

Trio Virado

New Orleans Friends of Music, March 24, 2025

PROGRAM

Grand Trio Concertante (1785)	Francesco Molinarort (1775–1847)
1. Allegro	
Pièce en forme de Habañera	Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) (arr. Amy Porter and João Luiz)
Triologue	Sergio Assad (b. 1952)
I. Chit-Chat	
II. Innertalk	
III. Hubbub	
Scaramouche (Op. 165b)	Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) (arr. João Luiz)
I. Vif	
II. Modéré	
III. Brasileira (Tempo di Samba)	
Todas as Manhãs (Homenagem a Luiz Bonfá)	João Luiz (b. 1979)
Three Pieces	Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992)
Bordel 1900 (from <i>Histoire du Tango</i>)	
Café 1930 (from <i>Histoire du Tango</i>)	
Whisky (Tango) (from <i>Suite Troileana</i>)	

PROGRAM NOTES

by Marc Loudon

[*Note:* Performance links provided in these notes are generally available *YouTube* links that in many cases start with advertisements. You can skip the ads by clicking on the “Skip” message that will appear on the lower right of the video after a few seconds.]

The Italian composer **Francesco Molino** was born in Ivrea, near Turin. His father, Giuseppe Ignazio Molino, was an oboist in the service of the Piedmontese Troop Band. Francesco followed his father’s path as a military musician, and at age 15 he too joined the Piedmontese Regiment and took up the oboe. He began learning the rudiments of musical composition and undertook studies in viola, and by 18 years of age was active as a violist in the orchestra of the Royal Theater of Turin. Molino was also entering the world of guitar performance and composition. In 1820 he settled in Paris, where he remained for the rest of his life. His *Guitar Method* (1830) set out new concepts in guitar technique and achieved substantial success. As a composer, he penned 60 works for guitar, including the brilliant Sonata Op. 51, a series of trios, and nocturnes for flute

and guitar duet. **The Grand Trio Concertante** is one of his finest works in that genre. The first movement, heard on this program, is an *Allegro* in sonata form.

A link to a performance of the first movement of the *Grand Trio*:

[Trio Virado, Allegro from Grand Trio Concertante](#)

Maurice Ravel originally composed his famous **Pièce en forme de Habañera** as a vocalise etude for bass voice and piano in 1907. A song without words, Ravel took as his model the slow, sultry Spanish dance called the *habañera*, which is a sultry dance that originated in 19th-century Havana (thus the name). It features accents on beats 1, 2½, and 4 in a measure of four beats. The off-beat accent gives the effect of syncopation as well as the early anticipation of beat 3.

Like most French composers of the period, Ravel was fascinated by the music of Spain. (Another example is his famous *Boléro*). He used the *habañera* as the basis of an exceedingly difficult virtuoso exercise for the bass voice. Ravel later transcribed the work for cello and piano—a transcription that retains all the virtuosity of the original—and from this several other arrangements have been made for many different instruments. The unique arrangement we hear on this concert is by *Trio Virado* flutist Amy Porter and guitarist João Luiz.

A link to this piece performed with violin and piano:

[Ravel Habañera, Violin and Piano](#)

Sérgio Assad is a Brazilian guitarist, composer, and arranger who often performs with his brother Odair in the guitar duo commonly known as the *Assad Brothers* or *Duo Assad*.

Born into a musical family in Mococa, São Paulo, Brazil, Assad began creating music for the guitar not long after he began playing the instrument. He learned Brazilian folk melodies from his father. By age 14, he was arranging and writing original compositions for the guitar duo he had formed with his brother Odair. At the age of 17, he and Odair began their studies under the best known classical guitar teacher in Brazil at the time, Monina Tavora, a former disciple of Andrés Segovia. Sérgio later went on to study conducting and composition at the Escola Nacional de Música in Rio de Janeiro, and he worked privately with a Brazilian composition teacher, Esther Scliar.

About his composition *Triologue*, Assad writes:

Triologue is a musical composition that I wrote in 2022 at the request of the Trio Virado. The piece is an expression of my fascination with the art of conversation and its similarities with music. In a conversation, each person has a unique voice and style of speaking, just like the individual instruments in *Triologue*. The three instruments—flute, alto, and guitar—engage in a musical conversation, with each one having a chance to showcase their individuality and contribute to the overall dialogue. The musical phrases in the piece are like sentences in a conversation, and the dynamics, articulation, and tempo are like the tone, emphasis, and pace of speech. The different movements of the piece represent different types of conversations — from lighthearted small talk to intense and chaotic exchanges. As in a conversation, music can convey complex emotions and ideas and bring people together in a shared experience. I hope that *Triologue* inspires listeners to appreciate the beauty of conversation and music and their power to connect people across cultures and languages.

