



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

FROM THE EMORY COOK COLLECTION

Luiz Bonfá

SOLO IN RIO 1959



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage | 750 9th Street, NW | Suite 4100
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FROM THE
EMORY COOK COLLECTION

Luiz Bonfá SOLO IN RIO 1959



- 1 *Pernambuco* 1:37
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 2 *Night and Day* 2:07
(Cole Porter / Harms, Inc., BMI)
- 3 *Shearing* 1:23
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 4 *Sambolero* 2:49
(Luiz Bonfá / Universal Duchess Music Corp., BMI)
- 5 *Calypso Minor* 1:44
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 6 *Uma Prece [A Prayer]* 2:32
(Luiz Bonfá / APRS, BMI—Irmaos Vitale SA)
- 7 *Bonfabuloso* 2:07
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 8 *Quebra Mar [The Seawall]* 2:35
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music)
- 9 *Luzes do Rio [Lights of Rio]* 2:30
(Luiz Bonfá / Ann-Rachel Music Corp., ASCAP)

- 10 *Perdido de Amor*
[Lost in Love] 3:22
(Luiz Bonfá / APRS, BMI—Irmaos Vitale SA)
- 11 *Manhã de Carnaval* 2:24
(Luiz Bonfá / Warner Chappell)
- 12 *Amor sem Adeus*
[Love without Goodbye] 2:00
(Luiz Bonfá—Antônio Carlos Jobim / Corcovado Music Corp., BMI)
- 13 *Variações em Violão*
[Variations on Guitar] 1:24
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 14 *Seringueiro* 2:50
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 15 *Chopin* 1:44
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 16 *Na Baixa do Sapateiro*
[In the Shoemaker's Hollow] 2:47
(Ary Barroso / APRS, BMI—Irmaos Vitale SA)
- 17 *Murder* 2:26
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 18 *A Brazilian in New York* 5:02
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 19 *Prelude to Adventure in Space* 1:56
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 20 *Tenderly* 1:40
(Walter Cross—Jack Lawrence / Edwin H. Morris & Co.—Range Road Music Inc., ASCAP)
- 21 *Blue Madrid* 2:15
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 22 *Marcha Escocesa*
[Scottish March] 1:08
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 23 *Fanfarra [Fanfare]* :53
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 24 *Samba de Orfeu* 1:11
(Luiz Bonfá—Antônio Maria Araujo de Moraes / Ann-Rachel Music Corp., ASCAP)
- 25 *Manhã de Carnaval 2* 1:21
(Luiz Bonfá / Warner Chappell)
- 26 *Perdido de Amor 2* 1:52
(Luiz Bonfá / APRS, BMI—Irmaos Vitale SA)
- 27 *Sambolero 2* 3:06
(Luiz Bonfá / Universal Duchess Music Corp., BMI)
- 28 *Quebra Mar 2* 2:08
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 29 *Seringueiro* excerpt :30
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 30 *Seringueiro 2* 1:59
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)
- 31 *Luzes do Rio 2* 2:36
(Luiz Bonfá / Bonfá Music, ASCAP)

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LUIZ BONFÁ: "O VIOLÃO DE LUIZ BONFÁ"

ANTHONY WELLER

This is the first CD release of one of Luiz Bonfá's masterpieces, complete at last. Because the Smithsonian Institution possesses the original master tapes (part of the legacy of the recording engineer Emory Cook), the disc comprises all seventeen tracks from the 1959 Cook LP (#1134), plus nearly another half hour of never-released material, including not just alternate takes, but pieces that Bonfá never recorded elsewhere.

Even within Bonfá's enormous output, the Cook recording remains very special. Every guitar aficionado will enjoy hearing Bonfá thrive in that most challenging situation, of playing solo. His warmth, intimacy, and dynamism suffuse every track; he plays the most treacherous passages with characteristic effortlessness, and sounds absolutely free and relaxed on this unforgiving instrument. The number of tracks apparently improvised on the spot adds to the virtuosic allure. It is simply how the man played, on one of his best days before a microphone.

Though Bonfá was technically superb—to my mind, one of the great guitarists of the 20th century—he always put his prodigious abilities at the service of the music. It is never virtuosity for its own sake, or to impress; his innovations always arise with some specific musical effect in mind. As Cook wrote in his original liner notes: "The ten Bonfá fingers, presumably in a fairly marital state at birth, are now collectively and separately divorced, each from the others to such an extent that it has been facetiously suggested that he should carry at least five paid-up union cards."



Luiz Floriano Bonfá (17 October 1922–12 January 2001) was born in what he called the “jungle village” of Santa Cruz, Brazil, the son of an Italian immigrant. He took up the guitar at age 11—it was a birthday present—and, serious from the beginning, quickly absorbed all the local teacher had to offer. With the apparent luck that seems to follow people of unusual destiny, a short time later the boy was at a party in Rio and met the Uruguayan classical guitar master Isaias Savio (1902–1977), a resident of the city, who asked him to play and then immediately offered to teach him.

By the mid 1930s, Savio was one of the finest and most knowledgeable guitarists in South America. He had studied with Miguel Llobet (a Catalan, the most eminent disciple of the 19th-century Spanish master Francisco Tarrega), and was thus able to pass on to the young Bonfá a demanding, systematic approach, which would encourage an original and flexible style to develop freely. Three years of weekly lessons, which meant a two-and-a-half-hour train trip each way, gave Bonfá a thorough knowledge of 18th- and 19th-century repertoire and of the most highly developed “school” of the classical guitar—which remains a notoriously individualized instrument in terms of technique compared to, say, the violin or the piano.

