

A musical analysis of rhythmic, melodic, structural, and harmonic elements in Villa-Lobos' Gavota-Choro

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses a significant gap in Villa-Lobos scholarship: the absence of detailed analytical studies examining how the composer specifically integrated European and Brazilian musical elements in his guitar compositions. While existing research acknowledges Villa-Lobos's cross-cultural synthesis, it rarely extends beyond historical contexts to provide a systematic stylistic analysis of individual works. This research conducts a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Villa-Lobos's Gavota-Choro, examining precisely how the composer achieves the integration of European formal structures with Brazilian rhythmic and melodic idioms. The methodology employs multiple analytical approaches, including rhythmic analysis drawing on Sandroni's paradigmatic framework, harmonic analysis, and formal analysis adapted to account for both European and Brazilian structural principles. The analysis reveals Villa-Lobos's sophisticated integration techniques, including layered rhythmic structures, metric transformation, chromatic enhancement of traditional harmonies, and linear bassline construction. These findings contribute significantly to three domains: theoretical musicology, by demonstrating effective analytical approaches to cross-cultural musical synthesis; performance studies, by providing performers with deeper understanding of interpretative implications; and Latin American music scholarship, by illuminating how Villa-Lobos operationalized cultural integration in his compositional practice, establishing a model for national art music that honors both European traditions and indigenous expressions.

Keywords: *Villa-Lobos, Gavota-Choro, Brazilian classical guitar, cross-cultural musical synthesis, stylistic analysis*

Analisis musikal dari unsur-unsur ritme, melodi, struktural, dan harmoni dalam Gavota-Choro karya Villa-Lobos

Abstrak

Studi ini membahas kesenjangan signifikan dalam kajian Villa-Lobos: tidak adanya studi analitis terperinci yang meneliti bagaimana komposer tersebut secara khusus memadukan elemen musik Eropa dan Brasil dalam komposisi gitarnya. Sementara penelitian yang ada mengakui sintesis lintas budaya Villa-Lobos, penelitian tersebut jarang melampaui konteks historis untuk menyediakan analisis gaya sistematis dari masing-masing karya. Penelitian ini melakukan analisis gaya komprehensif terhadap Gavota-Choro karya Villa-Lobos, dengan meneliti secara tepat bagaimana komposer tersebut mencapai integrasi struktur formal Eropa dengan idiom ritmis dan melodi Brasil. Metodologi ini menggunakan beberapa pendekatan analitis, termasuk analisis ritmis yang mengacu pada kerangka paradigmatis Sandroni, analisis harmonik, dan analisis formal yang diadaptasi untuk memperhitungkan prinsip-prinsip struktural Eropa dan Brasil. Analisis tersebut mengungkap teknik integrasi canggih Villa-Lobos, termasuk struktur ritmis berlapis, transformasi metrik, peningkatan kromatik harmoni tradisional, dan konstruksi bassline linier. Temuan-temuan ini berkontribusi secara signifikan pada tiga domain: musikologi teoritis, dengan menunjukkan pendekatan analitis yang efektif terhadap sintesis musik lintas budaya; studi pertunjukan, dengan memberikan para pemain pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang implikasi interpretatif; dan beasiswa musik Amerika Latin, dengan menjelaskan bagaimana Villa-Lobos mengoperasionalkan integrasi budaya dalam praktik komposisinya, membangun model untuk musik seni nasional yang menghormati tradisi Eropa dan ekspresi pribumi.

Kata kunci: *Villa-Lobos, Gavota-Choro, gitar klasik Brasil, sintesis musik lintas budaya, analisis gaya*

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INTRODUCTION

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) stands prominently among Latin America's most significant composers, renowned for integrating Brazilian folkloric elements with European classical traditions (Appleby, 1988; Tarasti, 1990). His compositional approach reflects a deliberate fusion of disparate musical worlds, particularly evident in his guitar works, which exemplify characteristics of the elevated choro—a synthesis of Brazilian popular tradition and European art music (Garcia, 1997). The *Suite Populaire Bresilienne*, composed primarily between 1908-1912, represents a significant early exploration of this cross-cultural musical synthesis, with the Gavota-Choro serving as a compelling case study of Villa-Lobos's innovative stylistic integration.

Villa-Lobos's European influences were solidified during his time in Paris, where exposure to contemporary composers such as Igor Stravinsky proved instrumental in developing his distinctive musical language (Peppercorn, 1977). Upon returning to Brazil, these European influences merged with his innate understanding of Brazilian musical idioms to create his unique compositional voice. This period of creative synthesis corresponds with what Coelho and Koidin (2005) identify as a critical developmental phase in Brazilian classical music, where national identity became increasingly articulated through the integration of indigenous and European musical elements.

Recent musicological scholarship has addressed Villa-Lobos's broader compositional output, with notable contributions focusing on his large-scale orchestral works (de Lemos Almada et al., 2018), piano compositions (Zaparolli, 2019), and his role in Brazilian musical nationalism (Hess, 2023; Wright, 1992)). However, comprehensive analytical studies of his guitar works remain surprisingly limited, particularly regarding the detailed stylistic elements that constitute his unique compositional approach in smaller-scale works. While Garcia (1997), Djahwasi et.al. (2024) provides valuable historical contextualization of Villa-Lobos's guitar compositions, and Goldspiel (1996) examines performance practice considerations, there exists a significant analytical gap concerning the specific compositional techniques through which Villa-Lobos achieves stylistic fusion.

