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Two Brazilian Interviews

TOM MOORE

Caio Senna, born 1959, is Professor of Harmony at the University of Rio (UniRio), in the shadow of Sugarloaf Mountain. His works are performed and recorded by leading figures in the musical life of Rio de Janeiro, such as baritone Inácio de Nonno and harpsichordist Rosana Lanzelotte. His most recent compact disc, *Primeiro Diálogo* (the title comes from a Faustian dialogue by Fernando Pessoa, Uni-Rio UNI004) presents a varied palette of chamber music, with songs for tenor and piano, an extended toccata and three brief miniatures for piano solo, and a suite for the unusual combination of bass clarinet and two guitars. Senna's music is immediately captivating while rewarding many listenings, and he is accessible while nevertheless writing in a style that is entirely his own.

We talked in Portuguese on August 12, 2002 in Rio de Janeiro.

MOORE: Could you say a little about the musical environment in your family when you were growing up? Did you have musical relatives? How did you get started in music?

SENNA: I don't have any immediate relatives who are musicians. I have one cousin who is a guitarist, but there is no tradition of musicians in my family. There are two branches of my family which are Italian, on my father's and my mother's side. My father's family, although it had some connections with literature, was not very much involved with music. In my mother's family, there was a lot of music making at parties, they would play serestas -- they are all from Minas, and singing and playing guitar is something that is very common in Minas. My mother studied piano when she was very young, for eight years, but when she got married, she didn't take the piano with her -- it stayed in her parents' house, and so there was no piano in our house. I never studied the instrument until I was 15 years old. She sang a lot, played the guitar, and encouraged me to sing. She sang with me all the time. At least that's everyone tells me, since I don't remember it.

MOORE: What kind of music?

SENNA: Serestas from Minas, popular songs. My mother would sing me to sleep with Brazilian popular songs that she enjoyed. So I never heard a traditional lullaby; I heard the repertoire of the popular singers of the time. There was an environment where people enjoyed music, but no one studied music -- and a certain amount of drama when I decided to study music, because people didn't like that at all. In my mother's family people became engineers. There were lawyers and politicians in my father's family, but in my mother's family they were engineers.

MOORE: Where did your mother's family come from?

SENNA: My mother was born in Belo Horizonte, and my father as well. Everyone was born in Minas. My maternal grandparents and the cousins were born in Ouro Preto. Of my paternal grandparents one was born in Belo Horizonte, and the other in Ouro Preto. My mother's great-grandfather was Italian. He was an employee of a British company that sold arms -- he came to America to sell guns. Nice, huh?

MOORE: When was this?

SENNA: At the turn of the century. He traveled between Argentina and Brazil, and married a girl from a family in Rio Grande do Sul. They ended up buying a farm in Minas and settled near Diamantina. He enjoyed music, and was very forward-looking, keeping up with the technology of the period, so that when the first gramophones were offered for sale to the public, he bought one, took it to the farm, and frightened the servants with voices coming from the beyond, since he hid it behind the wall. He liked music, but no one was a musician. All of his daughters and granddaughters played instruments -- it was part of a woman's education.

MOORE: What instruments did they play?

SENNA: They played guitar, learned by themselves, although they didn't have lessons. I have a great uncle who still plays guitar today, he loves to play serestas, and accompanies them very well. Each one of my great aunts studied a different instrument -- violin, singing, piano, my great-grandmother played harp. There was a lot of music in my family, but no one was a professional.

I was not the first, but the second, since there is a second cousin, my mother's cousin, that is a musician as well, although I think that he is no longer working in the field.

I began studying late. I played well by ear. I remember that when I was thirteen or fourteen, my mother asked if I wouldn't like to study piano, since she could tell that I really liked music. I told her that I was too old to study piano, and things went along like that for a while, but when I was fifteen I called my grandmother and asked her if she wouldn't give me the piano that was at her house. She fixed it up and sent it to us, and I began to study using the method of Amyrton Vallim, *Piano by Ear*.

He was a popular pianist, who was blind. He invented this method, since he was unable to read scores -- he had a marvelous ear, played nicely, but couldn't read. So he invented this crazy score that gave the name of the note, but not the rhythm. You picked up the rhythm by ear. It was a horror.

I studied for a year using this method, and saw that I wasn't getting anywhere, so I decided to actually study piano. This was when I was 18.

The advantage of Amyrton's method was that it taught me the chords and symbols from popular music, so that I was already composing before I had studied music. I had four or five compositions. When I really started to music, I headed more and more towards composition. But I didn't want to be a composer, or rather, I wanted to be a composer like Tom Jobim -- to play piano and compose. That's what I adored. I thought I would be a composer of popular music; I never imagined that I would be writing avant-garde. I wrote in a popular vein for many years.

MOORE: Where did you grow up?

SENNA: I was born in Sao Paulo, and lived there until I was nine years old. When I was nine we moved to Rio, and I have lived in Rio for more than 30 years -- we don't need to be more specific than that! So I am more carioca than paulista, and started to study music here in Rio.