“Savio was extraordinary to study with,” Bonfá remembered years later. “Unlike many teachers, he was the friend of his students. We were like one big family of pupils with a spectacular father.” Bonfá would eventually reply in kind by sending a promising boy named Carlos Barbosa-Lima, now one of today’s best-known classical guitarists, to Savio.

Though Savio had declared that Bonfá could become one of the world’s top classical soloists, Bonfá was increasingly drawn to the idea of dedicating himself to Brazil’s popular music. (The ever open-minded Savio supported this decision.) By his late teens, Bonfá was expanding his formal training to the work of making a living playing in Rio’s nightclubs, hotels, and casinos.

This was a tremendously creative era in Brazil’s popular-music culture, due partly to a hunger for live music on the radio. Traditional forms, like *chôro*, *serenata*,

and *samba*, were being invigorated and reinvented; others, like waltzes and boleros, were being given an ever more Brazilian intonation as their own local roots deepened. The influence of jazz from the United States was penetrating as well. Bonfá ended up performing and recording as both guitarist and singer with a successful vocal group, the Quitandinha Serenaders; when he left them, his stand-in was briefly the young João Gilberto. Bonfá eventually composed several songs that became hits for other singers: “Ranchinho de Palha,” “Sem esse Céu,” “Canção do Vaqueiro,” and most notably “De Cigarro em Cigarro” (“From Cigarette to Cigarette”).

Many of Bonfá’s most dramatic instrumentals (“Sambolero,” “Uma Prece,” “Batucada,” “Dança Índia”) similarly date from his early twenties. His compositional style on the guitar was already mature—a sense of exuberant virtuosity allied to a mood of tender joy, amid a still-audacious ability to imitate several percussion instruments at once. What would come later was an equally daring, liberated harmonic sensibility, which sprang from his deep love of impressionism, and of Debussy in particular.

Around 1946, Bonfá met his other main mentor, who was less a teacher and more a musical elder brother: the guitarist Anibal Augusto Sardinha (1915–1955). “Garoto” was a rare original, who managed to combine a range of disparate classical and folk influences into an impressionistic, fervently Brazilian style, which was passionate, technically brilliant, and harmonically idiosyncratic. Though only seven years older than Bonfá, Garoto had become extremely well known through many performances on radio, and was able to help Bonfá in the early stages of his career.

Bonfá called Garoto “my dear friend by whom I was greatly influenced, a musical genius far ahead of his time. . . . It was he who got me my first job, with Radio Nacional. In spite of his great ability, he was a truly humble man. We used to get together at his place in Copacabana and jam for hours, just the two of us.” Garoto’s stepdaughter Maria Alice de Medeiros Rosa—Bonfá was later best man at her wedding, in New York—remembers that Bonfá and his guitar were constant visitors

in the Rio household, along with other luminaries of Brazilian music. As she put it, "In terms of the guitar, Garoto always spoke of Bonfá as the best. And of course Luiz always spoke of Garoto as the best."

Bonfá first recorded as a leader in 1945, and by the time of the present disc (1959), he'd released under his own name about fifteen 78-rpm records, mostly for Continental, and about a dozen LPs, mostly for Odeon—and played on plenty of other artists' discs. This is all detailed on the Bonfá Discography Website, the labor of love of two collectors, Koichi and Motoko Yasuoka, who have tirelessly put together the world's most extensive Bonfá archive: <http://kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~yasuoka/Bonfa/index.html>.

Brazilian popular music was changing rapidly, as the old forms acquired a languid, contemporary cool, which was eventually labeled *bossa nova* ("the new knack," "the new thing," "the new swing"). Bonfá was an architect of this sound, along with Antônio Carlos Jobim, João Gilberto, Baden Powell, and others; but the popularity of the movement sprang from an authentic feeling that was now simply in the air, and seemed to reside in every melody.

Bonfá was partly responsible for it and partly absent from it. In 1957, he'd gone to New York, knowing little English, and had found that "no one knew me or anything about Brazilian music." Once again, a chance invitation to a cocktail party brought him luck, for Mary Martin—an enormously successful singing star, Broadway's Peter Pan—heard him play that night for fellow guests, and straightaway offered him a feature spot on a sixty-city tour. Subsequent tours with her, and frequent TV appearances, helped him establish a Brazilian beachhead with U.S. audiences and record labels. For the next fifteen years he lived in both countries, with a steady emphasis on the United States.

The year before, in 1956, Bonfá had been the guitarist in a Rio musical theater piece with a marvelous ensemble; he'd added one number to the score, which was by his friend Jobim, with a libretto by the prominent poet Vinicius de Moraes.

Orfeu da Conceição set the Orpheus legend in Rio, and got enough notice to attract the French director Marcel Camus, who in 1958 went to Brazil to film the story within the setting of *carnaval*.

By this time, Bonfá was busy in the United States, but he returned to Rio during a month off from the Mary Martin tour. When director Camus heard that Bonfá was in the city, he asked him to write a melody for the main character. With a mere week to go before his flight back to the United States, Bonfá came up overnight with a theme that was liked by everyone involved except Camus, who asked him to try again. He did so, but when the new theme was approved by the director, Bonfá insisted that the prior song was better, and argued until Camus relented. When *Orfeu Negro* ("Black Orpheus") went on to win the 1959 Palme d'Or at Cannes (and the Oscar for Best Foreign Film), Bonfá's "Manhã de Carnaval" became the #1 hit in Europe and one of the most-recorded songs in history. The entire soundtrack, which included Bonfá's "Samba de Orfeu" and Jobim's "A Felicidade," helped coalesce the coming awareness of *bossa nova*. Over the years, Bonfá composed or participated in quite a few soundtracks; his "The Gentle Rain," from a lackluster 1966 film, has become a jazz mainstay.

