

Friday, February 17, 2012, 8pm
First Congregational Church

Sérgio & Odair Assad, *guitars*

PROGRAM

Ernesto Nazareth (1863–1934) Eponina

Nazareth Batuque

Américo Jacomino (1889–1928) Abismo de Rosas (1927)

João Pernambuco (1883–1947) Interrogando

Luiz Bonfá (1922–2001) Manhã de Carnaval (1959)

Anibal Augusto Sardinha (1915–1955) Medley

Radamés Gnattali (1906–1988) From *Suite Retratos* (1958)
II. Valsa (Ernesto Nazareth)
IV. Corta-jaca (Chiquinha Gonzaga)

INTERMISSION

Sérgio Assad (b. 1952) Seis Brevidades (2008)

Chuva
Tarde
Feliz
Ginga
Cantiga
Saltitante

Odair Assad, *guitar*

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959) A Lenda do Caboclo (1920)

Villa-Lobos Chôros No. 5, “Alma Brasileira” (1925)

Antônio Carlos Jobim (1927–1994) Amparo (1969)

Jobim Stone Flower (1969)

Egberto Gismonti (b. 1947) Palhaço (1987)

Sérgio Assad Tahhiyya li Ossoulina (2006)

Cal Performances' 2011–2012 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Ernesto Nazareth (1863–1934)
Eponina
Batuque

Ernesto Nazareth is without doubt the first pillar of Brazilian music. He was strongly influenced by Frederic Chopin and started composing very early in life, his first published composition dating from when he was just 14 years old. Throughout his life, Nazareth worked as a professional pianist and became highly influential among such classical composers as Heitor Villa-Lobos, Francisco Mignone and Radamés Gnattali, to name a few. His oeuvre is quite large, with over 200 works written for piano. Many of his pieces have become standards in the Brazilian instrumental repertoire. Two of his works are featured here: the beautiful waltz *Eponina* and the energetic *Batuque*, based on an old Afro-Brazilian rhythm.

Américo Jacomino (1889–1928)
Abismo de Rosas (1927)

Abismo de Rosas (“Abyss of Roses”) is considered the first masterpiece to be composed for the guitar in Brazil. Its composer, Américo Jacomino, known as “Canhoto,” meaning “lefty,” was nicknamed after he once played guitar left-handed. He wrote *Abismo de Rosas*, a gentle waltz, when he was just 16, and it has been part of the guitar repertoire for generations. The Assads’ arrangement maintains the original compositional form while adding some extended harmonies and a slight jazz groove.

João Teixeira Guimarães (João Pernambuco)
(1883–1947)
Interrogando

João Teixeira Guimarães (aka João Pernambuco) was one of the pioneers of solo guitar music in Brazil. He was a member of the famous group Caxanga, and for many years actively performed as an accompanist. In addition to his activities in this field he greatly contributed to the Brazilian

guitar literature by composing many *chôros* and waltzes for solo guitar. The great maestro Villa-Lobos once said that Bach wouldn’t feel ashamed to sign Pernambuco’s works. Among the best known are *Sounds of Bells*, *Grauna* and *Interrogando*, a *jongo*. The arrangement for two guitars presented here opens with an introduction based on the first motif of the piece. Treated with mild dissonances and an air of fantasy, the introduction sets the mood for the subsequent energetic rhythm, based on fast, repeated notes.

Luiz Bonfá (1922–2001)
Manhã de Carnaval (1959)

Luiz Bonfá was one of the finest Brazilian guitarists of all time. A great soloist and a prolific composer, he is best known for the songs he wrote for Marcel Camus’s famous film *Black Orpheus*. In particular, his song *Manhã de Carnaval* (“Morning of Carnival”) gained such a reputation that it is considered to be one of the most important Brazilian jazz/*bossa nova* songs, helping to establish the *bossa nova* movement in the late 1950s. *Manhã de Carnaval* has become a jazz standard in the United States and has been recorded by many established artists. The version presented by the Assads is quite complex, using advanced chromatic harmonies and improvised sections that make it sound very much like a contemporary classical composition.

