

## CERVANTES EN BRASIL ... CERVANTES IN BRAZIL

I have accepted it: this is going to be a fragmented account. It's not perfect, it probably doesn't have great architecture. I want to move on, so it is what it is. I hope it's at least intelligible, and enjoyable.

I begin to realize, as I go over this writing, that there are many more issues embedded here – principally although not entirely musical, and by no means exclusively for a “specialized” audience, either– about which I want to write. So, imperfect as this is, it is also, I believe, some sort of seed.

Whether it will end up in Spanish or in English, who knows?

I completely lost my urge to write as I moved into the second volume of *Rumor de Páramo*; or at least the urge wasn't strong enough to take me anywhere. I was rather disturbed about it at the time, but looking back on it I find it incredible that I might have any hope –much less expectation!– of being able to write then, when I was at full stretch not only as interpreter but also as producer, administrator, fundraiser, publicist. I'm happy that the energy as well as the urge has now returned, and hope my farflung friends and fans won't feel overwhelmed by the result!

The other essay, specifically on the Encuentro in Ribeirao Preto and a bit more –though not entirely– for a specialized reader, I originally wrote in Spanish and will, at some point, translate into English; although bits of it necessarily appear in this writing. So here 'tis, dear friends. Enjoy. There are many photos of these various people, places, and events at:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/laquijote/ENCUENTRODEMUSICOLOGIAUNIVDESAOPAULORIBEIRAOPRETOBRASIL#>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/laquijote/BRASILESCUELAISAURASANTOSBELOHORIZONTE#>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/laquijote/BRASILBELOHORIZONTE#>

### SUNDAY 15 MARCH

Tonight I ordered a filet mignon from Room Service and accompanied it with the other half of a bottle of Trivento (Argentina) Shiraz-Malbec which my State Department host T\*\*\* and I started on Friday night. My lord, how I love Room Service. There are times when it is absolutely the right thing. Stay in my room and get caught up on email, thinking, writing.

Today was a Day Off! This morning I went early with T\*\*\* and Julie Holoway, a new English Language Specialist here, to the Feira (Fair) Afonso Pena (named for the street it is on). It is, in a few words, the Mother Of All Tianguis (the Mexican word for street fair). A couple of km of clothes, art, shoes, other leather, ¿what have I forgotten? ... with the necessary food and liquid refreshment stalls interspersed, of course. I bought all my gifts for folks back home, there and in the Artesanía (*Artesanato* in Portuguese) shop in the Palacio de Artes. A dangerous place indeed, this last, jampacked with stuff most of which you immediately want to buy. And 90% of which you want to buy even after you have devoted some sober thought to the undertaking. And all this beautiful work is by artisans of this state, Minas Gerais – General Mines in Portuguese. YES! It is a mining place just like Gto, although vastly larger, the third largest city in Brasil now, I'm told.

I am in the Southern Hemisphere! I am in BRASIL! It really is glorious. I have been curious for so

long about América Latina (AL), how it might be collectively and individually different from México. Now, being here, I am starting to make my way into this question. There's no doubt in my mind now that México's geographic proximity with the US is a powerful factor in their relationship. Porfirio Díaz was right when he said of México, "*tan cerca de Estados Unidos, tan lejos de Dios (So close to the US, so far from God)*". Brasil is its own self, I sense. You can FEEL the distance from the US. Also for many other reasons, among them: first of all it is a HUGE country, with enormous natural resources. Second, it comes from the Lusitanian (Portuguese) heritage – although Brazilian Portuguese, as I'd been told and had ample occasion to note in the Encuentro de Musicología, is something very different from continental Portuguese – and these two factors are very powerful in setting Brasil apart even from the rest of Latin America, let alone from North America, of which México is of course a part. Third, that distance from the US and more proximity to Europe. This is very present in México also, though the US in general –at least a significant part of its policy-making apparatus-- has never wanted to see that part of Mexico, it seems to me. The European heritage is still very present in México, culturally, and in many ways it is something really positive. In Brasil, you are geographically and culturally closer to Europe. One of the most graphic evidences of this, for me, was the absence of large automobiles, of which I saw practically none. On the contrary, there are lots of little Fiats: Fiat has at least one plant in Brasil. There IS a van-type Fiat: it is a very retro-looking (think police van from the 1930s) affair, very square on the outside and quite comfortable on the inside.

It's only a 4-hour time difference to Lisboa (Lisbon), for example. And for people flying to the East Coast of the US, apparently it is often cheaper to fly to Lisboa, and then to NY or DC, than it is to go through Dallas or Houston.

It's good, I feel, that Brasil has taken a leadership role (or so it seems) in making more solidarity, forging a stronger economic axis –not the New Axis of Evil Bush hastened to announce when Lula was elected– in AL. Some people in México complain about this -- the general drift being that Brasil is overbearing-- but I think some of that is our occasional tendency in México to feel victimized. I have to say, however, that I've felt for some time that México needs to have stronger relations with AL, with Iberoamerica in general: culturally, politically, economically, in every way. The current economic crisis in the US is just one example of why this diversification would be a good idea.

I know I am supposed to be thinking vacation thoughts, but the truth is that I've been working hard most of my time here! In the musicology congress in Ribeirão Preto I was busy for 3 days with all the activities there, and then on Friday performed a concert of *Rumor* music; on Saturday more conference stuff; Sunday day off and then Monday morning a brief and happy brush with Brazilian medicine (YES! More about this later); Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday afternoons master classes in the midst of practicing for this Belo Horizonte concert; Thursday travel to Belo.