The Gavota-Choro exemplifies Villa-Lobos's innovative fusion, blending the European dance form of the gavotte—characterized by its moderate tempo, elegance, and balanced phrase structure—with the rhythmic vitality, melodic flexibility, and improvisational character of Brazilian choro (Wright, 1992). This composition occupies a critical position in Villa-Lobos's stylistic development, representing his early attempts to integrate European forms with Brazilian urban popular music traditions. As Kraniauskas (2005) notes, such cross-cultural integration became a defining characteristic of Latin American art music in the twentieth century, with Villa-Lobos serving as one of its most influential practitioners.

A significant gap in current research concerns the absence of detailed musicological analyses addressing how Villa-Lobos specifically integrated contrasting stylistic elements within his guitar compositions. While Mair (2000) provides a comprehensive study on Brazilian choro that effectively explores its historical evolution and cultural context, it lacks detailed analytical perspectives regarding specific compositional techniques employed by Villa-Lobos. Similarly, though Magalhães (2014) effectively highlights the historical synthesis of cultural elements, and more recent studies by Ferraz (2012) examine broader nationalistic themes in Villa-Lobos's oeuvre, detailed examinations of how specific compositional techniques represent this fusion within discrete pieces remain sparse. This analytical deficiency aligns with what Béhague (1994) identifies as a persistent challenge in Latin American musicology: the tendency to prioritize cultural-historical contexts over rigorous stylistic analysis.

The theoretical framework for this analysis incorporates multiple methodological approaches to address the multifaceted nature of Villa-Lobos's compositional practice. Drawing on De Lemos (2018) recent advancements in analytical methodologies for Brazilian national composition, this study will employ Neo-Riemannian analytical techniques to examine harmonic progressions that blend European functional tonality with Brazilian modal inflections. For rhythmic analysis, Sandroni's (2001) paradigmatic approach to Brazilian rhythmic structures will be integrated with traditional metrical analysis to illuminate how Villa-Lobos synthesizes gavotte and choro rhythmic characteristics. This methodological pluralism responds to Hess (2023) call for integrated analytical frameworks that can adequately address the stylistic hybridity characteristic of Latin American art music.

This stylistic analysis intends to address four particular research objectives: (1) Identify and analyse the rhythmic patterns in Gavota-Choro, scrutinising how Villa-Lobos superficially adapts

traditional European gavotte rhythms with Brazilian choro rhythmic structures; (2) Examine the melodic construction, concentrating on the interaction between European contrapuntal techniques and Brazilian melodic idioms, which may not be as innovative as claimed; (3) Analyse the formal structure, evaluating how Villa-Lobos modifies traditional gavotte form, perhaps more out of necessity than creativity, to accommodate choro characteristics; (4) Investigate the harmonic language, particularly exploring how Villa-Lobos integrates chromatic harmonies and modal inflections characteristic of Brazilian urban music within a tonal framework, questioning the originality of these integrations.

The originality and scholarly contribution of this research lie in its focused analytical approach to a specific composition that exemplifies Villa-Lobos's distinctive stylistic synthesis. By conducting a comprehensive examination of the Gavota-Choro's compositional elements, this study will illuminate precisely how Villa-Lobos achieves stylistic integration at the micro-level of individual works. This research addresses what Crawford and Gibson (2016) identify as a critical need in contemporary musicology: detailed stylistic analyses that move beyond broad generalizations about compositional approaches to examine specific technical strategies through which composers realize aesthetic and cultural objectives. Furthermore, as Dragomir (2021) argues, such analytical specificity provides essential insights for performers, enhancing interpretative understanding and contributing substantially to performance practices.

This research contributes significantly to three domains: (1) theoretical musicology, by developing and applying analytical methodologies appropriate for examining stylistic hybridity; (2) performance studies, by providing performers with deeper understanding of the structural and stylistic elements that inform interpretative decisions; and (3) Latin American music scholarship, by enriching understanding of how Villa-Lobos operationalized cross-cultural musical integration in his compositional practice.

METHOD

The methodological approach of this study is conducted based on score analysis. Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework for analyzing the four key stylistic elements of Villa-Lobos's Gavota-Choro include rhythmic fusion, melodic integration, structural aspects, and harmonic language. The integrated methodological approach is justified by the stylistic hybridity of Villa Lobos compositional style. In this respect, As Kraniuskauskas (2005) argue, traditional European analytical methods alone are insufficient for examining works that combine multiple cultural influences. The theoretical framework for this analysis incorporates multiple methodological approaches to address the multifaceted nature of Villa-Lobos's compositional practice. This pluralistic approach responds to Hueter (2011) call for integrated analytical frameworks that can adequately address the stylistic hybridity characteristic of Latin American art music. Drawing on Navis (2020) recent advancements in analytical methodologies for Brazilian national composition, this study will employ Neo-Riemannian analytical techniques to examine harmonic progressions that blend European functional tonality with Brazilian modal inflections. This approach allows for nuanced examination of harmonic relationships that may not conform strictly to traditional tonal models, providing insights into Villa-Lobos's innovative harmonic language.

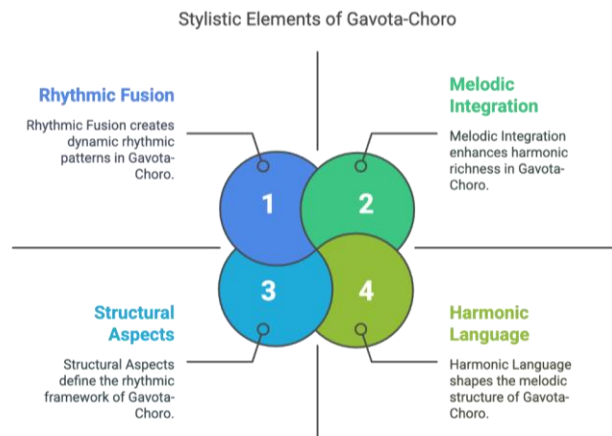


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of stylistic element of Gavota-Choro

The complete score of the Gavota-Choro was initially analyzed to identify all significant instances of stylistic fusion across rhythmic, melodic, structural, and harmonic domains. The musical examples were selected and analyzed through a systematic process in the form of representative sampling. In this case, a representative sampling selected based on demonstration of cross-cultural integration and representation of both European and Brazilian influences (Gavote and Choro musical elements).

