice and very well controlled. In concerts, her beautiful voice was much appreciated, but only a minority appreciated the pieces. The majority of the public expected more accessible songs; some people complained, saying, “I thought she would sing a samba, a tango or a mamba.”

PERSONALITY – Very discrete and polite. She made her debut on the excursion, coming out of a grave illness. She was thin and very frail. She paid close attention to what she ate. Dona Lucilia Villa-Lobos paid very close attention to her needs. At the end of the first stage, she was exhausted. She didn’t return for the second, being replaced temporarily by the singer Anita Gonçalves.

Anita Gonçalves

Strong voice, mezzo soprano. She had little vocal training. Her voice had no vibrato. Her repertory was more accessible to the public, interspersing classical songs among popular, which was better received.

PERSONALITY – Young, lively, svelte, single, and very beautiful. Daughter of Portuguese immigrants, her pronunciation was a little odd. She performed in the second and third stages of the excursion. From the fourth on, Nair Duarte Nunes returned, continuing until the end of the excursion. Now with more physical strength, and with a stronger voice.

Lucilia Villa-Lobos

Piano accompanist, first wife of maestro Villa-Lobos. She had a great deal of experience in this role.

PERSONALITY – Paid great attention to all members of the team. Always smiling and happy, in spite of the nervousness of the maestro. She treated me like a son. She even took care of my clothing.

In Mocaca, Anita Gonçalves took ill suddenly. It was Lucilia who was always at her side, giving her pills and injections. All this care and attention helped Anita get better very quickly, and to be in condition to sing in the concerts.

There were also on the excursion two anonymous artists. The first was Cleto Rocha, secretary, whose work with the prefectures was very arduous, in the arrangement and promotion of the concerts. He traveled separated from the group, always ten to fifteen days in advance of the rest, to make arrangements, reserve the theater, lodging, prepare for our reception, and sell tickets.

Sometimes he had a bad reception from a few Prefects, who were still from an earlier political period, that is, the Republican Paulista Party, recently deposed by the revolution of Getulio Vargas, and they didn't even want to hear about an excursion authorized by the Federal Interventor in São Paulo.

The second anonymous artist was the piano tuner technician, and acoustic technician for the concert halls. His name was Antônio Chechim Filho, who is writing these memories of that wonderful journey which was the *Excursão Artística Villa-Lobos*.

My art? To give to the artists the conditions in which they can present themselves perfectly. At the time, a young man, single, twenty-six years old and with thirteen years of experience. A very acute ear, and a great deal of patience, as the work requires. Technical inspector for the Brazil Piano Manufacturing Company, on leave to accompany these artists. Technician as well for great artists of São Paulo, like Guiomar Novaes Pinto, Souza Lima, Professor Kliass and many others,

Railroad Transport for the Artists

In 1931, there were very few roads for automobiles in the State of São Paulo. And those which existed were in general very precarious. For this reason, passenger travel was almost exclusively by rail.

The Villa-Lobos excursion did not stray from this rule. We traveled only by train. And, whenever possible, we went during the morning, so that we could have lunch in the next city. But many times this didn't happen. Then, we would eat in the dining car. The excursion became well known on the trains in which we traveled, so that in some dining cars they knew the routine: a special dish for Souza Lima and coffee for Villa-Lobos. The dish for Souza Lima was chicken baked in the Parisian manner, with various seasonings. It was a courtesy of the chef. Souza Lima had given him the recipe. The coffee for Villa-Lobos was that extremely strong coffee Villa-Lobos demanded, strong to the point of dying the spoon. He wouldn't drink it if it wasn't to his taste.

Many times the coffee was returned until it came to the desired strength.

The journeys were, in general, always happy, revealing beautiful and interesting landscapes. There were many interesting conversations with other passengers, who, knowing we were in the excursion Villa-Lobos, wanted to learn more about it. But sometimes they became painful and tiring, when the car, in spite of being first class, was

over-full, very hot, with dust and wood cinders from the locomotive coming in the windows.

Transport of the Piano

The piano was also transported by rail, also with a free passage on account of the state for the necessary transfer from one station to the next. The requisition could only be signed by Villa-Lobos or by Cleto Rochas.

A small railcar, completely enclosed and put at the disposal of the excursion, was attached at the end of the train in which the artists traveled. It was detached when we arrived at the station, and remained there until we left for the next city.

The piano, which was a grand, could only travel in a crate: first, because the railroad wouldn't accept it out of a crate, second for its safety in the transport from the railcar to the theater. Along with it came a box, containing a bench and various tools and accessories. A wooden platform, on which Villa-Lobos played his cello, also traveled in the same railcar.

Later, when we acquired wooden beams for the erection of the platform where there wasn't a large enough stage, those also became part of the baggage in our little railcar.

Observation: the piano could only travel on its side. A truck provided by the Prefectures and around ten men, manual laborers, would be used to take the piano from the railcar and transport it to the theater. This transport was made easy by the use of wheeled dollies, which were part of the accessories.

Unloading at the theater presented no problems, when there was a large stage door and loading dock for delivery of heavy cargo. But when there wasn't one, which happened in the majority of theaters, the situation changed considerably. The piano had to go in the front door, where the audience entered. This was very difficult work. The difference in level from the bed of the truck to the ground was a great distance. It was necessary to prepare a ramp with strong beams, and to slide the piano crate down it. With the men standing on the ground, the crate was very tall to try to keep balanced so that it didn't fall, not only damaging the piano, but running the risk of injuring someone underneath it. I had to be very attentive and arrange the men so that everything went well.

All this movement of men gesticulating, speaking loudly, attracted the attention of passers by, and during the unloading a crowd would gather. Some would offer to lend a hand. After a great deal of work, finally the piano crate was on the ground. Now we needed to get it inside the theater. This generally didn't present big problems. Going up a couple of steps was easy, just a question of applying force. There were enough men for this, used to hard work. To get to the stage in the center of the theater was also easy. With the dollies, the piano crate rolled easily inside the building. Now the crate was put in a horizontal position. With enough men holding it all around, it was easy to lift it onto the stage. But once it was on stage, there were problems with the footlights, which were often damaged. For this reason, side entrances to the stage were preferred, with steps. Sometimes these were so narrow that the crate could barely make it. Once, we had to knock down a wall to get the piano through.

All this work and trouble was repeated in reverse when the piano was removed, to take it to the next concert. But it was a little easier, as the route was prepared, and the ramp already made.

At last, the crate was on the stage or on the platform. Now came the uncrating, attaching the legs and pedals. With the crate lying on the ground, the lid, attached with screws, must be removed. Here, a new problem. The men, used to working with hoes and picks and shovels, couldn't manage a screwdriver. It was easier for me to remove the screws myself than to teach them how. With the piano out of the crate, on its legs, the crate and all the accessories were gathered together to be used for the journey to the next city, and the men dispersed. After the concert began a new task: to return the piano to the railcar which had remained at the station, so that it would be ready to be attached to the train which took the team to the next city.

This work, with few exceptions, was done at night, when the theater was empty. The same men who worked in the morning to get the piano from the railcar, now had the duty of taking it back. Now everything was easier. The route was prepared. The tools and fixtures as well. The men with experience, and with an advantage. Invited to attend the concert, the group always showed up reinforced by a few colleagues who, taking advantage of the opportunity, and satisfied by having attended a spectacle never seen before, worked with a will.

It was my duty to accompany them through the loading of the piano and accessories in the railcar, to ensure that none of the accessories were left behind, and also so that, due to some difficulty, they didn't leave the piano on the platform, exposed to the weather, as happened once, and also so as not to delay the train, at the hour of departure.

When all this was done, each man received a gratuity of 2000 Reis, which was good money in those days. "Enough for ten cafezinhos." And they went home, very happy. All finished, usually after midnight, satisfied with a job well done, I had a few hours to sleep before getting ready to go early the next day.

Preparation of the Piano

Once the piano was set up on stage, and the men had left, the piano was all mine.

It was gone over and tuned carefully, and the pedals adjusted. The keyboard, which was ivory, had to be cleaned with alcohol to remove any finger grease from the previous concert, and thus let the pianist's fingers slide more easily over the keys. With the piano in the correct place on stage, the keyboard had to be made level, as the stage floor was slanted. The same had to happen with the bench, which had to be adjusted to the level of the keys so that the pianist's performance wouldn't be compromised. On platforms, put together when needed, this care wasn't needed, as the platform would already be level.

The acoustic platform used by maestro Villa-Lobos was also located in a certain spot, with the special chair the maestro used to play his cello.

Stage Setting

Whenever possible, a backdrop with a closed top was used to help with acoustics. The lighting was adjusted, and then the stage was ready for the concert.

During the concert, I remained always on duty back stage for any emergency with the piano. Sometimes I had to go out because a few strings went out of tune. Once it was the bench. The stage floor had been waxed, and the bench began to slip backwards, with the movement of the pianist, mostly from depressing the pedals. I had to attach four pieces of rubber from an inner tube to the bottoms of the bench legs, and the problem was solved.

Arrival Reception

In accordance with the decision of the Interventor, Lieutenant João Alberto, the journeys were all taken by railroad. On arrival at the station, how were the artists received?

Since it was an officially sanctioned excursion, the people, civil, military and ecclesiastical authorities, appeared en masse, completely packing the station platform. Many times, the artists were officially greeted there by the Prefect or other authorities. In many cities there was a band of musicians and fireworks. From there, a cortege of automobiles followed to the hotel. When the hotel was close to the station Villa-Lobos preferred to walk with his artists, and with the cortege following him.

In a very small city, whose name I don't remember, our arrival was different. When we got there, not a single person was waiting for us. There was a miscommunication of the hour of arrival. This created some embarrassment, also with respect to moving our luggage. The Prefect was informed, and in a little while his entourage arrived, saving our situation.

Lodging

The entourage was always lodged in the best hotel of the city. Each hotel took the greatest of care, within its possibilities. We were in many very good hotels, with good food, plenty of it and varied. But we were also in hotels constructed of wood, precariously built. The efforts of the owners, always attentive, in the preparation of the very best meals, compensated for any discomfort. Almost all the hotels of Alta Sorocabana were of wooden construction.

We also had a lodging which wasn't a hotel. In Araraquara, we stayed in the residence of Doctor Milton Fonseca, a doctor of high reputation, in the city. This doctor was so enthusiastic about music that, when he knew of the coming of the excursion to Araraquara, he wouldn't permit that we be lodged in a hotel, though there were many good ones there.

Doctor Milton had a very spacious house. He arranged his house to lodge the entire entourage, as well as his family. We were regally accommodated, each in his own room and with great comfort.

And the food? I don't remember the name of Dr. Milton's wife, but I remember well that she was from Bahia ("ô xente"). She was an adorable creature. She took great care in the kitchen to make Bahian dishes which were her specialty. Among others, she made a *vatapá*, "good and hot" as she called it. And it makes my mouth water just thinking about it.

Villa-Lobos was enchanted with this *vatapá*, and couldn't stop praising it.

For three days we were hosted by this delightful family. They had two sons who studied piano. The piano was German, a parlor grand. Dona Antonieta Rudge gave a mini-concert on it and left her autograph.

At the last dinner, Doctor Milton gave Villa-Lobos his Guest Book to inscribe a memory of the stay.

Villa-Lobos began by writing the following: "We were in the house of Doctor Milton Fonseca, and we ate and we ate and we ate like we had never eaten before." Then he followed with praise and thanks for our reception there. This stay remained engraved forever in our hearts and (why not say it?) in our stomachs as well.

Villa-Lobos loved this sort of tirade, whether written or spoken.

Next morning, at departure, there were tears all around.

Araraquara truly was the city that remained most vividly in our memories, whether for the hospitality, for the theater, or for the success of the concert, especially the performance of Antonieta Rudge. They wouldn't stop applauding, saying, "She is divine, she is divine, she is divine!" And still applauding. She had to play two encores.

Theaters, Stages, and Platforms

Almost all the concerts were held in cinemas. Very few times did we have the opportunity to use a theater. Some of them were very good, with excellent acoustical conditions, good stages and perfect illumination.

The cinemas were constructed solely for this purpose. Sometimes they were simply sheds. In general, they didn't have a stage, or the stage was so small that it wouldn't hold a grand piano. It was necessary to build a platform to serve as a stage.

A Short History of the Best Theaters We Encountered

CAMPINAS – Municipal Theater with all the requisites for any production. The stage was quite ample, suitable for large theater companies. All sorts of arrangements for scenery and backdrops, magnificent dressing rooms, lighting to meet any need. It had perfect acoustics, with its zinc curtain to cut off the area overhead for concerts. There was a loading area in the back of the stage, for transport of pianos and other heavy equipment.

This theater doesn't exist today. It was demolished for reasons of public safety. In its last years, cracks had appeared, compromising its structure.

ARARAQUARA – Municipal Theater, perfect with all the characteristics of a great performance hall, and with one innovation we found only in this theater. There was a mechanism under the stage floor which allowed it to be moved, either tilted toward the front or level.

From information received from Doctor Agenor Pereira, who lived for many years in Araraquara, this theater was demolished for no good reason, and against the will of the people, because it was the pride of the city.

The reason alleged was that the theater had rotten beams or worms in the woodwork. There were large protests in the city, because a few wormy pieces of wood didn't justify destroying a theater of that stature.

The site remained vacant for many years, and later the municipal court was built there. Another municipal theater was constructed a few years later, in a different location.

GUARATINGUETÁ – Home of the ex-President of the Republic, Rodrigues Alves, (1848-1919), successor to Campos Sales. He was also President of the State of São Paulo (the title used in those days for the Governor). Elected in the second round as President of the Republic, he died in 1919 before taking office.

The Municipal Theater was constructed during his term as Governor of the State of São Paulo. It also had the requisites of a good theater, though without the same luxury and a little old and run down.

RIBERÃO PRETO – Dom Pedro II Theater. It wasn't municipal, but rather privately owned. It was constructed at the end of the golden age of coffee. It was the main tourist attraction of the city. Many operettas, lyric operas and revues were presented there. It was very appropriate for musical concerts. This theater, of incomparable beauty and luxury, had an extraordinary lighting system. A curtain that is a veritable work of art. But this theater has been unused for several years, according to the masters thesis of Professor Doctor Maria Elísia Borges (professor of art history at UNAERP and of art education at EESG *Doctor Tomas Alberto Whatelly* in Ribeirão Preto). Thesis presented at the post-graduate school of social sciences of Fundação Escola de Sociologia e Política de São Paulo, an institution connected with the University of São Paulo, to obtain the degree of master of science, defended on August 17, 1983.

