

## Pedagogical Analysis and Exploration of the Piano Based on Three Pieces from *Guia Prático Para Piano* by Heitor Villa-Lobos

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### Abstract

This article presents a pedagogical proposal for piano training based on *Guia Prático Para Piano* by Heitor Villa-Lobos, grounded in the constructivist approach to education, and more specifically, in the principles of meaningful learning. From a critical and contextualized perspective, this study problematizes the centrality of the Eurocentric canon in piano teaching and foregrounds the Latin American repertoire as a core axis of training. The study adopts a mixed methodological approach of a projective nature, integrating score analysis, the administration of surveys to piano teachers and students, and the conduct of semi-structured interviews with piano instructors. The analysis focuses on three pieces from *Guia Prático Para Piano*—"Pobre Cega", "A pombinha voou", and "Senhora Dona Viúva"—from which interpretative inferences are drawn and a classification by levels of difficulty within the intermediate level is proposed. The results demonstrate a positive assessment of Latin American piano repertoire and of Villa-Lobos's work, as well as the need for systematized pedagogical guidelines for its study and implementation. It is concluded that *Guia Prático Para Piano* offers a pedagogically structured repertoire that fosters interpretive development from a culturally situated perspective on piano teaching.

**Keywords:** Meaningful learning; Piano pedagogy; Music education; Latin American repertoire; Heitor Villa-Lobos; Decoloniality.

### INTRODUCTION

In piano teaching, European repertoire has predominated in academic training, in many cases relegating Latin American repertoire. This tendency reflects not only a deeply rooted pedagogical legacy, but also a lack of appreciation of regional, national, and Latin American repertoire on the part of teachers and students. Frequently, what is foreign is prioritized over what is local or one's own, which contributes to a disconnection between the training process and the cultural context of Latin American students. Daza (2020, 7) argues that it is difficult to find "sufficient material on methods, manuals, or guides related to folk music, since it is

not the primary interest of musicians”. Furthermore, the limited systematization of the Latin American repertoire in comparison with the Eurocentric repertoire represents a significant obstacle for teachers, who find it difficult to select works that fit the technical and interpretive level of their students.

For Santos-Gama (2022, 13), “the training of the pianist in Latin America is fundamentally connected to European traditions.” He highlights the importance of including Latin American repertoire as an essential part of the student’s technical, interpretive, and sociocultural development. Although in the last decade there has been a growing interest in the study of the repertoire of this region, a notable lack of systematic research that addresses it from a pedagogical and formative perspective still persists. In the same vein, Castillo (2019, 1) underscores the urgency of promoting studies on Latin American music, noting that “the need for studies on the musicological issue in Latin America is a reality that must be addressed from all disciplines that can contribute to the study of the musical phenomenon.” This statement reveals a persistent problem: the scarcity of pedagogical proposals that incorporate native repertoire in a structured and gradual manner into teaching–learning processes.

One of the factors contributing to this situation is the lack of systematization of the Latin American repertoire in comparison with the Eurocentric repertoire, which has historically been researched, edited, and categorized according to levels of difficulty. On the contrary, the Latin American repertoire continues to be marginalized in academic and pedagogical literature, which hinders its effective inclusion in training programs. As Daza (2020, 9) states, “traditional music must be brought closer to students and to the academic sphere, those boundaries of unfamiliarity and paradigms must be broken, and sufficient importance must be given to folk music.”

In response to this situation, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the solution of this problem through the construction of a formative proposal for piano students based on *Guia Prático Para Piano* by Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. In this article, we analyze and classify a selection of pieces from the aforementioned repertoire according to progressive levels of technical–interpretive difficulty in order to facilitate their integration into pedagogical contexts, thereby promoting a more contextualized and culturally relevant approach to piano teaching.

The scarcity of research that systematizes the Latin American piano repertoire has contributed significantly to the lack of awareness of its formative possibilities within the music education community. This gap not only affects repertoire selection but also generates a certain insecurity regarding its performance, hindering its incorporation into the teaching–learning process. In this way, the use of the Latin American repertoire continues to be limited despite its technical, expressive, and cultural richness.

The absence of a native repertoire in piano training also generates a decontextualized form of teaching based on aesthetic patterns that do not represent the sociocultural reality of Latin American students. This distancing prevents students from recognizing and valuing the particularities of their own sound environments, thus limiting the construction of a musical

identity rooted in their territory. Integrating Latin American repertoire would make it possible to reverse this situation by connecting curricular content with the experiences, traditions, and soundscapes of their context.