45 minutes after arriving in my hotel I was on the go again, to a reception for me and for J\*\*\*\* H, the new English Language Specialist here. Met some nice folks both Brazilian and USian and played first movement of CPE Bach *Sonata* and McNeff *Pavane* as a musical invitation to Monday's concert. Friday a visit to the Fundación para la Educación Artística, a really impressive and beautiful private music foundation where I gave a master class on Saturday; then a 3-hour master class in the Universidad Federal here; Saturday the master class –2 hours– in the Fundación ... WHEW!

Tomorrow is my concert in Belo Horizonte, Tuesday a free day; Wednesday I ship out back home. I miss my dogs! I miss my friends! I miss my piano! I miss the tranquility of my Casa del Pozo! But dammit, I have so much enjoyed my time here. I really want to come back to this hemisphere. The

desire in me to visit Argentina, Uruguay, Chile (especially now, with Bachelet there!!!) is even stronger in me now.

One of the last things Lirio Garduño said to me when we had coffee before I left was, "You're going to a country in which there's vastly more ethnic diversity than México, just wait and see". And goodness, she was right. México is very ethnically diverse in many ways, but Brasil is in another league. People come in all imaginable shapes, colors, sizes: absolutely black to pale as Northern European; Ibo-tall to Chichimeca-tiny. There are terrible problems of poverty in Brasil, some of them the consequence of a system similar to that of the *latifundios* in México, in which a very large quantity of land –or the means to profit, which amounts to the same thing, metaphorically or literally– is still owned by a very small number of people; and a number of these problems are still, as they are in México, related to skin color. The problems of poverty, in turn, are related to education –what else is new?– but somehow Brasil's incredible ethnic diversity gives me hope that these problems will be capable of resolution in ways which may be more inclusive and imaginative than they would have to be in a more homogeneous country. Thus they may end up being useful model for México.

The bread here is so good that I, who am rarely much tempted by bread any more, feel the urge to eat it and must consciously restrain myself. Along with bread, fresh produce and meat, coffee is also taken seriously here. People are always downing a quick espresso or *cafezinho*, another thing in Brazil which seems so European. The folks in Ribeirao Preto boast a lot about their beer; apparently there's an extensive microbrewery culture here. Alas, I can't drink beer, so I can't attest to its quality – but if it's anything like the produce, the meat, the fish, and the coffee, it must be indeed delicious.

Another thing I notice is that a lot of men here wear wedding rings. I have no idea why this jumped to my attention but I must say that I like it. Most –or many– Mexican men don't. Mexican women, of course, do. It may be presumptuous of me to feel this way, but this custom has always seemed to me like a remnant of the bad, old (or maybe not so old) macho Mexican past. Like the custom, still in use in some sectors of high society, of the woman appending to her name, "DE Fulano (the name of the husband)" ... as though she BELONGED to him!

## TUESDAY 17

Now it's 7:30 on Tuesday evening and tomorrow I'll be leaving. I changed hotels this morning --the one for which the Embassy reimburses me, while very nice, is a little rich for my blood and their reimbursement stopped as of this morning when my work for them ended-- to one which is a little more Lonely-Planet in feel. It's called the Ibis, which apparently is a world-wide chain of hotels (globetrotters take note) headquartered, I believe, in Belgium. The *recepción* and breakfast room, together with a lovely old entry porch where you can sit with your coffee or snack, are part of an older building, dating from at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 10 stories of the hotel part are connected to the rear of the original structure by a small glassed-in passageway. Very tasteful union of old and new. The rooms are a level or two above basic, and certainly comfy. Lovely.

Practically the national drink of Brasil is a kind of *aguardiente* called CACHAÇA (ca-CHA-sa), made from sugarcane. The tequila or mezcal of Brasil, you could say. There's a cocktail they make with cachaça called *caipirinha* (the nh is like the "ñ" in Spanish, so it sounds ky-pi-REEN-ya), which involves the cachaça mixed with lots of cut up limón (lime), sugar and sparkly water. Delicious and very treacherous – the wise cut it with mineral water, otherwise you find you can't get up from the table after your first one! I developed a bit of a fondness for *caipirinhas* during my two weeks here so I wanted to bring back some cachaça. I asked at the front desk for a recommendation and the young

woman sent me to the Mercado Central (central market) ... so I got to see yet another market phenomenon here! This is more permanent and opens every day -analogous to the Mercado Hidalgo in Guanajuato, for example-- unlike the Sunday Feira. Equally mega. Perhaps comparable to one of the mercados in the DF but certainly bigger than anything in Gto. Like those mercados, it is in a built structure. Some of the locales (shops) are quite large, others the size of the proverbial postage-stamp. It seemed to me that there were quite a lot of health-food stores, for some reason.

People here take their meat REALLY seriously. Apparently most of the beef raised in Brasil is still free-range, which may account for why it is so delicious. I remember dear Roosevelt friend Brad Garton returning from a visit to Montevideo, Uruguay some years back after going down there to supervise some sort of computer-music installation at the university there; he was almost swooning with delight about the beef he'd eaten there. Now -if the beef in Uruguay is anything like that of Brasil- I understand why. It's wonderful meat: succulent, lean, full of flavor.

Thus the butcher shops in the Mercado Central are gorgeous, shiny-gleaming clean and very proud-looking, much more reminiscent of butcher shops I remember in Paris and Madrid, for example, than those in either México or the US; except the really fancy Dean & DeLuca-type ones. And these Brazilian butchers are not charging Dean & DeLuca prices!