In the late sixties and early seventies, Bonfá rode out the *bossa nova* wave and, by spending more and more time in the United States, became far better known there than in Brazil. Despite his uneven records during this time—records that often give the impression it wasn't he making the paramount decisions—Bonfá remained as innovative as ever, ready to experiment with a subtle compositional use of electronic effects like echo and delay on his classical guitar sound.

In 1971, apparently mid-career, Bonfá left the United States and moved back to Rio. Afterward, he explained, "An artist has to look out or all the pressure will destroy him. Brazil is a slow, relaxed country, and I have many things aside from music that I enjoy doing." These included collecting vintage cars and raising exotic birds and plants. On a visit to New York, he told an old friend, "You've seen what it's

like in Rio—which would *you* choose?”

Bonfá's later career seems a gradual and happy withdrawal from the rat race of the music business. Always peripatetic, he still did concert tours in Europe and Australia and gave the occasional U.S. concert with Dave Brubeck and others. Regrettably, he rarely recorded solo after the superb 1972 LP *Introspection*, though with customary amiability he continued to record, often with lesser musicians. Still, it is impossible to know his magnificent early solo work, like the present disc, and not dream about the later introspections we never got to have.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Bonfá returned to New York for several club dates and made a couple of compact discs. All the old gentleness of touch was still there, but soon afterward Alzheimer's set in, and eventually left him unable to play and ever more remote from the person he'd been. He died in his beloved Rio from prostate cancer at 78.

It is a sad truth of the music profession that though a performer may sustain a long and fruitful career, his recordings usually telescope into a much shorter period with the kind of public attention that supports record contracts. Yet Bonfá's recording career ran from 1945 until 1996 and includes more than fifty discs; indeed, he was one of those rare performers whose first recordings were issued on 78s and whose last appeared as CDs.

Bonfá's golden era is the decade that began in the early 1950s, when he and Jobim and Gilberto and a few others were inventing a fresh sound. Everyone knows about the popular boom of the *bossa nova*—so often degraded across a half-century by overuse in the wrong hands, yet in retrospect so remarkably invulnerable, for those original recordings still glow with the luminous poetry of a new magic entering the world. One can debate the relative strength of its different roots—strains of jazz; the rich tradition of Brazilian popular music of earlier eras; elements of a South American classical tradition, particularly as incarnated by Villa-Lobos—but at its heart were a dozen extraordinary young musicians who listened to each other, and

together heard life unlike anyone before.

This decade is the gravitational center of Bonfá's most fascinating work. Sadly, very few guitarists nowadays, of any genre, are aware of Bonfá's mastery. Like the general public, they remember him not as a guitarist, but only as the composer of three standards: "The Gentle Rain," "Samba de Orfeu," and "Manhã de Carnaval" (the last variously referred to as "A Day in the Life of a Fool," "Morning of the Carnival," or "Black Orpheus"). Surprising as it may seem in the face of fifty-odd records, until recently it took determination to hunt down any discs of Bonfá's serious work; even now, many of his best LPs have not yet been re-released on CD. One danger of living in an age of cultural archaeology is that it's easy to assume the treasures of yesteryear have all been unearthed and reissued. The collectors know differently.

Emory Cook (1913–2002) was once called "the best ear in the U.S.A." Dating from an era when most classical guitar LPs can seem as if they were made in the same tiny bathroom, the sound Cook achieved here is detailed, unadorned, spacious, and uncolored by the usual mushy reverb. His widow, Martha Cook, has pointed out that he "liked the guitar in general, and played classical guitar quite well himself. When he began to court me, this is the record he brought to my house and played over and over." His trademark was an ability to make vital recordings on the spot, with no need of a studio: "He'd take his microphones and his Nagra—portable tape machine—and go travel for months at a time. He specialized in field recordings; he had started off by recording the sounds of the sea and the sky. He always worked relentlessly at placing his microphones. He just wouldn't give up until he got perfection."

On this particular odyssey he also recorded in Mexico, Ecuador, and the Caribbean; Martha believes that Bonfá was the only artist Cook recorded in Brazil. Unfortunately, for information on how the LP was made, we have only a Cook press release that suggests it was recorded on a single evening in Rio, on the Nagra III, "with twelve ordinary flashlight batteries."

The year 1959 was a busy one for Bonfá. He toured with Mary Martin as a featured soloist until the spring. At some point, he did a first-rate recording (*¡Amor!*) in the United States for Atlantic Records. He then returned to Rio, where he made this recording, using (according to the original liner notes) a "Model HS Series E Do Souto." It sounds—and looks—like the same guitar he used on many LPs he made at about this time: a spruce top with Brazilian rosewood back and sides, judging by the cover photo.

In delving into the work of a popular instrumentalist like Bonfá, we're appreciating someone who's creating music not for the larger world of many other interpreters (as a composer usually intends), but primarily *to play himself*. As a result, we sometimes end up judging him on the collective strengths of his artistic personality, the sum of all the work, rather than on the quality of an individual piece. His style, not any particular composition, in effect becomes the opus.

The thirty-one extremely diverse tracks on this disc fall into three categories: original compositions (19), which Bonfá played somewhat differently each time; probable outright improvisations (9), done on that day's spur of the moment; and his semi-improvised versions of others' compositions (3). Thus, except for three tracks, the music on this disc is entirely by Bonfá. This alone made him a rarity within the guitar world of the 1950s, no matter what style. Even rarer was that so much of this particular LP was improvised.

One crucial aspect of Bonfá's artistic personality is that he was happy to make up the music literally while he played it. The guitarist, musicologist, and composer Brian Hodel has recounted a puzzling Rio afternoon spent trying to extract from Bonfá an ideal performance of "The Gentle Rain" to transcribe, and watching him play it totally differently a few times before it dawned on Hodel that Bonfá was not only improvising, but instinctively disinclined to repeat himself. Each version was unique, and valid.