For rhythmic analysis, Sandroni's (2001) paradigmatic approach to Brazilian rhythmic structures will be integrated with traditional metrical analysis to illuminate how Villa-Lobos synthesizes gavotte and choro rhythmic characteristics. This methodological integration enables examination of both the structural organization of rhythm and the culturally specific patterns that characterize Brazilian popular music. Rhythmic Fusion serves as a central compositional technique Villa-Lobos employs, deliberately integrating the dance rhythm of Gavotte with Brazilian polyrhythms to produce cohesive yet diverse rhythmic structures. Rhythmic Fusion (Element 1) emphasizes the blending of European dance rhythms, specifically the Gavotte's elegant and balanced patterns (Hudson, 1986; Jenne, 1973; Little & Jenne, 2009), with Brazilian rhythmic complexities marked by syncopation and polyrhythmic independence inherent in Choro (T. Coelho & Koidin, 2005; Körver, 2020; Mair, 2000). Villa-Lobos's compositional practice frequently juxtaposes or integrates these rhythmic traditions, resulting in dynamic rhythmic patterns distinctive of his works (Appleby, 1983; Navia, 2020).

Similarly, the technique of Melodic Integration reflects Villa-Lobos's approach of blending clearly defined European melodic patterns with Choro's fluid and ornamented melodies, creating melodic structures uniquely his own. Melodic Integration (Element 2) supports an analysis focused on Villa-Lobos's synthesis of clearly structured European melodic phrasing typical of the Gavotte with more freely ornamented, improvisational melodic idioms characteristic of Brazilian Choro. This integration contributes significantly to the harmonic richness and stylistic uniqueness of Gavota-Choro.

Structural Aspects highlight Villa-Lobos's intentional compositional choices in structuring the overarching form, reconciling European formal symmetry with Brazilian expressive freedom and improvisational characteristics. Villa-Lobos's careful control of structure represents his overall aesthetic approach to hybridization and cross-cultural dialogue (Flach & Antonello, 2011). Element 3, Structural Aspects, allude directly to Villa-Lobos's synthesis of European formal clarity—namely the Gavotte-form of binary or ternary structure—and structural spontaneity and versatility in accordance with the improvisatory traditions of the Choro. Such synthesis lies at the basis of the stylistic unity that defines Villa-Lobos's music.

According to Coelho (2003) formal analysis of Villa Lobos' works will utilize structural paradigms derived from European dance forms and Brazilian popular music traditions. This adaptation acknowledges the necessity for analytical flexibility when analyzing works that incorporate various formal traditions. This integration acknowledges the fundamental connection between compositional structure and performance interpretation, especially in pieces influenced by improvisatory traditions such as choro.

Finally, Harmonic Language illustrates Villa-Lobos's technical adeptness in merging the traditional tonal language of Western dance forms with harmonically richer Brazilian idioms, evidencing both his compositional sophistication and his culturally integrative intent. Harmonic Language (Element 4) highlights Villa-Lobos's use of traditional European harmonic frameworks, evident in stable tonal progressions typical of Gavotte, alongside the nuanced chromaticism and modality commonly found in Brazilian music traditions (Appleby, 2002). This sophisticated harmonic interaction shapes the overall melodic structure and enriches the musical texture.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual foundations of choro

The term "choro" presents significant definitional complexity within Brazilian musicology, reflecting its multifaceted cultural and historical dimensions. According to Mair (2000), "Choro is a general term with divergent meanings. The word may designate an instrumental ensemble (called a choro, the individual players known as *choroes*, singular *chorao*), the music played by this instrumental group or a soloist, or certain popular dance forms." This definitional plurality underscores the necessity of approaching choro not as a singular concept but as a multidimensional musical phenomenon.

Etymological debates further complicate the understanding of choro. Appleby (1983) traces the term to the Portuguese verb “chorar” (to cry or weep), suggesting that the genre’s original character was predominantly melancholic. He notes, however, that this association diminished as “fast, lively choros became common” in later developmental stages. This perspective is challenged ((Flach & Antonello, 2011; Körver, 2020)), who proposes that “choro” derives from “Choromeleiros,” an instrumental music fraternity from Brazil’s colonial period. Through linguistic simplification, the public eventually abbreviated the term to “choro” when referring to groups performing instrumental music. This alternative etymology emphasizes performative traditions rather than emotional expressivity as the defining characteristic.

Recent scholarship by Magalhães (2014) advances our understanding of choro’s origins, characterizing it as an improvisatory approach to performing European dance forms that emerged in late 19th-century Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian musicians transformed polkas, waltzes, and schottisches by incorporating local rhythmic patterns and melodic inflections, creating a distinctive musical synthesis. Palomino (2020) extends this analysis, positioning choro as a quintessential example of transcultural musical practice where European structural elements underwent significant transformation through Brazilian performative approaches.