I didn't have to pay too fancy a price for my cachaça: \$24 Reales for a 700 ml bottle of a kind aged in wood, *envelhecida en madeira*, about US\$10.50. Brazilians, at least in the two places I've been, don't seem to be as attached to picante as Mexicans are; but they're interested enough to have some very tasty whole red chili peppers (some the size of serrano chiles, some tiny and round) conserved in vinegar, for example. I got a nice 500ml bottle of these to share with friends back home.

The only part of the Mercado Central which was quite different from mercados I've seen in México was the Animal Part. I could tell I was coming to it because of the, not to put too fine a point on it, smell. I have seen live chickens and other poultry in markets in México, but never pet-type animals. Here there were puppies and kittens and canary birds as well as the chickens and geese, all in cages, like a pet shop. Most of the puppies were quite small, but I saw an adorable bigger one who had to be at least three months old, who looked a little like a white Azabacha (my beautiful all black Lab-Chowchow-Doberman *criolla* dog, for those who don't know her). I actually had a surreal moment of thinking, hmmm, how do you get a puppy from Brasil to México?

I suppose I didn't really need to have this extra day: all in all it's eating up about 15% of the Cultural Specialist fee I get for my 4 days working for the State Department here. But it's so nice to not just skedaddle after my busy schedule in Brasil, so nice to have a leisurely day being a tourist. Usually my tourist time is tightly sandwiched in between heavy bouts of work -- which is still work no matter how much I enjoy it!

Speaking of joyful work, the concert last night went quite well, considering the conditions were less than optimal. There was a sudden really heavy rain - it is the end of the rainy season in Brasil, but it's actually rained very little during my time here-; awful traffic all day long; and there was something odd about either the acoustic of the hall, or the sound of the piano, or both; or maybe my ears were just very tired, also a real possibility. The rain beating on the roof of the auditorium of the US-Brasil Binational Center made a really distracting racket; not quite like when it rains during a concert in the Museo Iconográfico in Guanajuato, but close! Imagine being inside a snare drum and you will have an idea.

Add to this that I ran late all afternoon because I went to visit the Escola Municipal Professora Isaura

Santos. The city government here is apparently quite a progressive one, and someone managed to convince them to put some heavy amounts of money into MUSIC, imagine that. They bought a nine-foot Steinway for this school! My mind was just boggled when I saw it.

The music teacher, Professora Aida Cuba de Almada Lima, has formed a small orchestra of recorders (from the sopranino all the way down to the bass ones) in preparation for having the kids form a REAL orchestra with things like violins and stuff. I have no idea how this will end up working out – 9 or 10 years of age is late to start learning the violin or any other instrument for that matter. But jiminy, they are all so excited about it, including the city’s Director of Education --now there’s a concept!-- that I couldn’t say no to the invitation. At first only the 12-to 15-year old youngsters of the recorder orchestra were there, but when they asked if the younger kids could come in, I of course said YES! These are the ones who next year will be the next recorder orchestra generation, and are very curious about it.

I played a couple of tunes for them (Márquez’ *Solo Rumores* and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement of the George Walker *Sonata*, the very dancey one) on that perfectly lovely Steinway; and then THEY played for ME, which caused them great glee. It was very hard to leave there. Not only the kids and the Professora Aida, but also the Directora and Subdirectora of the school, even the English teacher (who got all his training years ago at that same Binational Center where I would perform that night) are incredibly psyched about this project, and they all seemed really pleased that this famous pianist woman had come to their school to share some music with them. I want to connect them with Silvia Berg’s students in the USP, who are doing some very impressive work with even younger children, through choral singing. So it was, all in all, a wonderful visit.

But I’ve been doing a lot of teaching and talking and listening in these last two weeks, and now I’m tired. This was also a fairly demanding program: the 5th CPE Bach *Prussian Sonata*, Laurie Altman’s *Fugue & Soliloquy*; a short group of the *Rumor* pieces (Fortner, Shapiro, and Uribe); then after the intermission, George Walker’s muscular and lyrical *2nd Piano Sonata* (1956); two of the Brahms Opus 118 *Intermezzi*; and finishing with Márquez’ *Días de Mar y Río*. So between the rain, the traffic, and the lateness I realized, I think in the intermission, that my concentration felt shredded. Well, this is why we practice, this is why we meditate and exercise and do all the stuff we do. It ended up being quite fine, although quite a lot of work for my tired concentration; and I played Ellington’s “It Don’t Mean a Thing (if it ain’t got that Swing”) as an encore, which everyone loved.

This time in Belo has been, like the time in Ribeirao Preto before it, really jam-packed, with teaching and concert activity principally; but also with some just marvelous people. My Embassy host, T\*\*\* R, was an absolute marvel of organization and efficiency. (When I had to get an emergency US passport in the DF in order to get the visa for Brasil, T\*\*\* and her staff were right on top of that situation, and the head person in the Public Affairs Section of the Embassy in Brasilia even dashed off a letter in support, all within a couple of hours. WOW!) She is a fluent Portuguese speaker who had, among her previous posts, Mozambique and Vladivostok ... talk about climate --not to mention language and culture-- shock. I felt incredibly well taken care of during my entire time in Brasil: they arranged all my travel while in the country, and had my schedule completely managed during the Belo part of the trip.

