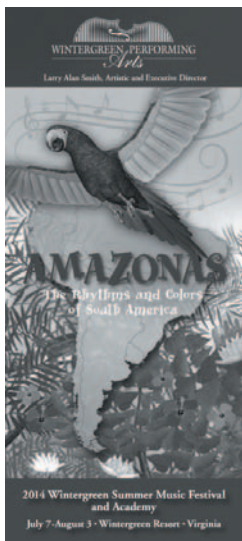


AMAZONAS

The Rhythms and Colors of South America

Why South America?

Larry Alan Smith, WPA's Artistic and Executive Director



On the surface, it seems pretty clear and straightforward. There is a magnificent and diverse continent to our south that is artistically and culturally rich. Simple . . . easy . . . a perfect theme for the 2014 Festival . . . exotic, captivating and intriguing.

However, as you might expect, there was something deeper at play here for me as I developed the theme and planned the Festival.

In August 1984, I was asked, as a member of the Juilliard faculty, to represent the school on the jury of the 3rd Young Concert Artists of Brazil Competition in Rio de Janeiro.

It was my first trip to Brazil, and I was given a very special and privileged introduction to the musical life of that great country. Arminda Villa-

Lobos, the wife of the late Heitor Villa-Lobos, was the president of the jury. There were three foreign judges, including myself and Mehli Mehta, the father of conductor Zubin Mehta. Mehli had been a ground-breaking conductor in India, and he was engaged to conduct the winners' concert at the end of the competition with the Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira. The Brazilian jurors were cellist Watson Clis, pianist Nise Obino, pianist Heitor Alimonda, guitarist Sérgio Abreu, guitarist Antonio Carlos Barbosa Lima, singer Paulo Fortes, clarinetist Enio Squeeff, composer/music critic Ronaldo Miranda, flutist Celso Waltzenlogel, violinist Mariuccia Iacovino and singer/music critic Léa Freitag. Remarkable!

My job was to judge the competition and award a full-tuition scholarship to the Juilliard School . . . with immediate acceptance. I'm not sure whether the scholarship or the acceptance was more valuable given how difficult it is to be accepted into the school. We heard 69 young Brazilian musicians perform during the course of the competition. One of five winners, and the person I selected for the Juilliard scholarship, was trombonist Radegundis Feitosa Nunes (age 22 from Itaporanga in

Paraíba). While writing this article, I found my notes from the competition.

Musicality (from 1-45 points): 45
Instrumental Technique (from 1-30 points): 30
Musical Personality (from 1-25 points): 25

A perfect 100!

“Fantastic start/What a sound!/Intonation+/Great technique/Beautiful tone/Young – Superb”– My notes made it clear that I wanted to talk with him about coming to Juilliard . . . which I did. He was very excited and eager to go to the United States.

I also came across this photo of the moment when I presented the scholarship to Radegundis after the final round of the competition. That moment changed his life forever.



Upon my return to New York, I wrote to Juilliard President Gideon Waldrop about my experiences. The note included the following:

“Radegundis Feitosa Nunes, my choice, played beautifully throughout the competition. He is 22 years old, and he is currently teaching at his local university and performing with the local orchestra. Only after awarding the scholarship did I discover the importance of the action. It seems that he is from an incredibly poor area of the country, and his success has become a topic of great interest to the people of Northeastern Brazil. The recognition of the trombone was also interpreted as a very encouraging gesture towards Brazilian brass playing.”

Barely able to speak English, Radegundis arrived in New York just a short time after the competition. He suddenly found himself at a school with some of the most promising young musicians in the world. We saw each other frequently, and it was clear that he was doing well and making the most of this incredible opportunity.

As for me, I had fallen in love with Brazil, met numerous outstanding Brazilian musicians and found a culture with a temperament that I found very appealing. I was hooked, and I knew that Brazil and Brazilians would continue to be important to my life.

President Gideon Waldrop asked me to return to Rio in August 1985 for the fourth edition of the competition to award another Juilliard scholarship. Radegundis had his scholarship, but he was still eligible for the competition and the many prizes it offered, so he returned to Rio. He was one of the 53 competitors, and in boxing terms, he was looking for a defense of his title.