The implicit question—*How much is improvised?*—tends to be knotty for any

genre that involves musicians making up substantial parts of a performance as they play. Every jazz musician improvising on "Summertime" assumes his colleagues know the song's structure and have sufficiently acute ears to follow any harmonic substitution and melodic byway that strike at a moment's whim. (Ditto a flamenco guitarist, a blues saxophonist, an Indian vina player.) Jazz scholars sometimes argue the point of honor of how much so-and-so is making up on the spot—as if a wholly improvised performance is more "honest," whatever that means—without admitting that a large percentage of a piece is necessarily agreed on in advance. In effect, what's occurring in all these genres is improvised variations on preexisting material.

This is far from the Western classical tradition of improvising, which has, save among master organists, largely died out. In Bach's day, for instance, any keyboardist worth his job could create a four-voice fugue from scratch, and there are many accounts of Mozart's and Beethoven's improvisational abilities, only hinted at by Beethoven's piano Fantasy, Op. 77.

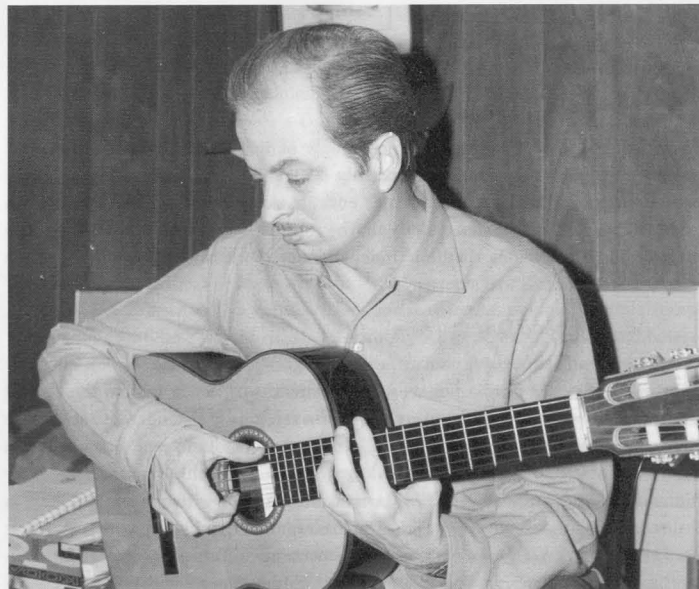
The chief drawback of improvisation is that it's difficult to invent a compelling structure off the cuff; hence the long tendency of musicians to turn to the ready-made one, be it a fugue or a 32-bar song. For the musician giving it life, the structure is liberating by being understood from the start, a skeleton waiting to be fleshed out. But even with no structure at all, there's often considerable beauty in an improvisation intended solely to express the mood of a moment, the free-flowing river of an acute musical imagination and its fingers. That fleeting sense of pure fantasia, of expressing the tidal currents of a dreaming mind, even as an idea quickens to life and then vanishes, is one of music's unique capabilities. At this, Bonfá was a master.

In practicing the rigorous art of improvising an entire piece from scratch, Bonfá is a virtual anomaly within the world of Brazilian guitar, at least as preserved on record. There are plenty of accounts of major Brazilian guitarists as adept improvisers—say, Garoto (1915–1955), Bola Sete (1928–1987), Paulinho Nogueira

(1929–2003), Baden Powell (1937–2000), and others—but precious few recordings as examples. Yet for cut after cut, Emory Cook allows us to hear Bonfá doing it in front of the microphones. (I suspect that part of the LP *Introspection* was also improvised.)

Naturally, we as listeners are inevitably always up against our own expectations. We approach a Schoenberg sonata differently than a Bach mass, an Indian raga, a tango, or a Broadway song; this is as it should be. In a wide world, where all are far more easily available than a decade ago, it is important to try to hear what each is trying to say, to learn to listen in as many different ways as possible—both to appreciate what each is, and not to expect any to be what they are not. As the artist and poet Dolber B. Spalding aptly wrote in a 1977 essay for *Chelys*, a music quarterly, “One thousand mice do not equal a horse.”

What I’m getting at is that even though this disc contains magnificent performances of several melodies that will still be played long after we are all dead, it also contains a number of slighter Bonfá pieces, made up on the spot, that are only passing remarks and fancies, albeit of a singular musical personality. They would sound quite different played by any other guitarist, no matter how good, and probably come across wrong in those other hands. Their purpose is merely to express a brief human moment, not to construct a cathedral. They are best approached as part of a visit with Luiz Bonfá, which is the overriding mood of this record. As a guitarist, he could do no wrong; no one has spoken more deeply, intimately, and exuberantly on six nylon strings that—until just a decade before this recording—had always been spun from animal’s guts.



THE TRACKS

[1-17 are as released on the LP; 18-31 are previously unreleased]

1. *Pernambuco* (Luiz Bonfá)

The only recording of this melody, as simple as it is lovely; the execution of it sounds effortless, but is in fact fiendishly difficult. Bonfá first sets up a muted, percussive background of chords struck entirely with his thumb. He then adds an unmuted, wistful, syncopated melody above—at times heard in several voices—while maintaining a marvelous rhythmic independence flawlessly throughout. The title refers to the state in Brazil's northeast.