Latin America has composers who have developed significant musical output using folkloric materials from the continent. Among them, Heitor Villa-Lobos stands out, as he is not only internationally recognized for his work but also for his commitment to music education. His *Guia Prático Para Piano* represents a synthesis of the academic and popular and constitutes a valuable pedagogical tool for integrating Latin American repertoire into piano training from a technically and culturally relevant perspective.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The proposal developed in this study is grounded in a constructivist pedagogical approach that conceives learning as an active and contextualized process. According to Ortiz Granja (2015, 101), “the objective of teaching, from this perspective, is for students to construct meaningful knowledge; to achieve cognitive understanding in order to promote conceptual change, considering the emotional conditions of both the educator and the student.” This pedagogical approach highlights the importance of providing tools and strategies that function as scaffolding (support) for the construction of knowledge, thereby promoting the active participation of students in their own learning process.

Within constructivism, social, cultural, and affective factors play central roles in cognitive development. In this regard, Freire (1996, 15) emphasized the importance of “establishing a necessary ‘intimacy’ between the fundamental curricular knowledge for students and the social experience they have as individuals”. Therefore, recognizing the cultural particularities of students not only enriches the educational process but also expresses a pedagogical stance that is respectful of and committed to their reality.

The Latin American piano repertoire embodies these cultural and social characteristics by integrating folkloric elements that reflect the diversity of the continent. Therefore, beginning piano training using this repertoire can foster meaningful and relevant learning. Villa-Lobos, in particular, represents an exemplary model of integration between academic and popular. Using his repertoire instead of resorting to the traditional Eurocentric approach allows Latin American students to move toward an authentic and contextualized form of learning from a constructivist perspective. In the words of Ortiz Granja (2015, 100), “learning is an idiosyncratic construction: it is conditioned by the set of physical, social, cultural, and even economic and political characteristics of the subject who learns.”

The research from which this article was derived was grounded in the model of meaningful learning proposed by David Ausubel (1918–2008), who posited that knowledge is constructed when students are able to relate new information to concepts already existing in their cognitive structure. In this sense, learning becomes more enduring and functional when coherently integrated with prior knowledge.

Meaningful learning has been defined as learning that allows for the acquisition and retention of knowledge that becomes incorporated into a student’s cognitive structure and can be used appropriately throughout their personal, social, and academic development (Montaña, 2015, cited in García, 2019, 33). Therefore, learning materials must offer conceptually relevant content and connect with the student’s prior experience so that they can generate meaningful conceptual networks.

According to Ausubel (2002, 25), “meaningful learning based on reception primarily involves the acquisition of new meanings from the learning material presented.” Consequently, the teacher’s role is essential, as they must select content that activates prior knowledge, present it in a structured manner, and create conditions that promote the construction of meaning.

Within this perspective, the work of the music educator is particularly complex. As Viera (2003, 42) states, “the task of the educator or teacher is neither quick nor easy, but it is essential if meaningful learning is to be achieved among students.” In this context, the teacher must not only transmit information, but also act as a cultural mediator, motivating students to reflect on the musical richness of their environment.

In particular, the Latin American repertoire represents a valuable pedagogical tool for establishing meaningful connections between musical content and students’ cultural identity. It is the teacher’s responsibility to make visible that in Latin America, there exists sonic diversity represented by numerous composers who integrate folkloric elements into their works, among them Heitor Villa-Lobos. His legacy makes it possible to articulate the technical teaching of piano with a deeper understanding of the continent’s cultural heritage.

## METHODOLOGY

The research that gave rise to this article adopted a mixed approach, as it combines quantitative and qualitative strategies to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon studied. On one hand, the qualitative approach was applied through semi-structured interviews and document analysis; on the other hand, the quantitative approach was implemented through the administration of structured surveys. This methodological integration made it possible to triangulate the data, support the validity of the findings, and generate a contextualized pedagogical proposal.

Regarding the type of study, a projective approach is adopted, understood as one which seeks to propose practical solutions to identified problems. According to Córdoba and Monsalve (n.d., 3), this type of research “consists of finding solutions to practical problems; it is concerned with how things should be in order to achieve objectives and function properly.” In this case, the central problem is the limited use of the Latin American repertoire in piano training. In response, a formative pathway is proposed to facilitate the progressive inclusion of this repertoire in piano teaching, taking the *Guia Prático Para Piano* by Heitor Villa-Lobos as its guiding axis.