Mrs. Villa-Lobos died just days before the 1985 competition, and as a tribute to her, there would be no president of the jury this time. Once again, the members of the jury were stellar, with two international judges and many distinguished Brazilians, including pianist Luiz Medalha and composer Claudio Santoro.

Five winners were selected, and it was not a surprise to anyone that Radegundis was in that group. I chose an incredible flutist, Beatriz Magalhães Castro from Rio de Janeiro. Like Radegundis, she would end up being a top student at Juilliard. Both Radegundis and Beatriz made me look very good!

I had been asked to conduct the 1985 winners' concert in Rio's stunning Teatro Municipal. Following the singing of the Brazilian National Anthem, we paid tribute to Mrs. Villa-Lobos through a performance of *Invocação em defesa da Pátria (Invocation in Defense of the Homeland)* by Heitor Villa-Lobos with soloists, a university chorus and large orchestra. It is something I will never forget, and it permanently solidified a great love I have for the music of Villa-Lobos. This was followed by Beatriz playing the first movement of the Jean-Pierre Rampal transcription of Khachaturian's *Violin Concerto in d minor* and Radegundis' performance of the *Concertino* by Ferdinand David. The other winners performed concerto movements by Weber, Glazunov and Beethoven. It was quite an evening! I was extraordinarily proud of my two Juilliard scholarship recipients!

Prior to my arrival in Rio for the competition, I had been invited by the legendary Brazilian composer Camargo Guarnieri to come to São Paulo in

order to conduct one of my pieces at the University of São Paulo. My Brazilian life was developing, and what an honor it was to spend time with Mr. Guarnieri. It is no coincidence that one of his works appears on Classics IV this year at Wintergreen.

I continued to meet Brazilian composers, conductors and performers. One very influential friend and mentor was the great Brazilian conductor Eleazar de Carvalho. He invited me to São Paulo multiple times to conduct his orchestra prior to his death in 1996.

Along the way I met others . . . some of whom are performing as guest artists in Virginia this month. Luiz de Moura Castro and his wife Bridget are old and dear friends and colleagues. I first met Fabio and Gisele Witkowski when they were students, and I consider my relatively new friendship with Paulo Steinberg to be a continuation of my “Brazilian life.” These are people who mean a great deal to me as friends and artists, and I am delighted that they are here for **AMAZONAS**.

Unfortunately, I don’t know any of the other countries in South America. I did have a very short stay in Paraguay once, and I caught a glimpse of Argentina while visiting the Iguazu Falls! However, given the upcoming changes in my life, I hope that my wife and I will be able to explore the continent. Invitations have continued to come from Brazil, and with a slightly more flexible schedule, I hope that I will be able to return frequently in the future.

While I have been able to stay in touch with Beatriz through some mutual friends, I lost track of Radegundis along the way. This is something I deeply regret. While planning this Festival, I learned of the tragic news that appears below.

The following was posted on the International Trombone Association website on August 18, 2010:

Radegundis Feitosa Nunes Passes Away



“It is with sad news that we mention that our dearest friend Radegundis Feitosa Nunes has passed away in a four-person fatal tragic car crash this past May. Along with Radegundis, three other musicians were also lost from the Paraíba area.

“The entire International and Brazilian music communities are in shock.

“Not only have we lost a great musician and enthusiast for the trombone, but also a rare human being. His passion for music and talent for motivating and captivating every person with whom he worked were his trademarks. Radegundis inspired generations of young musicians and left a profound mark in our community. His career as a trombonist and educator will always be celebrated as one of the cornerstones of trombone playing in Brazil.

“The Brazilian Trombone Association, and musicians from all over Brazil and across the world mourn this most tragic loss.”

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Radegundis would have been 52 years old on the 16th of August this year.

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I would like to dedicate the work I've done on the 2014 WSMEF to the memory of Radegundis Feitosa Nunes. I was given a rare opportunity to be able to significantly impact his life by bringing him to the United States. To this day he continues to impact my life as I remember his simplicity, his smile, his genuine enthusiasm for life and his deep passion for music.

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