

MARILYNN MAIR & CHORO MUSIC

INTERVIEW

I had the pleasure meeting Marilynn Mair at the Choro Festival in 2016. She performed with Luiz Simas their last Choro CD release entitled "Madrugada". Her love for Choro Music is fascinating and I wanted to share her reasons for choosing Choro as part of her repertoire.

Marilynn Mair/Mandolinist from Rhode Island, has shown the world what the mandolin can achieve in the hands of a skillful artist. Internationally praised for her beautiful tone, versatile technique, and impeccable choice of repertoire. She established classical mandolin in chamber music circles worldwide. She then branched out to playing choro in Rio, jazz at Berklee, avant garde premieres in Europe and Japan and writing her own compositions. Marilynn is a mandolinist, it's how she enters the world; through her concerts, recordings, and books, she has created a potent legacy for generations of players and audiences to come.

Concert review:

Marilynn Mair performs Brazilian mandolin music that in its lilting string compositions calls to mind staring out admiringly into a charcoal-black sky after hours on a veranda in Brasilia. Or in her swifter downbeat rhythms, Mair plays the mandolin as an instrument for all occasions, an after-dinner party and the late-night dancing, fast and close, that follows.—by Vaughn Watson, The Providence Journal (USA).
- Madalena Sousa

What was the first Brazilian tune(s) you learned?
Although I don't remember the first tune I played, the first one I fell in love with was Jacob do Bandolim's "Receita da Samba." Early in my career I transcribed it from a recording late one night, so I could record it myself the next day.

Does anyone else in your family listen to Brazilian Music?

When I first discovered Choro it was as if I had suddenly found a whole new musical family. Choro immediately struck a chord somewhere deep inside me and I knew I had to learn to play it. My son and daughter sometimes played Choro with me as children, and today they are fans of MPB and early Brazilian psychedelic rock.

When did you get involved with playing Choro music?

I started playing Choro in the 1990s, long before I ever went to Brazil. In 1999, I researched and published a series of articles on the history and composers of Choro. I first performed in Rio in 2005, and after hearing Choro played live there, I was determined to master the nuances of Brazilian interpretation.



Why did you choose Brazilian music?

One thing I have always loved about Brazilian music is how it mixes classical and popular traditions so seamlessly. Choro resonated with me immediately, for the way it combines the structure and virtuosity of its classical roots with a characteristic Brazilian syncopation. I began to play, listening to recordings, researching its history, and finally spent a 3-month sabbatical in Rio in 2007, to learn all I could about Choro performance practice. Over the past decade I have returned to Brazil frequently, made many musical friends there, and now consider Rio a second home.

What do you expect of the future of Choro Music in the Americas?

Choro is becoming more popular all the time, both here in the USA and in Brazil. I've published a bilingual Choro method book with Rio bandolmist Paulo Sa, and regularly give Choro workshops for mandolinists. Almost everyone who hears Choro wants to play it. At first it seemed like performers outside of Brazil were just playing the tunes without considering their essential performance practice. But now there are so many Brazilian musicians performing internationally, and so many great CDs available, that the authentic style of Choro seems to be asserting itself even outside of Brazil.

Did you record any CD with Brazilian Tunes?

Yes, thanks for asking. In 2009 I released "Meu Bandolim," a CD of pieces written by bandolmists, that I recorded with Brazilian musicians here and in Rio, including my long-time duo-partner, NYC pianist Luiz Simas. Then in 2015, I released "Madrugada," a CD that celebrates the intertwining of classical and Brazilian music in my life. It includes my original Choro, and my arrangements of classical pieces written by Brazilian composers.

My earlier Brazilian recordings include "Nadando em Luz" (2001), now out of print, and "Roda no Rio" (2007), with my Brazilian band, Água no Feijão. And I have included Brazilian music on many of my classical recordings through the years.

What are your fondest Brazilian musical memories?

Playing in the rodas in Rio, absolutely! It is such a thrill to show up, greet musical friends, and then play together so spontaneously, enjoying the moments when musical magic happens. And I treasure one particular moment, after a great roda with friends a few years ago, when someone there was astounded I was from the USA, insisting I was "bem brasileiro," truly Brazilian. It made me realize that I had taken my playing to a new level.

Were you influenced by old records from Brazil? Which ones?

The first Choro I ever heard was on a 1976 LP by Brazilian guitarist, Turibio Santos, with the young Raphael Rabello. It opened my ears to a new and glorious sound. All the recordings of Jacob do Bandolim have been so important to me, and recordings by my bandolim teacher in Rio, the great Joel Nascimento. They both combine virtuosity, precision and emotion so beautifully.

<http://www.marilynnmair.com>