The population consisted of Latin American piano students and teachers, specifically Colombian and Brazilian students and teachers. The sample was selected intentionally and conveniently, prioritizing the participants’ experience with the piano repertoire and the geographical diversity of their educational contexts. Although the number of participants was not large (35 students and 15 teachers surveyed; two teachers interviewed), it was considered sufficient for an exploratory approach to the topic, given the specificity of the object of study. For the administration of the surveys, students and teachers with different levels of experience were included; however, in the case of the interviews, only two instructors with recognized experience in piano performance and teaching were selected.

The semi-structured interviews conducted with these two teachers followed a previously designed guide that made it possible to maintain a systematic approach and facilitate the comparison of their narratives, focusing on exploring their perceptions regarding the inclusion of the Latin American repertoire—particularly that of Villa-Lobos—in piano training.

Additionally, differentiated surveys were designed and administered to students and teachers using Google Forms. The surveys were sent by email and contained closed-ended and multiple-choice questions aimed at identifying the frequency of use of the Latin American repertoire, its evaluations, and the willingness to incorporate works by Villa-Lobos into study programs.

Another key technique was documentary analysis, which focused on the scores of *Guia Prático Para Piano* provided by the Villa-Lobos Museum. From this corpus, three works were selected based on their musical relevance and pedagogical potential: “Pobre Cega”, “A Pombinha Voou”, and “Senhora Dona Viúva”. The selection considered criteria such as technical difficulty, expressiveness, and representative stylistic elements.

Likewise, from the set of pieces that make up *Guia Prático Para Piano*, those that presented a similar degree of technical and musical difficulty among themselves were excluded. This decision responded to the need to ensure a more representative comparative analysis, one that would demonstrate different levels of complexity within the intermediate range to which the repertoire of the *Guia* belongs. In this way, the aim was to select pieces that, within the general intermediate level, offered differentiated nuances in their degree of difficulty.

The analysis of these pieces was based on three dimensions: music for pedagogical purposes, intertextual, and historical-cultural. This made it possible to identify the technical, stylistic, and contextual aspects that supported their classification by levels of difficulty. Based on this analysis, interpretive guidelines and pedagogical suggestions were proposed for each study, thus constructing a progressive formative pathway.

In addition to contributing to the preservation of Latin American piano literature as a cultural heritage, this research proposes a concrete tool for its didactic integration. In this way, it contributes to pianists’ technical and expressive training, as well as to the strengthening of their cultural identity through repertoire.

## RESULTS

Next, the results obtained during the data collection process are presented and analyzed. These constitute the fundamental basis for supporting the decisions made in the design of the pedagogical proposal oriented toward the training of pianists based on *Guia Prático Para Piano* by Latin American composer Heitor Villa-Lobos.

### Surveys

A questionnaire was designed for the students that included closed- and open-ended questions; the same procedure was applied to the survey addressed to the teachers. To facilitate the understanding and analysis of the responses to the closed-ended questions, selected

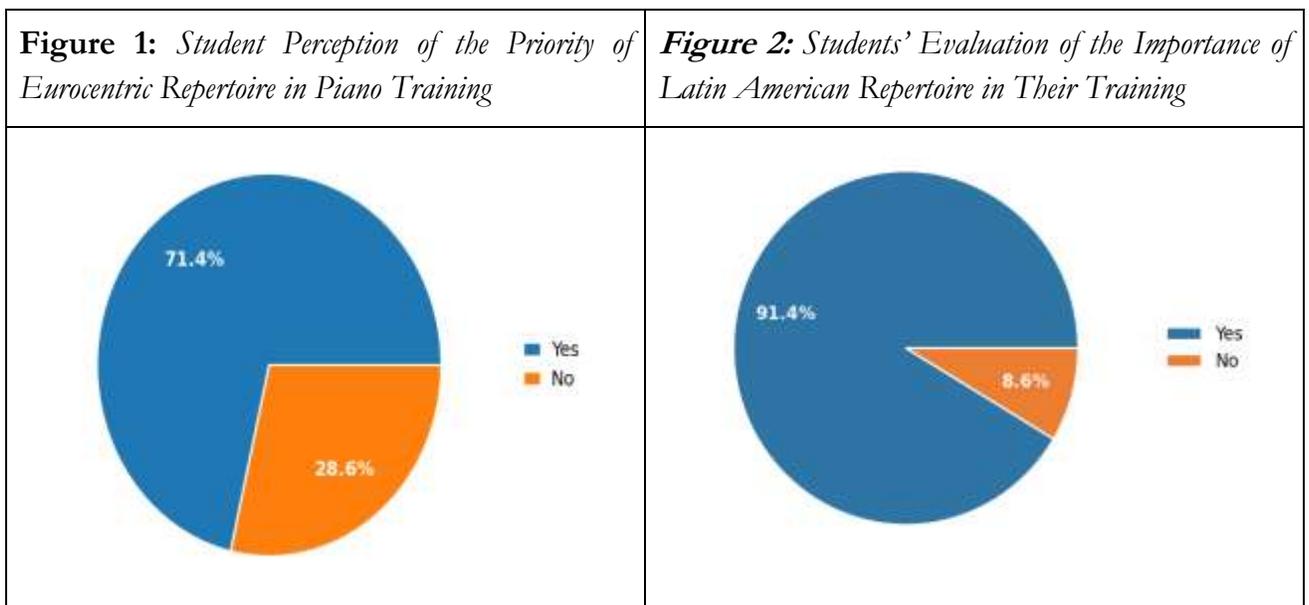
graphical representations were used, whereas the responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed through a descriptive approach, which made it possible to identify trends, similarities, and nuances in the participants' perceptions.