MOORE: What kind of popular music were you interested in?

SENNA: At the time it was just popular music - it wasn't differentiated. I didn't know any contemporary concert music. What I did know was what I studied in my piano lessons, which was traditional repertoire -- Debussy, Ravel -- I had heard of Stravinsky -- but I thought that there was only popular music in Brazil. I didn't know there was any other kind of music, except for Villa-Lobos, and as far as I was concerned he was far in the past, a figure from the beginning of the century, which he wasn't -- he was active almost until the 60's.

MOORE: What were the styles of popular music that you enjoyed.

SENNA: Every year I liked something different. I adored Chico Buarque. Then I started to enjoy disco -- that's a phase that just about everyone went through in the 70's.

MOORE: Was there Brazilian disco?

SENNA: Not as far as I remember. I started by enjoying Chico Buarque, Milton Nascimento, all of Elis Regina's repertoire -- the chic popular music of the period. Later I started to get interested in avant-garde popular music -- Arrigo Barnabé. Arrigo does music more or less in the vein of Frank Zappa. I loved rock until I was sixteen. My phases were very clearly marked.

MOORE: Were there other avant-garde musicians like Barnabé?

SENNA: Not like him. There were musicians that were underground, but not really avant-garde. I had a band that played popular music, which played a variety of things, from chic popular music to avant-garde, alternative....

MOORE: What were the instruments in the group?

SENNA: I didn't consider it to be a rock group. There was a Brazilian rock magazine that listed us as "80's techno-pop." So we were techno-pop, although I didn't know it. I played electronic keyboard, sometimes piano, there was bass, drums, flute, vocals. It was a group where everybody sang and played.

MOORE: Flute seems to be very Brazilian and not so common in popular music elsewhere. Why did you have a flute in the group?

SENNA: Because one of my friends played flute. We put the group together with friends that sang in the chorus at the Pro-Arte.

MOORE: Were you writing the material for the group?

SENNA: No. The repertoire had things of mine, but also from other people in the group -- everybody. And some things from outside -- Itamar Assumpção, which was underground music from Sao Paulo, I did a vocal arrangement of Arrigo Barnabé. There was one member of the group who wrote more for the group. At the time I was not composing so much. I did more arranging than composing. I only began to compose more regularly and in greater quantity when I was almost 30 years old. Now I have more than 100 compositions.

MOORE: How did you arrive in the world of contemporary classical music?

SENNA: I studied piano, but I wanted to play modern music, and for me modern music was popular music. I began to conduct a chorus, and that is how I got to classical music. I was conducting to earn money, and took a course in choral conducting with Cees Rotterweel. He brought a lot of contemporary choral music -- things by Ligeti, by contemporary Dutch composers. He was invited by Pro Arte to give a course. Later I went to Holland on vacation and stayed at his house. I got to know the contemporary repertoire through him and fell in love with it.

MOORE: When was this?

SENNA: 1985.

MOORE: Did you then study composition at a university here?

SENNA: I was already a composition student at the Escola de Musica of UFRJ. I had studied architecture for three years -- 1978-1980. In 1981 I decided to do music instead. In 1978 I had been studying piano at the same time I was doing architecture, but I thought that I was not ready to take the test for a course in piano. Since I was doing arranging I thought the course in composition was a good idea. I took the test and entered the School of Music in 1982. In 1984 I dropped out, because I was working a lot, and not enjoying the course -- it was heavy. There were things that I liked, and things that I didn't like so much.

MOORE: Who was teaching composition there at the time?

SENNA: You only started composition there quite late, since there were four years of fundamentals, if you can believe it. Only after three or four years did you begin composing -- seven years for the whole curriculum.

At the time it was very traditional – now it's more reasonable. At UniRio there is still traditionalism, together with a more contemporary approach. I consider pointless the kind of formalist teaching that leads some students to compose sonatas and fugues. I encourage my pupils to write free from these bonds and pursue their own paths.

So I dropped out, and spent three years away, and decided to go back because if I didn't I would no longer be enrolled in the program. I was in a bit of an existential crisis as far as popular music was concerned, because I was already doing things that didn't fit in there. The music was becoming more experimental, more classical – I like to improvise, but it was never my forte – I like to write. So I decided to give up all the popular music that I was doing, to stop playing, I went back to the program and decided to see what was going to happen..

And that was when I began to play chamber music. I was invited to play in a duo with a flutist – we played *Le Merle Noir*, the Hindemith sonata, the Poulenc sonata, the whole repertoire.

MOORE: When was this?

SENNA: From 1987 to 1991, or about then.

MOORE: Who was the flutist?

SENNA: Tina Pereira. In 1991 I took a position teaching harmony, and began to compose more and have less time to play piano.

MOORE: And you were at the...

SENNA: School of Music. Imagine – I studied architecture for three years, dropped out for a year, studied music for three years, dropped out for three years...my whole course of study took 15 years. I started in architecture at 18, and graduated in music at 33. That's when I decided to do a master's in music, since graduating at 33 is very sad, but to do a master's at that age is more usual.