T\*\*\* and the Embassy arranged for a translator, D\*\*\* K, who turned out to be also a wonderful person: a USian who came here some years back as part of a teacher-exchange program and stayed on. As one might imagine she is a fluent Portuguese speaker. This was my first time having a translator and it

was, at first, an adjustment for me, as by this time I'd grown used to navigating in *Portuñol*. Dawn was wonderful at giving me an ever-so-subtle glance to let me know my paragraph was getting just a little too extended and complex. It turned out that a lot of the time I mostly needed Dawn to translate what students were saying to ME in Portuguese, because by the time I left I was just barely beginning to understand more than about 30% when people spoke at normal speed. She, on the other hand, joked that she'd learned a lot of Spanish during our work together! We had a lot of fun.

My last night in Belo, I had dinner with J\*\*\*\* H, the English Language Specialist who'd just arrived a couple of weeks before. She'd been with the Peace Corps in Central America, as well as travelling in México; and it turns out –Small World Department– that one of her all-time favorite places in México is Guanajuato. We had some fascinating talk about the particular issues of Spanish speakers learning Portuguese, as well as about living and working in Iberoamerican cultures; and probably could have kept on with the *caipirinhas* and the conversation until the wee hours ... but we both had many things to do the next day. I'll look forward to the next time with all these people.

The frosting on the cake, so to speak, was that the DCM –Deputy Chief of Mission, the Number Two person in the Embassy– in Brasilia is composer Alex Shapiro's sister! And even cooler, she came to my concert! I was hoping she would, but I know how busy these people's lives are. Busy or not, she came to Belo and delivered the opening remarks for the concert. She turns out to be a wonderful woman, a born diplomat, one of those people who makes me proud of diplomats in general and of the US Foreign Service in particular.

We had fascinating conversation afterward. It turns out she served in México and was here during the terrible earthquake in '85. She'd been assigned to the Science Officer who apparently gave her just secretarial stuff to do and she was bored stiff. Then one terrible day, that earthquake. As you may know, México's President at the time, Miguel de la Madrid, was in a complete state of denial, claiming that there was no problem, only a few thousand people dead, when in fact there were THOUSANDS under the rubble, many of them dead but many of them still miraculously alive even after days; and De la Madrid basically sitting on his hands. There are those who claim this debacle was the beginning of the end for the PRI, and it certainly was one big nail in the coffin, I feel. The US and many other countries sprang into action and sent search and rescue teams. This woman ended up coordinating the entire US rescue team deployment from when they arrived in the airport to when they went to the affected areas to rescue people, what teams, in what order, in short managing all the triage of that effort. My eyes were welling up while she described this extraordinary experience, particularly when she said that it was her proudest moment as a Foreign Service Officer. I asked her how long she'd been in the Foreign Service at that time and she answered, Two years. This was her very first post! I could well understand why Alex said that she is so proud of her sister.

### **Encuentro de Musicología, Universidad de São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto**

I'd arrived in Ribeirão Preto on Tuesday 3 March after really quite a LONG trip: León-Dallas (2 hrs + US Immigration & Customs); Dallas-São Paulo (12 hours + Brasil Immigration and Customs); São Paulo- Ribeirão Preto (1 hour short hop), some 22 hours after I'd left León, in fact, with all the airport changes and waits.

It was in São Paulo that I had my first encounter WITH PORTUGUESE! Oh my goodness. I have been reading Portuguese, in email correspondence principally, since 2006, but nothing, NOTHING, prepared me for the sound of the spoken language. OK, OK, if I had been my usual super-prepared self, I would have undertaken to speak a little, or at least listen ... but I only found out I would

actually be going the day before I left for the NW minitour, and then I had barely 2 weeks between return from NW to depart for southern hemisphere, with attendant preparations at piano and administrative stuff ... so in the end I threw my trusty Oceano Español-Portugués dictionary (with its appendix of common phrases) into my backpack, studied it on the plane and that was as good as it got.

So, dragging my two rolling bags behind me and a little short on sleep, I was looking for the gate for my short-hop flight from São Paulo to Ribeirão Preto (RP). This local airline is called TAM, and all their female personnel, it appears, have long slender waists, the better to show off the dark-red cummerbund-style belt that separates the dark-blue (just above the knee) skirt from the prim white blouse above. It can afford to be prim with all that gorgeous body beneath it, jiminy. Oh my goodness, how beautiful these women are. The men no less so, so many of them tall and long-legged (those who are that way inclined, take note). Basically running on fumes now, I stop to ask one of these dreamboat women for the gate. Speaking Spanish, I apologize for my lack of real Portuguese. She gives me a broad and generous smile and says, "No hay problema, falamos PORTUÑOL (*No problem, we'll speak Portuñol*)". Portuñol is sort of like Franglish or Spanglish – a weird but amazingly functional hybrid pidgin. "Falar" is Portuguese for "hablar" which is "to speak" in Spanish; the mute H in Spanish is replaced in Portuguese with F in almost every case. Ay, dios mío, qué encanto. I am immediately bewitched.

Wonderful Silvia Berg meets me at the airport in Ribeirão (a little teeny one, the kind I love) with two young men, students Vinicius and Mitia: part of the small army of music students helping to make this Encuentro a reality. Silvia has had a hectic and scary time this last month. She went back to Copenhagen to attend to stuff there and was away for almost a month. The last week she was there her husband Johnny –surely one of the sweetest men I've ever had the pleasure to meet– was admitted to the hospital in RP. He thought he had the 'flu. Fever, persistent weakness and fatigue that just wouldn't go away. Being a strong male Dane he thought he'd just ride it out and not be a whiny weakling. Someone got him to go to the doctor. When he finally got to someone –a smart cardiologist– this man, a good diagnostician, smelled a rat. He sent Johnny for more tests and when they did a blood test they found the reason. There is a staph bacterium which normally lives in the mouth but when it gets into the bloodstream it can attack the heart. Being one of those clever bacteria it hides, literally, in the plaque which we all have, to some degree, around the heart. Statistically this is very rare, but it does happen; and it happened to Johnny.

