

## Brazil's Radamés Rides Again

Contributed by Daniella Thompson  
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A prolific composer throughout his life, Radamés Gnattali (1906–1988) is internationally known primarily for his suite “Retratos,” a composition in four movements honoring four choro pioneers, each in a different genre:

1. Pixinguinha (choro)
2. Ernesto Nazareth (valsa)
3. Anacleto de Medeiros (schottisch)
4. Chiquinha Gonzaga (corta-jaca)

Gnattali did not pay tribute to the veteran composers in name only, but incorporated the style and flavor of their creations into his suite.

The first movement, “Pixinguinha,” is an elaboration on the choro “Carinhoso”; the second, “Ernesto Nazareth,” draws on the waltz “Expansiva”; the third, “Anacleto de Medeiros,” builds on the schottisch “Três Estrelinhas”; while the fourth, “Chiquinha Gonzaga,” is inspired by the maxixe called “Corta-Jaca” or “Gaúcho.”

Radamés Gnattali & Jacob do Bandolim

Radamés began working on “Retratos” in 1956, in an arrangement for bandolim, conjunto regional, and string orchestra.

It was made for Jacob Pick Bittencourt, who recorded it in 1964, accompanied by an orchestra conducted by Radamés.

The Sambossa website offers both a letter about “Retratos” from Jacob to Radamés and mp3s of the second and fourth movements from that first recording.

In 1979—ten years after Jacob’s death—bandolinista Joel Nascimento invited several young musicians to form a group in order to play “Retratos.”

They were Raphael and Luciana Rabello, Celsinho Silva, and Mauricio Carrilho (all four from Os Carioquinas), plus Luiz Otávio Braga from Galo Preto.

The new group was baptized Camerata Carioca by Hermínio Bello de Carvalho and recorded the suite three times, the most recent being a reunion performance in December 2002, included in the CD *Ao Jacob, seus Bandolins*, where each movement features a different soloist on the bandolim.

Reminiscing about Camerata Carioca in a 2000 interview, Mauricio Carrilho ticked off the various adaptations of the “Retratos” suite:

The original recording was made in 1964 by Jacob do Bandolim, string orchestra, two guitars, and cavaquinho; it was released on CBS.

Fifteen years later, in 1979, Radamés transcribed the string orchestra part for a conjunto regional, whose lineup was two 6-string guitars, one 7-string guitar, one cavaquinho, and pandeiro.

In this version, the guitars played not only the harmony but the phrases that had originally been played by the cellos; the cavaquinho replaced the violins, etc. The recording of this version was released in 1980 by WEA.

Radamés created a third version for Joel [Nascimento], Camerata Carioca, and string orchestra, recorded on video for TVE.

Later he wrote a reduction for two guitars for the Assad brothers, recorded by them in Europe. This same version was recorded, with some modifications made by Raphael [Rabello], by Chiquinho do Acordeon, Rafa himself, and Dininho on bass.

In 1995, I did a version for O Trio (clarinet, bandolim, and guitar), that hasn't yet been recorded. As you can see, "Retratos" is the most adapted suite in the history of Brazilian music.

And that's without mentioning the transcription for flute and guitar, recorded by Duo Musica in Histoire du Tango (Classico 101).

The Assad brothers didn't make life easy for "Retratos" fans. They scattered the four movements of the suite among three separate albums.

"Ernesto Nazareth" and "Chiquinha Gonzaga" were recorded on Lo que vendrá (GHA 5256001; 1984/1993), "Anacleto de Medeiros" and another "Chiquinha Gonzaga" on Latin American Music for Two Guitars (Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch #79116; 1985/1993), and Pixinguinha is included in Alma Brasileira (Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch #79179; 1988/1993).

Fortunately, the Assads inspired other guitar duos, who include "Retratos" in their repertoire as a matter of course, just as they do Astor Piazzolla's Tango Suite. These duos pop up everywhere: the Slovakian Duo La Barré, the Swedish Duo Scatto, the American New Mexico Guitar Duo.

And now we have a shining new guitar duo, made up of the Kazakh-Australian brothers Slava and Leonard Grigoryan, both trained from a very early age by their violinist father.

Slava (born 1976) is Australia's leading classical guitarist, with several awards and CDs and numerous international performances under his belt. His younger brother Leonard, still in his teens, demonstrates astonishing technical assurance.

The duo's CD Play is a virtuoso tour de force, and their rendering of "Retratos" intimate and sensitive. The tone is warm and clear, the teamwork seamless.

Slava Grigoryan is apparently enamored of the popular music of Brazil. His latest album, with flutist Jane Rutter, is called Brazil and includes compositions by Pixinguinha, Zequinha de Abreu, Luiz Bonfá, Tom Jobim, Altamiro Carrilho, Ivan Lins, Djavan, and Jorge Ben Jor.

Slava & Leonard Grigoryan: Play  
(ABC Classics 472 824-2; 2003) 59:24 min.

01. Tango Suite: I. Deciso (Astor Piazzolla)
02. Tango Suite: II. Andante (Astor Piazzolla)
03. Tango Suite: III. Allegro (Astor Piazzolla)
04. Kolobok (Eduard Grigoryan)
05. Retratos: I. Pixinguinha [Choro] (Radamés Gnattali)
06. Retratos: II. Ernesto Nazareth [Valsa] (Radamés Gnattali)
07. Retratos: III. Anacleto de Medeiros [Schottisch] (Radamés Gnattali)
08. Retratos: IV. Chiquinha Gonzaga [Corta-Jaca] (Radamés Gnattali)
09. Evening Dance (Andrew York)
10. Day Dreams (Eduard Grigoryan)

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