### Survey of Piano Students

First, students were asked about the repertoire that had been most frequently worked on in their piano classes. The responses show that the European repertoire continues to be the most used in the teaching–learning processes of the instrument, which indicates the persistence of a formative model centered on the Eurocentric canon.

The survey results also reveal that the Latin American repertoire is still rarely used in piano classes, occupying a secondary position in relation to the European repertoire. This situation reveals an implicit hierarchy of repertoires in piano training, in which Latin American music is not usually conceived as the central axis of the formative process.

Although all the surveyed students belong to Latin American contexts, the majority consider that the European repertoire should have priority in their piano training, as shown in Figure 1. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the students recognized the importance of performing Latin American works in their formative process, as evidenced in Figure 2.



In this regard, 91.4% of the students stated that the performance of the Latin American repertoire was relevant to their training, while 8.6% did not consider it fundamental. These data make it possible to observe that although there is a positive appraisal of this repertoire, it does not necessarily translate into its prioritization within the teaching–learning process. This apparent contradiction suggests a possible internalization of Eurocentric models rooted in music education institutions, which shape the perception of the pedagogical and artistic value of the region's own musical traditions.

On the other hand, to understand students' perspectives regarding the piano repertoire of Heitor Villa-Lobos and its possible incorporation into piano classes, they were asked about their prior knowledge of the composer's piano literature and their interest in engaging with it.

The results showed that 51.4% of the students stated that they were familiar with at least one piano work by Villa-Lobos, while 48.6% reported that they did not know this repertoire. However, despite this partial lack of knowledge, 97.1% of the respondents expressed an interest in performing the composer's piano works.

Regarding the relevance of having a pedagogical model that facilitates the approach to the piano repertoire of Villa-Lobos and other Latin American composers, 94.3% of the students considered it important to have such a model, compared to 5.7% who expressed the opposite view. The justifications provided mostly reflect a positive appraisal of Latin American repertoire, both for its technical and aesthetic characteristics and for its cultural and identity-related dimensions, recognizing it as a means of strengthening cultural empowerment.

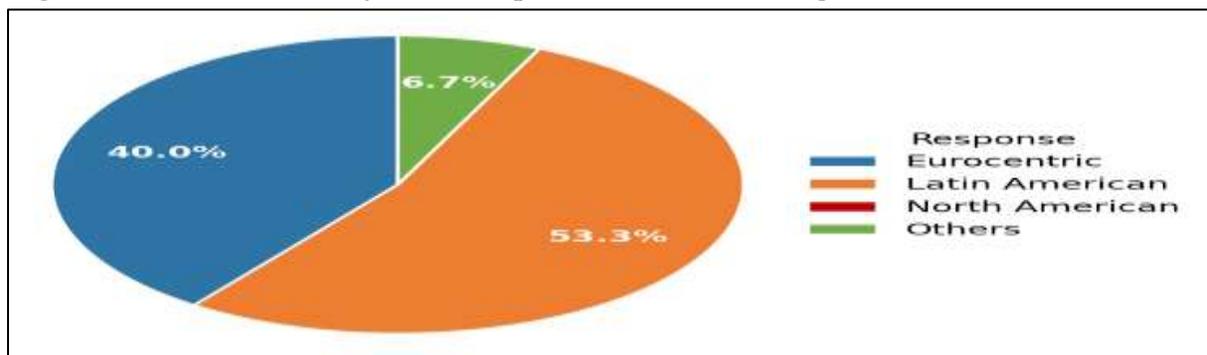
Likewise, students highlighted the innovative character that a pedagogical proposal oriented toward the systematized study of Latin American repertoire would entail, pointing out the scarcity of methodological guidelines for its interpretation within traditional formative processes. In accordance with Ausubel's (2002) theory of meaningful learning, the results suggest that this repertoire, particularly that of Villa-Lobos, possesses high pedagogical potential by fostering motivation, meaning, and coherence in musical learning.