In this work, she writes:

“At the time of the coffee crisis, there began in 1928 the construction of the last artistic edifice originating in the coffee business. This was the Dom Pedro II Theater, constructed under the auspices of the Paulista Beer Company. The plans were prepared in the engineering office of Doctor Pujol of São Paulo.

“The painter Dakir Parreiras (1894-1967) was commissioned to create the stage curtain entitled “Glorification of Dom Pedro II.” Since this curtain is no longer in existence, we present its description, published in the newspaper *A Cidade* on August 13, 1969, according to which Dom Pedro II is found in the foreground, seated on a throne, with the crown lying on a base at his side.

“The symbolic figures of Poetry, Music and Painting form a semi-circle around him. In the background, connected with Dom Pedro II, are figures of History and Country. Above are Princess Isabel and the counselors, and behind them a view of Corcovado, of Rio de Janeiro.

“The opening of the Dom Pedro II Theater took place on October 8, 1930, with the performance of the Clara Weiss Company, according to *A Cidade* of that day.

“The Council for the Defense of Historical, Artistic and Tourist Patrimony of the State (CONDEPHAT) studied the possible demolition of this eclectic building, which represented the final stages of a historic period, important for the city.

“The study was archived in 1973, according to architect Carlos Lemos. In 1980, the Dom Pedro II Theater was partially burned, and, although many public initiatives have been mobilized by the community for its preservation and restoration, nothing concrete is being realized.” [footnote: Borges, Maria Elísia, *Painting in the “Coffee*

Capital,” its history and evolution during the period of the First Republic, Sao Paulo, 1983]

Apparently the theater has been closed since 1973, and unused since 1983, when a fire destroyed its interior including the curtain as well as the roof. Little survived of the interior of the building. The exterior, however, was almost untouched, and remains intact, but the theater is abandoned. [footnote: Recently, I was informed by Srta Gláucia Pantaleão, teacher, resident of Ribeirão Preto, that at the end of 1986, work was initiated on the restoration of the Dom Pedro II Theater of that city. This work is being undertaken under the auspices of the municipal government and of the Paulista Antártica Beer Company. To the delight and happiness of artists and of the people, very soon this theater will return to being the glory and pride of the city.]



EXCURSÃO VILLA-LOBOS

*Teatro Dom Pedro II
Ribeirão Preto, abril de 1931.*

Our first concert took place in this theater, with great success.

Ribeirão Preto was the only city in which the excursion performed for a second time, when it returned from Alta Mogiana. This second time, the performance took place in a hall called Legião Brasileira de Assistência.

Platform

We encountered, besides the theaters mentioned, many others that were small and simple.

The majority of the concerts took place in cinemas. Most of these cinemas had small stages unable to hold a grand piano. It was necessary to build a platform in front of the screen. Since this situation arose often, an easy and rapid system was designed.

It consisted of twelve empty gasoline barrels. Today these barrels are no longer used. The barrels were set up on the floor in four rows of three. Their plugs were removed. On top of the barrels were placed wooden beams, and over these, a floor of tongue and groove wooden planks. All of this was done without nails, because the wood was borrowed from sawmills, and had to be returned to them to be sold. The piano was placed on top of this raw wood. This system of platform on metal barrels gave great acoustic results. The fact that the piano was directly on the raw wood, transmitted its vibrations to the floor turning it into a large soundboard, which in its turn was transmitted to the barrels, amplifying the sound with great acoustic effect and enhancing the concert.

Antique Projector

We found many cinemas with antique projectors, the kind that operate from behind the screen.

They had a tiny platform on which the projector was installed, well attached to a bench. The light from this equipment was produced by two pieces of carbon, which, regulated so that they came close to one another, produced an intense light. The smoke produced by the combustion of the carbon was vented to the outside through a chimney. The film was rotated by hand, using a hand crank. It was the duty of the operator to regulate the speed of the machine in accordance with what the film required. For example, for the subtitles he had to reduce the speed to allow the audience to read. The film was divided into several reels. At the end of each reel there would be a short intermission to allow for changing reels, and the lights of the theater would be lit for a few minutes. First a bell would be rung, to warn the spectators about the lights.

The screen was a piece of cloth stretched tightly on a rectangle constructed of water pipes, with a series of tiny holes in the one on top, so that water from the pipe would run down the screen to the bottom, keeping it constantly wet throughout the show, to make it translucent and to let the image pass through to the audience. This screen was firmly fixed in place, and couldn't be removed quickly. For this reason, the artists couldn't remain in their dressing rooms retouching their makeup. They had to be seated in the front row of theater seats waiting for their turn to go on.

Acoustics

It is difficult and time-consuming to improve the acoustical conditions of cinemas transformed into theaters. These are constructed always in rectangular form, with their walls at ninety degrees to one another. Many times they had a row of doors and windows and many black curtains. The construction did not take into account the acoustics. Of course, for cinema there is no need for acoustics. Silent films, with an orchestra accompanying, didn't require it.

Furthermore, since the sound waves coming out of the instruments project themselves into space in circles, they were lost in part in the ceiling, which many times wasn't covered. They were broken coming into contact with the corners of the walls, absorbed by the curtains, and arrived at the back of the hall, already weakened and dry. That is, without the round and velvety sound which a musical concert requires.

Maestro Villa-Lobos was very demanding concerning the acoustics of theaters. He went to a lot of difficult work to try to improve it. He demanded that all curtains, carpets and decorations be removed, so that at least those wouldn't reduce the little vibration the hall was capable of.

This work always displeased the commission, which, anxious to embellish the appearance of the cinema, had decorated it. Many times the commission would resist the removal of decorations, saying that the theater would be ugly and the excursion didn't deserve this. In the end, he managed to convince them that for a musical concert, sound was more important than appearance.

One of the first things Villa-Lobos would do on arriving in the city was to visit the theater to see what the acoustical conditions were.

In one city of the first stage of the excursion, I don't remember the name, Villa-Lobos examined the theater in company with the organizing commission. Seeing the theater well decorated, he said, "What a shame! Such a beautiful and well-decorated theater, but without any acoustics whatsoever!" A woman on the commission, wanting, no doubt, to make a good impression on the maestro, said, "Don't worry, maestro. We have already ordered one from São Paulo. It will arrive today!"

The stages, when we could use them, also submerged the sound due to the area overhead, totally open. Whenever possible we would create a backdrop, with a cover on top, so that the sound would be projected toward the audience. In only four theaters during the entire tour did we encounter ideal acoustic conditions, with the lights outside of the stage proper, a zinc curtain separating the stage from the upper area, and only a small door to allow the artists to enter. Creating a small stage in the center of the theater, the artists could perform close to the audience.

Villa-Lobos only performed on his cello on an acoustic platform, placed on the stage. On this platform was only a chair for him to sit on, and enough space for the cello. It measured exactly one meter thirty centimeters by one meter eighty centimeter and was thirty centimeters high. All constructed with pine lumber fifteen millimeters thick. It also had five slots on the sides, four centimeters in diameter, to allow the sound to get out.

The importance of this platform was not only so that the cello would be more prominent and easier to see, but principally for the large acoustic effect. On Villa-Lobos' orders it was painted black.

This excursion was very important for the interior of the state. Many people didn't know what a musical concert was, and much less what the acoustics should be for a concert hall.

Lighting

The illumination of the theater also was part of the good presentation of the concert. Villa-Lobos took pains with this factor. He always gave it a final look.

Villa-Lobos was seated at the very beginning of the concert. All the lights were out both in the theater and on stage. The theater remained black for several seconds. Then a small spotlight was lit, shining only on the strings and bow of the cello. Villa-Lobos was seen from the audience only as a shadow. But the strings and bow were well lit. It seemed as if the cello were playing itself. The piano accompanist was seen by a light from above, which lit the music stand, the keyboard, and the page turner. At the end of the piece, all the lights were lit, for the applause.

For the vocalist, all the lights were on, but there was never side lighting and footlights weren't used.

For the piano soloist, there was half light in the theater and on stage, with a spotlight from above on the pianist, taking care not to make a shadow on the keys. For Villa-Lobos' lecture, all the stage was lit, and the theater was half lit.

I knew these procedures well, because I was in charge of all of this, both in setting up the lights before, and in the execution during the concert. I was only relieved of this duty in four municipal theaters, because they had their own electricians and lighting booths.

Dress

The prominence of the Villa-Lobos excursion required, for the concerts, dress appropriate for grand concerts. For the men, Villa-Lobos and Souza Lima, tails. For me, as page turner for the piano accompanist, a suit coat. Dona Lucilia Villa-Lobos, Antonieta Rudge, Senhorita Helena Rudge and the singer, long dresses. At the receptions following the concerts, the same dress because of going directly from the theater to the reception location.

In the dining rooms of the hotels and at dinners we were invited to: suit with collar and tie; for the ladies, dress clothes. For walks and visits, the same dress used in dining, but with a hat added for the men, as was usual at the time: "A man never goes out on the street without his hat."

For travel, dress for the women was simpler and at will, for the men suits, collars, ties, and hat.

Second Secretary

As I accumulated more and more duties during the excursion, and always carried them out, maestro Villa-Lobos considered me his second secretary. For anything he needed, outside of music, he called on KEKIM (Antônio Chechim Filho). My charge as technician was the care of the piano, keeping it always in good order and well tuned. For the concert halls, to improve the acoustics. With the passage of time, more and more duties accumulated. I took care of everybody's luggage getting on and off the train. One of the first things I did on arrival of the hotel was to tell the chef how Villa-Lobos liked

his coffee. Otherwise, he would reject it, and if the second time it wasn't right, things would become dicey. In the theater, I worked even as an electrician, taking care of the lighting, making sure the dressing rooms had adequate light, and mineral water for the artists, setting up the stage, whenever possible, to be a saleta.

I was also in charge of various payments, for freight, mail, telegrams, telephone, tips, etc. Running the lights, and signaling the beginning of each part of the concert. Raising and lowering the lid of the piano as necessary.

Whenever it was possible, I took photographs of the various journeys we took. The promotion of Piano Brasil which Villa-Lobos had promised the factory was also my duty, including announcements and poster, and pamphlets which were placed with the programs on the seats of the theater.

After Srta. Helena Rudge left the excursion, I gained one more duty, to help the piano accompanist by turning pages. I was easily able to do this as I knew music well.

In São Paulo, on return from each stage, I had to make a final accounting of the expenses of the stage, for my reimbursement. In that, I became a typist of two copies. One went to the maestro, and the other to me, where all the expenses paid were laid out, city by city.

How the Concerts were Received

In all the cities there was great interest on the part of the public. Well before the beginning of the concert the theaters were packed.

Precisely on time, because Villa-Lobos insisted on this, the concert began. In some cities, before the concert began, the Prefect made a presentation to the public, with words of praise for the artists. Following that, the concert began. Villa-Lobos came first, with his marvelous cello. At the piano, his wife Lucilia Villa-Lobos accompanied. After that came one of the two singers, Nair Duarte Nunes or Anita Gonçalves, also accompanied on piano by Dona Lucilia Villa-Lobos. The concert always closed with a piano solo by one of the two great pianists: João Souza Lima or Antonieta Rudge.

Rarely was there extended applause [insisting on an encore]. The public in general wasn't acquainted with this attention given to artists. After the first applause, they got up and left. They were used to this from the movies.

Also, there was rarely interest in complimenting the artists afterwards or asking for autographs, except from people directly tied to the concert.

PROGRAMS

There were three types of programs, the first for large and well-developed cities, the second for medium-sized cities, and the third for very small cities. Each program was divided into two parts, with an intermission.

First Program

First part:

a) Cello solo by Villa-Lobos accompanied on the piano by his wife, Lucilia Villa-Lobos.

b) Vocal solo, by one of the two singers, Nair Duarte Nunes or Anita Gonçalves, accompanied on piano by Dona Lucilia Villa-Lobos.

c) Piano solo by one of the two pianists, João Souza Lima or Antonieta Rudge.

Intermission

Second part:

a) Lecture by maestro Villa-Lobos

b) Cello solo by Villa-Lobos with piano

c) Vocal solo by the same singer as the first part and piano

d) Piano solo by the same pianist as the first part.

End

Second Program

First part:

a) Cello solo with piano – Villa-Lobos and accompanist Lucilia Villa-Lobos

Intermission

Second part:

a) Lecture by Villa-Lobos

b) Piece for singer and piano: Nair Duarte Nunes or Anita Gonçalves

c) Piano solo by João Souza Lima or Antonieta Rudge.

Special Second Program

This was used only in a few cities during the seventh stage (Central do Brasil Railroad).

In this program, there was neither lecture nor singer. Villa-Lobos just gave some words of appreciation at the beginning of the third part.

First part – Souza Lima

a) Etude

Chopin

b) Nocturne

Chopin

c) Polonaise in A flat major Opus 53

Chopin

Intermission

Second part – Villa-Lobos

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| a) Prelude #4 | Bach |
| b) Chant Triste | Tchaikovsky |
| c) Sonhar | Villa-Lobos |
| d) Trenzinho do Caipira (on request) | Villa-Lobos |
| e) Capricho numero 2 | Villa-Lobos |

Intermission

Third part – Souza Lima

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| a) Cakewalk | Debussy |
| b) Caixinha de Música Quebrada
(dedicated to Souza Lima) | Villa-Lobos |
| c) Dança dos Negros | Fructuoso Vianna |

Note: this program, the only one to be referred to in its entirety here, is courtesy of Professor Ciro Gonçalves Dias Júnior, who provided it from his archives to better illustrate our book.

Third Program

First Part:

- a)) Cello solo by Villa-Lobos accompanied on the piano by his wife, Lucilia Villa-Lobos.

Intermission

Second Part:

- a) Lecture by Villa-Lobos
b) Songs by one of the singers, Nair Duarte Nunes or Anita Gonçalves, with piano accompaniment

Note: In cinemas there was always an orchestra with a piano, and this served for our accompaniments. In this program, there was no piano soloist, and so we did not use our piano.