Darius Milhaud was a French composer, conductor, and teacher. He was a one of six composers (Francis Poulenc, Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Louis Durey, Georges Auric, and Germaine

Tailleferre) who initially lived, worked, and generally “hung out” with each other in Montparnasse, France, and came to be known as *Les Six*.

Born in Marseille and raised in Aix-en-Provence, Milhaud began as a violinist, later turning to composition. He studied composition at the Paris Conservatory with organist Charles-Marie Widor and harmony and counterpoint with André Gedalge. He also studied privately with Vincent d'Indy. From 1917 to 1919, he served as secretary to Paul Claudel, the poet and dramatist who was then the French ambassador to Brazil, and with whom Milhaud collaborated for many years, writing music for many of his poems and plays.

The Nazi occupation of France in the 1940s forced Milhaud (who was from a prominent Jewish family) and his wife to leave his homeland. He secured a teaching post at Mills College in Oakland, California. From 1947–1971 he taught in alternate years at Mills and the Paris *Conservatoire* until poor health forced him to retire. His remains are interred in the cemetery in his beloved Aix-en-Provence.

Milhaud's compositions are influenced by jazz and Brazilian music and make extensive use of polytonality (music in which more than one key is used simultaneously). A renowned teacher, he taught many future jazz and classical composers, including Burt Bacharach, Dave Brubeck, and Philip Glass, among others. (Brubeck named his first son Darius.) Milhaud told Bacharach, “Don't be afraid of writing something people can remember and whistle. Don't ever feel discomfited by a melody.”

Scaramouche was composed as a delightful piano duo in 1937 at the request of the renowned French pianist Marguerite Long. The sources of the three movements are incidental music that Milhaud had composed for two plays. The first and third movements are from a production of an adaptation of Molière's *Le Médecin volant* (*The Flying Doctor*); it is from this production that *Scaramouche* gets its name, as the troupe of players was named the Théâtre Scaramouche. The second movement is derived from the overture of Jules Supervielle's opera *Bolivar*.

Vif, the first movement of *Scaramouche*, has been likened to a cross between folk-song melodies and nursery rhymes: one of the themes used is the melody from the children's song *Ten Green Bottles*. Polytonality can be heard as early as the opening measures, where chromatically clashing triads are layered under the movement's opening theme. Syncopation is another technique used in this movement. In an early part of the movement, the bass line places emphasis on the first, fourth and seventh notes of an eight-note bar (as in a habañera). A few measures later, Milhaud uses a three-against-four poly-meter. This kind of syncopation was often used by Brazilian composers, including Heitor Villa-Lobos.

Modéré, the second movement, hints at the French overture style used by Johann Sebastian Bach and other Baroque composers. The movement has elements of canon and ostinato. *Modéré* is in ternary (ABC) form: the A section is written in 4/4 meter and is contrasted metrically by a B section in 6/4. In the final (C) section of the movement, Milhaud layers both the A and B themes on top of each other.

Brasileira, the third movement, is a *samba* (Brazilian dance) *choro* (a “happy lament”). It derives from Milhaud's time in Brazil as secretary to the French ambassador. During this time, he listened to the music of Brazilian composer Ernesto Nazareth, which served as an inspiration for the movement.

Scaramouche has been, since its introduction, one of Milhaud's most popular compositions. It has been arranged for many different combinations of instruments; the unique arrangement we hear on this concert is by *Trio Virado* guitarist João Luiz.

A link to the original duo-piano arrangement of *Scaramouche*:

[Scaramouche: Duo-Piano \(Original\) Version](#)

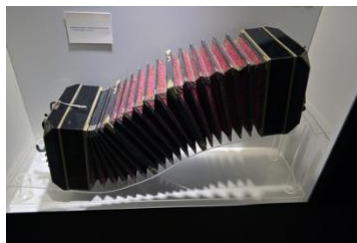
The guitarist, educator, and composer **João Luiz** started playing the popular music of his native Brazil professionally during his childhood and was later trained in classical guitar by his mentor Henrique Pinto. As a performer and composer, João is equally at home with classical, Brazilian and world music. He is currently Director of Chamber Music CUNY Hunter College, and he teaches guitar at SUNY Stony Brook and Mannes College of Music in New York. João holds a master's degree in Classical Guitar from Mannes as a student of Michael Newman and Frederic Hand. As the recipient of the Augustine Foundation scholarship, João earned his doctorate from Manhattan School of Music as a student of David Leisner. He formed the Trio Virado in 2011 with flutist Amy Porter and violist Juan Miguel-Hernandez to promote contemporary Latin American chamber music.