So it was that when Silvia returned from Denmark she found her husband in the hospital. He could have died. He's a lovely man, whose strength is partly expressed in his quietness, who's never missed a single concert of Silvia's whether she was conducting or having a piece played, in the 20-some years they've been married. He was upset that he wouldn't be able to come on Friday to my concert. He's home now; they checked him out of the hospital they day I left RP, after he'd finished the course of very powerful antibiotics that was the only thing which could kill this clever staph bacterium.

We drop my bags at the hotel –all the invited guests are staying there– and race over to the campus, have a fast but delicious lunch at the campus cafeteria (all organic! Lots of arugula! Portuguese olive oil all over the place! Beets! Carrots! Olives!! Amazing different fruit drinks: pear with mint!, peach but not sugary! Something with avocado! Will talk later about how Brasil is the dream of both vegetarians and South-Beachers) and then race over to the Escola de Música where we are just in time to hear part of a super talk by Cecilia Piñero Gil of Spain (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) who works in gender studies. We comment. She responds. More comments by more audience members.

More engagement. Afterwards we immediately strike up a conversation, Silvia, Cecilia and I, and we like each other very much, collegial respect first and then that spark that lights up between colleagues who also share passion for their work. Goodness, I am already having fun!

Then I meet musicologist Pablo Sotuyo, originally from Uruguay who has spent time in the US and in México, and has lived and worked in Brasil for some years now; fresh from a mini-course he gave on cataloguing procedures. A big piratical-looking bear of a man who just radiates enthusiasm and laughter. Somewhere in there I meet Diósnio Neto, the organizer of this whole shebang, a dynamo who, it turns out, loves surfing; and somehow manages to be always the eye of the hurricane in all this musical and scholarly madness, always calm and always with a wonderful contagious enthusiasm. Over the next few hours I meet the rest of the invited participants: Juan Pablo González of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile; and Mário Vieira de Carvalho of Portugal. All these quite eminent folks foregathered in little Ribeirão Preto to take part in this congress. I've written about this part in Spanish; I will try to translate and send on later.

Four days - Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday - of intensely stimulating and thought-provoking talks and discussions. Just amazing. It turns out that musicology in AL is something different from the picture of musicology with which I grew up, an image principally acquired, I suppose, from the musicologists of which I knew. I actually KNEW practically none of them personally as they seemed to be almost completely uninterested in other human beings. A bunch of desiccated types closed up in the library, the remotest possible corner of the ivory tower, researching music that didn't interest anyone, and probably not even they themselves, completely lacking in any involvement in the community around them, academic in the worst sense of the word: no imagination, no curiosity, nothing. And certainly no interest whatsoever in NEW music, heaven forbid.

Well, these people are something completely different. Yes interest in the community around them, yes interest in forming a different musicology with different models, yes interest in performers, yes interest in new music. Yes interest in rigorous scholarship; but yes also to interest in remedying the disconnection between musicology and the times in which it lives. In short, academic in the BEST sense of the word. WOW!!! I am enchanted. So Friday morning was my roundtable with Silvia Berg and musicologist (and collaborative pianist) Ricardo Ballestero; then in the afternoon Silvia and I did a half hour talk about the collaborative process between composer and interpreter. Then I skedaddled to go get ready for my concert, at 8PM. Which meant that I missed Mário Vieira's talk, to my lasting regret; but he has promised to email it to me.

Concert a really quite amazing success. When I came out on stage (magenta douppioni dress, Jenny will remember it from Raritan River) there were whoops and whistles. There was a standing-O BEFORE the break, good heavens!! Understandable, I suppose, since I ended the first half with LeBaron; and it was the best hall for that great piece, lots of wood, relatively small, wonderful acoustic. It was a whole concert of *Rumor* music and goodness me, they got it. They loved it.

Mário Vieira de Carvalho, the wonderful Portuguese musicologist, moved up from the back of the hall to the front row for the second half. I notice very little about the público during a concert but for some reason I did notice that. Mário Vieira de Carvalho is an extraordinary scholar, who has the equally extraordinary gift of good ears and a great imagination. A scholar and a gentleman of the old school, moreover, and a really lovely man.

I worked very hard to memorize Silvia's *Dobles del Páramo* – I was determined to play it for memory that night. I had an instinct that I needed to have that piece inside me instead of out there on the music stand. And I did. A couple of mistakes but ¡my goodness! It was the last piece on the program, and I was right to do that. It was just sublime, that triumphant E-flat ringing out at the end like redemption with the whole piano resonating behind it, the air glowing with its force and love.

Saturday was the end of the Congress and then 17 student projects for which Neto had the great generosity to make a place. Several of them very exciting indeed, particularly in terms of early music education for children in poor schools; and other ways of extending the reach of music into the community. Wonderful to see this activity. We need more of this in México and I want to try and stimulate some collaboration.

Sunday was a First Day Off In Weeks. Yuka Almeida de Prado, a very gifted soprano and dedicated teacher (effectively the voice teacher at the USP/RP), invited me to her house to swim in the pool and relax. It was wonderful. I needed a day like that. We swam a lot and sat in the sun until it became ferocious --she saw to it that I was appropriately slathered with sunblock – and talked quite a bit about music and performing and the need for students to learn about relaxation techniques.

