



Programs notes

By Eduardo Ruiz

The great "Twelve Studies" by Hector Villa Lobos is considered one of the most renowned pieces of music for classical guitar and I would like to share the story about how the 12 etudes came to exist. This story is also how Andres Segovia, a virtuoso classical guitarist, met Hector Villa Lobos for the first time and it was told by Villa Lobos himself in a testimonial collected by the composer and musical producer Heminio Bello de Carvalho and reported by the guitarist Turibio Santos, and also it was confirmed by Andres Segovia himself in his article "I met Villa Lobos", written in 1958 for the magazine "Guitar review", edition 22 and published by the classical guitar society in New York.

Between 1923 and 1924, Villa Lobos was in Paris which was a city frequented by renowned guitarists and musicians, visiting different events and in one of those he was able to meet Andrés Segovia.

Their meeting was very abrupt since Segovia, without knowing that Villa-Lobos was present, was commenting to some guests that Villa Lobos's works were anti-guitar and that he used resources that were not for that instrument. It was then that Villa-Lobos interrupted Segovia saying: Why do you say that your works are anti-guitar. At that moment they began to argue until Villa Lobos took Segovia's guitar, sat down and started playing, ruining the quiet evening. The next day, Segovia visited Villa Lobos's house at night to continue playing and they become very close friends and that is when Segovia asked Villa Lobos to composed an etude for guitar and, because of their great friendship, he composed twelve: "Twelve Studies" for guitar. However, it is unknown why Segovia did not include a piece by Villa Lobos in his repertoire before 1938 in his concert at the Wigmore Hall in London.

The first draft was written between 1924 and 1928 and was called the "Guimarães" manuscript since it was donated by the heirs of the composer's first wife, Lucia Guimares. In the event that Segovia had not helped in the creation of the studies, the person who could have helped in his place would be the Spanish pianist Tomás Terán who was a friend of Villa-Lobos and was also the first interpreter of the Études since, commissioned by Villa Lobos, he played its piano transcription for the young Abel Carlevaro in the year 1943. Terán was with Villa Lobos when he presented a clean copy of the manuscript of the 12 studies and of the "Brazilian Popular Suite" to his publisher in 1928 and in 1929 Villa Lobos included his 4 piano transcriptions of 4 of the 12 etudes which were 3,5,10 and 12 in another contract with his editor. It is unknown why his publisher did not publish the studies in 1928, however it is presumed that it was because the two manuscripts were not considered a commercial success since they were very long (46 pages), very difficult technically and with a very new musical language.

In 1930, Villa Lobos returned to Brazil for some concerts and was unable to return to Paris due to a rebellion after which the dictator Getúlio Vargas seized power, remaining in the country until 1948, 3 years after the end of World War II



The second draft arose between 1947 and 1948 when Villa Lobos was resuming contact with his publisher after those years of exile and thought of publishing works for guitar, including the 12 studies. For this edition he also used the first manuscript "Guimares" but Villa Lobos made some modifications, 2 being the most important. First, he cuts 33 measures in the study number 10 and some changes in number 11. Villa Lobos intensifies his friendship with Segovia since he begins to include pieces by him in his concerts, however he only decided to include studies 1,7,8 and 11 despite the fact that he surely worked all 12. Because of this, Villa Lobos suggests publishing the studies with Segovia's fingerings, but he refuses saying that while he could offer a more appropriate fingering, it is better to use his indications.

In the publication made in 1953, Villa Lobos dedicated these studies to Andres Segovia in the publication made in 1953 and Segovia dedicates a few words to Villa Lobos saying that he has a great knowledge of the instrument and that if he has given any indication, it must be respected.

The chronological order in which the studies are presented is not, however, a pedagogical order, but rather an order that allows one to appreciate the different technical skills of the instrument such as arpeggios, slurs, polyphony, fast scales, trills, and glissandos. The first 2 studies are dedicated to arpeggios, the third to left-hand slurs, the fourth to playing repeated chords highlighting a note, and the fifth is an approach to polyphony. The sixth is about chords, the seventh presents many technical difficulties such as scales and trills while the eighth is full of dramatic changes. The ninth presents the same melody with a lot of ornaments while the tenth is very complex due to the rhythmic changes it has. The eleventh has a very intense character being, in my opinion, the pinnacle of the series and then ends with the study number 12 that presents many glissandos full of dramatic changes.

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