2. *Night and Day* (Cole Porter)

One-and-a-half astonishing choruses, which suggests it must've been at least partly improvised—for if it were a polished arrangement, why not finish out the second chorus? This is one of Bonfá's stunning bravura versions of a standard, to set beside "Yesterdays" and "I'll Remember April" from *¡Amor!* (same year). Though Bonfá wasn't the first solo guitarist to apply a fingerstyle approach to a jazz tune—Oscar Aleman, Laurindo Almeida, and Bill Harris come to mind—with due respect, there is little comparison with the power, velocity, contrapuntal activity, and sweep of all that Bonfá has going on. Of special note are a remarkable difference of timbre between the bass lines and chords; the crackling lines in the upper voice; the exhilarating behind-the-beat swing of true jazz time (which surprisingly few Brazilian musicians possess convincingly); most of all, an urgent propulsion throughout the whole track, which is tremendously hard to achieve on solo guitar.

3. *Shearing* (Luiz Bonfá)

[Original LP liner notes refer to this as an improvisation.] A swinging homage, in

title at least, to a favorite pianist of Bonfá's. (One track on *¡Amor!* is "George Back in Town.") However, the inspiration seems primarily the sound of big-band horns syncopated against a rhythm section; there's nothing obviously Shearingesque until the closely spaced chord voicings at the very end. Bonfá has spoken of what a cataclysm it was to encounter a Glenn Miller big-band arrangement in the late 1930s: "When I heard 'In the Mood,' it was like a shock. I was amazed by the sectional arrangement of the brass, woodwinds, and rhythm section, and this inspired me to orchestrate the guitar in the same way."

4. *Sambolero* (Luiz Bonfá)

First recorded for the LP *Alta Versatilidade* (Odeon, 1957), retitled *Brazilian Guitar* on Capitol Records in its U.S. release. The Cook Records version of "Sambolero" was the next one and the best; the title is an appropriate amalgam of samba and bolero. This is the only vocal by Bonfá on the piece, which he famously recorded with Stan Getz, Antônio Carlos Jobim, and Maria Toledo on *Jazz Samba Encore!* (Verve, 1963, with Maria providing an introductory vocalise; no lyrics there either.) He would also record it on *A Voz e o Violão* (Odeon, 1960) with Brazilian vocalist Norma Suely, under the title "Quando a Noite Vem, Amor," with lyrics added.

The present version is one of the most dramatic examples of a brushing technique that I believe, but cannot confirm, Bonfá invented. It is produced by turning the plucking hand sideways, more parallel to the strings, so that the fingertips (pointing now more toward the soundhole) produce a brushes-on-drums effect on the inner voices. After Bonfá hums along with his own melody, he plays it melodically with the percussive brushing effect heard only on the lower strings.

5. *Calypso Minor* (Luiz Bonfá)

[Original LP liner notes refer to this as an improvisation.] Back in the fifties, the word calypso had a nonironic meaning, before it got stained with tired suntan oil, and

Bonfá plays his calypso straight, with a strong, haunting opening pizzicato strain that could've come right out of Nassau goombay in its heyday. In an almost formal motivic development, he restates the theme in chords, more slowly and romantically; repeats it again in minor, quite nostalgically; shifts it into major, where its character changes utterly and loses its darkness and its Caribbean accent; repeats it in minor; and begs off with a brief gesture at the theme.

6. *Uma Prece* [A Prayer] (Luiz Bonfá)

One of Bonfá's most tender instrumental compositions, an early piece filled with a sense of yearning and innocence. He recorded it six times in all, first on a 78-rpm record in 1951. There's also a memorable 1955 version on electric guitar with accordion and violin; the 1962 duet with vocalist Pery Ribeiro has lyrics. This is the version with the most delicacy and fine embroidery, and a ravishing lilt in Bonfá's phrasing. Each statement of the theme gathers special small details: a slur here, a phrase in thirds there, with unexpected glissandi, and always that sense of a close friend confiding a secret.

7. *Bonfabuloso* (Luiz Bonfá)

[Original LP liner notes refer to this as an improvisation.] A lighthearted waltz intro of great sophistication leads into a light swing, with quotes from "I Got Plenty of Nuttin'." This is more a chord progression on which Bonfá elaborates than a true melody given a harmonic setting—though as sheer guitar-playing, it's stunning. Notice a passage just before the ending section where Bonfá goes swiftly in and out of a muffled pizzicato; and the poised harmonic ambiguity of the end, with its contrarily tolling bells.

8. *Quebra Mar* [The Seawall] (Luiz Bonfá)

One of Bonfá's most elaborate, substantial through-composed instrumentals, though many details do vary from version to version. A samba, it was first recorded on *Meu*

Querido Violão (Odeon, 1958), and later for *Luiz Bonfá Plays and Sings* (Verve, 1962). This version is the most gracious and lively. The piece is technically problematic, even awkward; Bonfá makes it sound calm and expansive. Alongside the meticulous, emphatic phrasing, there are minute variations in ornaments, and in the harmonic underpinning of the theme as it gets repeated. He's careful not to do anything the same way twice.

9. *Luzes do Rio* [Lights of Rio] (Luiz Bonfá)

This and the alternate take are the only recordings of one of Bonfá's best pieces. The title suggests something far more reflective than the energetic speed of this very fast quasi-samba, with its percussive cross-rhythms—especially in the staccato chords and the extended ending. Two other Bonfá trademarks: the secondary theme which in mood departs significantly from the main theme; and pianistic devices (like chordal phrases repeated in different registers), which are normally not very suited to the guitar.