Anibal Augusto Sardinha (1915–1955)
Medley

Anibal Augusto Sardinha, better known as “Garoto” (“The Kid”), is an important composer in the history of Brazilian guitar. A phenomenal player, he influenced most of the guitarists who came after him and opened the door for the modern Brazilian guitar. Despite his short life, he composed many memorable guitar standards, such as *Lamentos do Morro* and *Jorge do Fusca*. His output is so important that the Assads decided to create a medley out of three of his best known compositions—the two mentioned above, plus

the beautiful song *Gente Humilde*. The medley is structured in a classical three-movement form of Moderato–Andante–Allegro.

Radamés Gnattali (1906–1988)
From *Suite Retratos* (1958)

Radamés Gnattali was one of Brazil’s elite composers. Extraordinarily prolific, he was a champion of bringing together the popular and classical sides of Brazilian music. *Suite Retratos* was written in 1958 and scored for mandolin, *chôro* and string orchestra. In the 1980s, Gnattali prepared a new version for the *chôro* group Camerata Carioca. With his new version, Gnattali revolutionized the writing of *chôros*. Treating the *chôro* group as a classical chamber group, the revision proved a great success. The Assads were taken by that version and asked Gnattali to make a reduction of it for guitar duo. The two-guitar version was a hit when it came out, and it has been played all over the world by many guitar duos and duos comprising a reed instrument and guitar. Tonight the Assads present the second and fourth movements of the *Suite*, which pays tribute to notable Brazilian composers of the past. In this case, they are Ernesto Nazareth and Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847–1935), respectively.

Sérgio Assad (b. 1952)
Seis Brevidades (2008)

Sérgio Assad’s *Seis Brevidades* were written in Chicago and Paris in 2008 and are dedicated to his brother Odair. They were not conceived with related musical materials, each piece being very different in character and based on different sources of Latin American music. Yet the whole set is unified as each piece depicts brief moments of a journey through a single day. Although not written at the same time, they were inspired during or by specific times of day. The first piece, called “Chuva,” is an impression of a rainy morning in the Chicago Loop. The second, “Tarde,” was inspired by a warm Chicago afternoon along the Navy Pier. “Feliz,”

meaning “happy” in Portuguese, expresses that state of mind when one is having a great day and genuinely enjoying oneself. “Ginga,” which means “to swing while walking,” was inspired by a walk along the River Seine. “Cantiga” is a song inspired by a Parisian dusk; and the last piece, “Saltitante,” which means “leaping,” was created after returning home, fleeing an evening rain, in Paris. The title “Brevidades” has a double connotation by implying the word “brief,” for the duration of each piece, but also the name of a Brazilian cupcake, suggesting that these pieces should be taken as sweet little “cakes.”

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)
A Lenda do Caboclo (1925)
Chôros No. 5, “Alma Brasileira” (1920)

Heitor Villa-Lobos is the most famous composer to come from Brazil and ranks among the top classical composers in the 20th century. His output is tremendous and covers all music styles except opera: symphonies, concertos, chamber music, and various solo instrumental and vocal works. He wrote one of the most important set of pieces for the classical guitar: a series of studies, preludes and a *suite popular*, in addition to a guitar concerto. His piano writing is very idiomatic and does not adapt easily to the guitar; however, two of his piano pieces work quite well in a two-guitar transcription. *A Lenda do Caboclo* and *Chôros No. 5* were adapted by Sérgio Assad with an interesting *scordatura*. One of the guitars is tuned with a low sixth string down to C-sharp and the fifth string down to G-sharp, while the other guitar has the sixth string tuned down to a low B. This tuning made the two-guitar version possible without compromising the original piano version.