Most Performed Pieces

By Villa-Lobos:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Elegie | Massenet |
| The Swan | Saint-Saens |
| O Trenzinho do Caipira | Villa-Lobos |
| Chante Triste | Tschaikovsky |

Sonhar

Villa-Lobos

By the singers:

A Casinha da Colina, and others

By the pianists:

Polonaise in A flat Major

Chopin

Chaconne in D Minor

Bach-Busoni

Hungarian Rhapsody

Franz Liszt

La Campanella

Liszt-Busoni

Alegria na Horta

Villa-Lobos

Dança de Negros

Frutuoso Vianna

Caixinha de Música Quebrada

Villa-Lobos

(dedicated to Souza Lima)

Lectures by Villa-Lobos

The lectures were always opportune, and very well received by the audiences. In general, the public was poorly informed about music.

Villa-Lobos spoke slowly, and said much about musical patriotism. He spoke about good music and about music of bad quality, giving examples. He hated foreign popular music, especially on records, very much in use at that time. He complained that young men dedicated themselves little to music, having the mind turned to kicking a ball with the feet. He was always very friendly to children. He praised children's choirs, organized principally in elementary and high schools. He gave detailed explanations concerning his compositions.

He spoke a great deal about the value of artists. "Each artist has a special gift to exercise in the area which he chose. Souza Lima and Antonieta Rudge for the piano, Nair Duarte Nunes and Anita Gonçalves for the voice. I, Villa-Lobos, for cello and guitar, but principally for composition. Kekim for the tuning and adjustment of pianos. All of us, from childhood, have practiced our art."

Concerning the instruments, he spoke about his cello. He said it was a very fine instrument, having been brought from Paris, from a famous French maker, whose name I don't remember. It was an instrument so sensitive and delicate that any shock could damage it, so that he didn't entrust it to the hands of anyone else. He transported it himself.

Speaking about the piano, Villa-Lobos said, "Why a grand piano, and not a common vertical one? Because the grand piano was constructed especially for concerts." Its advantages: being horizontal, opening the lid, the strings were entirely exposed, allowing all the sound to get out. Its mechanism also, functioning horizontally, obeyed the demands of the pianist better. The loud sound, very clear, and the full bass, enhanced the pianist's playing.

Silence in the audience during the concert was a theme Villa-Lobos returned to a great deal during the excursion. "Silence during the concert is very important in order to be able to appreciate the artist and not impede his performance. You shouldn't converse

or make any other sound while the artist is performing. Silence should be absolute. Thus, you can appreciate all the details of the performance.”

He spoke also of work and sacrifice, which he and his entourage had suffered in order to perform these concerts at these cities, which had never before experienced such things.

He related his own difficulties, his suffering, and how, from childhood, he had struggled so that his music would be accepted and understood.

During the whole excursion, he almost always ended his lecture with this phrase: “Don’t be surprised to see a Christ without a beard.”

Receptions, Luncheons, and Dinners

The organizing commissions for the concerts, informed by the first secretary Cleto Rocha that the artists didn’t dine on the day of the concert, were quick to offer them a reception instead. It was one more courtesy done for the artists, almost always a going away party, as we traveled, in general, on the day following the concert. Usually members of the commissions and local authorities took part. They took place in restaurants, pizzerias, ice cream parlors, bars, club halls. Even a school was used for this purpose.

I can’t give many details about these receptions, because I rarely took part, or only arrived at the very end.

My duty, following the concert, was to accompany the piano from the theater until the final loading into the railcar that was waiting at the station. This took some time, and so I missed the reception. I only took part in the receptions when we didn’t travel the day after the concert. In general, these receptions, when the artists were going to be free the next day, lasted a long time: with music, discourses, talks, presentations by students of the local piano teacher, who was always a member of the commission. One time, in a club, along with the receptions, they offered us a grand ball. In all these events, Villa-Lobos spoke a few words of gratitude to the city, which had received us with such honor, and also some words of encouragement, that they should practice music in whatever fashion, especially the children and the young.

Some cities, when time allowed, offered luncheons and dinners, always with dishes characteristic of the area. And there were visits to schools and important establishments and industries, trips to plantations, and visits to typical attractions of the city.

Economics

Since the excursion was officially sanctioned by the government of the state and of the cities, to many it seemed that the artists would gain considerable financial rewards. But this wasn’t the case. There was no money granted by the state or by the cities.

The proceeds of ticket sales, which was given to the excursion, after paying expenses, was very small for the artists and their expenses, which were larger than one might think. I can confirm this, as I made the payments for those various expenses, and in some stages we had a deficit.

No, were it not for the free travel from the railroads, and provision of lodging and theater which the majority of cities provided gratis to the excursion, it wouldn't have been possible to take such great and self-sacrificing artists to the interior of the state.

There was established a fixed price for all the concerts, 5000 Reis, today 5 Cruzados, a little expensive in comparison to tickets for the cinema, which ran from 300 to 1000 Reis. Only in Theaters did prices reach as high as 3000 to 5000 Reis.

Villa-Lobos had a certain number of tickets printed, and furnished some of them to the organizing commission of the concert, in each city, by means of the first secretary Cleto Rocha, to be sold in advance in the ticket office of the theater. These tickets were the same in all cities.

After the concert, Villa-Lobos went to the ticket office to verify the income received from ticket sales, and to collect the unsold tickets. By the number of tickets sold, Villa-Lobos gauged the interest of the people in the concert, which, calculated as a percentage of the population, became a very important statistic for the excursion.

Stories of Villa-Lobos

During our travel, or at the dining table, Villa-Lobos liked to tell stories of his past life, remembering his childhood. Taking up his guitar, he would play those old round songs all children know. "O anel que tu me deste..." "Carneirinho, Carneirão..." and many others.

One day, at lunch in the hotel, among other dishes there was one of pancakes, one of his favorites. He then told how, as a child, after his father's death, he composed a melody on guitar. What name should he give this composition? That day he ate dinner at the house of a friend, and they served pancakes, knowing it was his favorite dish. No more doubt, "'Pancake' will be the name of the piece!" he shouted.

When he was 16 he composed a piece he named "As Sedutoras." Later he wrote the "Polichinelo."

In Marajó he met a friend from Ceará. His name was Donizete. He played saxophone. Together they decided to go to Manaus. But they didn't go by boat. They went cross country, they penetrated the forests, on foot, by wagon, by ox cart, on the backs of burros, and in canoes to cross the rivers. They carried their instruments along, and, in the villages and little towns through which they traveled, they gave concerts from which they earned a little to allow them to continue on their way. One day, crossing a river, "A Canoa Virou" [the canoe turned over, name of a well-known song], and he remembered then the song he had sung as a child. There they were, with their instrument in the water, the guitar, the cello, and the saxophone. The river wasn't deep. They pulled their instrument out by their straps, along with their suitcase of clothing. At the end of their journey, they weren't able to enjoy Manaus. They became very sick and returned home. The friend stayed in Fortaleza, and he returned to Rio and then to São Paulo. He said that he suffered a great deal in getting back. That the difficulties and labors of the excursion were only a shadow of what he experienced then. And, in closing, he exclaimed, as he did many times, "Here is a Christ without a beard!"

How the Excursion was Viewed

For the cities in the interior of the state: without doubt, a grand occurrence. A festive day. In some cities it was even considered like the annual local fiesta. The Villa-Lobos Excursion was the most exciting thing that had ever happened. In contrast to the enthusiasm of some cities, in others they didn't even know what a musical concert would be. Some would ask, "What is a concert?" Others thought it was a theater company, asking, "What show will be presented?" And "will the singer sing *La Cumparsita*?" – a song that was at its most popular during that period.

For the artists: The excursion gave to all its members great artistic development. Villa-Lobos was inspired with themes for his next compositions. We also had the satisfaction of getting to know almost all the cities of the interior of the State of São Paulo, with their beautiful aspects, great progress in some cities, in contrast to others very isolated and lacking in progress. For me it was very valuable to learn how to operate in an extended artistic tour. It was a great pleasure to be able to live together with these artist friends for almost a year and a half.

I also had the opportunity to revisit many cities I had known years before.

The team had the satisfaction of leaving a legion of friends, throughout the interior of the State.

The results of the tour were so positive, that they wanted to carry it into neighboring states. The Constitutional Revolutionary movement of 1932 unfortunately interrupted this proposal.

Villa-Lobos and Silence

Many didn't understand the need for silence in a concert hall, something which Villa-Lobos preached insistently in his lectures. In the cities of Alta Sorocabana, from Avaré on, they didn't practice this. Always after the intermission, at the beginning of the second part of the program, a problem arose. The sound of roasted peanut shells. Imagine the effect of an entire theater cracking peanut shells, while a cello solo, or a song, or a piano solo is played! Villa-Lobos asked the Prefects not to allow the sale of peanuts in the shell at the doors of the theater on the day of the concert. Nevertheless, there was always someone cracking peanut shells.

FIRST STAGE

Paulista Railroad Company, January/February, 1931

Opening Concert

Since everything was getting ready more rapidly than he had expected, Villa-Lobos decided to move up the date of the first concert to the third week of January, 1931, planning to return to São Paulo during Carnaval, then to proceed with the tour.

Every year during January and February, Piano Brasil sent Sr. Antônio Chechim Filho and an assistant to tune, adjust and repair the pianos of the Colégios de Irmandade de São José: Nossa Senhora do Bom Conselho, in Taubaté; Nossa Senhora do Patrocínio, in Itú; Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in Campinas; São José, in Bauru; Nossa Senhora Aparecida, in Aranjatuba; and others. Sr. Capiluppi calculated that in the second half of

February Sr. Kekim would be in Campinas, and from there he could join the Villa-Lobos Excursion.

When in January Villa-Lobos urgently asked for a tuner for Campinas, because the concert had already been arranged, Sr. Capiluppi was flustered. Kekim was far from Campinas, he was in Itú, and he didn't know about the Villa-Lobos Excursion.

Well, the tuner Kekim, "Antônio Chechim Filho", is no longer tuning pianos. He is writing one of the most beautiful pages of his professional life, after the passage of 56 years, describing the Villa-Lobos Excursion, that great happening of the epoch in the interior of the State of São Paulo.

I, Kekim, was in Itú, quietly working on the pianos of the Colégio Nossa Senhora do Patrocínio, when I received an urgent telegram from the piano factory, asking for my immediate return to São Paulo to tune a piano for some concerts. That same day I returned to São Paulo and presented myself to Sr. Capiluppi. It was there that he told me I must go urgently to Campinas, to tune the piano in the Municipal Theater, find maestro Villa-Lobos at the Vitória Hotel, and from there join the entourage of the Villa-Lobos Excursion, taking care of the piano that would be used for various concerts.

The next day I was in Campinas. I found maestro Villa-Lobos in the Vitória Hotel, which was coincidentally the same place I customarily stayed when I went there to work at the Colégio Sagrado Coração de Jesus.

I was received by the maestro very cordially, and was presented to the other members of the entourage. They were very glad of my arrival. Antonieta Rudge said happily, "Welcome to the youngest member of our group!" I was satisfied with my reception, because everyone was very friendly. I went to the theater and left the piano in tune...Nobody could find fault!

That night, I attended the concert in the theater. It was the only concert I attended as part of the audience, in a theater box with some members of the organizing commission. In all the other concerts, I was always back stage, ready for any emergency with the piano, and to attend to the piano lid and the lights.

It was in Campinas that I learned of the plans and the extent of the excursion. For me it was a pleasure to be able to work for that group of great artists, repeatedly, for more than a year.

The program in Campinas, being the debut concert, had a modification. The first part consisted of several pieces for solo cello by Villa-Lobos, accompanied on piano by Dona Lucilia Villa-Lobos. The second part, right after the intermission, in place of the singer as had been planned originally, a three voice choir from one of the high schools of Campinas performed, under the direction of maestro João Julião. It was a marvelous spectacle: the girls in their red and white uniforms, boys in black suits, and the maestro directing from the podium. The piano accompaniment was played by a pianist of the school, whose name I don't know. Needless to say, the applause was thunderous.

Next came the piano solo, by the great pianist Antonieta Rudge. The last piece was the Polonaise of Chopin. There was much applause, and the pianist returned many times to acknowledge it. She had to play an encore.

Everything was finished in Campinas. After the concert, the compliments, the autographs, a small reception, we returned to the hotel for a rest, and to get ready for a journey the next day to Vila Americana, where we would have the real beginning of the

excursion. Villa-Lobos, however, complained that the public gave a chilly reception to his music.

Vila Americana

That is what this city was called in 1931. It ceased to be “Vila” [town], becoming plain “Americana,” due to its considerable progress over the years, with its great number of textile factories.

It was the first city to be visited, after the debut of the excursion in Campinas. First in everything: for the artists, the first experience of performing in a small city. For me it was also a new experience, with many difficulties. Difficulties in installing the piano on too small a stage. But the greatest difficulty was the piano crate.

For the first time, the grand piano of maestro Villa-Lobos would be used. It had been stored for a long time in the furniture storage facility of a moving company in Rio de Janeiro. Villa-Lobos asked the company to send the piano directly from Rio to Vila Americana, in the State of São Paulo.

I found the piano still in the railroad car. To move it, the local government had ordered a truck, with its driver and two men. So, how could three men move a grand piano, still in its crate? It was necessary to ask for additional manpower, and to wait for its arrival. Meanwhile, time was getting short, it was running out. And the concert would be later this same day. At last, the piano was moved and placed on the tiny stage, still in its crate, just as it had arrived from Europe. That is, with the zinc wrapping, completely sealed, as was usual at that time for maritime shipping, so that the humidity and the sea air would not damage the piano.

Opening the crate was another problem. It was nailed shut, and well nailed. Without proper tools, the men began to open it, using crowbars and even trying a pickaxe. It was necessary to call a halt to this, and to send for more appropriate tools. Time was passing. At last the crate was open. The piano was taken from the zinc wrapping and mounted on the stage. The men were dismissed. From there on, it would be up to me. Imagine the state of a new piano sent from Europe to Brazil, and then stored for months in a warehouse. Totally out of tune, but with the little time remaining it was still possible to get it in functioning order and to tune it, though by no means perfectly. There wasn't enough time to check lighting and acoustics of the concert hall.

At last, the concert began right on time, because Villa-Lobos wouldn't allow delay. It went very well, and was much applauded. Villa-Lobos, Antonieta Rudge, and Nair Duarte Nunes felt difficulties in performing, but with their talent they overcame them. The page turner, Srta. Helena Rudge, complained there wasn't enough light on the music.

At the end of the concert, there was new work to re-crate the piano, and get it back in its railcar, for the journey to Piracicaba, it being necessary to re-nail the whole crate.

At last the laborious day was over, but I was satisfied, having given the artists conditions to perform in the best way possible.

On the next day, early, everything began anew, with a journey to Piracicaba.