10. *Perdido de Amor* [Lost in Love] (Luiz Bonfá)

A glorious lyrical statement. I love the power in Bonfá's introduction to the song, and how gracefully he puts the brakes on as soon as he begins to sing and realizes he's started too quickly. Compare this with how, as soon as his vocal ends, he breaks off the steadiness of the rhythm to go into a freer exploration of the song on guitar alone before resuming the steady accompaniment when his vocal comes back in. As Bonfá's son, Luiz Novaes Bonfá recalls, his mother—Nelly Novaes Bonfá—told him the song came about when "Dick Farney, the famous Brazilian crooner and close friend of my dad, asked him to compose a song he could record on his upcoming album." Bonfá, always a reluctant lyricist, wrote the words as well. First recorded for Dick Farney's 78-rpm record in January 1953, there's also a gorgeous version with Bonfá accompanying singer Pery Ribeiro on their duet LP, *Pery Ribeiro e Seu Mundo de Canções Românticas* (1962), a relatively unknown disc that is one of his great achievements.

Perdido de amor, perdido estou por você.
 Lost in love, I am lost for you.
Amar seu olhar, seu lábios beijar, é viver.
 To love your gaze, to kiss your lips, is to live.
À luz do luar eu fico a pensar em você.
 In the moonlight I keep thinking of you.
Um verso que diz serei tão feliz com você.
 A verse that says that I will be so happy with you.

Perdido de amor, perdido estou por você.
 Lost in love, I am lost for you.
Seu beijo sensual, carícia ideal, não posso esquecer.
 Your sensual kiss, your ideal caress I can't forget.
E vivo a sonhar, seu nome a chamar.
 And I live to dream, to call your name.
Só penso em você.
 I only think of you,
perdido de amor, perdido estou por você.
 lost in love, I am lost for you.

11. *Manhã de Carnaval* (Luiz Bonfá)

One of the best of the half-dozen guitar-centered versions by Bonfá of his own most famous composition, one of those rare immortal melodies whose shape carries a kind of divine inevitability. Bonfá usually played it in either G minor or the present A minor. His brushing accompaniment of the peaceful melody is perfect, with suggestions of a bolero—a rhythm that, as he told Hodel, he always felt was a strong component of the bossa nova. Every measure is full of feeling and impact; the rapid ascending pizzicato just before the coda helps make the final resolution to a closing major chord even more unexpected.

"I work strictly on inspiration," Bonfá said once. "I am not one of those who can say: now I will sit down and compose for an hour. For example, the melody for

"The Gentle Rain" came one day when I was fishing. It just hit me." Luiz Novaes Bonfá remembers that his father "used to get goosebumps on his forearms when he felt a melody taking shape."

12. *Amor sem Adeus* [Love Without Goodbye]

(Luiz Bonfá / Antônio Carlos Jobim)

Another song built on an ideally expressive and singable line. It was later recorded by both Dick Farney and Sylvia Telles, but this seems to be its first appearance.

O dia que você gostar de mim será o meu dia mais feliz.
 The day that you like me will be the happiest of my days.
Os teus lábios hão de encontrar os meus.
 Your lips will meet mine.
Na manhã desse amor que nasceu.
 In the morning of this love that was born.

Então desse encontro irá nascer o amor que eu sempre desejei.
 From this encounter the love that I always desired will be born.
Os teus lábios hão de encontrar aos meus
 Your lips will meet mine.
Na manhã desse amor sem adeus.
 In the morning of this love without goodbye.

13. *Variações em Violão* [Variations on Guitar] (Luiz Bonfá)

[Original LP liner notes refer to this as an improvisation.] The piece's first recording; it appears again on *A Voz e o Violão* (Odeon, 1960), arranged as a haunting, if more conservative, duo for guitar and organ. Here, it feels very much a brief *moment musicale*, and though little actually happens in the way of variations, you can hear Bonfá deliberately clothing the theme more and more as he repeats it. There's a strong tremolo passage of swooshing chords; he achieved this effect by sweeping the third finger of his plucking hand extremely rapidly back and forth across the strings.

14. *Seringueiro* (Luiz Bonfá)

Luiz Novaes Bonfá writes: "The word *seringueiro* means the person who extracts the sap from a rubber tree. It's important to notice the intonation my dad uses as he sings, as well as the words themselves. The style of this song is called 'toada,' and reflects a humble, simple vocabulary of a laborer singing his hopes and fears."

Sou do Amazonas, seringueiro e pescador;

I am from the Amazon, a rubber tapper and fisherman; (2x)

Quando à tarde vou pro rio me lembro de Rosa Flor,

In the afternoon I go to the river and I remember Rosa Flor,

a morena que no mundo só nasceu pro meu amor.

the dark-haired woman who was born into the world for my love.

Sou do Amazonas, seringueiro e pescador;

I am from the Amazon, a rubber tapper and fisherman; (2x)

Quando a noite vou sozinho pelo meio do matão,

When at night I go alone through the jungle,

o silêncio é tão profundo faz bater meu coração.

the silence is so deep it makes my heart pound.

15. *Chopin* (Luiz Bonfá)

[Original LP liner notes refer to this as an improvisation.] This waltz is one of the most harmonically dense pieces on the LP; a good argument can be made that Bonfá had the most complex harmonic conception of any of the Brazilian guitarists. An extended introduction leads organically into a "discovered" theme and harmonic sequence that Bonfá expands and expands, then is able to return to and unfold some more. The title is actually appropriate, as the waltz keeps veering off into gestures and episodes whose harmonic (hence emotional) underpinnings come from ever odder places. After a brief reprise of the waltz material, it's abruptly over.

16. *Na Baixa do Sapateiro* [In the Shoemaker's Hollow] (Ary Barroso)

[Original LP cover calls it *Bahia*.] The title 'In the Shoemaker's Hollow' refers to a street in Salvador, Bahia. This may be the first solo guitar version of the classic samba by Ary Barroso (1903–1964), who also wrote the song the world knows as "Brazil." Bonfá was doubtless familiar with not only the original 1938 version by Carmen Miranda, but the 1939 recording by the composer on piano with guitarists Garoto and Laurindo Almeida. By 1959, the tune had already been recorded by the likes of John Coltrane and Bing Crosby. Here, it opens with a characteristic Bonfá touch: an introduction played *metallico* near the bridge.