Antônio Carlos Jobim (1927–1994)
Amparo (1969)
Stone Flower (1969)

Antônio Carlos Jobim represents one of the most sophisticated sides of Brazilian popular music. One of the leaders of the *bossa nova* movement born in the late 1950s, Jobim created a great number of unforgettable songs. Many of these songs are standards in instrumental music in Brazil, as well as in many other parts of the world. His most recognized tunes are those recorded by João Gilberto and Stan Getz in the early 1960s. Songs like “The Girl from Ipanema” and “Corcovado” became popular and jazz standards in the United States. However, Jobim composed many other works that are not familiar to the general audience. The Assads have created their own versions of a few of his lesser known works, including *Amparo* and *Stone Flower*.

Egberto Gismonti (b. 1947)
Palhaço (1987)

Egberto Gismonti stands as a music innovator in Brazil, having created his own style by mixing traditional Brazilian music with elements of jazz and classical music. In some ways his output echoes that of Ernesto Nazareth 100 years before. A very accomplished pianist, over the years Gismonti has written memorable themes that can easily be presented in any classical program. Also an innovative guitarist, he established a

unique approach to the instrument by using extended techniques on his eleven-string guitar. His piano music adapts very well to the guitar, and some of his piano scores became quite successful in guitar arrangements. The Assads chose to play his very famous composition *Palhaço*, originally scored for piano. Their version for two guitars keeps the form of the original composition, while making room for a long improvised section.

Sérgio Assad
Tahhiyya li Ossoulina (2006)

Sérgio Assad has dedicated most of his efforts to building a repertoire for him and his brother. Over the years, he has made numerous arrangements and transcriptions of everything from baroque to contemporary music. However, he has developed a parallel career as a composer, having written many works for solo guitar and guitar ensembles. His original compositions—such as *Aquarelle* and *Fantasia Carioca*, both for solo guitar—are played by guitarists around the world. *Tahhiyya li Ossoulina* (“Homage to Our Roots”) was written in 2006 and is dedicated to his ancestors. Sérgio and Odair’s grandfather immigrated to Brazil from Lebanon in 1895. There he married an Italian immigrant and built a huge family with 15 children. One of them, Sérgio and Odair’s father Jorge Assad, became an amateur musician and encouraged his children to become professional classical guitarists.



Fadi Kheir

BRAZILIAN-BORN brothers Sérgio and Odair Assad have set the benchmark for all other guitarists by creating a new standard of guitar innovation, ingenuity and expression. Their exceptional artistry and uncanny ensemble playing come from both a family rich in Brazilian musical tradition and from studies with the guitarist-lutenist Monina Távora (1921–2011), a disciple of Andrés Segovia. In addition to setting new performance standards, the Assads have played a major role in creating and introducing new music for two guitars. Their virtuosity has inspired a wide range of composers to write for them, including Ástor Piazzolla, Terry Riley, Radamés Gnattali, Marlos Nobre, Nikita Koshkin, Roland Dyens, Jorge Morel, Edino Krieger and Francisco Mignone. Now Sérgio Assad is adding to their repertoire by composing music for the duo and for various musical partners both with Symphony Orchestra and in recitals. They have worked extensively with such renowned artists as Yo-Yo Ma, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Fernando Suárez Paz, Paquito D’Rivera, Gidon Kremer and Dawn Upshaw.

The Assads began playing the guitar together at an early age and went on to study for seven years with Dona Monina. Their international career began with a major prize at the 1979 Young Artists Competition in Bratislava. Odair is based in Brussels, where he teaches at Ecole Supérieure des Arts. Sérgio resides in San Francisco, where he is on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory.

The Assads’ repertoire includes original music composed by Sérgio Assad and his re-workings of folk and jazz music, as well as Latin music of almost every style. Their standard classical repertoire includes transcriptions of the great baroque keyboard literature of Bach, Rameau and Scarlatti, and adaptations of works by such diverse figures as Gershwin, Ginastera and Debussy. Their touring programs are always a compelling blend of styles, periods and cultures.