In summary, although the European repertoire continues to occupy a predominant place in piano teaching, the results demonstrate a high level of student interest in the study and performance of Latin American repertoire and, specifically, in the piano works of Heitor Villa-Lobos, as well as the need for structured pedagogical models to guide its approach within piano training processes.

### Survey of Piano Teachers

The results of the survey administered to piano teachers show that 53.3% primarily use Latin American repertoires, while 40% prioritize Eurocentric repertoires. None reported predominant use of the North American repertoire, and 6.7% stated that they employed repertoires other than those mentioned, as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Trends in the Use of Musical Repertoires in Piano Training

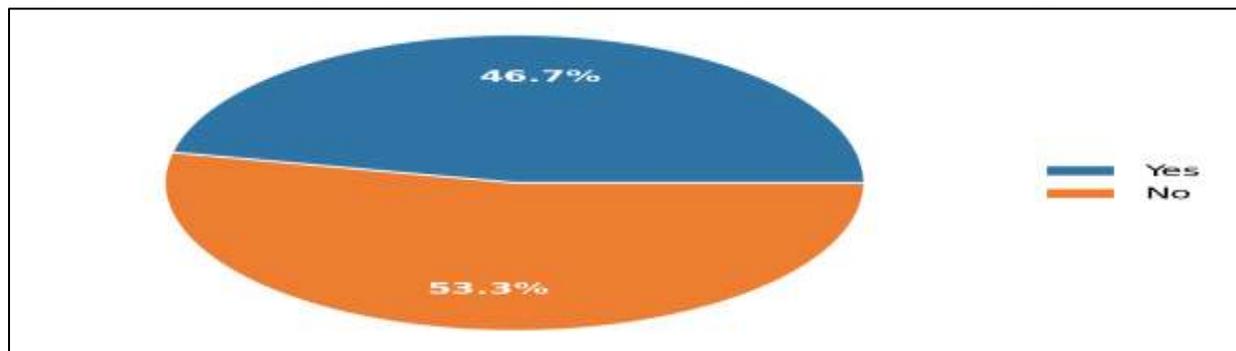


Regarding the use of the Latin American repertoire, the results indicate that all the surveyed teachers incorporated it to some extent in their piano classes. However, the frequency and position that this repertoire occupies within the formative process vary, which reveals

differences in its pedagogical prioritization in relation to other traditionally established repertoires.

Teachers were also asked whether they considered that the Eurocentric repertoire should be used as a priority in the teaching–learning process of the piano. 53.3% stated that it should not, while 46.7% considered that this repertoire should occupy a priority place in student training, as shown in Figure 4. This result is particularly significant considering that all the surveyed teachers belonged to the Latin American context.

**Figure 4:** *Teachers' Perception of the Priority of Eurocentric Repertoire in Piano Teaching*



For their part, 100% of the surveyed teachers stated that they perform the Latin American repertoire and recognize the importance of its inclusion in piano classes. Nevertheless, tension is evident between the positive appraisal of this repertoire and its pedagogical prioritization, given that a significant proportion of teachers continue to grant centrality to the Eurocentric repertoire within formative processes.

Within this framework, with the aim of further exploring teachers' perspectives on specific repertoires from the Latin American sphere, particular attention was given to their knowledge of Heitor Villa-Lobos's piano repertoire and its possible incorporation into piano classes. All the respondents stated that they were familiar with at least one piano work by the composer and expressed that they consider its inclusion important in the teaching–learning process of the piano.

Finally, teachers were asked about the relevance of a pedagogical model for the pianistic study of the repertoire of Villa-Lobos and other Latin American composers. The majority recognized its relevance in piano training, highlighting that this repertoire contributes significantly to the development of technical and interpretive skills, as well as to the comprehensive formation of the pianist. Nevertheless, divergent positions also emerged, as some teachers emphasized the need to maintain a Eurocentric repertoire as the central axis of the formative process.

### **Interview with Piano Teachers**

Semi-structured interviews, conducted with two piano teachers via the Zoom platform, made it possible to gather their perspectives on the use of the Latin American repertoire in piano teaching, as well as their appraisal of Heitor Villa-Lobos's piano repertoire in formative

processes. Both teachers agreed on the relevance of incorporating Latin American repertoires into piano training, highlighting their contribution to the development of technical and interpretive skills essential for mastering the instrument.