Piracicaba

A concert without any big difficulties. We were already adapting to this new way of working, and providing means to effectuate it easily.

Before Piracicaba, we were in Santa Bárbara. For that concert, being the third program, the piano wasn't needed. Therefore our piano was shipped directly to Piracicaba. With a day in advance, there was sufficient time to get the piano on stage in perfect functioning condition. There was even enough time left over for a visit to Piracicaba Falls.

Limera

Skipping over São Pedro de Piracicababa, with the third program, we come to Limera. In that city we didn't use our piano. The concert was in a club hall, whose name doesn't come to me. The piano from the hall was used. It took a great deal of work to prepare it. It had a very heavy touch, and was very much out of tune. I made it a little lighter in touch with a general regulation. Antonieta Rudge was worried, and her daughter Helena even more so, because the concert closed with the Polonaise of Chopin, a difficult piece, and they feared she might end up with a cramp in her hand or her arm.

Cordeiro, Hoje Cordeiropolis, and Leme

With the third program, no new things to record.

Pirassununga

Concert with the first program. It was held in the hall of the high school. The piano was placed on the stage without great difficulty, but with considerable work getting it in and out of the crate, due to the nails.

A marvelous concert. The singing portion of the second part was replaced, courtesy of the school director, by the local chorus directed by its conductor. Following that came the piano solo of Antonieta Rudge. A large number of students from the school attended the concert, all in their required uniforms. It was a very beautiful concert and was enthusiastically applauded, the artists receiving many compliments. They signed many autographs.

Rio Claro

First program. Nothing of importance to report, expect for the difficulties with the crate, which were already becoming routine.

São Carlos

First program. In this city the entourage spent two days. The local doctors offered us a grand dinner in the hotel in which we were staying. Among other dishes, what was memorable was two enormous baked "Dourados" in the center of the table. São Carlos has a very large group of doctors.

The concert was enthusiastically applauded, with the theater completely packed. Following the first stage, we were in Porto Ferreira, Riberão Bonito, and other small cities, all with the third program. In general, all the concerts were well received.

Araraquara

We were in this city more than two days.

We were lodged in the house of a prominent local doctor, Dr. Milton Fonseca, a musical enthusiast. He had a wonderful grand piano. And two sons who studied piano and were quite virtuosic.

The city theater, Municipal Theater, was one of the most perfect we encountered in the entire excursion. Perfectly functional, and with extraordinary acoustics.

The concert achieved great success. At the end, the public applauded Antonieta Rudge, making her return to the stage twice, and to play extra pieces.

The people of Araraquara were great appreciators of music, and did justice to the theater they have.

Jaboticabal and Bebedouro

First program. Two concerts without anything important to report, except to note the success our excursion was achieving.

Barretos

Last concert of this first stage.

In this city, we stayed two days before the concert. We were very well received. The organizing commission offered the entourage a grand luncheon.

We visited a ranch [fazenda] where Zebu cattle were raised, and were received with a snack in the house of the ranch administrator, based on pure milk, cheese, butter, and tidbits, provided by the wife of the administrator.

The next day, the day of the concert in the hotel, when lunchtime was approaching, a young man sought out Antonieta Rudge and asked, "Would you like me to take care of tuning your piano for the concert?" Dona Antonieta, with great kindness, responded, "No, my son, we have our own technician."

The young man said, "But I won't charge you anything." Dona Antonieta replied, "It isn't needed, the piano is already tuned." The young man insisted, "What I want is to get to know the piano and to have the opportunity to attend the concert." Dona Antonieta said to him, "Oh, if that is what you want, then attend the concert." And she took from her purse two tickets and gave them to the boy, saying "Take along a companion." The young man was satisfied, and thanked her a great deal. That night, there he was at the concert, and he stayed to compliment the artists. He must have been a very conscientious tuner.

This being the last concert of the stage, we returned following it to São Paulo, along with the piano, so that I could go over it thoroughly and make a new crate, closed with screws rather than nails, because the old one was falling apart from being pried open and nailed back together.

SECOND STAGE

Mogiana Railroad Company – Alta Mogiana, March/April, 1931

Batatais

On this stage we didn't have the pleasant company of Antonieta Rudge and her daughter Helena. Also, Nair Duarte Nunes, the singer, didn't return for this stage. Antonieta Rudge felt tired, because she wasn't young enough for such a heavy schedule. Nair Duarte Nunes began to feel ill in Araraquara. There, Dr. Milton Fonseca had examined her and recommended she return to São Paulo for intensive treatment. With difficulty she made it to the end of the stage. But for the second she didn't return.

Replacing Antonieta Rudge, the pianist João Souza Lima joined us, traveling in company with his wife Dona Maria do Amaral Souza Lima. For voice, Anita Gonçalves joined us.

We lost nothing with the changes. The new members were very much up to the task. For me, a new duty was assigned, that of assisting the piano accompanist with page turns. This task was easy for me, because I read music well. I had studied much solfeggio, from the time I was a child. Only one problem worried me. I had to purchase a suit coat ["smoking"], to present myself with the other artists. At that point I ceased to be an anonymous artist.

On the decided date, more or less the beginning of March, we journeyed by night train directly from São Paulo to Batatais. It was a tiring journey. The first transfer was in Campinas, from the Paulista to the Mogiana Railroad, with a one meter gauge. We were on a sleeping car, but it shook so much during the journey that nobody could sleep. Everyone ended up with an upset stomach. Even I, who never had problems with travel, joined them. In Riberão Preto, in the morning, we had another transfer. This time, it was to change from a night train to a day train. In the end, after 16 hours of travel, we arrived at the city that would be the first on our second stage.

A crowd awaited our arrival at the station. The warmth of our reception made us forget the troubles of the journey. At the hotel, we had lunch and rested a while, and in the afternoon went for a walk through the city. Among other places we visited, a school, the club, the cinema where the concert would take place, and the garden of the main plaza. What impressed us the most was the garden. The gardener was a true artist. He gave his bushes various animal forms, such as elephant, giraffe, camel, and others. And to the small plants, the form of small birds, like ostrich, stork, etc. In addition to the art of giving plants whatever shape he wanted, he also took pains in creating various nooks with various animals. And he was very good at putting together colors of flowers and foliage. It is a shame that I didn't have a camera at hand to fix this image.

On the next day, the day of the concert, the work began very early, to end late that night. Getting the piano from the station wasn't an easy task. We got it on stage without difficulty. Uncrating was much, much easier than before. To open the crate was just a matter of removing screws. With the piano itself, there were no problems, as it had come from a thorough going over in the factory of Piano Brasil. Everything prepared, lights checked, acoustics reasonable, though a little worsened because of having many doors

onto the street, the theater being on a corner, for easy exit of the audience at the end of the program.

Everything was ready. It was the debut, for the excursion, of pianist João Souza Lima and singer Anita Gonçalves. Kekim also debuted, as assistant to the piano accompanist. It was a show filled with debuts!

Villa-Lobos enters, with his cello, sits on his chair on the platform. The lights are turned out completely for a few seconds, then a small spotlight is lit, focused on the strings and bow of the cello. Of Villa-Lobos can be seen only a shadow. A light comes up on the piano, and at that moment the piano accompanist and her assistant enter. The music begins. It appears that the cello is playing itself. Soon after the beginning, there can be heard a racket and very clearly the words, “Diabo...diabo...” [Devil, devil] which makes some of the spectators laugh. It was some boys who, from the outside of the theater, were spying through a gap of one of the doors. Villa-Lobos couldn’t see this, and thought that they were mocking him. The blood rushed to his face. He stopped playing. He ordered that the lights be lit and spoke to the public, in an angry tone and with that directness that was peculiar to him, “Be quiet, it is necessary to listen to the artist. Let him play. If you like it, applaud. If not, you can boo. I am well accustomed to this. Prefect and authorities, command an end to this uproar!” These are the words Villa-Lobos said, and we were all back stage, astonished to hear him speak in this tone, after such a courteous welcome from the people of the city. These words were so impressive that even today I can hear them vividly in my mind.

After a few more words, he returned to the cello more calmly, proceeding through the concert to the end of the first part. At the beginning of the second part of the program, when Villa-Lobos entered for the second time on the stage before the lights were lowered, a man from the audience stood and spoke to Villa-Lobos in name of the city. He made it clear that the incident came from outside the theater, and that the people of Batatais knew very well how to listen to any artist and respect him. Referring to artists, the orator emphasized, among other words, that to be an artist isn’t anyone’s privilege.

In response, Villa-Lobos said, “Yes, to be an artist is a privilege. It is a special gift which the individual has in a specific field.” And he continued with his lecture, that which he had intended, but which in the first stage he didn’t do in all the cities. He referred to musicians of poor inspiration, and to true musicians, criticizing popular American music, criticizing records and criticizing opera, saying that Carlos Gomez was a composer of Italian music. He criticized football [soccer], saying that the intelligence of the young passed into their feet, and many other things. Those of us back stage were horrified to hear him speaking this way.

Following the lecture, the concert continues, without any public enthusiasm. Only Souza Lima received warm applause.

After the concert, everything seemed more calm. I stayed at the theater with the men from the prefecture, to oversee the moving of the piano back to the railcar, which would need to be coupled to the train in which the artists traveled.

Meanwhile, Villa-Lobos and his entourage, together with the organizing commission, went to a bar in the city where a reception had been prepared. In that same bar, the students of the city gathered, and began to attack Villa-Lobos. There was no violence. The students wanted Villa-Lobos to leave the city immediately. He was considered *persona non grata* in Batatais. They threatened that he and all his companions

would have to sleep in the station waiting for the first train to leave the next morning. By the intercession of Souza Lima, whom everyone respected, not only as a pianist, but also as a person, the students agreed to withdraw their demand on condition that Villa-Lobos would issue a written retraction in the local newspaper, saying that he had not intended to offend anyone in the city, and asking forgiveness for any misunderstanding.

I wasn't present. I was still in the theater, overseeing the loading of the piano. I went to the bar to get a drink, and found there all the uproar, and Villa-Lobos, head down, revising the words of his retraction. Souza Lima was at his side, helping him. The women, after being freed by the students, returned to the hotel with headaches. I found out then that all the members of the organizing commission had disappeared. They looked for the Prefect, who couldn't be found anywhere in the city. Only the artists and the students remained, who fortunately reached an accord honorable for both the city and for him.

On the first train that left for Franca, we continued our journey. Thanks to Souza Lima, we didn't have to sleep in the station.

Franca

After a short trip, we arrived in Franca, shoe capital. All of us traveled upset and shocked by what had happened the night before. We didn't know what kind of reception we would receive in Franca. Happily, we were well received, and everyone deplored the occurrences of the night before.

After being lodged in the hotel, the artists only went out for the concert. The performance was applauded with much enthusiasm, and Souza Lima had to play an encore, even within the concert. During the intermission, there was much discussion of what had occurred in Batatais.

A very nice reception was offered to us.

They didn't allow us to leave immediately following the concert, keeping us there to visit the city. Franca is divided into two very distinct parts, which are called new city and old city. The new city is more residential, and the old city is more industrial, with a great quantity of factories and workshops making shoes. We visited one of the larger factories. One of the owners said that he started making shoes in his home, working with his wife and children. Paying close attention to quality, he progressed little by little to arrive at the point in which we found him now. We also visited other factories, some very small, just getting started.

The enthusiasm of this city raised our morale, and we went on to the next city.

Conquista

In spite of being a small city, many people awaited us at the station. The third program was presented. It was reasonably well received, although by few people. We went on to...

Pedregulho

Also a small city, with the second program.

Brodósqui

Entering the railroad branch of Igarapava, we stopped in this city, home of the great artist, the painter Cândido Portinari (1903-1962). We visited the mother church, where his paintings enchanted all. The second program was presented here, with much success. Continuing to the next city...

Sertãozinho

First program. There wasn't a stage for the piano. We had to construct a platform. Nothing special to record about this city.

Ribeirão Preto

As always, the excursion was received in a festive way. We were lodged in the Recci Hotel, close to the principal plaza, where the theater we would use was located.

This hotel I already knew well. I had stayed there a number of times, on inspection trips for Piano Brasil.

The concert was in the Dom Pedro II Theater, which, in spite of being private, was similar to a municipal theater, with all the resources needed for a musical concert. It was beautiful and very fine, with an admirable lighting system. It was the poster place of the city.

The concert, with the first program, was very good. Great enthusiasm. The lighting effects were marvelous, with the gradual change in intensity. It was strongly applauded, and a rare success. The theater wasn't full, because it was very large.

We made a trip to the plantation of the Prefect. We were impressed with the sea of coffee bushes, the drying racks, the coffee cleaner, the grounds, and other beautiful things on the plantation.

Continuing our journey, we went through...

Jardinópolis, São Joaquim, Ituverava and other places where either the second or third program were presented. Nothing of importance occurs to me to record.

Igarapava – Uberabinha

While the excursion climbed to Alta Mogiana, city by city, until reaching the final stop of the stage, in Igarapava its success arrived ahead of it and crossed the frontier of the state, entering into the Mineiro triangle within.

Cleto Rocha was in Igarapava, organizing the concert for that city, when he received a visit from the Prefect of Uberabinha. He wanted to know if there was any possibility of extending the excursion to his city. Since Uberabinha is in the state of Minas Gerais, Cleto Rocha told him this would not be possible, because he had permission from the Paulista Interventor only to present concerts in the State of São Paulo. He advised him, however, to direct himself to Villa-Lobos in person, as he was in charge of the excursion, and could give him the last word. The Prefect, therefore, went to

Villa-Lobos and told him of his wishes, guaranteeing that in his city they would have a great success, because the people were anxious to hear him. Villa-Lobos received him cordially, but responded that unfortunately it was impossible to grant his wish, not only because it was outside the State of São Paulo, but because the time available to be in the area was so short. He couldn't delay there, in order not to cause difficulties with the next stage of the tour. He offered him several tickets, so that he could return with his family and attend the concert. The Prefect, very gratified, returned to his city and resolved with his assistants, "The excursion can't come to Uberabinha, therefore Uberabinha will make and excursion to Igarapava."

He organized a caravan, with around one hundred people, and chartered a car from the railroad, with round trip passage to Igarapava. At that time it wasn't easy to obtain a chartered railroad car for caravans and excursions; and there was the additional advantage of getting a discount on the price per passenger.

On the day of the concert, there was the caravan, led by the Prefect, helping to fill the theater to its limit.

