

Heitor Villa-Lobos - Floresta do Amazonas (2010)

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01. Overture 02. A Floresta (The Forest) 03. Danca dos Indios (Dance of the Indians) 04. Em Plena Floresta (In the Depths of the Forest) 05. Passaro da Floresta - Canto I (Bird of the Forest - First Song) 06. Danca da Natureza (Nature's Dance) 07. Passaro da Floresta - Canto II (Bird of the Forest - Second Song) 08. Canto na Floresta I (Song in the Forest I) 09. Conspiracao e Danca Guerreira (Conspiracy and War Dance) 10. Veleiros (Sailing Ships) 11. Em Caminhos para a Cacada (On the way to the Hunt) 12. Passaro da Floresta - Canto III (Bird of the Forest - Third Song) 13. Cair da Tarde (Twilight) 14. Os Indios em Busca da Moca (The Indians in Search of the Girl) 15. Passaro da Floresta - Canto IV (Bird of the Forest - Fourth Song) 16. Danca Guerreira - repeticao (War Dance - repeat) 17. Interludio e Acalanto (Interlude and Lullaby) 18. Canto na Floresta II (Song in the Forest II) 19. Cacadores de Cabeça (Head Hunters) 20. Cancao do Amor (Love Song) 21. Melodia Sentimental (Sentimental Melody) 22. O Fogo na Floresta (Forest Fire) 23. Epilogue
Anna Korondi - soprano
São Paulo Symphony Orchestra
Male Voices of the Choir of the São Paulo
John Neschling – conductor

Villa-Lobos' late masterpiece, Forest of the Amazon, began life as a Hollywood film score, the majority of which was never used. So he developed the music into a huge, 80-minute-long, multi-movement suite that serves both as a tribute to his homeland and a fitting culmination of his personal musical voice. The work has everything: luscious orchestration, great tunes, a "primitive" male choir chanting in a primordial language, some lovely songs for soprano, and passages of wordless vocalise for the same singer evocative of exotic birdsong. Does it sound "Hollywood-esque"? Yes, but only to the extent that Villa-Lobos often works in a similar idiom anyway. More significantly, the piece is chock-full of contrast--but there are also recurring elements (the War Dance, for example) that help to bind it together and give it shape. It's not just 80 minutes of "atmosphere".

The only competition for this recording, for which a new edition of the score was specially prepared, comes from Alfred Heller's very good Moscow recording, which contains a touch less

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music. Certainly in terms of sheer sonic opulence, the performers' ability to project the style with total confidence and commitment, and the excellence of the singing (soprano Anna Korondi is superb), this vividly engineered SACD sets a new standard. If you've been collecting this Brazilian music series (and you certainly should be), then this new release will be self-recommending. It's simply magnificent. --David Hurwitz, ClassicsToday.com

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