In particular, the interviewees recognized the pedagogical value of Villa-Lobos's piano works, considering that they articulate elements of the academic tradition with Latin American folkloric and cultural references in an integrated manner. According to the teachers, this combination enriches the formative process and expands the student's expressive possibilities. They also noted that the diversity of levels of difficulty present in this repertoire makes its pedagogical organization possible, which would facilitate the selection of works appropriate to students' technical and interpretive level and promote a more systematic formative progression.

From a technical standpoint, the teachers emphasized that the Latin American repertoire contributes to the strengthening of aspects such as finger independence, endurance, and manual coordination, demonstrating that it is possible to structure piano training processes from a perspective centered on Latin American repertoires.

On the other hand, the interviewees highlighted the compositional particularities of Villa-Lobos, especially his ability to construct soundscapes that evoke the cultural and natural contexts of Brazil through characteristic timbral, rhythmic, and melodic resources. In this sense, the composer's work was recognized as bearing high aesthetic, technical, and cultural value, as it integrates elements characteristic of different Latin American ethnic traditions, thereby adding interpretive complexity and expressive richness to the piano repertoire.

Taken together, the interviews reinforce the relevance of a systematized pedagogical proposal based on the piano repertoire of Villa-Lobos and other Latin American composers, aimed at providing contextualized instructional material organized according to levels of difficulty. These findings are in dialogue with the principles of meaningful learning (Ausubel 2002), insofar as repertoire selection is conceived as a means of fostering the construction of new knowledge from culturally relevant content, as well as with constructivist approaches that emphasize the importance of sociocultural components in educational processes (Ortiz Granja 2015).

## DISCUSSION

A central finding of the results is the discrepancy between teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the use of the Latin American repertoire in piano classes. While students report that the European repertoire continues to be the most frequently studied—thus evidencing the persistence of a formative model centered on the Eurocentric canon—teachers state that they make significant use of the Latin American repertoire in their pedagogical practice. This difference suggests a gap between declared pedagogical intentions and the formative experiences actually lived by students, highlighting the need to analyze not only the presence of Latin American repertoire in the curriculum but also its systematization and prioritization within the teaching–learning process.

Taken together, the results reveal a tendency toward the inclusion of the Latin American repertoire in piano teaching. However, the still significant use of Eurocentric repertoire reflects the persistence of traditional training models, historically linked to Western academic heritage. The absence of a North American repertoire and the marginal mention of other repertoires indicate that musical diversification in piano courses continues to be a process under construction that requires pedagogical reflection and openness to broader perspectives.

From a decolonial perspective, this centrality of the European repertoire corresponds to what Queiroz (2020, 154) terms “musical coloniality,” in which models of music education in Latin America continue to reproduce structures of symbolic power. In this regard, Lambuley (2014, 23–27) warns that such logic reinforces an aesthetic supremacy that renders other musical epistemologies invisible. The pedagogical proposal developed here is presented as a means of problematizing these hierarchies and promoting a more plural, culturally situated, and axiologically conscious form of piano training.

### **Analysis and Pedagogical Exploration Based on Three Pieces from *Guia Prático Para Piano* by Heitor Villa-Lobos**

The present pedagogical proposal is grounded in the didactic models proposed by Jaramillo (2010, 64–68), specifically in the articulation between the communicative-playful model and the complex model. From the former perspective, priority is given to the communicative component insofar as it is linked to the meaningful learning proposed by Ausubel and conceives pedagogical action as a mediating process that enables substantive relationships between the student and the piano repertoire.

The complex model, for its part, makes it possible to understand music education as a situated practice, shaped by historical, cultural, and social dimensions. From this perspective, piano performance is not reduced to a technical–aesthetic exercise, but is understood as a process of recognition, valuation, and resignification of musical knowledge within context.

From a decolonial reading, this approach implies problematizing hegemonic forms of transmitting musical knowledge, traditionally centered on Eurocentric repertoires and methodologies. Thus, learning is not limited to technical acquisition, but incorporates a critical understanding of the historical, cultural, and symbolic contexts that shape the music studied.

Based on a general analysis of *Guia Prático Para Piano* by Heitor Villa-Lobos, it is observed that the works that comprise it are predominantly situated at an intermediate level of piano training with varying degrees of difficulty. In this section, three specific pieces—“Pobre Cega”, “A pombinha voou”, and “Senhora Dona Viúva”—are analyzed; these are constructed from melodies of popular tradition and subsequently arranged for piano by the composer.