In the customary lecture, the maestro thanked the Prefect and his caravan, for their sacrifice in order to be able to attend a spectacle never before presented in that area. The Prefect of Uberabinha thanked the maestro and the artists for those kind words, and offered them the flag of his city.

In Igarapava the concert was the best attended and most applauded of the entire stage. After the concert came the compliments, and the reception to which the Prefect and his family were invited. The people of Uberabinha, in caravan, went to the station and into their chartered car, and waited there until morning for the train that would take them home.

I didn't participate in this reception. I stayed in the theater, overseeing the removal of the piano and its placement in the railcar, which would, early next morning, be coupled to the train that would take the excursion to Casa Branca.

Who knows Uberabinha? I believe not many people. In 1924 and 1925 I was in this city working for Piano Brasil. At that time, Uberabinha was already a progressive city. Situated in the Minas triangle, on the Mogiana Railroad line between Uberaba in Minas Gerais and Araguari, in the State of Goiás. With its rapid development, in a few years Uberabinha felt itself diminished by its name. The name was changed from Uberabinha to the Uberlândia of today.

Casa Branca

They call this city the "land of the goatbeard," the "army ant," and the "beautiful girl." In truth, these names are appropriate. There are large fields covered with goatbeards. I saw few army ants, but there were plenty of beautiful girls. In this city there is a school of education where a large number of girls study. On our arrival, the station platform was crowded with these girls and the people of the city. Some rockets were fired into the air. A musical band greeted our arrival.

The concert was the first program, and went very well. The audience included a large number of schoolgirls. The commission served an abundant reception, and on this occasion a student from the school greeted Villa-Lobos and the artists with a short discourse.



EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS
Mogi Mirim, Março de 1931

Em pé

2 - Lucila Villa-Lobos

5 - Anita Gonçalves

6 - Maestro Souza Lima

7 - Maria de Souza Lima

Embaixo:

2 - Maestro Heitor Villa-Lobos

4 - Antonio Chechim Filho



*EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS
Espírito Santo do Pinhal, Março de 1931*

Em pé:

- 1 - Ana*
 - 2 - Lucila Villa-Lobos*
 - 3 - Francisco*
 - 4 - Maria de Souza Lima*
- (Ana e Francisco são os donos da chácara)*

Embaixo:

- 1 - Maestro João de Souza Lima*
- 2 - Antonio Chechim Filho*
- 3 - Maestro Heitor Villa-Lobos*

Mogi Mirim

Concert with the first program. Sparse attendance. Nothing of importance occurred, just a visit to a farm.

Espirito Santo do Pinhal

Now they call it simply Pinhal. A concert with the first program. I remember very little of this concert. It must have been a normal concert. I just remember that we visited the country house of a close friend of my mother.

The warmth of reception and the attentions we received in all the cities relieved the hurt of that sad night at the beginning of this stage.

THIRD STAGE

Lower Mogiana, May/June, 1931

Jaguari (now Jaguariúna), **Pedreira**, **Amparo**, **Socorro** all with the second program.

Serra Negra

First program. There wasn't room for the piano on the stage. Therefore, we had to build a platform. A good concert, well attended and appreciated. We visited the hot springs, and took plenty of water to cleanse the liver and the kidneys, and the sometimes indigestible food we had ingested during the past four months.

After some additional small cities, we arrived at...

São João da Boa Vista

Home of Guiomar Novaes. The people adore their native daughter. In this city there was great interest in the concert. The house was completely packed. A crowd waited for our arrival at the station. First program. Villa-Lobos was warmly applauded after his lecture. Anita Gonçalves had to return to the stage several times and finally give an encore. But it was Souza Lima, ending the concert with *Alegria na Horta* by Villa-Lobos, who aroused from the people the most enthusiastic applause, making him return to the stage many times for bows and finally having to play an encore. A short piece, which, as I recall, was a Minuet by Paderewsky. As the people continued to stand and applaud, Souza Lima played in addition *La Campanella* of Liszt-Busoni. Now, finally satisfied, they passed to compliments and solicited autographs from all the artists. I also autographed several programs.

Following, we went to the customary reception, and rested for the journey the next day.

Guiomar Novaes

I can't neglect to tell a story about the great pianist of our country.

Around 1942, I returned to São João da Boa Vista, accompanying Guiomar Novaes for a concert in her home town and another in Marília. This time it wasn't by train. We went by plain accompanied also by Dr. Otávio Pinto. I admired the simplicity of Dra. Guiomar. In the middle of the flight, without any embarrassment, she took from her purse a rosary and prayed throughout the flight. She did the same every time I flew with her.

I don't need to describe the success of those concerts, especially that in São João da Boa Vista.

Later in 1942, I was supposed to accompany Guiomar Novaes to give concerts in Natal and Recife. The voyage was to be made by boat. It was the time of the European War. Brazil had already suffered the torpedoing of some ships along its coast. The voyage was dangerous. I was frightened. The artist needed me. I prepared myself to travel. When everything was prepared, including the piano, for Guiomar Novaes always played on her own piano, almost on the eve of departure, orders arrived from Natal canceling the concerts, for military reasons. "Ai!..." I breathed deeply.

But, returning to the Villa-Lobos Excursion, we arrived at Santa Rosa.

Santa Rosa

A tiny city, enclosed within a large plantation of the Matarazzo family. An intimate concert. Everyone knew each other and greeted each other. A large portion of the audience was made up of workers on the plantation, and most were Italians. It was a pleasant concert, and was patronized by the prefecture of Cajuru, to which the plantation belonged.

The reception was in the house of the plantation administrator, where we were also lodged, as if we were in our own homes. We were very well served, with Italian dishes prepared by the wife of the administrator. We were sorry to depart, to leave such a friendly family, so hospitable, but we had to continue our return journey to Ribeirão Preto.

Ribeirão Preto

This was the only city at which the excursion performed two times. This second concert was organized by a group of farmers of Ribeirão Preto.

The concert was held in a hall called the Legion Hall. I believe it was the Legião Brasileira de Assistência. We used the piano and the stage belonging to the hall. It was a very good concert, well applauded and attended.

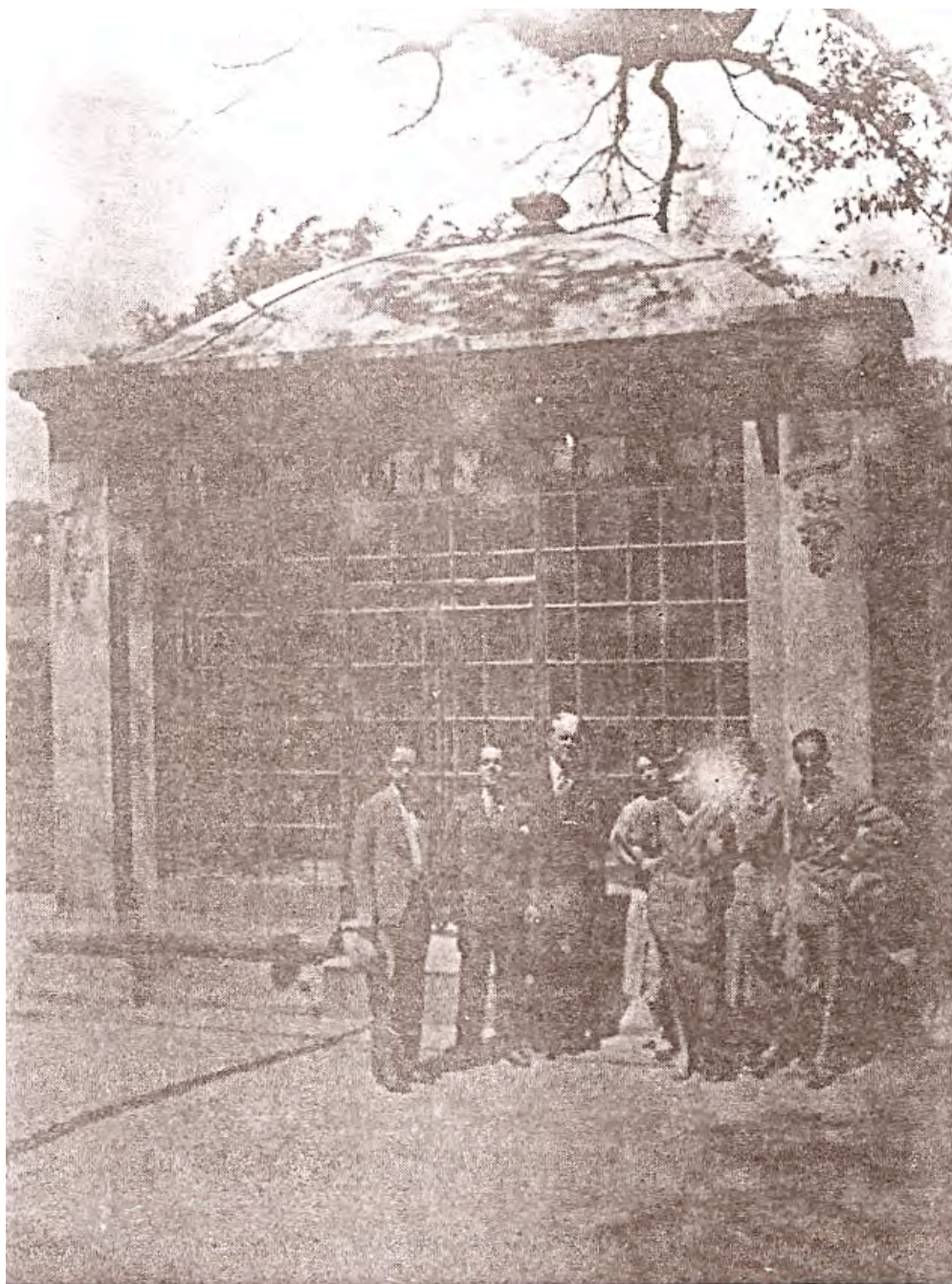
This commission did not offer a reception for the artists. It offered a banquet held in the Hotel Ricci, where we were lodged. Many people were invited. With the champagne, a man who wasn't the prefect saluted Villa-Lobos and the artists, praising the work they were doing for the promotion of music, saying that they were a team of flag bearers ["banderantes"] for music. Villa-Lobos responded, thanking him, saying that he had worked hard and suffered much to spread his music and that of Brazil, and ended with that phrase he repeated many times during the excursion: "Don't be surprised to see a Christ without a beard."

Resuming our journey, we went again to the city of Casa Branca, and got on the branch line of São José do Rio Pardo e Mococa.



EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS
Ribeirão Preto, Março de 1931

- 1 - Maestro Heitor Villa-Lobos*
- 3 - Dr. Eduardo Leite Ribeiro "Prefeito"*
- 4 - Filha do Sr. Prefeito*
- 5 - Lucila Villa-Lobos*
- 6 - Filha do Sr. Prefeito*



EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS
São José do Rio Pardo, 1931

Casa onde Euclides da Cunha escreveu
"Os Sertões"



*EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS
São José do Rio Pardo, 1931*

- 3 - Lucila Villa-Lobos*
- 4 - Maria de Souza Lima*
- 5 - Antonio Chechim Filho*
- 6 - Maestro Heitor Villa-Lobos*
- 7 - Anita Gonçalves*
- 9 - Maestro João de Souza Lima*

São José do Rio Pardo

A beautiful city. As always, a large number of people awaited the arrival in the station of the excursion. We were lodged in the Hotel Brasil, which was close to the principal plaza.

The concert was again much applauded.

A caravan from Guaxupé, State of Minas Gerais, neighboring city to São José do Rio Pardo, which was present at the concert, asked maestro Villa-Lobos to extend the

excursion to that city. As is known, the excursion could only perform in the State of São Paulo. Checking the schedule, Villa-Lobos resolved to go there. We stayed a few days in São José do Rio Pardo, to wait for the organization of the concert in that city. We took advantage of that time, in addition to resting, to take some trips. We visited the state secondary school, some plantations, to one of which we went in the early morning to drink fresh milk. We visited the Rio Pardo which passes through the city, with its majestic bridge, all constructed of iron, and areas along the river. We also visited a house along the banks of the river, where Euclides da Cunha retired to write *Os Sertões*.

Guaxupé

Not much time passed before there arrived in the hands of the maestro a pass from the railroad, on account of the prefecture of Guaxupé, for a round trip between Guaxupé and São José do Rio Pardo, and also a pass for the shipping of the piano.

On the determined day, we resumed traveling. Very well received at the station, we were lodged at the Hotel Cobra, the best and most modern hotel in the city.

We arranged the installation of the piano, and the stage was large enough in spite of it being a cinema. The concert was very good, with much applause. In the lecture, Villa-Lobos expressed gratitude for the interest the people of Guaxupé had in the concerts of the excursion. The reception was served in the dining room of the Hotel Cobra, where we were staying.

I had already been in that hotel in 1922 and 1923, doing warrantee work for Piano Brasil on pianos sold there. At that time, it was a small hotel constructed of wood. But now, no. It is a modern hotel constructed totally in brick. Its proprietors were Agenor de Lima and Alice Pereira Lima.

To my surprise, after the passage of a few years, these people became my aunt and uncle, through my marriage to a niece of theirs, Conceição Pereira, now also Chechim.

I have had no further contact with Guaxupé since the Villa-Lobos Excursion. I got to know Conceição in São Paulo, and in São Paulo we were married. Fate had it that years later a daughter of ours, Maria Lucy, pianist who studied with concert pianist maestro João de Souza Lima, married a son of that household, Dr. João Batista Lima, medical doctor, and a son of ours, Dr. Paulo Eduardo, medical doctor, married a daughter of the same household, the teacher Maria Angélica Pereira Lima. We all became on large family.

Mococa

Our arrival in this city was, as you might say, normal. As in all the other cities, there were celebrations, greetings and flowers.

We were lodged in the Hotel Terraço. For the concert, it was necessary to build a platform, as the piano didn't fit on the tiny stage of the cinema. This was a good thing, as it improved the acoustics of the hall a great deal. The concert was beautiful, and was much applauded, especially Souza Lima, who was always the most appreciated. In that concert, the singer Anita Gonçalves was on the verge of not being able to sing. She became ill early in the day, was medicated with sedatives, and until the time of preparing

for the concert was still uncertain she would participate. A local doctor gave her an injection and said, “She will perform.” And she sang normally.

Mococa was the last city of this stage, and following it we returned to São Paulo.