MOORE: With whom did you study composition?

SENNA: As an undergrad with Ronaldo Miranda, and in graduate school with Marisa Rezende.

MOORE: Did you work with other composers there?

SENNA There were various people. Ripper, with whom I had classes for a year, Murilo Santos, who was professor of orchestration. The strongest impact was that of Marisa Rezende, whose work I particularly admire. I think she is the best in her generation.

MOORE: What was her aesthetic? What were the styles that were present there?

SENNA: The majority of the professors were very traditionalist, but it was a "light" traditionalism. Murilo's harmonies recall Hindemith. Ronaldo is romantic, with some contemporary things. Marisa has a more contemporary style. Her music includes a lot of things, from avant-garde effects, clusters and a very complex texture to triads and modal melodies. I had a tendency towards a rather dissonant language, though not necessarily serial. When I studied with Ronaldo I invented a language in which I did not repeat a note until I had exhausted the chromaticism, though it wasn't always a series. I tried to make chords using this, so the result is that it sound tonal at certain points.

MOORE: The overture of the *Suite for Piano* is partially serial?

SENNA: The overture is the most serial of all the movements. It was conceived as a series in the melody, and it appears in the other voices – retrograde, inverted – directly from the series, but trying to form chords. When the next tone won't fit to make a chord with the others, I keep repeating the tone until the sound changes, so that it makes harmonies.

I used to work polyphonically, which is the easiest way for you to put together harmonies, since you can prolong a tone if there is one that is not going to harmonize with the rest. It gives a strange character to certain passages, but I was always trying to make chords. I think in terms of chord symbols from popular music, harmonically speaking – adding dissonances – ninths, elevenths, thirteenth, avoiding minor seconds – for example in C Major if you are going to add an eleventh you will use F Sharp, and not F Natural– this is something you do a lot in jazz, to avoid the semitone with the third – this all comes from popular music. So the music is within this way of thinking, but using a series to build everything on.

The waltz is also chromatic. The freest movement is the last. I used this method quite a bit to avoid functional harmonies, II-V of something, typical habits from popular music. In order to escape these I invented this method which forced me to have to administer these sonorities – how am I going to arrange this chord so it makes sense? But it is not serialism in the sense that it was understood in the 50's, definitely not.

MOORE: I thought the style of the harmonies in the overture recalls both the harmonies of Charles Ives and of the Second Viennese School, which is interesting they are not generally considered to have much in common.

SENNA: I played an entire recital of Charles Ives accompanying a singer -- 24 of his songs -- so I have had a lot of contact with his music. The repertoire we performed was quite varied, ranging from the song he wrote at 14 for the little dog that died, to the last song he wrote before he gave up composing.

MOORE: Is he known in Brazil?

SENNA: I don't know – the singer invited me to accompany him, and I got to know the music. It's a very prolix body of work, because you have things which are completely tonal, things which have harmonies in fourths, things that are completely free – it's very varied.

TM A post-modern aesthetic.

SENNA: That is what Ricardo Tacuchian would say. I think this happens in my music. I don't really have control over it. Since I have had many different musical experiences, I think that it all gets mixed up. My way of thinking about harmony is always contaminated by the time when I was doing popular music, so I end up taking a particular road. I tend to have melodies, sometimes I even recognize Italian-style melodies.

The suite was written in my second semester of composition at the university. I had to write a suite, but it didn't have to be in the harmonic style of the baroque, as is the case at some schools. It was more of an excuse for a piece with various movements of contrasting characters. Ronaldo was not strict – you could do anything as long as you did it well.

MOORE: Until fairly recently composers in Brazil had to draw a strict line between the classical and popular music that they wrote.

SENNA: I think that my generation is one in which the larger part of people doing composition come from popular music. This is different from the generation of Marisa -- it was very common for people to have classical training and go into composition -- it's true of Marisa, of Vain Daunts Elite, Carl de Holland, Joyce de Oliver, Murilo Santos, and various others. Now my generation is one in which most people thought they would write popular music, and fell over to this side, because they went to a university, made contact with it, and some went back to popular music. Tatoo Taborda does popular music, people that studied along with me, Marcus Vinicius does popular music, Roberto Vitorio did popular music... some had more classical training, some more popular training, but they all had this experience. This is different from what happened before, when there was more prejudice on both sides. There is still the idea that there are bigger things and smaller things – how can you compare a symphony of Beethoven with a song of Schubert and decided which is greater and which is lesser? How are you going to compare this with Pixinguinha, being born poor, and making such beautiful music without any training whatsoever?

I think there has been prejudice on both sides, but I hope that things are improving. The fact that there is a course in MPB at UniRio means that it will attract students to the University who otherwise might not have come, and this is good, because everybody will get to know each other and be able to work together.

I think that what makes more sense for today is a division between music for the market and alternative music. Even in the area of early music, there is the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, but in Brazil the majority of groups in early music will be alternative.