17. *Murder* (Luiz Bonfá)

[Original LP liner notes refer to this as an improvisation.] The strangest and one of the most fascinating tracks on this disc. As an improvisation, it does not cohere at all, which is perhaps the point. The exquisite opening calls to mind Bonfá's remark that the impressionism of Debussy was one of his strongest influences. A dazzling passage in natural and artificial harmonics (rarely used to this degree in 1959) leads to an apparent *grave* conclusion in low chords. After a pause, there's a brief burst of Bonfá using muffled, slightly off-kilter harmonics way up the neck to imitate a troupe of percussion instruments, followed by more *metallico* dissonance and whole-tone flourishes. These roam ever farther afield, recalling his remark in an interview that "you can find a musical way to go from a chord to *any* other chord." Bonfá did refer to his style as "romantic-descriptive," and it took courage on Emory Cook's part not only to end the original LP with this cut, but to include it at all, at a time when the popular (mis)conception of Brazilian music was narrowing rapidly to a man, a girl, a guitar, Ipanema.

PREVIOUSLY UNISSUED TRACKS

18. A Brazilian in New York (*Luiz Bonfá*)

More than any other, this track shows how masterly Bonfá was in expressing, at a gesture, any number of moods on the guitar. Luiz Novaes Bonfá has spoken of instances in childhood when his father would tell him a story and illustrate the story musically on the guitar as he went along. (The track also contains some of his most experimental harmonies and dizzying playing.) Years after he first arrived in New York, Bonfá would remember his anxiety: "When I reviewed my career while lying down in my room in the Paramount Hotel, I couldn't avoid a small tear in the corner of my eye. The son of an Italian immigrant from Santa Cruz. . . . I turned off the lights and decided to embrace New York, its lights, its nervous neon signs, its people always in a hurry. I glanced at my guitar and for the first time, I was afraid."

Here's how he narrates this musical saga, complete with traffic lights: "*This is the story of a Brazilian in New York . . . 'Don't Walk—Don't Walk—Don't Walk—Walk' . . . the people cross the street . . . homesick . . . a dance from north of Brazil . . . now come a piano and orchestra . . . a romantic samba in Rio de Janeiro . . . back to New York . . . 'Don't Walk—Walk'*"

19. Prelude to Adventure in Space (*Luiz Bonfá*)

One of the unreleased treasures, a characteristic excursion in several directions, which somehow succeeds. A lyrical introduction (which thirteen years later will be developed at greater length one minute into "Adventure in Space," a complex, ambitious piece on *Introspection*) gives way to a swinging samba in major that abruptly turns into a kind of slow, dark, romantic bolero in minor, complete with percussive slaps on the top of the guitar. All the parts within this have the cohesiveness of having already been somewhat composed.

20. Tenderly (*Walter Cross*)

After a trademark passage of swooshing tremolo chords, at 0:27 Bonfá goes into the second half of the standard "Tenderly," which he'd recorded on the LP *Alta Versatilidade* (1957). That earlier version of "Tenderly" is, indeed, tender and thoughtful; this one is electrically charged, virtuosity let loose, but by 1:01 he's abandoned the tune and gone into a heated (and daunting, if you're a guitarist) improvisation that doesn't quite gel. Still, an amazing half-statement of the tune.

21. Blue Madrid (*Luiz Bonfá*)

A more extended, looser version appears this same year on *Amor!* Here, the opening phrase has an uncanny resemblance to a swing setting of "Manhã de Carnaval." However, by 0:40 in, Bonfá has settled into "blowing" over a two-harmony vamp—adeptly concealed by diverse chord voicings and bass lines—with highly detailed, bravura playing throughout. It ends with a phrase that's nearly identical to the introduction he uses for "Night and Day."

22. Marcha Escocesa [Scottish March] (*Luiz Bonfá*)

"Scottish March" first appears on a Bonfá 78-rpm record from 1953 and on the LP *Meu Querido Violão* (1958); then, under the title "Bagpipes," on *Amor!* (1959). The rat-rat-rat drum is a flamenco effect used most frequently by Sabicas and Carlos Montoya; it's produced by holding one bass string crossed over another with the fretboard hand (usually the 6th and 5th strings, or else 5th and 4th), and percussively plucking them. Bonfá adds his imitation of bagpipes themselves in the upper voices, the adroit result of left-hand slurs and right-hand *ponticello*. Eventually, the bagpipes and drums are heard simultaneously.

23. Fanfarra [Fanfare] (*Luiz Bonfá*)

This sounds like an introduction to another track, or possibly just Bonfá fooling

around, looking for something, he's not sure what—until he finds a lyrical passage culminating in artificial harmonics.

24. Samba de Orfeu (Luiz Bonfá)

One of the treasures of the unreleased tracks. Even though this is among Bonfá's most famous compositions (he recorded it ten other times), he never released a solo guitar version. "The only exception," according to Bonfá collectors Koichi and Motoko Yasuoka, "is the soundtrack to *Orfeu Negro*, where the tune consists of two parts: first a solo guitar statement by Bonfá, then a very different guitar passage by Roberto Menescal with the vocals by children." Here, though, we at last have an openhearted solo rendition of the whole piece, which fills a prominent gap in Bonfá's extensive discography.

The rest of the previously unreleased tracks are alternate versions of previously issued tracks. We can only speculate whether these were earlier or later takes.