The organizing commission prepared for our farewell, along with a reception, a grand ball. I didn’t take part in the reception, being involved in the loading of the piano, this time returning also to São Paulo for a general going over, as was necessary at the end of each stage. But I didn’t miss the ball, no! I had been asked in advance by the young ladies of the commission not to miss it. I was the only single young man in the entourage. We all danced enough, and, already nearly dawn, retired to rest a little. Soon after, we journeyed to São Paulo, closing out the third stage.

FOURTH STAGE

Baixa Sorocabana, July/August, 1931

Salto de Itu

The first city of this region was Salto de Itu, now just “Salto.” The concert didn’t arouse much interest among the people, being the first city in the region where the Villa-Lobos excursion performed. Perhaps this was because of lack of publicity by the organizing commission, and also for lack of commentary from neighboring cities.

Our reception and the concert were similar, few people at the station, few people at the concert. It was one of the least attended concerts until that time, although with a public that knew how to applaud.

In this fourth stage, the singer Nair Duarte Nunes returned, all completely recovered, stronger, less thin, with more vitality and a better disposition.

We had the opportunity of visiting the falls that gave the city its name [“salto” means falls].



EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS

Salto de Itu, Agosto de 1931

Em pé:

3 - Maria de Souza Lima

5 - Nair Duarte Nunes

7 - Lucila Villa-Lobos

Embaixo:

1 - Maesiro Souza Lima

2 - Maestro Villa-Lobos

3 - Antonio Chechim Filho

Itu

This was a city I already knew well. I was in this city working at the Colégio Nossa Senhora do Patrocinio when I was urgently called upon to join the Villa-Lobos excursion. The concert and our reception were very good. We had the opportunity to visit the quarters of the 4th Regiment of Artillery.

With Dona Lucilia and Nair Duarte Nunes, we visited the Colégio Nossa Senhora do Patrocinio, so that the sisters could get to know members of the excursion.

Sorocaba

A large, industrialized city. Our reception was very good, and the concert was applauded with enthusiasm. Villa-Lobos, very gratified, gave a beautiful lecture, speaking very calmly, always showing his interest in Brazilian music. He received much applause.

For the concert, in a cinema, we mounted a platform, because it didn't have a stage.

The great acoustic effect which resulted from the platform, with its twelve gasoline drums, made Villa-Lobos decide that we should do this even where there was a large enough stage.

São Roque

We arrived in São Roque on a day of intense cold. At our arrival, an enormous crowd awaited us. There were many flowers for the ladies. The hotel, constructed of wood, was filled with flowers.

For the concert, the platform was mounted by order of Villa-Lobos, in spite of the cinema having a stage large enough for the piano.

It was the month of August. That night, at the time of the concert, it was tremendously cold. The artists had to stay wrapped up and with gloves on until the moment they went on stage. The program was the first, as in the previous three cities. There was plenty of enthusiasm on the part of the public, with much applause. The lecture by Villa-Lobos was also appreciated. The reception was short, and everyone soon left due to the cold. I also, after completing my duties with the piano, went to bed. But who could speak of sleep! It was so cold, with an icy breeze that came through the window sills and the cracks around the doors, that it was impossible to sleep, in spite of the bedcovers. Early morning, on arising, what a surprise! The fields and the roofs of the buildings were all white, covered with a heavy frost.

We still visited the country house of the Prefect before resuming our journey.



EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS
São Roque, Agosto de 1931

Em pé:

- 2 - Maria de Souza Lima*
- 3 - Lucila Villa-Lobos*
- 4 - Prefeito de São Roque*
- 5 - Nair Duarte Nunes*

Embaixo:

- 1 - Antonio Chechim Filho*
- 2 - Maestro Heitor Villa-Lobos*
- 3 - Maestro João de Souza Lima*

Porto Feliz

City of the Bandeirantes [more or less “pioneers”]. In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the members of the “Paschoal M. Cabral” Bandeira, which came from São Paulo, made a stop here, and later went upriver to get to the State of Mato Grosso. Afterward, they cut through the forest to reach as far as Cuiabá. They were looking for gold, metals, and precious stones, seeking riches. They also captured Indians and took them to São Paulo to work as slaves.

We were on the banks of the river, where we photographed one of the barges used by these bandeirantes. It is being preserved, so that it won’t deteriorate over time, in order to preserve the memory of that historic period.

The city is old, small, but with a people who love music very much. They received Villa-Lobos and his companions affectionately, and applauded the concert with enthusiasm.

The reception was served in a bar with billiards, the best and finest of the city. After the reception, in conversation with a member of the commission, we learned that he was the city champion in billiards.

Villa-Lobos challenged him to a little match. He was accepted, and the said champion started off gaining a certain number of points. When he made an error, Villa-Lobos started, very calmly, playing slowly, always with a cigar in his mouth. He was playing and counting: five points; ten points; twenty points; forty points; eighty points; one hundred points; end of match. Everyone complimented him for having this additional skill. The loser also complimented him, and added the following, “I wish the maestro could only play music!”

On the same occasion, someone showed up playing guitar. Villa-Lobos soon said, “I also play this.” And he took the guitar in his hands. First he tuned it, and then began to play. He played classical music he had composed, popular pieces, modinhas of the time with variations, cirandas of children, etc. It was like a second concert. In a little while, people began arriving and the billiard hall became an auditorium. He went on playing and talking until the early morning. Everyone was enchanted. On leaving, they all gave cordial farewells, Villa-Lobos saying, on returning the guitar to its owner, “This is like a cachaça [Brazilian hard liquor], when you start, you can’t stop.”



*EXCURSÃO ARTÍSTICA VILLA-LOBOS
Porto Feliz, 1931*

*Barcaça que os bandeirantes utilizavam-se para transporte
de ouro entre Corumbá e este porto.*

Tiete, Laranjal (today Laranjal Paulista), **Conchas**, and other cities. Concerts with the second and third program. Nothing of importance to report.

Botucatu

A very old city, with many schools. At our arrival, a large number of students was waiting in the station, along with the reception commission and the people. We were

lodged in a very good hotel. In that hotel, Villa-Lobos nearly “blew up” with the waiter on account of his coffee. He would only drink his coffee if it was extremely strong. If not, he would return it, asking for a stronger one. Well, in this hotel he returned it three times. He was already getting angry with the waiter, but he kept it under control, perhaps remembering Batatais. Finally, the fourth coffee arrived, and it was to his taste. Villa-Lobos had already calmed down. He thanked the waiter, and even gave him a tip for having been so patient. That is the way Villa-Lobos was. He was quick to calm down, and also quick to get angry.

The concert took place on a very good stage. Villa-Lobos and Nair D. Nunes were appreciated mostly by the students. Souza Lima got a standing ovation and had to play an encore.

It was the 15th of August. The 16th would be my father’s 75th birthday. Villa-Lobos gave me leave to return to São Paulo to spend the day with him, and to return on the 17th, when we would resume our journey. I was very grateful for this gesture, not only to Villa-Lobos, but to Dona Lucilia, who urged that I should go.

On the appointed day we resumed our journey in accordance with our established routine. At the time when we were to get on the train, another “blow up” of Villa-Lobos occurred. The station chief didn’t want to accept the pass that he presented, saying that he wasn’t able to, that he didn’t have authorization for this. Villa-Lobos showed a copy of the circular telegram which the government of the State of São Paulo had sent to all the railroads of the State. As the chief didn’t want to recognize the telegram in Villa-Lobos’ hands, not having been received his own copy, he refused to furnish the tickets.

Then Villa-Lobos “shot through the roof.” “Do you understand that I am Villa-Lobos?” he shouted in an angry tone. The chief responded, “And I am the chief of this station!” The situation was becoming ugly, with other passengers also wanting to get their tickets, and curious bystanders all around, when Souza Lima intervened to calm things down. He asked the chief to read over the papers, since we had already gone for seven months with this authorization, and it couldn’t be possible that only this station, which is such an important one, shouldn’t have received the order. He added that he would give his personal guarantee for the expense, if the railroad didn’t receive compensation from the government for these tickets and for the shipping of the piano.

While Souza Lima was talking to the station chief, the telegram, which had been misfiled, turned up. Everything being resolved satisfactorily, we continued our journey.

São Miguel, Lençóis, Agudos

Tatuí

Like other cities, Tatuí also received the excursion with many people at the station, flowers, and a band.

The concert was much applauded. Nair D. Nunes and Souza Lima were recalled many times to the stage. Villa-Lobos was also well applauded, mostly for his lecture.

The commission of Tatuí was so helpful that they offered to take the whole entourage and the piano, by automobile, to Itapetininga.

Itapetininga

On our arrival, we found, at the entrance to the city, all the students of the local Normal School, male and female, lined up in their beautiful uniforms. After a brief greeting by the commission, not yet getting out of our cars, we proceeded into the prefecture, accompanied in procession by that group of students and by a crowd of people.

In front of the Prefecture came the official greeting. The Prefect made a presentation to each of the members of the tour, one by one. The chorus of the school sang a piece whose name I don't remember.

We were lodged in one of the best hotels in the city, and the artists rested a little, while Villa-Lobos made his customary visit to the theater to verify the acoustic conditions. I oversaw the installation of the piano on the stage, this time with less work, as the piano came directly by truck to the theater. The stage was very good and spacious, the piano having been set up without any trouble. The acoustics were also good, without needing to remove any drapery.

The concert was applauded with much warmth. The theater was completely packed. All the artists were a success. In his lecture, Villa-Lobos, always friendly with children, young people and students, said some beautiful words to them, stimulating them to dedicate themselves to Brazilian music.

At the end, the compliments, autographs, receptions, and rest before resuming our journey.

Buri, Itapeva, Itararé

Last cities of this fourth stage. Normal concert, without any important novelty. We returned to São Paulo.

FIFTH STAGE

Alta Sorocabana, September/October, 1931

Avaré

After a rest at the end of the fourth stage, we returned to battle in this city.

After a journey of more than 16 hours in a night train, and in a shaking bed, we arrived.

We were received a little coldly. Only the Prefect and a few people were at the station. We were surprised, as we had become accustomed to large receptions in lower Sorocabana.

The concert was in a cinema, with a reasonable stage. A good public, and reasonable enthusiasm. In his lecture, Villa-Lobos was moderate. He spoke very calmly, and was applauded.

Resuming our journey, Villa-Lobos was a little worried about what we would find ahead. This region was a newly settled frontier.

Close call – I was still in Avaré, in a very beautiful garden. The sun was just setting. I was returning to the hotel from the theater after setting up the piano on stage. I was walking distracted by the beauty of the garden, when there was a sudden blow

against my tool case that I carried with my right hand. This hit against my leg, and I turned quickly to see what had happened. A *jarraca* snake had made a false strike, hitting the tool case. I immediately jumped back. The snake was ready for a second strike. This movement got the attention of the gardener who was nearby, and he ran to attack the snake. With a hoe, the tool he had in his hand, he cut the snake in half with one blow. Afterwards, with the hammerhead of the hoe, he smashed the head. There wasn't anyone else in the garden. Afterwards, people began to gather. The gardener reported that this was the second case of a snake in that garden, in spite of there being no forest nearby.

This case was much talked about, both in the hotel and in the theater. I was the one who was happy, because I had missed being bitten by that snake, which would have caused great harm not only to me, but to the whole group and the concert. The *Jarraca* is a very poisonous snake. I thank God to have had the good luck that the snake gave a false strike.

Cerqueira Cesar, Xavantes

Two small cities, with the third program.

Ourinhos

We had great difficulty in this city preparing the cinema for the concert. It was necessary to construct a platform. It was difficult to find the wood for this. The concert was reasonable, with little applause.

Villa-Lobos was afraid that in continuing our journey it would be difficult to obtain the wood needed to construct a platform. He asked the Prefect if we could take his wood along with us, which he freely granted. For us, there was no difficulty in transporting it, as there was plenty of room in the railcar reserved for the piano. From then on, the platform became a routine. We only had to borrow the gasoline barrels, for better acoustic effect.

Salto Grande

A train station with a small nucleus of houses around it. An avenue with a few commercial houses mixed with residences. All in wood construction. At the end of the avenue, which was short, a plaza, as there is in all cities. On this plaza, a chapel, the cinema, the hotel, the school, some houses, and the prefecture.

Red earth, with much dust and mud. When it rained, it became difficult to walk.

The concert was given in that cinema. It was a barracks, built all of wood, with a galvanized roof. There were common chairs for the audience. A screen hung from the wall, and a tiny booth behind the screen, where the film projector was installed, one of the antique variety. The screen had to be kept wet.

With the platform installed, and the acoustics and lighting improved as much as possible, the theater was all right. At the beginning of the concert, the artists all sat in the front row, along with the commission. There was no possibility of dressing rooms for last minute touching up of makeup. And improvised stair gave access to the stage for the artists.

The Prefect opened the concert. He presented the artists, something that rarely happened.

The concert began. It was the first program. Villa-Lobos played, then Nair Duarte Nunes, then Souza Lima, who stole the show. The concert went well, in spite of being in a wooden barracks. The acoustics, with the platform, and with the galvanized roof, which wasn't high, left nothing to be desired. The second part began. Villa-Lobos spoke, thanking them for the attentions paid to the excursion, and following with his lecture. After that, he played his cello, and the singer came on for her song. She was singing *A Casinha da Colina* when a hard rain started. The galvanized roof wasn't a problem for the movie spectators, since the movies were silent, but for us it was an enormous disturbance. Imagine a strong hailstorm on a metal roof! The singer was forced to cut short her program. The concert was stopped. Happily, the rain shower was brief, and the pianist was able to perform without difficulties, and was deliriously applauded.

The artists did encounter difficulties in leaving the theater to get in the car that was to take us to the reception, prepared by the teachers in a classroom in the school. They had to walk with their footwear covered in mud, in their fine shoes and long dresses.

The commission was headed by the Prefect. It was made up of people of the city and some teachers of the school.

In attendance were prefects from Cambará and Jacarézinho, cities of the north of Paraná, very close to the border of the State of São Paulo. These prefects were enchanted with the concert, and asked Villa-Lobos to go to their cities. Villa-Lobos responded, "Paraná is outside our route, but I will go, due to your enthusiasm and for the purposes of our crusade. Senhores Prefects, organize concerts in your cities, arrange for us to be transported by automobile, with a truck for the piano, and we will be there. He asked Cleto Rocha urgently to make preparations for these extra concerts. We stayed three days in Salto Grande, intending to rest a little, while they made preparations for the concerts in Paraná. But the commission didn't give us that opportunity: we traveled those three days, visiting large coffee plantations, country estates, and sawmills around the city. The commission was diligent in arranging for cars to take all of us, and a truck for the piano, to Cambará, with additional automobiles accompanying us, forming a caravan, confronting the dust and mud.