Luiz's **Todas as Manhãs** ("All the Hands") was written for the Mannes Guitar Seminar in 2011 for three guitars. The piece describes some of the scenes in the award-winning 1958 Brazilian film *Black Orpheus*. The bossa nova song "Manha de carnival" by Luiz Bonfá is the main theme for the piece, which is itself a backwards theme and variations. *Todas as Manhãs* not only tells the story of *Black Orpheus* but also shows a variety of techniques, rhythms, and colors characteristic of Brazilian dances. The version for guitar, viola, and flute is dedicated to Trio Virado.

A link to a performance by Trio Virado of excerpts from *Todas as Manhãs*:

[Trio Virado: Todas as Manhãs excerpts](#)

Astor Piazzolla was possibly the greatest exponent of the tango as a serious musical form in the twentieth century. He began playing music on the bandoneón, an instrument somewhat



resembling an accordion (see photo at left). His early career, beginning at age 17, was as an orchestral bandoneónist and arranger. By 1941 he was earning enough money to pay for music lessons with the eminent Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera. During his five years of study with Ginastera he mastered orchestration and began to study piano. By 1950 Piazzolla was about ready to abandon tango altogether. At Ginastera's urging, Piazzolla entered his classical composition "Buenos Aires Symphony in Three Movements" for the Fabian Sevitzyk Award. The performance took place in Buenos Aires with the symphony orchestra under the direction of Sevitzyk himself. At the end of the concert, a fight broke out among members of the audience who were offended by the inclusion of two bandoneóns in a traditional symphony orchestra. In spite of this, Piazzolla's composition won him a grant from the French government to study in Paris with the legendary French composition teacher Nadia Boulanger. Piazzolla was growing tired of tango and tried to hide his tango and bandoneón compositions from Boulanger, thinking that his destiny lay in classical music. Introducing his work, Piazzolla played her a number of his classically inspired compositions, but it was not until he played his tango composition *Triunfal* that she congratulated him and encouraged him to pursue his career in tango, recognizing that this was where his talent lay. This was to prove a historic encounter and a crossroads in Piazzolla's career. With Boulanger he studied classical

composition, including counterpoint, which was to play an important role in his later tango compositions. He went on to a distinguished career as a composer, performer, and recording artist. (A 1982 composition, *Le Grand Tango* for cello and piano, dedicated to Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, was premiered by the cellist in 1990 in New Orleans.)

Piazzolla's *nuevo tango* style was distinct from the traditional tango in its incorporation of elements of jazz, its use of extended harmonies and dissonance, its use of counterpoint, and its ventures into extended compositional forms. Piazzolla's fusion of tango with this wide range of other recognizable Western musical elements was so successful that it produced a new individual style transcending these influences. It is precisely this success, and individuality, that makes it hard to pin down where particular influences reside in his compositions, but some aspects are clear. The use of the passacaglia technique of a repeating bass line and harmonic sequence, invented and much used in 17th- and 18th-century baroque music but also central to the idea of jazz changes, is predominant in most of Piazzolla's mature compositions. Another clear reference to the baroque is the often complex and virtuosic counterpoint that sometimes follows strict fugal behavior but more often simply allows each performer in the group to assert his voice. A further technique that emphasizes this sense of democracy and freedom among the musicians is improvisation, that is borrowed from jazz in concept, but in practice involves a different vocabulary of scales and rhythms that stay within the parameters of the established tango sound-world.

The first two pieces on our program are the first two movements from his *Histoire du Tango*, which dates from the 1980s. Its four movements trace the evolution of the tango in the 20th century, although all four of the movements are unmistakably Piazzolla. The first (**Bordel 1900**) is a blithe, up-tempo dance with ragtime sparkle and syncopation. It describes the tango in its origins, in brothels of the early 20th century. Here, provocative melodies with flexible tempos appear. The piece is written with a bright but elegant character and is described in the score as *molto giocoso* (very playful). The flutist plays *staccato*, and the guitarist accompanies some passages as if the guitar were a percussion instrument. The movement is composed in binary time, like the traditional tangos of the time; it suggests a dance. The piece also is something of a habañera, which is noticeable in the repeated rhythms of the guitar.

The second movement (**Café 1930**) has the character of a French jazz ballad, slow and poignant, emphasizing that by 1930 the tango had changed and had acquired a romantic, sensual, and slow character. This movement features dark melodies. The guitar begins with a base of arpeggio (broken chords) and ornaments. The flute enters with an expressive melody, and the guitar continues to accompany. The score includes *accelerando* and *rallentando* indications, as well as *ad libitum* sections, in order to give interpreters a certain freedom.

The third piece, **Whisky**, is a movement from the *Suite Troileana*, named for Piazzolla's friend and early mentor Anibal Troilo, a bandoneónist who led the first orchestra that Piazzolla joined as a 17-year-old.

A link to performance of an arrangement of *Café 1930* from *Histoire du Tango* by Trio Virado:

[Café 1930 by Trio Virado](#)