You have music for the mass market, and music for niche audiences.

MOORE: When did you get to UniRio?

SENNA: I graduated in 1992, started the Master's in 1993, and finished the Master's in 1995. I did the Master's because I wanted to study with Marisa, not because I wanted the degree. I swore that I was never going to teach in a university. By the end of 1996 I was very broke, not making much money, and there was a competition for a substitute professor at UniRio, and so I started there in April 1997. Afterwards, I decided to do a competition to be a real professor, and started as a real professor in November 1997 in harmony. And I have been there since then.

MOORE: Could you say a little about your works? You have number of works for flute.

SENNA: I always composed thinking of the performers. So the majority of the works are for piano, or for piano and voice, since I play piano. When I had a flute and piano duo I wrote the *Suite* to be part of its repertoire. I also did a piece for flute solo for Tina. *Tanganica* I wrote for a flutist who wanted it for a CD that she never made. She asked various composers, and nobody wrote anything. I gave it to her the following week.

Other things: there is the *Viridarium Chymicum*, which was my final work as an undergraduate, for soloists, chorus and orchestra. In the version for chorus and organ, I produced it with Julio Moretzsohn, who was my colleague in choral conducting. The majority of my choral pieces are for the chorus of Pro-Arte, directed by Carlos Alberto.

There is a lot of chamber music for flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, and piano, because a group of a friend of mine had this combination of instruments, the *Camerata Contemporanea* of Rio de Janeiro. I also have pieces that were done for the group *Musica Nova* at UFRJ. So my pieces are for heterogeneous groups, since that's the nature of these ensembles. *Musica Nova* has violin, clarinet, violoncello, trombone, and double bass, which is an impossible group to balance. I did a piece for clarinet, trombone, double bass and piano. Always pieces written for people – I have many things with harpsichord, since Rosana Lanzelotte was interested and made a recording.

I always compose things that I am going to hear, and rarely write something that has not been commissioned. So I have very few pieces with percussion, because in Rio de Janeiro, as amazing as it seems, there is no percussionist to play this kind of music. In Sao Paulo, yes, but not in Rio de Janeiro. I have a piece for clarinet and marimba, because Paulo Passos, from the *Camerata Contemporanea*, has a duo with a percussionist from Sao Paulo.

MOORE: What importance does *brasilidade* have for you?

SENNA: I am not concerned in the least with this kind of thing, although sometimes I do things on purpose. For

example, when I wrote the Sambas for Inacio de Nonno, he gave me a text from a friend of his wife, in Mato Grosso, who had died of AIDS. He wrote the poems while he was dying in the hospital. They are very heavy, really heavy, at the same time ironic, I said “My God, if write a really contemporary piece of music, it’s going to be too heavy”. So I decided to write some sambas, and also because the meter was very even, which is very common in sambas. So if I pull it toward irony it will be lighter.

Often things pop up influenced by popular music unconsciously, and in pieces which are not Brazilian at all, I discover things from popular music that I was doing ten years before.

I don’t like the notion that you have to use Brazilian rhythms, or things like that. A person should do what he feels like doing. If you feel like doing that, fine. If you don’t feel like, that’s fine too. I once saw an article by Marlos Nobre about Villa-Lobos, who was a person influenced by national music, but his music above all was very original -- he didn’t follow models. What happens with most of the nationalist composers is that they write symphonies with first themes, second themes, transition, development – a completely European form, but with Brazilian themes. So you have a sort of Brazilian Haydn – you use a folkloric melody as your second theme, and you are going to say that your symphony is Brazilian because of this?

I don’t think so. I think that anything that is done here will be Brazilian, among other reasons because it will be contaminated by a number of things are Brazilian – the way of doing, the way of thinking, the way of feeling – it is going to be contaminated, more for some, less for others, depending on your individual story.

* * * *

Antonio Guerreiro de Faria is professor of composition at UniRio, the University of Rio de Janeiro, the only institution of higher learning granting the doctorate in music in the state of Rio de Janeiro, where he is a colleague of David Korenchandler, interviewed for the July 2002 issue of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC. His article “Guerra-Peixe and the stylizing of folklore” appeared in Volume 21, No. 2 of the Latin American Music Review. We talked (in Portuguese) in Rio in July of 2001.

MOORE: Let’s start at the beginning of your life in music. How did you get your start as a musician and composer?

FARIA: It was late, quite late. I began as a popular musician, and as a popular musician I didn’t know music very well – I would play a lot by ear.

MOORE: What instrument?

FARIA: I played electric guitar, electric bass, I played rock, I played everything, MPB (Musica Popular Brasileira), but only later did I begin to study formally with Guerra-Peixe.

MOORE: Where?