Our arrival at Cambará was also festive. A crowd awaited us in front of the prefecture, with a band to greet the artists. Following, we were all lodged in the only hotel in Cambará, made entirely of wood.

Cambará

The city was much larger than Salto Grande, and was well prepared to receive the artists of the Villa-Lobos excursion and to attend the concert. The Prefect, a very dynamic man, had organized everything in three days: they sold tickets, made publicity posters, reserved lodging and a theater. It was a cinema, but without a galvanized roof. By early afternoon, the platform was already constructed with wood from a local sawmill, with adequate lights and other details taken care of. All that was left was the arrival of the piano, getting it installed on stage, and tuning it to be ready for the concert. A few hours passed, with us awaiting the arrival of the instrument. And there was no sign

of it. The artists in the hotel were prepared for the concert. And no sign of the piano. I was in the theater waiting. Six hours passed, seven hours, eight hours, the hour for the concert to begin. No piano. The theater packed with spectators. After a little more than eight hours, the truck with the piano arrived. It was covered with mud. It had got stuck in the mud, which was the reason for the delay.

The public was anxious. The artists, who were already in the theater, still more so. Hands to work, without losing any time. We had to get the piano out of the truck and set up on the stage. So the spectators saw their first spectacle: how you move and set up a grand piano. In a little more than half an hour, the piano was set up on stage, ready to be played. That day, the piano wasn't tuned before the concert. It was the only time during the excursion that this happened. It was also the only day in which, due to the delay, I went without dinner.

Everything was ready, and the concert began. First, Villa-Lobos at the cello, then the singer, and finally, closing the first part, Souza Lima.

During the intermission, as was usual, the audience members went out to drink some coffee, smoke a cigarette, buy some peanuts, etc. When the signal was given to begin the second part, nobody returned to the concert hall. There was just a row of men in the back of the hall. They were the men who were charged with moving the piano on to Jacarézinho. Since that day, due to the delay, no program was distributed, the audience thought that the end of the first part was the end of the concert.

Afterwards we were told that there, the cinemas were not accustomed to take intermissions. When they raised the lights, it was the end of the show.

Thus, the caravan from Salto Grande which went to Cambará, to attend the second program, was frustrated because they saw only the first half. After the concert came the reception, the good-byes, and rest before proceeding on the next day.

Jacarézinho

Courtesy of Cambará, we went by automobile to Jacarézinho. This time, the truck with the piano went in front of us so that another delay wouldn't happen as it did en route to Cambará.

Our arrival in Jacarézinho was also received festively. The concert took place also in a cinema. With a good stage, there was no need to construct a platform.

The concert was good and well applauded. The commission offered us an ample reception, and also honored us with their presence.

On the day after the concert, we remained in Jacarézinho. We visited local industries: a factory of artifacts made of bamboo, wicker, and cane; a factory that made lumber for construction. We also went to a quarry which made stone plates called *mineiras*, which are used for anti-skid pavement.

Our return to Salto Grande was also by automobile, courtesy of the commission of Jacarézinho.

Palmital

A tiny city hidden in the midst of the forest. Few people awaited us at the station. Our lodging was very insecure, being in the only hotel in the city. A small cinema, with

the platform erected, almost full. A bit of enthusiasm. A novelty about the railroad: On the train, there was no dining car. There was a stop at this station for lunch. A collective lunch. The various passengers sat around a table that had been set. The passengers who wanted to have lunch, had to disembark, and hurry over to have lunch at the only restaurant close to the station. The train was there for thirty minutes, as frequent visitors to the restaurant related to us. The tactic of the manager was to begin by serving a very hot soup. The client would lose a lot of time eating the hot soup, and would have very little time to eat the other delicacies. When there were five minutes left before the train's departure, the engineer of the train would blow the whistle to alert the passengers. Everyone would run out, failing to eat the best dishes. There was no risk that anyone would fail to pay the bill, as there was payment in advance.

We didn't get out to eat at this restaurant, because this was where we got off the train. We ate at the hotel in the city.

Assis

Among the cities in this region, Assis was one of the most progressive. The people appreciated music. At our arrival, the station was filled, between people and authorities. We were lodged in a hotel of wood, as was the common construction in the area. The cinema was also a barracks of wood, but it wasn't covered in galvanized roof tiles, but wooden shingles. It was a novelty to have a roof of this type. We constructed a platform, without difficulty, and set up the piano. The concert was much appreciated and applauded. A small reception ended our day.

Presidente Prudente

A city already somewhat large, being the largest we found in Alta Sorocabana. At our arrival, as almost always, the commission, authorities, and people awaited us at the station. They were tired of waiting for us. The train arrived very late. It stopped for a long time to load wood for the boiler, and then went on, discharging large cinders.

We were lodged in a hotel, again of wood. In spite of the attentions of the manager, it was uncomfortable.

All the artists were much applauded. A small reception and farewells.

Cândida Mota, Paraguassu, Rancharia, Martinópolis, Álvares Machado, Santo Anastácio, Presidente Bernardes, and others

All tiny cities, located in a clearing in the woods. They were colonies of immigrant Italians, Germans, Lithuanians, Hungarians, and others, who, coming from Europe after the European War of 1914-1918, founded and populated these cities. Their inhabitants had never seen a musical concert, and much less a grand piano.

Special programs were prepared, with very accessible music.

Since it was a concert patronized by the Prefecture, taken together with curiosity, the people filled the little theaters, and ended up liking it, applauding with enthusiasm.

Villa-Lobos gave a concert in each of these little cities, saying in his lecture that he considered himself a “Banderante de Música”, with the obligation of bringing to this people the knowledge of some musical artists, good music, and some of his compositions.

We didn’t have any difficulty with the cinemas. We had our movable platform, which was erected easily and rapidly. We also had great collaboration with the people of those cities. All of them were ready and eager to get us empty metal barrels for the base of the platform. Sometimes, due to difficulties of transport, they brought the barrels by hand and on their head.

In one of these cities, it is difficult to say which, there weren’t enough barrels for the base. The solution was to stack a number of crossties from the railroad, abundant in the station, to substitute for the missing barrels.

For us, this stage of the excursion was laborious and tiring. We suffered with the accommodations and the food, but all were satisfied with the affection, good will, and attention which this population always showed us.

Porto Epitácio

The last city of this journey, if one could call it a city. In reality, it was a village, a little larger than others due to the movement of the port.

The concert in this city was a little better. Around one hundred people were in the audience. I say a little better, because there were places where the spectators numbered between fifty and eighty.

There was also a little more enthusiasm.

The commission was composed of the Prefect, his wife, and his daughters. We were lodged in his house. In spite of the lack of space, it was much better than some of the hotels in which we stayed, which didn’t even have indoor toilets.

On the day following the concert, the Prefect took us on a barge trip on the Paraná River. From the city we went by car to the port, properly speaking. He chartered a boat from the Mate Laranjeira Company, and took us on a beautiful trip down the Paraná River. We entered the State of Mato Grosso via a tributary, whose name I have forgotten.

On return, he offered us a large snack at his home. Very gratified, we said farewell to embark on our return journey to São Paulo, which lasted twenty-six hours, on the little train of the Sorocabana Railroad.

SIXTH STAGE

Ramal de Bauru and Araraquarense Railroad, November, 1931

Returning to the battle for the sixth stage, we traveled directly from São Paulo to the transfer station for the Ramal de Bauru Railroad, one meter gauge.

Itirapina

Railroad junction city. Life there revolves around the railroad. The first concert of this stage was reasonable in success and attendance.

In general, the first cities of each stage were always a little weak. As we went on our journey, the next cities would receive feedback and information concerning our excursion, making them more interested. Thus, the applauses would be more vibrant.

Continuing our journey, we stopped in Itápolis, Tabatinga, Brotas, Torrinhã, Dois Córregos, Jaú, Bocaina, and Pederneiras. In all these cities, nothing was important enough to be worth relating, because I don't have any specific memory of them. Certainly the concerts were normal, with success and enthusiasm, like the others.

Bauru

In Bauru, we were lodged in a very good hotel, Hotel Central, which still exists today, on Rua 1o de Agosto.

About this hotel, what I remember is that, due to an oversight by the commission, no room was reserved for Kekim! The hotel was completely full. The result? The first night Kekim had to sleep under the stairway that went to the second floor.

About the concert, it must have been normal. Nothing remarkable occurs to me.

TRENTINHO DO CAIPIRA

Returning from Bauru en route to Araraquara, Villa-Lobos, well accommodated in his seat of the passenger car, decided to write a piece of music. He said, "I am going to write a piece. It will be called the *Trentinho do Caipira* [Little Train of the yokel]." He took from his briefcase a sheet of staff paper and a pencil, and began to write. It seemed as if he was writing a letter. But it wasn't, no. It was music! The train ran, swaying to and fro, the car was completely full, with many children, some of them crying from time to time, and it was very hot. Villa-Lobos went on writing. Almost at the end of the journey, the piece was ready. It was a cello solo for him to play, and with a part for piano accompaniment. After the journey was finished, and after a bit of retouching at the piano, the piece was ready to be performed. Wasn't he a genius?

Matão

First city of the Araraquara Railroad. A large crowd awaited us on the station platform. For the concert, in the cinema, we put up our platform, although the stage was large enough to hold the piano.

The concert was very good, with the second program. For the first time, Villa-Lobos played his *Trentinho do Caipira*. Dona Lucilia, the piano accompanist, had a few difficulties. The music was very new, with scarcely one read through. She missed the beat a few times, which got her a very rude remark from the maestro at the end of the performance.

The theater was filled. The public of this city, which loves music very much, applauded with great enthusiasm.

Taquaritinga

A very pretty city. Nothing important to record, except that the concert was again well applauded.

We went on to Santa Adélia and Pindorama, two tiny cities, with the third program.

Soon after we left Taquaritinga, a new problem arose: dust. From Taquaritinga on, the track wasn't covered. The ties that secure the rails lay directly on the earth, unlike the earlier portion, where they were laid on gravel.

While the train was running, it raised a cloud of dust that came in the windows. The composition of trains on this railroad was contrary to that of other railroads. The first class cars were attached after the baggage cars, and at the end of the train came the second class cars, suffering even worse from the dust. It was necessary to travel with the windows closed to keep out some of the dust and the cinders that came out of the boiler, looking like fireworks. The reason for so many cinders: they used wood instead of coal to heat the boiler.

Catanduva

We finally arrived at this city covered in dust. The shoulders of our jackets and our hats were red with dust. The women, with their clothes all dirty, their hair matted, and the skin of their faces dried by the dust, needed to wash their faces with cotton and oxygenated water. The heat of the high sun ground the dust even more into our faces. It was a miserable journey. Travelers who were used to this line wore a duster made of washable fabric, which they wore over their clothing, and at the end of the journey they removed it, without having got so filthy.

At last, the hour of debarkation came. The organizing commission of the concert, and a great crowd of people filled the stations. We were in a tizzy. How could we present ourselves so dirty? There was no solution. We simply had to get off even if we were dirty. The people of Catanduva thought it perfectly natural. They were accustomed to it. They knew their own railroad.

Lodged in a regular hotel, we bathed immediately, changed clothing, and were ready for our task. Villa-Lobos visited the theater, and I got the piano to the theater, set up the platform, tuned, etc.

All our sacrifice was well compensated by the concert, which was very well applauded. Villa-Lobos, after his lecture, played *Trenzinho do Caipira*, his composition, still in manuscript.

The piece reflected well the little train on which we traveled. The whistle of departure, the discharge of air, the brakes, and the departure. Starting with a strong beat, slowly, gaining speed, hitting the maximum, where it stays for a while. You can hear clearly the beating of the joints of the track. A climbing with force and loss of speed, a descent at great speed. Entrance into a tunnel, with the muffled sound found there, and after emerging, stronger. At the end, the whistle of arrival. Slowing down, coming to a stop. You hear the beating of one car against another.

There was much applause, at the close of the concert, for *Alegria na Horta*, by Villa Lobos, played by Souza Lima. The insistent applause made him return to the stage several times. The people of Catanduva were very appreciative of classical music.

A superb reception, a day of rest with a few visits, and a new journey, confronting for hours and hours the dust of the line until arriving at Rio Preto.

Rio Preto

Today it is called São José do Rio Preto. A very beautiful city, with grand hotels, bars, nightclubs, a casino, and a very good theater. It was one of the few cities we visited that had an intense night life.

Our arrival at the city was no different from the others. The concert took place on the platform, in spite of the good quality of the theater. There wasn't a great need, but Villa-Lobos wanted to put it up, because the theater was rather large, and the platform amplified the sound a great deal. We had enough wood for this, the wood we got from the Prefecture of Ourinhos, and which always traveled with the piano.

The concert, one more success by Villa-Lobos with his cello and *Trenzinho do Caipira*.

The lecture was also well appreciated. He spoke passionately, and emphasized the value of Brazilian artists, and notably the patriotism that led him to organize this excursion. "National artists and musicians, great geniuses of music, must make themselves known in all the cities of São Paulo," he said.

Nair D. Nunes was much applauded for the song *A Casinha da Colina*. What to say then about Souza Lima, closing with the *Campanella* of Liszt-Busoni?

The reception was held at a fine ice cream store on the plaza.

We also visited the casino, but nobody wanted to bet on roulette. We stayed more than one day in this city. We were supposed to go also to Mirassol, a city next to Rio Preto, which was beginning to grow. At the last minute, the concert was cancelled. I don't know the reason.

This was the end of the sixth stage. We got on that little train en route to São Paulo, with a stop at Araraquara. More than eight hours of dust, heat, and hot sun entering through the windows. The car super-full, with many children.

Souza Lima had the idea of asking Villa-Lobos to compose a more accessible piece, for him to perform at the next concerts, where the public didn't appreciate classical works. Villa-Lobos thought it was a superb idea. He took his staff paper and pencil, to write whatever motive came to him, and immediately began to write. It is incredible how, between stops of the train, with vendors of pastries, oranges, etc., hawking their wares, Villa-Lobos wrote the piece. *Caixinha de Música Quebrada*, he called it. And he wrote at the bottom, "for Souza Lima to play."