Contemporary analytical approaches to choro have identified key musical elements that define the genre. Murray (2013) delineates four fundamental characteristics: syncopated rhythmic patterns (particularly sixteenth-note figures that create forward momentum), contrapuntal interaction between melodic lines, harmonic progressions blending functional tonality with modal inflections, and improvisatory flexibility within formal constraints. These elements appear prominently in Villa-Lobos’s *Gavota-Choro*, suggesting deliberate engagement with the choro tradition.

Of these characteristics, rhythm emerges as particularly crucial in defining the choro style. Moss (2020) emphasizes that “rhythm is the most important element in defining the choro. Rhythmic freedom has become a principal characteristic of Brazilian popular music in general, and is highly influenced by the indigenous instrumental and dance forms such as the *martelos* (hammers), *desafios* (challenges), and *cocos* (coconut), and by the African lundu and batuques.” This rhythmic complexity—combining Portuguese syncopation with indigenous Brazilian and African polyrhythms—produced what Garcia describes as a “free, subtle, fantasia-like quality” that distinguishes choro from purely European forms.

Gidal (2010) state at this rhythmic complexity further, contending that unique rhythmic patterns and instrumental techniques greatly shaped African cultural influences on Brazilian musical traditions. Brazilian choro is defined by the distinctive stylistic fusion produced by combining these African-derived rhythms with European musical structures brought by Portuguese colonists. For creative adaptation by concert composers such as Villa-Lobos, this synthesis of several influences created a distinctive musical identity that has shown especially helpful.

Beyond only its musical qualities, choro was a major socio-cultural phenomenon in Brazilian society. Dos Santos (2004) notes “the Choro has a kind of social structure. Those who heard the Choros perform also felt great respect for one another, a respect shared by the Choros themselves.” This respect cut across social and geographic barriers to build networks of gratitude among Rio de Janeiro and surrounding areas. With talented artists becoming “well-known legendary figures, admired from afar, even before any actual contact was made with them,” Santos’s account shows how choro promoted social cohesion.

Extending this socio-cultural study, Körver (2020) investigates how choro functioned concurrently as a vehicle for social integration in early 20th-century Brazil and as a means of cultural opposition. Choro events created venues where people from many social levels could engage via common musical appreciation, so momentarily transcending strict class divisions. Wright (1992) notes how choro’s incorporation of various Brazilian elements matched more general attempts to create unique national identities in Latin American art music, so tying this social purpose to nationalist cultural movements.

The transformation of choro from popular practice to formal compositional resource represents a critical development for understanding Villa-Lobos’s approach. Lima and Barbosa (2023) examine how classically trained composers, including Villa-Lobos, adapted choro elements within formal concert compositions, effectively elevating the genre from popular practice to art music. Their research identifies specific techniques through which composers translated improvisatory choro practices into

notated compositions, including stylization of rhythmic patterns, formalization of melodic gestures, and expansion of harmonic vocabulary.

This “elevation” of choro aligns with what Coelho and Koidin (2003) identify as a critical developmental phase in Brazilian classical music, when national identity became increasingly articulated through the integration of indigenous and European musical elements. Villa-Lobos’s *Suite Populaire Bresilienne*, and specifically the Gavota-Choro, exemplifies this integration, combining the European gavotte form with characteristic choro elements to create a sophisticated cross-cultural synthesis.

Despite these valuable contributions to understanding choro’s historical development and cultural significance, detailed analytical studies examining how Villa-Lobos specifically integrated choro elements with European dance forms remain limited. While Saeb (2017) provides a comprehensive historical account of choro’s development and Villa-Lobos’s relationship with the genre, his study does not offer detailed analysis of compositional techniques in specific works. Similarly, Tarasti (1990) examination of nationalist elements in Villa-Lobos’s music addresses choro’s cultural significance but provides limited insight into the technical aspects of Villa-Lobos’s adaptation of choro characteristics.

These limitations reflect what Béhague (1994) identifies as a persistent challenge in Latin American musicology: the tendency to prioritize cultural-historical contexts over rigorous stylistic analysis. This analytical gap underscores the need for detailed examinations of how specific compositional techniques represent cultural fusion within discrete pieces like the Gavota-Choro, moving beyond broad generalizations about Villa-Lobos’s compositional approach to examine the specific technical strategies through which he realized his aesthetic and cultural objectives.

Gavota

Gavota or the Gavotte, on the other hand, originated as a folk dance in the region of Brittany, France, during the late 16th and early 17th centuries, before gaining popularity in the courtly traditions of Baroque Europe (Little & Jenne, 2009). It is characterized primarily by its moderate tempo and graceful demeanor, typically composed in binary form and performed in duple meter, frequently notated as 2/2 or alla breve. As Kennedy (2013) explains, one distinctive rhythmic trait of the Gavotte is its characteristic upbeat phrasing; it consistently begins on the half-bar upbeat, creating a clear and elegant rhythmic identity. This distinct rhythmic structure contributes fundamentally to its refined character, positioning the Gavotte among the most stylized European dances during the Baroque period.

The rhythmic identity of Gavotte emphasizes clarity and symmetry, marked by balanced phrases that are typically constructed around four-bar structures, frequently arranged in pairs to form clear eight-bar periods (Hudson, 1986). Melodically, Gavottes often exhibit concise, memorable motifs with structured phrase symmetry and limited ornamental elaborations, distinguishing the dance from more heavily ornamented contemporaries like the Sarabande or Minuet (Jenne, 1973). This melodic simplicity enhances the elegance and clarity inherent to its courtly tradition, thus fostering an aesthetic that values transparency and controlled expression.

