

ONLINE AUDIO GUIDE 8.4

CHAMBER MUSIC

title: Aria, from *Bachianas brasileiras* no. 5

performing forces: soprano (Kiri Te Kanawa), eight cellos

composer: Heitor Villa-Lobos

text: Ruth Valladares Correa

language: Portuguese

form: ABA1 form

function: chamber music performance

source: *Kiri Te Kanawa: Canteloube, Songs of the Auvergne/Villa-Lobos, Bachianas brasileiras* no. 5 (Decca 411-730 1DH, 1995)

Listen for:

- minor key
- vocalise
- wide range for soprano voice
- technical challenge of singing very high notes softly
- sequences
- syncopation
- pizzicato versus arco
- imitation of guitar

Timing	Structure and text	What happens
00:00	Introduction	sequence (common in baroque music) two cellos plays arco descending line four cellos imitate <i>ponteio</i> style with pizzicato repeats
00:13	A	two cellos plays the melody line, arco, with the soprano
00:27	vocal entry (“Ah” for over three minutes)	one of many instances of syncopation (two of the cellos)
00:50		soprano begins a melody, cello finishes
1:16		soprano appears to be cadencing but then continues on
1:27 to 1:43		one of many sequences in vocal part

1:49		cello finishes soprano's melody
2:12	Instrumental interlude	singer's main melody in cello, arco ponteio/pizzicato accompaniment
3:12		gentle ritard begins
3:24	<p>B</p> <p>Tarde, uma nuvem rósea lenta e transparente,</p> <p>Sobre o espaço, sonhadora e bela!</p> <p>Surge no infinito a lua docemente,</p> <p>Enfeitando a tarde, qual meiga donzela</p> <p>Que se apresta e alinda sonhadoramente,</p> <p>Em anseios d'alma para ficar bela,</p> <p>4:02</p> <p>Grita ao céu e a terra, toda a Natureza!</p> <p>4:14</p> <p>Cala a passada aos seus tristes queixumes,</p> <p>E reflete o mar toda a sua riqueza</p> <p>Suave a luz da lua desperta agora,</p> <p>A cruel saudade que ri e chora!</p> <p>Tarde, uma nuvem rósea lenta e transparente, Sobre o espaço, sonhadora e bela!</p>	<p>voice reenters</p> <p>repeated notes in vocal line syllabic setting</p> <p>cellos play sustained notes, arco, throughout B section</p> <p>repeated notes, now a step lower</p> <p>repeated notes, another step lower</p> <p>repeated notes, another step lower</p> <p>repeated notes, another step lower</p> <p>repeated notes, yet another step lower</p> <p>midpoint of B section, interrupts downward direction and stepwise motion</p> <p>repeated-notes of 3:24, now slightly elaborated</p> <p>repeated-note melody of 4:14, a step lower</p> <p>repeated-note melody, a step lower</p> <p>repeated-note melody, a step lower</p> <p>new repeated-note melody, yet another step lower, phrase is extended, singer takes a breath</p> <p>leading to . . .</p> <p>hummed transition back to A</p>

5:14	A1 (shorter than A)	singer now hums throughout essentially same melodic material as A final high note, sung pianissimo (<i>pp</i>)
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English translation

Evening, a cloud grows rosy, slow and transparent,
 above the space, dreamy and beautiful!
 The moon rises into the infinite, softly,
 decorating the evening, like a delicate maiden
 who dreamily gets ready and adorns herself,
 her soul eager to become beautiful,
 shouting to the sky and the earth, and all Nature!
 The birds quiet at her sad plaints
 and the sea reflects all her richness . . .
 Gently the moonlight now awakens
 the cruel longing that laughs and cries!
 Evening, a cloud grows rosy, slow and transparent,
 above the space, dreamy and beautiful!

Translation by Harvey Officer (see J. Peter Burkholder and Claude V. Palisca, *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), 438.

Consider:

- This movement is just over six and a half minutes long. What portion contains actual words? What is the effect of these long stretches of vocalise? Do you think the extended “ahs” in any way “comment” on the nature imagery in the B section?
- Identify some passages in which the voice and the cellos seem to blend. Identify other passages in which contrast is paramount.
- Villa-Lobos, who composed many long, sprawling works, was often criticized for his sometimes lackadaisical approach to form. How, specifically, does this piece counter that critique? What are some instances of formal balance in the music?