As part of the pedagogical proposal, interpretive inferences and methodological guidelines are developed for the approach to each work, taking as reference the contributions of Santos-Gama (2022) in certain aspects. Likewise, the pieces are classified into three sublevels within the intermediate level, considering musical and pianistic criteria, such as tonality, rhythm,

melody, form, texture, formal extension, and dynamic and agogic nuances, conceived as central elements to be explicitly addressed with piano students.

From a pedagogical standpoint, although a strictly compositional creative act has not been proposed, the interpretative process involves a continual re-creation of the work in which the student integrates technical mastery with an active musical imagination aimed at understanding and conveying the expressive and cultural meaning of each piece.

### **Pobre Cega**

The song “Pobre Cega” has its origins in poetics rooted in Portuguese tradition, which allows one to infer Portugal’s influence on the formation of Brazilian musicality. In this regard, Andrade (1972, 23–24) points out that Brazilian music is shaped through a process of miscegenation in which it is also essential to acknowledge the contribution of the colonizing nation to the construction of its ethnic musical identity. From this perspective, a decolonial reading does not entail excluding European influence; rather, it involves problematizing its historical centrality and repositioning it within a plural cultural framework, in which multiple sonic traditions coexist and engage in dialogue without pre-established hierarchies.

In the *Cancioneiro de Músicas Populares* (1895, 97), César das Neves and Gualdino de Campos document a song titled *Ceguinho*, accompanied by a note recounting the story of a young woman named Anna, deceived by a nobleman who pretends to be blind to abduct her with her mother’s complicity. This tragic narrative circulated widely throughout the Iberian world and was later resignified in the Brazilian context.

The four stanzas of the Brazilian folk song “Pobre Cega” are derived from the Portuguese version, albeit with minor modifications that do not alter its overall meaning. However, there are no direct links between the two versions in terms of melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic features, which points to a process of cultural appropriation centered primarily on the poetic text. In his piano transcription, Heitor Villa-Lobos adopts the title in feminine form, a decision that, according to Vetromilla (2010, 61), may be understood as part of the composer’s interpretative and creative engagement with the original legend, consistent with the variable and mutable nature of folklore arising from its oral transmission.

The work was composed in 1935 and catalogued by the composer as the third of the eighth volume of his *Guia Prático Para Piano*. It is written in F minor and features a cut-time (2/2) meter. The four-flat key signature represents an initial challenge for students in the early stages of training, as it requires a more developed understanding of tonalities and key signatures. The minor mode contributes to the creation of a melancholic atmosphere, consistent with the song’s poetic content and the emotional weight associated with the legend from which it originates.

Cut time contributes to a greater sense of forward motion, a quality associated with the piece’s character as a children’s round. However, this type of meter may generate confusion among students; therefore, prior work on rhythm and pulse is recommended before beginning instrumental study. Another relevant technical aspect is the constant use of octaves in the bass,

which requires firmness, arm-weight control, and adequate left-hand span—skills that are typically consolidated at the early intermediate level.

From an interpretative standpoint, the contrapuntal texture of the piece presents the challenge of balancing the sound between the melody performed by the right hand in a single voice and the lower accompaniment, which is naturally more resonant. Therefore, careful work on dynamic control and melodic projection is essential. The musical form is straightforward, and the piece includes very limited agogic nuances consisting solely of a *rallentando* at the close, which may be complemented by a *decrecendo* to reinforce the expressive character of the ending.

Considering its technical, rhythmic, and formal characteristics, the present study classifies “Pobre Cega” at Intermediate Level 1, making it suitable for students in the initial stage of that level.

### **A pombinha voou**

“A pombinha voou” is a Brazilian folk song that presents a love narrative marked by distance and melancholy arising from the physical absence of the beloved. An analysis of the lyrics suggests the continuity of the emotional bond despite the separation, with letters serving as the primary means of communication between lovers. According to Braga and Oliveira (2012, 62), the text constructs a situation characterized by emotional demands, feelings of possession, and a need for reassurance—elements that nonetheless coexist with the hope maintained by the one who remains, sustained by the belief in mutual affection. Furthermore, the lyrics convey emotions such as frustration, attachment, love, and longing, while also alluding to courtship dynamics and elements of nature—such as the dove’s flight—that reinforce the narrative’s illusory and optimistic character.

Heitor Villa-Lobos set the song in 1935 and catalogued it as number four of the sixth volume of his *Guia Prático Para Piano*. In his version, the composer introduces melodic modifications and establishes an intertextual dialogue with “O cravo brigou com a rosa”, a tune widely known in northeastern Brazil. This procedure reflects a compositional practice of re-signifying folk material by integrating multiple cultural references within a single piece.