At some point Yuka's brother Mauricio came over and we had *almoço* --like *almuerzo* in Spanish, lunch – and pronounced roughly ow-MOSS-oh. They are Japanese-Brazilian. This is a whole other interesting story – the Japanese arrival in Brazil dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now a strong and very proud ethnic presence. In 2004 there was a huge celebration of the centenary of the first Japanese presence in the country. Yuka had done a presentation in the Encuentro about her doctoral project, which has to do with Brazilian composers who used texts and images from this Japanese presence in their music: in her case, in song literature. Villa Lobos (2009 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death) wrote a short cycle of songs about geishas, for example. Her thesis deals with this cycle of Villa-Lobos as well as music of living Brazilian composers such as Gilberto Mendes, around this same theme. We had a homestyle Japanese-Brazilian lunch, complete with those wonderful Japanese sour plums. Goodness, so many, many stories to tell, both musical and personal.

Anyway, this leads up to my Encounter with Medicine In Brasil. After all that swimming, at some point in the evening I began to notice that my left ear was stopping up. This happens to me even when I go over a hill in the bus, so I applied the usual remedies and figured it would go away, but it didn't. In the early evening we went to see Johnny in the hospital. An old family friend of Silvia's had come to keep her company during this tough time. She and Silvia and Yuka and I went out for a light supper after leaving Johnny in the hospital. I realized that I was barely hearing out of my left ear and that the right one was getting gradually more clogged. Oh dear, I thought, tomorrow I have 3 or 4 hours of master classes. Agghh. We went to a pharmacy after supper and after convincing the pharmacist on duty (they are very solicitous and careful about what they sell you) that I really knew what the problem was and how to fix it, he sold me a bottle of peroxide and a baby aspirator. Yuka dropped me off at the hotel and we made an arrangement for her to pick me up early the next morning so I could come to her house to practice. Bless that woman, not only did she offer me her piano to practice but came and got me in her car various times, and generally took such good care of me.

I knew the problem was wax in my ears: I am prone to that. Peroxide melts it. The trick, an ER doc explained to me years ago, is to periodically put some peroxide in each ear and then flush it out with warm water in the aspirator. Now I was paying for having done nothing about it before I left. That

night, I tried it in each ear, repeatedly, but it didn't work. Almost deaf. I felt vividly how easy it would be to just tilt into panic, but curiously, felt no urge to. Nothing to do but sleep and hope it drains during the night. In the morning, no better. When Yuka came to pick me up I said, I am going to need to see a doctor. Any GP will do, although an Otorhinolaringólogo would be best. I think it's too deep to solve with peroxide. Bless that woman yet again, she thought for a moment and then said, I have a student whose mother works at the University hospital, precisely in the Otorhino section. She will be coming in a little while to help me with some work. I'll ask her to call her mom and arrange something, and then she'll take you over there.

And so it was. I got an experience few foreign visitors have, I imagine: I went to a public hospital in Brasil. This is also the University hospital so it is a very good one. Fernanda and I piled into her car and went there. It is enormous. If is filled with people of all ages, sizes, colors, hundreds of them it seems to me. Now I am quite calm because I know what the solution is and feel sure that soon the problem will be resolved. Fernanda leads me through several large areas where people --many, many people, having taken their numbers I imagine-- are waiting to be examined. I feel a bit badly because I am going to the head of the line, as it were, and won't have to wait; but it's also true that I must get back to Yuka's and practice for a couple of hours before my first master class, at 5 that afternoon; so I just obediently and deafly follow where I'm led.

In this section, at least, I suppose since people are having only ears and throats looked at, they double up on beds in the examining rooms, not a bad idea it seems to me. The resident, who looks as though he might be from the Isle of Skye, or Stockholm, so blue-eyed and sandy-haired is he, quickly puts new paper on the examining table. I plop myself up there and explain in *Portuñol* what I suspect the problem is. In answer to his questions and with a lot of smiling and nodding between us, I say I always know when I have infection or inflammation; and that I have no feeling of either. I suspect he'll find that there's a lot of wax deep in the ear and that the only way for me to hear again is for him to flush it out. He takes a look and concurs. Then I lie first on one side and then on the other while he cleans out my ears (the left one needs several tries) and *¡¡qué milagro, what a miracle!!* I can hear again. He tells me that in the left ear, the first one to clog up, there was a big piece of wax stuck right to the tympanum; so that's why it took forever to get that one clear, I think to myself. It was almost certainly the swimming, he says, that drove the wax in so far. Agghh. He puts a couple of drops of topical antibiotic in each ear, to prevent any possible infection with all that humidity in there, and sends me on my way with a twinkle in his blue eyes. What extraordinary luck for me - and what a privilege to have seen a place like that hospital.

Later that afternoon in the class, I ask the students -and Fernando Corviser, professor of piano and coordinator of the Music School, who's there- what they want me to talk about. It turns out that what they want to hear about first is the project itself! What was it like to commission music, how did I go about it, what were the challenges, all that. My goodness, I was thunderstruck.

This interest made me think, later, that perhaps this process is something in which other people might also be interested, and that perhaps it's something I should write about; and not necessarily for a "specialized" reader, either. Who knows where this might go?; suddenly I realize that I have a lot to say here.