The Gavotte, while often adhering to ternary forms, occasionally appears in more elaborate Baroque dance suites, serving as a somewhat graceful middle or concluding movement (Buch, 1985). However, its structural limitations are evident, raising questions about its overall significance in the broader context of Baroque dance. It largely relies on clear harmonic progressions, dominant-tonic resolutions, and simplistic cadential patterns, adhering closely to the tonal conventions of the Baroque and Classical eras. This reliance on stable and predictable harmonic movement contributes to its polished and dignified character, which is essential to its dance origins (Warner, 1974).

In examining Villa-Lobos’s Gavota-Choro, it is essential to grasp the conceptual foundation of Gavotte, as it embodies the European tradition. Villa-Lobos’s compositional approach involved a deliberate synthesis of European formal traditions with indigenous Brazilian musical styles (Piedade, 2015). Recognizing the traditional rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic elements of Gavotte allows for a detailed comparison with the Brazilian Choro style, illuminating precisely how Villa-Lobos merges these diverse stylistic elements into a cohesive musical expression.

Particularly, pointing out Gavotte’s unique rhythmic quality and harmonic phrasing helps one to analyse with the syncopated, polyrhythmic, improvisational qualities of Choro. The structured harmonic progression typical of Gavotte is contrasted with the more freely chromatic and modally complex

harmonies present in Brazilian musical traditions. Therefore, understanding Gavotte in its musical and historical context directly aids in the investigation of stylistic fusion by highlighting the innovative way in which Villa-Lobos blends Brazilian rhythmic energy with European structural refinement in Gavota-Choro.

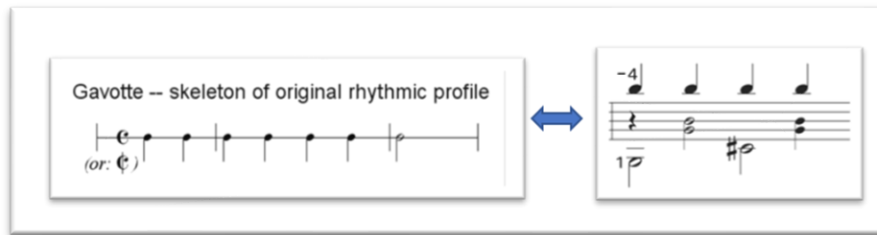


Figure 2. Integration of European gavotte rhythmic patterns with Brazilian choro characteristics

This figure attempts to showcase the opening measures of the Gavota-Choro, but it merely highlights Villa-Lobos's effort to merge European gavotte rhythmic patterns with Brazilian choro characteristics, rather than offering any profound insight into the composition. The opening exhibits the typical gavotte characteristic of starting on the second half of the measure, which is a hallmark of the traditional European dance form. Villa-Lobos, however, hastily introduces syncopated rhythmic patterns typical of choro, with the sixteenth-note figurations glaringly creating rhythmic tension against the steady bass line. The bass bonds to a conventional European rhythmic structure, while the upper voice awkwardly attempts to incorporate Brazilian rhythmic elements, resulting in a forced layering of overlapping rhythmic sensibilities.



Figure 3. Villa-Lobos's approach to contrapuntal texture with rhythmic complexity

Figure 3 illustrates Villa-Lobos's attempt to maintain multiple independent voices, each with its own rhythmic profile, though the execution may leave much to be desired. The lower voice adheres to a predictable rhythmic pattern that parallels European bass lines, ostensibly offering harmonic foundation and metrical stability. Meanwhile, the upper voice attempts to showcase characteristic choro syncopation with sixteenth-note groupings, but it falls short of creating the expected forward momentum and rhythmic interest. This juxtaposition highlights Villa-Lobos's approach of merging European structural elements with Brazilian rhythmic vitality, which raises questions about the originality of his work.

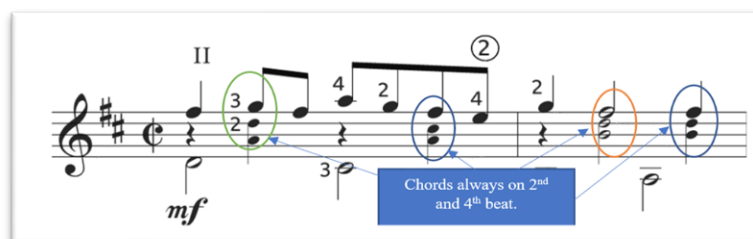


Figure 4. Villa-Lobos's rhythmic approach in the Gavota-Choro

Figure 4 shows a basic component of Villa-Lobos's rhythmic approach in the Gavota-Choro. This intentional chord placement produces a sophisticated syncopated rhythm that best illustrates his mixing of Brazilian rhythmic sensibilities with European formal structures. The notated section amply illustrates how Villa-Lobos uses a consistent pattern of chord placements counter to the main metric accents. Especially in 4/4 time, the strongest accents in traditional European music usually come on the first and third beats. As the blue annotation in the figure emphasizes, Villa-Lobos deliberately challenges this expectation by putting chords on the second and fourth beats instead.

This chord placement approach claims to have several compositional functions, but its effectiveness remains questionable. Initially, it generates a relentless syncopated rhythm that attempts to blend the distinctive rhythmic energy of Brazilian choro with the European gavotte form, but the execution leaves much to be desired. Secondly, it establishes a rhythmic pattern that supposedly maintains forward momentum, all while claiming to provide structural cohesiveness. Third, it creates a problematic clash between the actual musical accents and the metric framework, which is supposedly a defining characteristic of Brazilian popular music. The harmonic consequences of this method are, quite frankly, significant. Villa-Lobos attempts to shift the listener's attention by placing harmonically rich chords on typically weak beats, resulting in a rather forced rhythmic displacement. This method attempts to capture the performance techniques of choro musicians, who occasionally emphasise off-beats in a bid to create rhythmic interest and drive, though the effectiveness of this approach is questionable.