The Assads are also recognized as prolific recording artists, primarily for the Nonesuch and GHA labels. In 2001, Nonesuch Records released *Sérgio and Odair Assad Play Piazzolla*, which later won a Latin Grammy Award. Their seventh Nonesuch recording, released in fall 2007, is called *Jardim Abandonado* after a piece by Antônio Carlos Jobim. It was nominated for Best Classical Album, and Sérgio went on to win the Latin Grammy for his composition, “Tahhiyya Li Oussilina.”

A Nonesuch collaboration with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg in 2000 featured a collection of pieces based on traditional and Gypsy folk tunes from around the world. In 2003, Sérgio wrote a triple concerto for this trio that has been performed with the orchestras of São Paulo, Seattle and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. In summer 2004, Sérgio and Odair arranged a very special tour featuring three generations of the Assad family. The family presented a wide variety of Brazilian music featuring their father, Jorge Assad (1924–2011), on mandolin and the voice of their mother, Angelina Assad. GHA Records has released a live recording and DVD of the Assad family live at Brussels’ Palais des Beaux-Arts. In the 2006–2007 season, Sérgio and Odair performed Joaquín Rodrigo’s *Concierto Madrigal*.

for two guitars and Sérgio's arrangement of Piazzolla's *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. The Assads were also featured performers on James Newton Howard's soundtrack for the movie *Duplicity*, starring Julia Roberts and Clive Owen. In the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 seasons, the brothers toured a project entitled *De Volta as Raizes* ("Back to Our Roots"), featuring Lebanese-American singer Christiane Karam, percussionist Jamey Haddad and Sérgio's daughter, composer-pianist Clarice Assad.

In February 2011, Odair performed his first solo guitar concert tour in North America, with concerts in New York and Montreal. Sérgio has written another concerto for his duo, entitled *Phases*. It was premiered with the Seattle Symphony in February 2011. In the meantime, he was nominated for yet two more Latin Classical Grammys in the Best Classical Composition Category for his piece for the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet and the Delaware Symphony, entitled *Interchange*, and for *Maracaípe* for the Beijing Guitar Duo. In fall 2011, five of the members of the Assad family—Sérgio, Odair, Badi, Clarice and Carolina—joined together again for another evening of new and favorite Brazilian works. Their tour included stops in Qatar, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands (to open the "Brazil Festival") at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and three concerts in Belgium with a finale at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

The Assads' collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma is ongoing. In 2003, the record *Obrigado Brazil* was released, featuring Rosa Passos, Egberto Gismonti and Cyro Baptista. Sérgio arranged several of the works on the disc, which won a Grammy in 2004. In 2009, the brothers were featured on Yo-Yo Ma's chart-topping release *Songs of Joy and Peace*, which features guest artists as diverse as James Taylor and Dave Brubeck. On "Familia," Mr. Ma plays Sérgio's composition alongside Sérgio's mother Angelina, sister Badi and children Clarice, Rodrigo and Carolina. The release topped the classical and mainstream *Billboard* charts and won a Grammy for Best Classical Crossover. In April 2012, Sérgio and Odair tour North America with Mr. Ma and pianist Kathryn Stott in a program of Latin American works arranged by Sérgio, as well as some of his original compositions, with concerts at the new Smith Center in Las Vegas and Chicago's Symphony Hall.

Future plans include performances of a new duo guitar concerto written for Sérgio and Odair by Clarice, to be premiered at the Pro-Musica Chamber Orchestra in Columbus, Ohio. In spring 2013, Sérgio and Odair plan another tour of their much loved trio with the inimitable Paquito D'Rivera, as well as a record release of their project, *Dances from the New World*.

Sérgio and Odair Assad are managed exclusively by Opus 3 Artists and play Thomas Humphrey guitars.