FARIA: Guerra-Peixe had a course called *Seminars in Music* at the Museu de Imagem e Som. That was in 1970, and there I learned to read and write music, later I had classes in harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, for two and a half years. Then I stopped because I ran out of money. I had to stop, and then I started as a student again in 1981. In the meantime, I studied harmony and counterpoint with Helio Senna, a professor at UniRio who had studied at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow for six years, and there I had more formal instruction in modal counterpoint and harmony. In 1981 I went back to study with Guerra, and completed my studies.

MOORE: How did you get your start as a popular musician? Where did you grow up? In Rio?

FARIA: In Rio.

MOORE: In which neighborhood?

FARIA: I was living in Leme, and it was there that I began to be part of popular music groups.

MOORE: When?

FARIA: 1965, when I was 16.

MOORE: Tell us a little about what pop music was like at the time.

FARIA: There were two things going on, *jovem guarda*, which was the Brazilian rap of the period, and on the other side the people of *Musica Popular Brasileira* –Tom Jobim, the festivals of song that were happening.. There were those two directions that were bumping into each other. On one side the rockers, who are were tagged as alienated, and on the other side the people of *Musica Popular Brasileira*, who were more politically oriented. And that was the panorama in the sixties here in Rio. Everything happening, getting old, lots of new stuff happening, because that was the age of the song festivals, where every year there were new things. Because that is where Chico Buarque, Milton Nascimento, Caetano Veloso appeared. It was *filet mignon* – these days there is nothing happening any more..

MOORE: Did you begin by writing popular songs? Or just playing. ?

FARIA: I began by playing in a band. I worked in an orchestra, and later when I learned to read I accompanied all sorts of singers, including Tim Maia. I was in Tim’s band in 1971, 1972. In that century I met Laura [Laura Ronai, professor of flute at UniRio]. She wasn’t my student, but my colleague.

MOORE: Talk a little about your beginnings in classical music.

FARIA: I composed a little, and not very well. Because I thought that a classical composer doesn't like popular music. That was something bad that Mario de Andrade did. It was him who imported that idea -- erudite/popular [translator's note: the usual term for classical music in Brazil is *musica erudita* -- erudite music). As if to appreciate a piece by Chopin, Buxtehude, or Bach, one would need a great deal of erudition, which is not true. You don't need to be very erudite to appreciate the music of Bach. And so to move from popular music to classical music is not such a big deal, because I don't make any distinction between classical and popular.

MOORE: I think this lack of separation between the two is something that is typically Brazilian, since in the United States there seems to be a clear distinction, though it's starting to blur.

FARIA: I know that 10 or 20 years ago there was a rigid separation between classical and pop. In Brazil this is gradually changing as well. There's nothing harder than making a recording of new classical music. If a young person has just graduated from the university there's very little chance that someone will record his music with a classical pianist, because every one that likes classical music is closed off. There's only one producer, one hall, who are only doing re-recordings of pianists who have already recorded Bach or Beethoven, because these will be profitable. So the chances of a young instrumentalist, in this country, or anywhere in the world, after years of systematic study, five or six years, to record a CD of classical music are minimal.

MOORE: Could you tell us about some of the more important of your early compositions?

FARIA: I began to compose seriously in the nineties. The fact that I was a student of Guerra-Peixe didn't make me into a nationalist, and he himself gave total liberty to go in whatever directions might be best for them. Guerra-Peixe didn't impose any kind of commitment to nationalism on his students. And so I began to compose very freely my concerto for saxophone and orchestra. It was played in Curitiba; it has been performed three times here in Brazil. In my style there is popular (folk) music, urban popular music and classical music, and I try to make a mixture. A little popular, a little classical, using techniques from concert music, even some folk music, but without doing research into folklore, because if we are realistic about it, folklore in Brazil is coming to an end. A museum piece.

MOORE: But the musical activity of the urban population...

FAIRA: Is more attractive, more present than of the population which is making folk music. I think one can make a mixture between elements from urban culture, which is very strong in this country, and all over the world, and the processes of classical music, because classical music by itself is heading for extinction.

The only successful classical music is music for films. That's the way things are in the United States.

MOORE: Earlier composers from Princeton (for example) might have had commissions from foundations. Now they may go to Hollywood to write film scores.

FARIA: With the sort of market that remains for classical music, what else can they do?

MOORE: Is the score for the saxophone concerto published?

FARIA: No. It's in *Finale*. There is someone who wants to record it now, an American.

MOORE: There are not many publishers for classical music in Brazil.

FARIA: Here in Brazil there is no interest in publishing classical music, not at the present.

MOORE: Does it need government funding?

FARIA: What we need is a culture. It is much easier to publish popular music than classical music here in Brazil. The well-known authors from the Baroque and Romantic, and a very small amount of modern music.

MOORE: Was the concerto recorded?

FARIA: It was recorded, and broadcast on television in Parana, on TV Cultura. This year I have had various pieces performed: a series of preludes and toccatas here in Rio by the pianist Ruth Serrão. There were performances of a flute duo in the U.S by Julie Koidin. Brasil Ensemble is going to record a piece of mine (*Tutu Marambá*) for chorus this week, a work that has already been recorded four times. This will be the fifth.