This passage exemplifies what Garcia (1997) identifies as a defining characteristic of choro: the sophisticated manipulation of rhythmic patterns that creates a distinctive Brazilian musical identity within European formal structures. The consistent placement of chords on the second and fourth beats transforms the traditional gavotte rhythm into something that is neither purely European nor purely Brazilian, but rather a sophisticated synthesis that represents Villa-Lobos's unique compositional voice. For performers, this excerpt highlights the importance of appropriate accentuation and rhythmic precision when interpreting Villa-Lobos's music. The deliberate emphasis on the second and fourth beats should be clearly articulated to convey the composer's intended rhythmic character while maintaining the underlying metric structure of the gavotte.

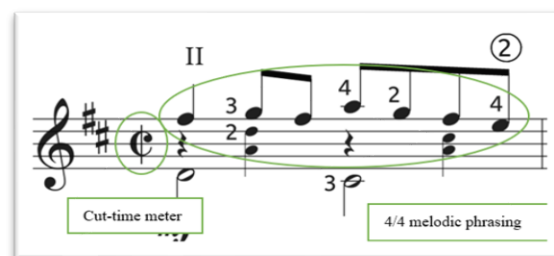


Figure 5. Melodic phrasing

This figure illustrates a sophisticated rhythmic technique employed by Villa-Lobos in the Gavota-Choro, specifically how his melodic phrasing creates a metric transformation from the notated 4/4 time signature to an implied cut-time (2/2) feel. The passage demonstrates Villa-Lobos's deliberate construction of melodic lines that suggest a different metric organization than what is indicated by the time signature. While the piece is notated in 4/4 time (as shown by the C time signature), the melodic phrasing, accentuation patterns, and grouping of notes create a strong sense of cut-time meter. This approach aligns with what Béhague (1994) identifies as Villa-Lobos's "rhythmic plasticity," wherein metric structures become malleable elements that bridge European and Brazilian musical sensibilities.

According to Piedade (2015), this technique of metric superimposition represents a key compositional strategy through which Villa-Lobos translated improvisatory choro practices into formal notated music. They note that "Villa-Lobos frequently employs metric ambiguity as a means of importing the rhythmic flexibility of choro performance into European formal structures. This observation is clearly demonstrated in the figure, where the green annotations highlight both the notated 4/4 time signature and the melodic phrasing that suggests cut-time.

This metric duality represents a key aspect of Villa-Lobos's approach to cross-cultural musical synthesis. By creating tension between the notated meter and the implied metric organization, Villa-Lobos demonstrates his sophisticated understanding of how rhythmic structures can serve as a vehicle for cultural integration. Villa-Lobos's rhythmic approach embodies his broader aesthetic goal of creating music that exists at the intersection of European formal structures and Brazilian expressive sensibilities. This perspective is particularly relevant to the Gavota-Choro, where the very title announces the composer's intention to integrate European and Brazilian elements.

Huether (2011) identifies significant performance implications arising from Villa-Lobos's metric ambiguity, noting that "performers must navigate both the notated meter and the implied metric organization simultaneously, allowing the tension between them to create the distinctive rhythmic character that defines Villa-Lobos's music. This observation highlights the practical significance of understanding Villa-Lobos's approach to metric organization, particularly for interpreting works like the Gavota-Choro that explicitly engage with both European and Brazilian musical traditions.

For performers approaching this passage, Carlevaro (1988) recommend maintaining awareness of both metric frameworks simultaneously, suggesting that effective interpretation of Villa-Lobos's guitar works requires a sophisticated understanding of how metric layers interact to create the distinctive rhythmic character that defines his compositional voice. This approach allows performers to effectively communicate both the European formal structure and the Brazilian rhythmic character that together define Villa-Lobos's unique musical synthesis (Walidaini et al., 2022).



Figure 6. The relationship between non-chordal melodic movements and chord extensions

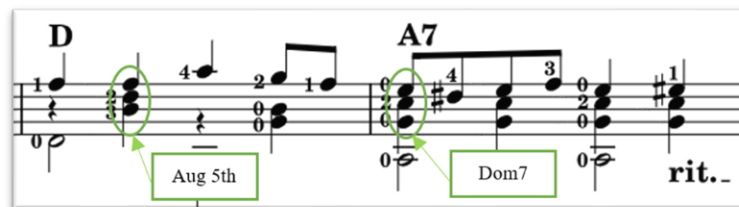


Figure 7. The relationship between non-chordal melodic movements and chord extensions

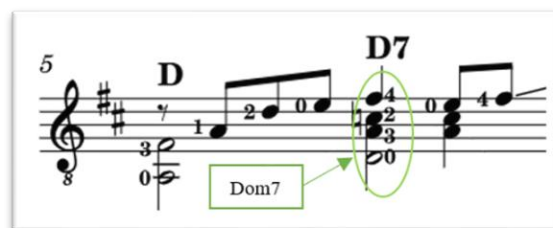


Figure 8. The relationship between non-chordal melodic movements and chord extensions

Figures 6, 7, and 8 illustrate Villa-Lobos's sophisticated approach to harmonic language in the Gavota-Choro, specifically his use of non-chordal melodic movements to initiate and establish chord extensions. The excerpt demonstrates how the composer employs melodic lines that incorporate non-harmonic tones to create extended harmonies, enriching the traditional harmonic vocabulary of the gavotte form with jazz-influenced sonorities characteristic of Brazilian choro. The figure highlights several specific instances of this technique. The Dom7 chord in the later measure shows Villa-Lobos's integration of dominant seventh harmonies, a characteristic feature of choro that distinguishes it from

purely European harmonic language. The circled notes function as both melodic passing tones and components of the extended harmony. Throughout the four-bar phrase, Villa-Lobos systematically incorporates non-chord tones into the melodic line that subsequently become absorbed into the harmonic structure, creating a fluid relationship between melody and harmony.