The piece is written in E major, marked *Andante* ( $\text{♩} = 96$ ), and includes a brief introduction preceding the melody’s entrance on an anacrusis. One of the principal technical challenges lies in sustaining harmonically functional long tones while simultaneously performing (with the same hand) the melodic line. This procedure requires the student to develop finger independence and refined sound control, so that the melody may emerge clearly without interrupting the harmonic support underlying the musical discourse.

From a rhythmic standpoint, the piece does not present complex note values; however, it includes metric shifts from 3/4 to 2/4, and subsequently returns to the initial meter, requiring attentiveness and rhythmic flexibility. In addition, various dynamic and agogic indications such as *mezzo-forte*, *pianissimo*, *fortissimo*, and *decrecendo* increase the level of interpretative difficulty.

The presence of chromaticism in the bass and wide leaps in both hands reinforces the need for accurate spatial awareness of the keyboard. Moreover, the use of chromaticism in measures 20-21 and the first beat of measure 22 generates a progressive increase in harmonic tension, which may be approached from an interpretative perspective through the execution of a crescendo that highlights the expressive character of the passage. From a pedagogical standpoint, this relationship between harmonic structure and dynamics fosters the development of attentive and conscious listening, oriented toward the construction of musical discourse.

For these reasons, and considering both the technical aspects and the expressive background of the song, this study classifies “A pombinha voou” at the intermediate level 2, recommending its study for students who have already consolidated the fundamental skills of the intermediate level.

### **Senhora Dona Viúva**

The song “Senhora Dona Viúva” is part of the traditional repertoire of Brazilian children’s circle songs. According to Melo (2003, 73), it is performed within a collective game, generally led by girls, in which one participant assumes the role of the widow inside a circle. The dynamics of the game involve singing, bodily movement, and dramatization—elements that reinforce its playful and social character, as well as its role in the transmission of cultural practices.

Heitor Villa-Lobos includes “Senhora Dona Viúva” as song number five of the second volume of his *Guia Prático Para Piano* (1932). In his pianistic setting, the composer departs from the naïve character of the children’s round and constructs a complex musical discourse, employing a non-tonal language, abundant dissonances, chromaticism, seconds, and parallel chords—resources commonly associated with musical modernism. This tension between the song’s popular origins and its sophisticated compositional treatment generates a significant expressive contrast.

The piece is written in compound meter (6/8) and marked with a lively tempo, *vivo*, bearing the character of a tarantella, which suggests a fast and energetic motion. From the opening measures, the piece demonstrates a high level of technical and interpretative demand, including the superposition of sustained tones and staccato articulations within the same hand, as well as extreme dynamic contrasts (*sforzando*, *pianissimo*, *fortissimo*).

The work includes virtuosic passages with rapid movement across the keyboard, as well as abundant chromaticism and a final glissando performed with both hands, accompanied by a broad dynamic crescendo. These resources may be interpreted as a sonic allusion to the bodily and collective movement characteristic of popular musical practices, reaffirming a conception of music as an embodied experience rather than an exclusively abstract one.

For these reasons, and considering both the technical and interpretative aspects of the work, this study classifies “Senhora Dona Viúva” at the intermediate level 3, as it requires a greater

degree of pianistic control, interpretative maturity, and stylistic understanding in comparison with the pieces previously discussed.

From a technical standpoint, the work demands increased hand independence, control of phrasing, attentiveness to dynamic nuances, and conscious management of sound layers. On the interpretative level, the student must integrate these elements with the narrative and cultural character of the piece, articulating previously acquired technical resources into a coherent and stylistically grounded musical discourse.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the pieces “Pobre Cega”, “A pombinha voou”, and “Senhora Dona Viúva”, drawn from the *Guia Prático Para Piano* by Heitor Villa-Lobos, made it possible to formulate interpretative inferences with pedagogical value for their incorporation into piano teaching and learning processes. These inferences contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the works by articulating technical, textural, and expressive aspects with their cultural dimensions. Likewise, the classification of these pieces into three sublevels within the intermediate stage of piano study constitutes a methodological contribution that guides repertoire selection according to the student’s technical and interpretative level. This organization supports a coherent pedagogical progression and highlights the potential of the *Guia Prático Para Piano* as instructional material.

Finally, the results of the study reinforce the relevance of the Latin American pianistic repertoire—and, in particular, the work of Heitor Villa-Lobos—in the academic training of the pianist, not only because of its aesthetic and technical value but also because of its contribution to cultural understanding and the construction of situated musical identities. In this sense, this article proposes a pedagogical pathway that problematizes the centrality of the Eurocentric canon and expands the formative possibilities of piano study from a critical and contextualized perspective.

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