MOORE: And who are the lyrics by?

FARIA: The piece is based on folklore because it was written for a competition that I entered in '92, a competition for choral music in Belo Horizonte. I entered the piece, it didn't win any of the prizes, I heard that it had been given honorable mention, and now it will be on its fifth CD.

MOORE: Can you tell us a little about your esthetic? Atonality, 12-tone?

FARIA: Let's be real here, because I am a realist with his feet on the ground. I think that 12-tone music is dead and buried. No instrumentalists that I know have 12-tone pieces in their repertoire. Seriously. Perhaps some professors have a 12-tone piece for their students to study as a sort of museum piece. "A long time ago someone decided to write music like this. Isn't it ugly?" and they play it, and the students play it. The reality is this: no one plays 12-tone music any more. You can use atonality in film music, in music for television as a sort of special effect.

It's like a sort of linguistic code. If I suddenly decided that I wanted to make a speech, were I to be elected President of Brazil some day, would I make my inaugural speech in Chinese? What Brazilian would understand it? Well, Schoenberg decided to change the code, just like that, makes a series of 12 tones that is not going to be understood or assimilated by anyone, no matter who. It was a code imposed from outside. I think that every time the academy decides to come up with a new system of composition it goes far from the popular taste. It's a code that is a closed system; it would be very difficult for that code to be accepted.

MOORE: When a student begins to study composition, at UniRio, for example, does he need to be trained in 12-tone technique?

FARIA: Ordinarily the professor is going to train the student in this in some way, but chances are that he is not going to write 12-tone music, because his contact with the labor market, which is for popular music, is going to turn this composition student into an arranger. But not into a composer, because there's no space for that here.

MOORE: Could you say a little about foreign influences in classical music in Brazil? You have influences from the US in film, television, rock. Brazil has more cultural independence than many countries. In terms of classical music the United States is still to some extent a European colony. Do you see influences from figures like Steve Reich and Philip Glass in Brazil?

FARIA: Depends on the tribe, on the context. If you are in the university context you could say that there is an influence of Philip Glass, but not if these composers are working in a popular context. In some aspects these composers who are products of the universities are being influenced by the United States, or by Europe via the United States. People in popular music are directly influenced by American popular culture. I think our country is a culture of fusion, just as the United States is also a culture of fusion. You took various elements without any xenophobia, mixed them up and made your own thing. In Brazil -- although we mixed things together -- all of Brazilian popular music is a product of the fusion of European currents and African things -- made here, realized here, as soon as Brazilian popular musicians are only trying to imitate music from outside, without trying to make a fusion, this is bad, this is really bad. But I think this is a moment of transition for Brazilian music. Everything is very complicated, it's really a moment where there's a melting pot, a cauldron, we're only going to be able to see the results when we are farther down the road. Some composers don't know which way to go, they simply don't know. They are confused, thinking "Do I want to be a classical composer? What's in that for me? Should I be a popular composer, write arrangements, film music?" OK. But what kind of market is there for film music in this country? There isn't any television? Maybe there's a way out there. This is something that's not only happening here, it's happening in the United States too, as far as I know, in France, Germany, Italy. This turbulence is a worldwide thing, a product of the globalization that is already a reality.

It wasn't along ago that I saw a film with a ton of Chinese eating Big Macs in McDonald's in Shanghai. Wait a second, where am I? That's the way it is.

MOORE: In the US Brazilian music is still a recognized brand.

FARIA: With its own characteristics. What is going on with Brazilian classical music is a process of fusion and transformation that's not finished yet. Because of globalization there is a great deal of information for composers. I have already defined my own language based on urban music, taking advantage of urban elements that I know, and translating and stylizing those elements. I can't do research into folklore, because folklore is at an end, all over the world, or it is being transformed. It's still strong in some places in Brazil

MOORE: What sort of training do the students at UniRio have? Classical or popular?

FARIA: 80% popular and only 20% have classical training. That's the reality.

MOORE: So when they arrive at the university they have to absorb a classical music that is alien to them.

FARIA: They have to absorb in a very short period, and many times they can't do it. I don't know if this is happening in the U.S.

MOORE: Milton Babbitt told me that he has students that don't know the Beethoven symphonies.

FARIA: A hug for Milton Babbitt! The same thing is happening here, OK?

MOORE: When the students get their degrees, will they be writing classical music, popular music, film music?

FARIA: The majority of my students that graduate in composition, and only a few manage to graduate, head to arranging popular music. Very few decide to write classical music.

MOORE: For lack of professional opportunities.

FARIA: Being a composer in Brazil is not a profession. 80% of Brazilian composers are going to agree with me.

MOORE: But they are still composing.

FARIA: It's natural --throughout the whole world you find composers composing.

MOORE: But there are commissions for composers in Brazil.

FARIA: There are -- I am working on three.

MOORE: Please tell us about them.