This approach to harmonic extension through melodic development represents a key aspect of Villa-Lobos's stylistic integration. As Navia (2020) explains, "Villa-Lobos's approach to harmonic language combines European functional principles with the extended harmonies characteristic of Brazilian urban music, creating a distinctive tonal palette that transcends conventional analysis. The suspended fourth and dominant seventh harmonies highlighted in this figure exemplify this integration. Huether (2011) specifically addresses this technique in Villa-Lobos's guitar works, noting that "Villa-Lobos frequently employs non-chordal tones that create momentary dissonance before being absorbed into the harmonic texture, a technique that reflects both European impressionist influences and Brazilian harmonic practices. This observation directly applies to the figure, where melodic movements establish extended harmonies that enrich the traditional gavotte form.

According to Coelho and Koidin (2005), this approach to harmonic language represents a defining characteristic of elevated choro, wherein European functional harmonies are extended through added tones and modal inflections that reflect the improvisatory nature of Brazilian urban music. Villa-Lobos's systematic incorporation of these extended harmonies demonstrates his sophisticated understanding of both European and Brazilian harmonic principles.

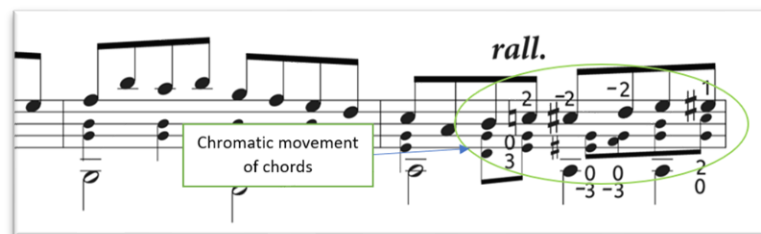


Figure 9. Chromatic melodic movement

Figure 9 demonstrates Villa-Lobos's sophisticated approach to harmonic language in the Gavota-Choro, particularly his use of chromatic chord movements to enhance cadential progressions. The passage reveals how Villa-Lobos enriches traditional European cadential formulas with chromatic voice leading derived from Brazilian harmonic practices, creating a distinctive approach to tonal resolution. The figure highlights a specific cadential passage where Villa-Lobos employs chromatic voice leading to create a more elaborate perfect cadence. The initial section establishes a harmonically stable foundation before introducing chromatic movement. The central portion, labelled "Chromatic movement of chords," shows Villa-Lobos's systematic introduction of chromatic alterations that create harmonic tension. The final section (circled in green) demonstrates how these chromatic alterations resolve into the cadential harmony, with specific fret numbers indicating precise voice leading through semitone movements. The rallentando marking further emphasizes the cadential function of this passage, creating both rhythmic and harmonic resolution simultaneously.

This chromatic approach to cadential harmony represents a key aspect of Villa-Lobos's harmonic innovation. Dragomir (2021) identifies this technique as characteristic of Villa-Lobos's guitar writing, noting that "Villa-Lobos frequently enhances traditional cadential formulas through chromatic voice leading, creating more elaborate harmonic trajectories that maintain functional clarity while introducing coloristic elements. This observation directly applies to the passage shown, where chromatic movement enriches the cadential progression without undermining its functional purpose. Barbosa (2024) analyzes similar chromatic techniques in Villa-Lobos's works, stating that "Villa-Lobos's chromatic voice leading often follows patterns that extend European harmonic practices while incorporating inflections characteristic of Brazilian urban music. This combination of European functional principles with Brazilian chromatic sensibilities exemplifies Villa-Lobos's distinctive approach to harmonic language.

According to Wright (1992), these chromatic cadential elaborations reflect Villa-Lobos's engagement with early twentieth-century harmonic innovations while maintaining connections to

Brazilian musical traditions. Saeb (2017) notes that “Villa-Lobos’s cadential formulas often incorporate chromatic elements that suggest influence from both European impressionism and the harmonic practices of Brazilian choro musicians. This dual influence is clearly evident in the passage shown, where traditional cadential function is enhanced through chromatic voice leading.

Additionally, the *rallentando* marking indicates that Villa-Lobos intended for performers to highlight this chromatic enrichment through rhythmic flexibility. Hoffman (2023) observe that Villa-Lobos frequently employs tempo modifications to emphasize significant harmonic events, particularly cadential passages enhanced by chromatic voice leading. This observation suggests that performers should implement the *rallentando* in a way that enhances the harmonic richness of the passage.

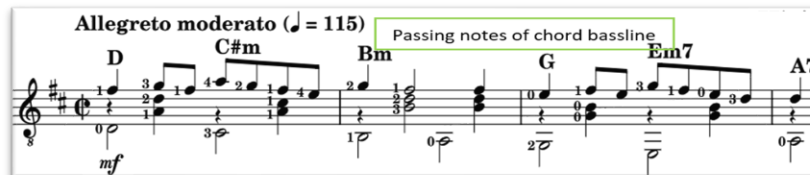


Figure 10. Passing note on bassline

Figure 10 demonstrates Villa-Lobos’s sophisticated approach to bass voice construction in the Gavota-Choro, particularly his use of passing notes in the bassline to create smooth voice leading between harmonically distinct sections. The passage illustrates how Villa-Lobos enriches traditional chord progressions through linear bass movement, a technique that combines European contrapuntal practices with Brazilian harmonic sensibilities. The figure presents several key elements of Villa-Lobos’s bassline construction. The harmonies are clearly labeled (D, C#m, Bm, G, Em7), showing a progression that moves through different tonal areas. The bassline employs stepwise motion between these harmonically distinct chords, as highlighted by the green annotation indicating “Passing notes of chord bassline”. The tempo marking “Allegretto moderato (♩= 115)” indicates a moderate pace that allows these bassline movements to be heard clearly while maintaining forward momentum. Fret numbers below the staff provide specific technical information for performers, emphasizing the importance of proper execution of this bassline movement.