Villa-Lobos, knowing that everyone would arrive in Araraquara totally covered in dust, and not wanting to change to the Paulista Railroad train in this state, he thought to stop a while at the home of Dr. Milton Fonseca, who was a great friend, for a bath and a change of clothes. He sent a telegram to Dr. Fonseca, saying the following: "We return from Rio Preto, we will go to your house, prepare baths." Villa-Lobos loved this kind of tirade. I myself sent the telegram in Rio Preto.

On our arrival in Araraquara, we found Dr. Milton waiting for us at the station. He took us to his home, and suggested we spend the night, and go on the next day. He served us a grand Bahian dinner, prepared under the direction of his wife.

Dr. Milton was very happy because, in addition to receiving our visit a second time, he also had the great pleasure of receiving in his house the pianist Souza Lima and his wife Da. Maria and the singer Anita Gonçalves.

After dinner, they made a little music, Villa-Lobos playing *O Trenzinho*, and Souza Lima a few pieces.

Very satisfied by our gathering, we rested a little to resume our journey next day to São Paulo.

SEVENTH STAGE

Central Railroad of Brazil, December, 1931

Jacarei

First city of this stage, with nothing important to report. The concert must have been normal.

São José dos Campos

Normal concert, as in other cities. Among other visits, we went to the Institute of Aeronautical Technology (ITA) which later became CTA. There we were served a luncheon with all the professors and students. Villa-Lobos dispensed with the protocol of having a special table. At “chow” time, there we were in line with our trays in hand! The kitchen staff served each one of us as we passed through. After getting our food, we sat at a table with some professors and the people of the commission who had accompanied us. All of us found this type of meal congenial. It was a departure from our routine of almost a year, having meals, sometimes rather sophisticated, in hotels and restaurants.

Campos do Jordão, Caçapava, Taubaté, Tremembé, and Pindamonhangaba

All these cities with nothing different to relate, if not for the success of the concerts. In Caçapava, we visited the quarters of the 4th Infantry Regiment. In Taubaté we visited the Colégio das Irmãs de São José, Nossa Senhora do Bom Conselho. I had been caring for the thirty-six pianos at this college for a number of years.

Guaratingueta

In this city, in a very good municipal theater, the concerts took place with a large public and with great enthusiasm, Souza Lima getting a standing ovation, returning several times to the stage to acknowledge it.

At the beginning of the second part after the maestro’s lecture, during his performance on cello, two people had a disagreement up in the balcony, and argued very quietly. Leaving the area, they gave vent to their anger, now in loud voices. Several people, wanting to calm them, said, “Up there you were discussing this very calmly and quietly. Why are you so angry now?” They responded, “Up there we couldn’t disturb the music of the maestro.” Certainly Villa-Lobos must have spoken, as was his custom, about

having silence in the audience during the concert. At last, everything calmed down, and the two returned to attend the concert.

On that same night, during the vocal number of Nair Duarte Nunes, there was release a gas in the theater, that, from such a bad smell, obliged her to cut short her program. It must have been a prank of very bad taste, or some kind of sabotage. But Souza Lima played in spite of the bad smell, and was much applauded.

Lorena and Piquete

Two cities with success equal to the others. Nothing important to report. In Piquete, the organizing commission was comprised entirely of military graduates and their wives. We were invited to visit a factory of explosives and munitions for the army.

Cachoeira

Today it is called Cachoeira Paulista. It was a dairy city at that time, depending almost exclusively on milk products, like most of the cities in the Paraíba valley. There was even a daily train, called the milk train, which collected the milk of the various cities to transport it to São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro.

At our arrival there was a surprise. The station platform, instead of being filled with people, as usual, was full of milk cans. It was the time when milk was loaded. The commission met us almost in the middle of the cans, but most of the people and the band were outside, in front of the station, to salute our arrival.

This city was one of the few in which it was necessary to set up the platform.

In the concert, all the artists were appreciated, and applauded with enthusiasm.

It wasn't necessary to reload the piano in the railcar that night, because we were staying the next day for some visits, including to a factory of dairy products.

I took part in the reception. The commission, which was composed of several young single women and some married couples, decided to have two tables, one for the artists and the married couples, the other for the single women. Since I was the only young man, and single, I was invited to sit with the young women, and was very happy about this! It is necessary to say that I was royally served, and with much kindness. From this day on, Souza Lima called me "Kekim the lady killer" ["Kekim das moças"]. The other artists joined him, and I became "Kekim the lady killer" until the end of the excursion!

Cruzeiro

My home town. It was also where our secretary, Cleto Rocha, lived. The reception at our arrival was organized by Cleto Rocha himself. A multitude was on the station platform waiting for us.

There were many flowers for the ladies. A band saluted the artists. The prefect, authorities, and the organizing commission complimented everyone as we disembarked.

The concert was in a cinema on the principal plaza. It was entirely filled. *Trenzinho do Caipira* by Villa-Lobos was a success, played by himself on cello. Souza Lima was thunderously applauded for the *Campanella* of Liszt-Busoni, closing the

concert. Many compliments and autographs, and a tasty reception, prepared by Cleto Rocha, in the best bar of the city.

On the next day, we stayed in Cruzeiro, for some visits, including to the family of Cleto Rocha, whose wife, Clélia, was a niece of the maestro.

Queluz

Last city of the seventh stage. A small city, nestled between the mountains of Serra do Mar. Very beautiful. The concert was in a small cinema. It was necessary to put up the platform. All the artists were greatly applauded. The people of this city liked music. We noticed that in all of the cities of this stage the people appreciated music very much.

The seventh stage was complete. We returned to São Paulo.

EIGHTH STAGE

Brazil Northeastern Railroad, January, 1932

Pirajuí

First city of this eighth stage, and first of this zone. Our arrival and concert were much different than usual. There wasn't the warmth which we encountered in the Central Railroad area. We were very surprised.

Cafelândia

A city I already knew. I had been there a few times, tuning and repairing pianos at a school for girls of São José, whose name doesn't occur to me. This is an interesting city. It is divided into two distinct parts. One was really called Cafelândia, and must be the newer part. Mostly residential, with the school, hotel, church, cinema, bars, and retail businesses.

The second part is called Pena, the older part, with stronger commercial sector, hotel, cinema, church, and bars.

It was in the cinema in Cafelândia that we put on the concert. It was much better applauded than the one in Pirajuí, and better attended. Considerable enthusiasm for *Trenzinho do Caipira*.

Lins, Promissão, Avanhandava, and Penapolis

All these cities with good attendance, but little enthusiasm.

Birigüi and Araçatuba

Two cities close to one another. Many people from Birigüi went to Araçatuba to attend the concert a second time.

In that city there was more interest in the concert and in the artists.

In both there was a school for girls of São José, with conservatory. Many people studied piano. The people were very interested in music.

Araçatuba

A fairly large city which received the Villa-Lobos group with many flowers and festivities. We were lodged in a hotel owned by Japanese. There is a large Japanese colony in this city.

The concert surpassed expectations. The cinema was completely filled. The piano on the platform produced a magnificent acoustic effect. Enthusiasm and much applause for Villa-Lobos, for *Trenzinho do Caipira*. There was also much applause for the singer, who had to return to the stage to acknowledge. And Souza Lima had to play an encore.

A very hot city. The thermometer reached 41 degrees Celsius within the hall. Full Summer. It was January of 1932.

During the day, there was a surprise. I received from the factory of Piano Brasil a telegram calling me to return to São Paulo for an important mission. Another technician would be sent to replace me. I needed to accompany Guiomar Novaes for three concerts in the interior of the State of São Paulo: São José da Boa Vista, Campinas, and Santos.

I was sorry to leave the excursion, now nearing its end. But I was happy to be able to serve the great Brazilian pianist.

Before I left for São Paulo, my replacement arrived. It was a German technician, also very good. His name was Hermann Schunvenk, today no longer with us.

All the artists were very sorry about my departure, but they had to continue the excursion to the end.

Next cities (without my presence):

Guaporé, Valparaíso, Mirandópolis, and Andradina

Returning to São Paulo, after completing the eighth stage, Villa-Lobos considered complete his task proposed to the Interventor of the State, Lieutenant João Alberto Lins de Barros.

He was very content with the success he had had in more than a hundred cities visited.

The enthusiasm awakened by the music, especially among the young, inspired him to think about doing the same in other states.

Closing

Completing his excursion, after great success in all the cities in the interior of the State of São Paulo, Villa-Lobos chose the Capital of the State for his final farewell performance.

With a great deal of work, he organized a large chorus, with around five thousand voices, a large orchestra, composed of two hundred music teachers, and the band of the Public Force of the State of São Paulo, now the "Military Police," with about one hundred men.

He gave this chorus the name of "Villa-Lobos Civic Exhortation."

On the 12th of April of 1932, Tiradentes Day, the spectacle was presented to the public, on a beautiful sunny afternoon, in the open air, in a football stadium in the capital.

Organization and Rehearsal of the Chorus

During the travels of the excursion, Villa-Lobos prepared his program for the closing. He composed a piece to be sung, entitled “Forward, Brazil.” It is worth saying that this has nothing to do with the music of the Copa of 1958. I don’t remember if the lyrics were also by Villa-Lobos.

At the beginning of February, soon after the beginning of the school year, under the authority of the Interventor and the Prefect of São Paulo, Villa-Lobos invited all the public schools of the capital to take part with their students in this grand chorus. He distributed to the Directors the program of music to be performed, for the necessary rehearsals in their schools. And he also recommended that only children thirteen years old and above be included.

Besides the public schools, Villa-Lobos also invited the young men and women of *Ginásios*, *Colégios*, Normal Schools, Superior Schools, and various groups. Many military, padres, seminary students, men and women also gave their contribution.

The primary school teaches had to rehearse the children very well in the established program in a single voice, so that when they were joined to other schools, they could sing together. The adults needed to form a chorus in their schools, rehearsing well in two or three voices, so that when they joined the others they wouldn’t have difficulties.

There would be no general rehearsal. For that reason all had to be very well prepared. Villa-Lobos visited the schools constantly to attend the rehearsals, directing some of them personally.

Each participant in the concert was furnished a badge by the municipal prefecture, to be worn on the chest, with the words “Villa-Lobos Civic Exhortation” as well as the name of its bearer, residence, school, teacher, and the director of the school. And in a color easily visible, the type of voice, as bass, tenor, baritone, soprano, first voice, etc. This badge was very important to be able to group the voices on the day of the concert, and also so that, if some child should get lost, it would be easy to return him to his group.

On the day of the concert, all the children were transported from their schools to the field in electric “bondes” [streetcars], provided courtesy of the electric company. The adults went to the field with school passes and standard tickets.

The FINAL PROOF– From very early in the day, all members of the excursion team were found on the field to organize and mark the location where the children and adults would be, and everything else that was necessary.

A little after noon, the children began to arrive. There began also our hard work: to locate the children on the terrace in the determined places, school by school. Later, the adults arrived, and were also grouped on the terrace, in pre-established positions according to their voice.

At last, all that multitude of singers completely filled the terraces. Musicians of the orchestra and of the Armed Forces Band took their place on the field, to the left and right of Villa-Lobos’ podium. Meanwhile the public was filling the general seating. Admission was free. It was a present Villa-Lobos offered the city of São Paulo.

The Concert: April 21, Tiradentes, National Holiday

A great deal of strength and energy were needed to maintain that large quantity of singers in their places and without a great deal of noise. A bandstand was erected on the field, nearly two meters high, courtesy of Piano Brasil.

Maestro Villa-Lobos, ready to direct the concert, mounted the bandstand, wearing his tails. While he waited for the hour to begin, he directed the arrangements, and asked the children to be silent. The arrangements were successful, but the silence, no!

It was sunny, and the day was hot. Villa-Lobos took off his coat for the time being and put it on a chair by his side. He wore only his blue shirt, the one he generally used in place of a vest. Thus he was more easily able to move about to direct the arrangements.

Exactly at three o'clock, the hour set for the beginning of the Orpheonic Concert, the Interventor and the Prefect of the capital arrived at the field. Villa-Lobos wanted to start the concert. He insistently asked the children to be silent. That wasn't possible to achieve, with that multitude of children. Time was passing. Villa-Lobos, always very punctual and not wanting to be late, was becoming nervous. Suddenly he gave a shout. The children were startled. They stopped, as if by enchantment. Immediately he directed them all to stand.

Without losing time, he started the concert, with the Band of the Armed Forces and the orchestra playing the national anthem, sung by that enormous number of students. At the same time, the national flag was being raised on the flagpole. An enormous applause greeted this ceremony. At that moment, the maestro realized that he had been conducting in blue shirtsleeves, not having had time to put on his tails. Rapidly he followed with the prepared songs, some for two and three voices.

It was an admirable spectacle. The children and the adults sang very well in tune and on the beat, following the conducting of the maestro.

It is impossible to reproduce here the program. An original which I had in my possession for many years, was lost as was related at the beginning of this book.

In accordance to my memory, the songs were almost all civic: National Anthem, Hymn to the Flag, Independence Hymn, Song of the Soldier, Forward Brazil, some *cirandas*, and others.

All went as foreseen by Villa-Lobos. The beginning of the concert happened at three o'clock, in spite of small delays, and ended at the predicted time: four thirty. Enough time for the children to return to their schools while it was still daylight.

Before bringing the celebration to a close, Villa-Lobos directed with his megaphone some words of thanks to the Interventor and the Prefect, to the participating singers, to the teachers and directors of the schools, who gave him the possibility of presenting so well this chorale. He also thanked the public, which attended his chorale with such order and enthusiasm. Afterwards, he asked that all stand again, and he closed the concert with the National Hymn sung by all, while the national flag was lowered, which was collected by officers of the armed forces. There was another thunderous round of applause, and the children waved thousands of green and yellow pennants provided by the Prefecture of the capital.

While still on the field, Villa-Lobos was much complimented by the authorities and a large number of friends, musicians, teachers, officials, and many other people.

Villa-Lobos had completed his task.

For us of the team, another began. To conduct all those children to get on their streetcars and busses, which were waiting to take them back to their schools.

Cleto Rocha mounted the bandstand, and directed the departure from there, school by school, in the same order in which they had arrived.

Everything finished, I, Kekim, returned to my occupation in the Piano Brasil Factory, in São Paulo.

Cleto Rocha went to Cruzeiro to resume his post in the Viação Sul Mineira Railroad.

Souza Lima, Antonieta Rudge, and the singers stayed in São Paulo,

Villa-Lobos moved back to Rio de Janeiro.

I am the only survivor of that marvelous team. I give thanks to God for having had the opportunity to participate in that beautiful journey.