FARIA: One is a trio for piano, oboe and horn, for the Trio Uni-Rio, another is a piece for bassoon and string quartet, commissioned by Elione Medeiros, the bassoonist. And the other is a brass quintet, which I am working on at the moment. All drawing on urban popular elements, in a more classical style, but without compromising the communication.

MOORE: Who commissioned your piece for flute and piano, Madrigal and Dance?

FARIA: Guerra-Peixe, to be published by Vitale. It was published by Vitale; I wrote it '85, '86. And although it's enjoyable, I don't know if I would write it that way now.

MOORE: It's very original, but at the same time easy to assimilate.

FARIA: I take care to write music for the people who are going to play and the people who are going to listen to it, so it can't have a language that is all its own. If you have a language that is all your own, you are not communicating. Do you understand? Communication is important. I wrote the piece here, and you enjoyed it there in the United States. If I use my own code, I am not going to communicate. That's how I think.

MOORE: Other projects for the future?

FARIA: I have a group that recorded all of the popular music of Guerra-Peixe.

MOORE: What's it called?

FARIA: "Take your finger out of the pudding."

MOORE: It played in Niteroi.

FARIA: It's going to play in Rio in August.

MOORE: How many popular pieces did Guerra-Peixe write?

FARIA: 50 or 60, more or less. And we chose seventeen to record. From the 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, even from the 80's.

MOORE: Are they known here in Brazil?

FARIA: Some of those are well-known chorinhos. There are marches, sambas, marches for Carnival. In addition to the element of variation which is common to jazz and popular Brazilian music, we will add development, which is something that I think that no one has thought of before.

Concert Review

Roots, Jazz, Romania

MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Dave Brubeck in *Back to My Roots: Music from Romania*. October 24, Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, CA.

Dave Brubeck became famous for trying to break a foursquare mold in American jazz, the perpetuation of the four beats to the measure found so commonly in American songs. It was his collaboration with Paul Desmond, begun at San Francisco's Presidio 59 years ago, that eventually led to the 1960 best-selling jazz single of all time, *Take Five*, a piece with five beats to the measure. Brubeck declared "It's time that the jazz musicians take up their original role of leading the public into a more adventurous rhythm." Have Americans come much farther since, beat-wise?

No. Yet in Romania, they say "Elementary, my dear Dave!"

When it comes to rhythmic adventurousness, the Romanian jazz musicians of the *Back to My Roots* concert made *Take Five* sound like *Take One*, and the flipside of the hit sound like *Rondo a la Twerp*. And all of this rhythm fest not far from the fateful Presidio in the Legion of Honor Museum theater. Two drummers, a bass guitarist, and five, seven, nine, twelve beats to the measure in combinations of threes and twos led the public in a toe-tapping, exhilarating, everything goes take on original Romanian melodies by the sultry contralto Teodora Enache and cimbalom virtuoso Marius Mihalache. The instant standing ovation at the end was lustily deserved.

Enache takes as her source of inspiration the "Romanian Piaff," Maria Tănase (1913-1963). Her velvet brazier of a voice would melt the steeliest Terminator. Mihalache's miraculous stick technique proved that the speed of light can be exceeded while he pounded, plucked and caressed his electrified, foosball-sized cabinet of piano wires through an incredible range of tempos and moods.

Good-cop drummer Lucian Maxim is the percussionist of the Bucharest Radio Symphony. He specialized in soft hand-beating of his instruments, and adding color with stroking the ribs of a Japanese wooden frog, tickling dangling native wood sticks and bowing the edge of a saw. Bad-cop drummer Ovidiu "Tandarica" ("The Kid") Lipan, initially looking as out of place as a retired bartender, turned into a flying-haired wild man without leash. He got literally out of hand when one of his sticks shattered during one of the many frantic sections, and was out-of-foot when it came to his floor-operated bass drum, which he could accelerate, it seemed, to several thousand beats per minute. A legend in his country for introducing Rock during the Stalinist 70s, Lipan spent 23 years in exile before returning to teach his craft to a freer generation.

Some numbers were "doinas," free lyrical songs of lament in a minor key, beginning with a vocal incantation, not unlike a call to prayer, and sounding sometimes like a far less rigid form of our blues. The encore, *Riuleandra*, was most striking, with the call performed at a surprisingly breakneck pace, then sliding into an acceptably bluesy lumber on the tonic minor key.

Others were based on the ciulandra, a circle dance that accelerates till its performers drop from exhaustion. In this case, the audience was dropping. As the ensemble deftly improvised and transitioned from tune to tune and as climaxes reached a fever pitch, one was reminded of the vortex of influences that have operated in the region, and the joys many an ethnomusicologist has experienced delving into folk sources from valley to valley. Pressing down now is the immense surload of Western pop, jazz, and technology that one must adapt with yet somehow still maintain individuality.

As the new Global Order and Media continue to penetrate the farthest reaches of musical traditions and blend all into a megacorporate whole, will the top tune of 2060 be "Take Gray"? Let us hope the rhythmic vitality of Romanian traditions will enrich our roots, rather than our foursquare fertilizer wither theirs.