This approach to bassline construction represents a significant aspect of Villa-Lobos’s harmonic language. According to Tarasti (1990) Villa-Lobos frequently employs linear bass motion to connect harmonically distant chords, creating a sense of continuity across diverse tonal areas. This technique is clearly demonstrated in the present example, where the bassline creates smooth connections between harmonies that might otherwise sound disjointed (H. Djahwasi et al., 2023). This approach as characteristic of Villa-Lobos’s adaptation of European voice-leading principles to Brazilian harmonic contexts, noting that Villa-Lobos’s basslines often function both harmonically and contrapuntally, supporting the harmonic structure while maintaining independent melodic interest. This dual function is evident in the excerpt, where the bass creates both harmonic foundation and linear motion.

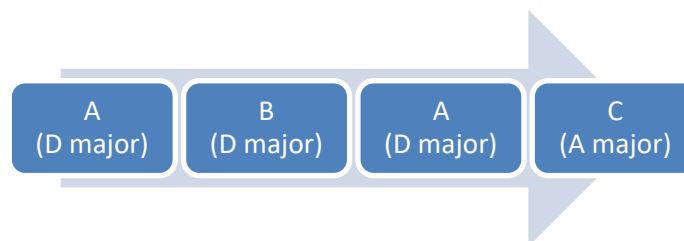


Figure 11. Music structure

Figure 11 illustrates the formal structure of Villa-Lobos’s Gavota-Choro, revealing his integration of traditional European dance form with Brazilian choro structural principles. The diagram shows an A-B-A-C structure with accompanying key areas, demonstrating Villa-Lobos’s sophisticated approach to musical architecture. The A-B-A-C form displayed in the diagram represents a significant point of convergence between European and Brazilian formal traditions. This structure combines elements of classical rounded binary form (typical of European gavottes) with the rondo-like sectional

approach characteristic of traditional choro. The structure shows four aspects. The first movement demonstrate an initial A section in D major establishing the primary thematic material. The second movement show contrasting B section, also in D major but with different thematic content. The third movement articulate a return to the A section, maintaining tonal stability in D major. Finally the four movement initiate a concluding C section that modulates to A major, creating harmonic contrast.

CONCLUSION

Villa-Lobos achieves this metric transformation through three specific compositional techniques. The first, the melodic contour emphasizes two main pulses per measure rather than four, with stronger melodic movements and directional changes occurring at half-measure intervals. The second, the placement of harmonic changes supports this dual metric organization, with significant harmonic movement occurring at the half-measure level. The third, the articulation patterns and note groupings reinforce the sense of two main beats per measure rather than four, creating a broader metric pulse than what is literally notated.

Sandroni (2001) analyzes similar rhythmic phenomena in Brazilian music, identifying what he terms “rhythmic paradigms” that create metric ambiguity through the interaction of contrasting metric layers. He argues that this approach represents a fundamental characteristic of Brazilian musical expression, particularly in urban genres like choro that evolved from European dance forms. Sandroni specifically notes that the simultaneous presence of contrasting metric frameworks creates a distinctive rhythmic tension that characterizes Brazilian adaptations of European dance forms.

This metric duality produces what Flach and Antonello (2011) describe as a “rhythmic counterpoint” wherein multiple metric layers interact to create a complex temporal organization. They argue that Villa-Lobos’s sophisticated manipulation of meter represents a significant innovation in his adaptation of Brazilian rhythmic sensibilities within European formal structures, noting that “Villa-Lobos’s approach to metric organization transcends simple syncopation, creating instead a multidimensional rhythmic texture that honors both European and Brazilian traditions.

The harmonic approach of Gavota-Choro exemplifies Villa-Lobos’s broader strategy for cultural synthesis. By extending European functional harmony through techniques derived from Brazilian musical practices, Villa-Lobos creates a distinctive harmonic language that honors both traditions while establishing something entirely new. The systematic use of non-chordal melodic movements to initiate chord extensions represents not merely a technical device but a fundamental aspect of Villa-Lobos’s cross-cultural musical integration.

Future research would benefit from comparative analyses between Villa-Lobos’s Gavota-Choro and other works within the Suite Populaire Bresilienne. Such comparisons would reveal how consistently Villa-Lobos employed the identified techniques across different dance forms and stylistic contexts.

While this analysis has identified several technical aspects of Villa-Lobos’s compositional approach, further research specifically addressing performance practice considerations would be valuable. This could include historical investigations of early performances, analysis of recordings by significant interpreters, and development of specific technical approaches for effectively realizing Villa-Lobos’s cross-cultural synthesis in performance.

The current analysis employs traditional music-theoretical approaches supplemented by contextual understanding of Brazilian musical traditions. Future research could benefit from the application of additional analytical methodologies, particularly those developed specifically for examining cross-cultural musical integration. Neo-Riemannian approaches, as suggested by De Lemos et al. (2018), could provide deeper insights into Villa-Lobos’s harmonic language, while computational analyses might reveal additional patterns in his rhythmic and melodic construction.

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