Anyway, I talked about the project for about an hour; and then we talked about the music. One of the students, a young man who may go on to do a Fulbright for a Master's in Musicology, had said after the concert that the only piece on the concert he really felt that he didn't "get" was Tomás Marco's

*Siluetas en el camino a Comala (Silhouettes on the Road to Comala)*. So we start with that. I go to the piano and invite them up to gather 'round so they can see the score, and do a whole exegesis of the piece from the piano: an analysis-performance, if you will. Silvia is there, and it is just wonderful to have her chime in from the composer's viewpoint. Reminds me of when I used to participate in Montes de Oca's composition workshop.

From there we move to Georgina Derbez' *Del viento, la esperanza (From the Wind, Hope)*, partly because Silvia wants to look at it, and listen to it, again: she really loves that piece and Georgina's music in general. Then one of the kids asks about Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras' *Canto Lejano (Distant Song)* and we look at that one too. Silvia says a number of times how much she admires that piece, so simple on the surface, such economy of means. We also talk about LeBaron and the particular challenges of her *Los Murmullos*: logistical, acoustical, dramatic.

In fact, economy of means becomes a bit of a leitmotif in this workshop: examining the scores, listening, looking again, we realize how each of these pieces, in its own way, is a model of economy. Thinking back on it, I wonder if this is partly because of the 4-6 minutes' duration that I originally specified which, in the same way as the poem which served as the pre-text of a *lied*, for example, imposes a certain discipline which became, at least in the case of some composers' pieces, a structural element. I shall have to think more about this.

That duration was not strictly observed by some of the composers, of course! This was one of the elements I talked about in the first part of the workshop; and another which would definitely have a place in any writing I might do about the commissioning process.

I leave them a copy of the *Canto lejano*, and will send more music via email. One of the things I can do in these classes is to spread around scores, at least those which are unpublished, which disgracefully is most of them. We leave some four hours later, all of us having had a wonderful time.

On Wednesday, I have a one-hour individual session with young composer João Svidzinski focusing mostly on a recent *Piano Sonata* of his. He's gifted, hard-working, honest; plays the contrabass and also is studying conducting. João was one of the 17 students featured on Saturday, with a project of composing pieces for student band. It was Mário Vieira de Carvalho of Portugal who suggested, during João's presentation, that it might be fun to write pieces featuring particular groups of instruments, and then involve the audience in performances by asking them to identify the instruments when they played. It struck me as a wonderful suggestion, Bernstein and Britten updated to our own time. It could be a good practical way to get young composers out of the academic ivory tower, to connect with their audiences and stop hiding behind the bromide that listeners don't like "contemporary music", whatever that phrase means. I could abound on this subject, and have on many occasions in the past: for now I'll just repeat what I always say: the music of Emmanuel Bach was, in his time, contemporary.

After my session with João I did a class for a group which is studying Acoustics. I focused on the acoustics of the piano, inviting the group up to see -and hear!-- how the piano produces its magnificent orchestra of sounds, and demonstrated a few other goodies like playing the strings, harmonics, and the like. We talked as well about how the acoustic of the instrument is never just that: it has also to do with humidity at any given time, with the nature of the hall, the number of bodies in it ... many and unpredictable variables. Again, the ear becomes the great arbiter. I, as a pianist, much make my best judgement, based on all those factors, about how much sound to use, how much pedal, etc, etc; based on what my ear tells me and what I know about all these elements.

Then (Tuesday was a long day!) there's a really great master class, with three singers and four pianists. I decided to alternate singers with pianists. I like mixing things up like that: the singers learn from the pianists and vice versa. Maybe more the latter than the former.

On Wednesday afternoon, I have a session with several singers, a couple of pianists and string players, and a percussionist, on body awareness. Basically, in those two hours, I give them "relaxation express", my usual blend of yoga, Alexander Technique, and Somatics, which seems to be helpful for people, at least to start them feeling how nice it is to have your shoulders and your spine where they really want to be. We talk about how we approach our instrument, our state of mind, how important it is to make a special space for making music, and some ways of doing that.

I continue to be amazed at how little of this "know your body" stuff - if any! - gets taught to young musicians, performers in particular. In dance it would be absurd not to teach that. But for musicians it's still foreign territory, even after Fleisher and Graffman and so many others. Come to think of it, not much of the integrated analysis-execution thing is taught either, it appears, particularly in the context of NEW music; in spite of the fact that it seems -to me at least- such a logical and intuitive and organic way to approach ANY piece of music whenever it may have been written.

One thing I noticed about these students: they're very PHYSICAL. I showed them my own personal "express stretch", that I ALWAYS do before sitting down at the piano - and they all took off their shoes and followed me, even in that tiny room! I have had big problems getting students in the US to even find their shoulders, much less attempt this stretch, which is rather demanding. They seem to feel embarrassed. These kids did without a moment's hesitation.

These students are ALL so enthusiastic, so thirsty, so articulate; I'm really impressed and wish I had more time to spend with them. We'll see if that can happen in the future.

I finish with the relaxation-techniques class, Neto arrives and we're able to say "hasta luego" (*até logo* em português); arrangements are made to take me to the airport the next morning; Silvia and Yuka and I have a lovely dinner; I pack; and the next morning I leave for Belo Horizonte, Part II of this wonderful voyage.

