

“Native Brazilian Music” (Recorded under the supervision of Leopold Stokowski) (1942)

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Essay by Larry Huffman (guest post)*



Leopold Stokowski

Leopold Stokowski gained fame with the Philadelphia Orchestra, 1912-1940, from their many recordings and from the Disney film “Fantasia.” After Stokowski left Philadelphia, he formed, in 1940, the “All-American Youth Orchestra” whom he created by selecting young musicians from across the United States. Stokowski wished to tour South America with his youth orchestra, and gained the necessary sponsorship from Columbia Records.

On 26 July 1940, at midnight, Stokowski and his All-American Youth Orchestra, along with some Columbia Records engineers, set sail on the *S.S. Uruguay* for South America. They toured Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay during August and September of 1940. On the ship, Stokowski and the Columbia Records engineers had recording equipment which they used to record in each of these countries.

Prior to the orchestra tour, Stokowski contacted Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) asking him to identify musicians representing “the most legitimate popular Brazilian music.” Villa-Lobos recruited nine prominent Brazilian musicians who were credited under their stage names: Pixinguinha (Alfredo da Rocha Vianna, Jr., 1897-1973); Donga (Ernesto dos Santos, 1889-1974); João da Bahiana (João Machado Guedes, 1887-1974); Zé Espinguela (José Gomes da Costa, 1901-1944); Cartola (Angenor de Oliveira, 1908-1980); Zé da Zilda (José Gonçalves, 1908-1954); Luiz Americano (1900-1961), and the duo Jararaca and Ratinho (José Luis Rodrigues Calazans, 1896–1977, and Severino Rangel de Carvalho, 1896–1972).

In his book, “Todo Tempo que Eu Viver” [“All Time I Live”] (Rio de Janeiro, Corisco Edições, 1988), the filmmaker Roberto Moura wrote:

... The music salon of the *Uruguay* had perhaps never held so many celebrities... At 10 pm began the gathering of conjuntos, escolas de samba, orchestra, [and] people who were going to sing and people who were going to listen... From one number to the next, the night passes and dawn surges. The music salon of the *Uruguay* is still full. Now the

audience consists mainly of members of the All-American Youth Orchestra, who are curious to learn about the Brazilian instruments. By morning, the sound engineer is able to count more than a hundred recordings. That is the work of one night, and also Brazilian music in its most typical expression, which will go to other countries of the Continent to serve the policy of pan-American approximation of the peoples in this hemisphere....

Larry Huffman is a musicologist and member of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections. He is author of the website www.stokowski.org dealing with the career of Leopold Stokowski.

* The views expressed in this essay are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Library of Congress.