25. Manhã de Carnaval 2 (Luiz Bonfá)

A shorter, somewhat uptempo, less reflective version. The melody, of course, acquires another intensity at the brighter tempo. It's notable that with the exception of a few gestures, it's nearly identical to the issued take. Evidently this was how Bonfá was playing his most well-known composition at that moment—even if it was radically different a month prior or hence. As usual, Bonfá's separation of parts into their clear identities, with his "brushes" on the interior strings, is total.

26. Perdido de Amor 2 (Luiz Bonfá)

The issued take is a tad slower and moodier; however, it's instructive to hear how Bonfá's gestures in supporting himself in this take are quite different, from the introduction on. He was a master at the off-the-cuff intro that establishes the mood

of a song instantly, and an extraordinarily sensitive accompanist, even for his own singing.

27. Sambolero 2 (Luiz Bonfá)

At the beginning of the take, one can hear Emory Cook's voice asking for an introduction. Bonfá answers, "Don't have a lyric yet," which suggests that he thought of his very evocative humming on the cut as an interim measure. Cook's reply, to the effect that he'd just played an introduction, does suggest this was a later take. It's understandable why the other take was chosen (Bonfá accidentally leaves out a phrase at 2:10), but there are still lovely little accompanying moves, especially at the start of the vocal reprise.

28. Quebra Mar 2 (Luiz Bonfá)

Taken at a far faster tempo than the issued version; the result is far more insistent, a different animal altogether. I find the other take more effective, but it's fun to hear how Bonfá has no trouble with its many fingering issues at any tempo, and how his ornaments change with the different feel.

29. Seringueiro excerpt (Luiz Bonfá)

A lengthy introduction only—intended, perhaps, to be edited into the front of the alternate vocal performance to form a more complete take.

30. Seringueiro 2 (Luiz Bonfá)

A fairly straightforward reading of the song, not so special as the other take.

31. Luzes do Rio 2 (Luiz Bonfá)

There's much to be said for this version compared to the issued take. In many ways it's rhythmically stronger and more complex; however, the ending comes off as slightly unsatisfying. I suspect this was the first take, because afterward Bonfá rapidly

starts experimenting on different parts, with numerous variations on what inevitably we now regard as the "text" of the piece, which he never recorded again. Also, his question to Cook ("Did you record that?") suggests that he may have been trying to run through it before doing a proper take. Fortunately, the tape was rolling.

Having now lived with this recording over many months in preparing these notes, I've been reminded countless times of the sense of wonder and mystery with which, as a young guitarist, I first encountered it, more than twenty-five years ago. Now I know—most of the time—what Bonfá is actually doing; and yet it is no less wondrous. I have played my original scratchy copy for many friends across the decades, and whether or not they were musicians, they were all aware of being in the presence of true human magic, and the almost tactile thrill that comes from hearing a performer on one of his best days. Luiz Bonfá was one of nature's musicians: a man who could transmit beauty easily and intimately, and who was afraid of nothing on the guitar. I am happy to be able to say, after all these years, that he remains as great an inspiration and a joy as when I first heard the sounds of his unique poetic spirit.

ANTHONY WELLER is a guitarist, novelist, and journalist with numerous recordings and books to his credit. www.anthonyweller.com

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Luiz Bonfá (Continental, 1955)
Orfeu da Conceição (Odeon, 1956)
Alta Versatilidade (Odeon, 1957); issued as *Brazilian Guitar* (Capitol Records)
Violão Boêmio (Odeon, 1957)

Bonfafá (Odeon, 1958)
Meu Querido Violão (Odeon, 1958)
Amor! (Atlantic, 1959)
A Voz e o Violão (Odeon, 1960)
Pery Ribeiro e Seu Mundo de Canções Românticas (Odeon, 1962)
Luiz Bonfá Plays and Sings Bossa Nova (Verve, 1962)
Violão Boêmio vol. 2 (Odeon, 1963)
Jazz Samba Encore! (Verve, 1963, with Stan Getz, Antônio Carlos Jobim,
 and Maria Toledo)
Introspection (RCA, 1972)
Bonfá Burrows Brazil (Cherry Pie, 1978)
Non-Stop to Brazil (Chesky, 1989)

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Hodel, Brian. 1983. *The Brazilian Guitar*. San Francisco: Dennis McMillan Publishing. Out of print; contains 5 transcriptions.
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Hodel, Brian. 1983. "Luiz Bonfá, Ambassador of Brazilian Swing." *Guitar Player* (May).
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SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro). 1959. Directed by Marcel Camus.

CREDITS

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Tracks 1–17 originally issued in 1959 as Cook LP #1134;
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Luiz Bonfá

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One of the most creative guitar virtuosos of the 20th century, Luiz Bonfá is celebrated as one of the principal architects of the cool Brazilian sound of bossa nova—and as co-author, with Antônio Carlos Jobim, of the film score to “Black Orpheus.” But Bonfá was far more than the composer of “Manhã de Carnaval.” His technical mastery, intimacy, and dynamism suffuse every track of this first CD edition of his masterpiece, a long-unobtainable solo 1959 LP, along with a half-hour of previously unreleased material from the original studio session. **70 minutes, 31 tracks, 32 page booklet with extensive notes by Anthony Weller.**

- 1 Pernambuco 1:37
- 2 Night and Day 2:07
- 3 Shearing 1:23
- 4 Sambolero 2:49
- 5 Calypso Minor 1:44
- 6 Uma Prece [A Prayer] 2:32
- 7 Bonfábuloso 2:07
- 8 Quebrá Mar [The Seawall] 2:35
- 9 Luzes do Rio [Lights of Rio] 2:30
- 10 Perdido de Amor [Lost in Love] 3:22
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- 30 Serrigueiro 2 1:59
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