I sense that there are some of the same issues here as there are in México, although probably to a lesser degree. [Just two years later, in April 2011, I feel México is starting to catch up ... but exchange and collaborative efforts would still be enormously fruitful for both musical communities.] My conversations with Silvia and others confirm that hunch. There is enormous natural talent -- that much is clear. But, as I'm told by Silvia and others, just as in México, kids -at least those not from economically-advantaged families- often don't start an instrument until they're over ten years old - which is late, unless you're Carter Brey, for example, who apparently started the 'cello when he was 18. Generally other music education -harmony, theory, history- comes even later. Unless they are lucky enough to be in the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, whose *programa de estudios* (syllabus), as described to me by Juan Pablo González, is truly impressive.

Thus even the very talented ones don't start ANY musical training until it's too late, really; many of them are 25 or 26 and almost just starting, in terms of everything from repertoire to harmony, theory, history. In Europe or the US students almost 10 years younger already have a firm grip on all these other subjects as well as being, many of them, MONSTERS on their instruments. So this is one of the reasons why these early childhood music education projects by Silvia's students are way more than cute - they are crucially important.

**THE FOOD**

As promised, about the food ...

First, coffee. Brazil is, of course, a major coffee-producing country. And coffee, along with arugula, is omnipresent. It is almost espresso strength, but never bitter or acid. Delicious with or without milk. The kind you get in the market stalls is already sweetened, a bit like Cuban coffee. In the lobby of the hotel there was one of those vacuum decanters of it, with little teeny plastic cups, so you would never have to need coffee for more time than it took to press that button and fill your little cup. In the faculty room in the Escuela de Música, ditto; just that there they provided darling little espresso cups and saucers instead of plastic cups, and little espresso spoons.

I decided my second day here that Brasil –at least the part where I was– is Food Heaven for both vegetarians and South Beachers. Probably Vegans too, for that matter. For one thing, arugula is indeed omnipresent: tender, bright green, delicately spicy, PILES of it in all the salad-bar sorts of places. And the lettuce! Leaf lettuce, always fresh, crunchy lovely big leaves generally of some Black-seeded Simpson variety; both green and red. Then there are the olives. I forgot to ask if they are cultivated in Brasil but they could just as easily come from Portugal, or even Chile. Big green gordales, little green ones, big black shiny Greek-type olives, smaller Kalamata ones ... oh my goodness. Not as a special “gourmet” item but, like the lettuce and the arugula and the coffee, EVERYWHERE. And everywhere, Portuguese olive oil and wine vinegar.

There are restaurants which are called kilo places, with anywhere from 10 to 20 different hot and cold dishes –yes, including always the wonderful salad greens– where you fill up your plate and then they charge you according to the weight. In Belo I went with translator D\*\*\* K to one place like this, definitely a place for the “just plain folks” and not for the rich and exclusive; cafeteria-style as they say in the US, with at least 20 dishes and salads and all, and a SEPARATE little counter where there is a chef with some ten different skewers in a vertical gas grill, each with beef of a different “término” from rare to well-cooked. You tell him what you want and he slices it off the skewer with a large, very sharp knife. After the first slice he looks at you to make sure it’s what you want. People take their meat seriously here: even the elderly little lady ahead of me in line had her eagle eye firmly fixed on that little sample. YUMM. Just as yummy, the whole meal cost me some 10 *reais*, slightly less than 60 Mexican pesos or USD\$5. Yes, that is one digit you see there.

One night in Ribeirão Silvia and I, with her friend who was visiting, went to a little place which serves “peixe grillhado” – grilled fish. Silvia kept saying, “It’s a very humble place, now”, as though to warn me not to expect some place with satin tablecloths and obsequious waiters. And indeed, like many little restaurants all over México, it was completely unpretentious, with its plastic chairs, its plastic tables with that oiled cloth on them, the ceiling fans going like mad in the heat even at 9 o’clock at night; and it was just wonderful. I didn’t write down the name of the fish, but it is a quite large freshwater white fish of Brasil, which they grilled, and it was just mouthwateringly delicious. We were famished and ordered some fried manioc to scare away our hunger while the fish was cooking – which took quite a while since it is a very large fish! It came with steamed broccoli and potatoes. We unashamedly stuffed ourselves.

All that delicious produce makes me want to know more about how Brazil’s agricultural system works. Silvia explained to me that Ribeirão Preto is right in the middle of one of Brasil’s richest and most plentiful agricultural regions; but goodness, so is Guanajuato in the middle of Mexico’s, and we don’t have produce like that! Nor beef either, for that matter, nor fish, heaven knows. I wonder how

they do it? Perhaps there is more government support for farmers there, both economically and in terms of extension help?

None of this is to say that there are not tremendous environmental problems in Brasil: apparently they're in at least as bad shape as México in that regard. But it certainly seems that they're doing something right and it would be interesting to know what and how.

Last but not least, the Japanese presence in Brasil means that there is incredible Japanese food there. In Ribeirão Preto on Saturday night I went with Mário Vieira, Neto, Pablo Sotuyo and Yuka to a very elegant restaurant, all blonde wood and modern design. We dithered about what to order and Yuka, decisive as always, recommended a sort of *degustación* thing, delicately hinting that we wouldn't really want anything more to eat. My goodness, was she ever right! A large wooden vessel arrived, more or less in the shape of a Viking longship, crammed to the gills (or would it be "gunnels"?) with every imaginable kind of sashimi and sushi, all impeccably fresh and delicious. We could barely finish it among the five of us. And they made a good *caipirinha* there! What more could anyone ask for?

### COMING HOME

I feel that lately I've been in a lot of airports, at dusk and at dawn: Salt Lake City, Portland, and Medford on that little West Coast tour from 6 to 16 February. And now Sao Paulo and Dallas, nightfall in the one and daybreak in the other. I'm ready to be home.