Authors

MICHAEL MCDONAGH is a San Francisco-based poet and writer on the arts who has done two poem/picture books with artist Gary Bukovnik, *Before I Forget* (1991) and *Once* (1997), the former being in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, The Berkeley Art Museum, and the New York Public Library. He has also published poems in journals including *Mirage*, and written two theatre pieces -- *Touch and Go*, for three performers, which was staged at Venue 9 in 1998; and *Sight Unseen*, for solo performer. His critical pieces have appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Review of Books, 3 Penny Review, California Printmaker, Antiques and Fine Art, The Advocate, High Performance, and In Tune. He writes for The Bay Area Reporter and heads the Bay Area chapter of The Duke Ellington Society.

TOM MOORE is Music/Media Librarian at The College of New Jersey. He plays contemporary music in the Ronai/Moore Duo with fellow flautist Laura Ronai of the University of Rio de Janeiro; they have premiered works by Korenchender, Oliveira, Ripper, Hagerty, White, Rubin, and others. He also performs with the baroque ensemble Le Triomphe de L'Amour. He studied flute with Sandra Miller and Christopher Krueger.

Chronicle

October 5

American Composers Orchestra in John Adams's *Christian Zeal and Activity*, Alan Hovhaness's *Holy City*, Irving Fine's *Serious Song: A Lament for String Orchestra*, Charles Wuorinen's *Grand Bamboula*, Anna Weesner's *Still Things Move*, and Steve Reich's *Different Trains*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. ""This is among [Reich's] best recent works" [Alan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 10/10/03].

October 7

Death of Arthur Berger (b. 5/15/12), at 91. Boston, MA. "[Berger's] rugged, economically scored music straddles Neo-Classicism and Serialism . . . [He] established a sideline career as a thoughtful writer and critic. . . . Berger was part of the wave of Paris-trained composers whose work helped establish a contemporary American style in the 1940's . . . Like Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson, with whom he was associated, Mr. Berger was fascinated in his early years by Stravinsky's music, and he adopted aspects of Stravinsky's rhythmically pointed style, as well as the textural clarity that was central to Stravinsky's Neo-Classicism.. Mr. Berger's work maintained a gritty urbanity that gave the impression of greater abstraction, and held popularity at arm's length, unlike Copland and Thomson. He magnified that distance in the late 1950's by incorporating 12-tone techniques into his music, which retained its Neo-Classical contours. . . . With the composer Bernard Herrmann -- who had not yet made his name as a film-score composer -- Mr. Berger published the *Musical Mercury*, a magazine devoted to contemporary and traditional music. He edited the magazine for three years, while also studying composition with Walter Piston, Hugo Leichtentritt and Archibald Thompson Davison at Harvard, where he earned his master's degree in 1936. In 1937 he moved to Paris for two years of study with Nadia Boulanger . . . Upon his return from Paris in 1939, Mr. Berger joined the faculty of Mills College . . . where he also continued his composition studies with Darius Milhaud. He later taught at Brooklyn College, the Juilliard School, Brandeis University and the New England Conservatory, retiring from teaching in 1999.. Mr. Berger also contributed reviews to *The Boston Transcript* and *The New York Sun* in the mid-1940's, and joined Thomson as a critic a *The New York Herald Tribune*. In 1962 he helped found *Perspectives on [sic -- "of] New Music* . . . which he edited briefly. His autobiography, *Reflections of an American Composer*, was published by the University of California Press in 2002" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 10/10/03].

First New York appearance of Christoph Eschenbach conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra, in Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

October 11

NACUSA Concert. Pacific Sticks in Lori Griswold's *Our Life Sails on the Uncrossed Sea* and *This is the Garden*, Anne Baldwin's *The Frogs Are Singing in the Lily Pond*, Sondra Clark's *Summer Scenes from Childhood*, and Ilana Cotton's *Women's Voices, Women's Words* (with Laurie Amat). Art Center, Palo Alto, CA.

October 19

San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra in Mark Alburger's *Camino Real Prologue*, Anne Baldwin's *Veteran's Day*, Lisa Prosek's *Chilkat*, Jan Pusina's *Wind Quartet*, and Igor Stravinsky's *Histoire du Soldat*. Diablo Valley College Chamber Orchestra in music from Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera*, Maurice Ravel's *Mother Goose*, and Ralph Vaughan Williams's *The Wasps* and *Symphony No. 8*. Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, CA.

October 24

Opening of Walt Disney Concert Hall, designed by Frank Gehry. Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, in John Adams's *The Dharma at Big Sur*, Salonen's *L.A. Variations*, Witold Lutoslawski's *Cello Concerto*, and Silvestre Revueeltas's *Sensemaya*. Los Angeles, CA. "[The] musicians are thrilled with Disney Hall. . . . The 'guiding deities of [*The Dharma*] . . . were . . . Lou Harrison . . . and Terry Riley" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 10/27/03].

Item

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Clint Bajakian,
on composing for video games,
The New York Times, 10/9/03