

**Northern Illinois University  
School of Music**

**Projeto Arcomusical  
presents  
MeiaMeia**

Friday, April 24th, 2015  
6:30PM  
Recital Hall  
NIU School of Music

**Projeto Arcomusical is:**  
Gregory Beyer, Director  
Alexis C. Lamb  
Christopher Mrofcza  
Kyle Flens  
Abby Rehard  
Daniel Eastwood

**Program**

Berimbau Solo No. 1, 'Home-ing'	Gregory Beyer (b. 1973)
Um só	Alexis C. Lamb (b. 1993)
Descobertas por pau e pedra	Alexis C. Lamb
Berimbau Duo no. 5, 'Alexis'	Gregory Beyer
Berimbau Trio no. 1, 'Harmonia'	Gregory Beyer
Palíndromo	Alexis C. Lamb
Berimbau Quartet no. 1, 'Chip'	Gregory Beyer
Caída de quatro	Alexis C. Lamb
Berimbau Quintet no. 1, 'Solkattu'	Gregory Beyer
Mudança de onda	Alexis C. Lamb
Berimbau Sextet no. 1, 'Kora'	Gregory Beyer
Apenas Seja	Alexis C. Lamb

## About the Program:

**Berimbau Solo No. 1, 'Home-ing'**, is the first solo piece that I wrote for melodic berimbau. It came to me all at once in a fit of inspiration when I first discovered that the cabaça on a Mozambiquean *xitende* wasn't located at the bottom of the staff in the manner of the Brazilian *berimbau*. That simple realization opened up a floodgate of inspiration and creativity and has become the single line of inquiry which has sustained Projeto Arcomusical for over a decade. I dedicate this piece to my brother, Christopher, whose childhood nickname is similar to the title.

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Within the tradition of capoeira, the berimbau is always performed with a caxixi. Similar to other instruments with African origins, the constant rattling sound like the caxixi is not only used as an additional rhythmic implement, but it is also a sign of the ancestral spirits. However, in all of the other pieces written for the MeiaMeia song cycle, we opted to not use the caxixi. I wanted to bring the caxixi back into my solo, **Um só (or Only One)**, to pay respects to the berimbau's traditions, while continuing to use the innovative tuning schemes and extended techniques that Dr. Gregory Beyer and I have written for the rest of the compositions. I utilize the caxixi both as an independent instrument and as an accompaniment to the berimbau. When these two ideas intertwine at the end of the piece, their coexistence is reflective of the title and they become one.

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I wrote **Descobertas por pau e pedra** during my studies at Northern Illinois University as part of a semester-long independent research project with my professor, Dr. Gregory Beyer. The focus of the project concerned the history of the berimbau and its potential for use in contemporary music. The title of the piece reflects the discoveries that I made while learning about the instrument and how these translated into my own compositions. Two works by Steve Reich, *Clapping Music* and *Six Marimbas*, formed the point of departure for the compositional ideas I present in *Descobertas*. I dedicate this work to Greg as a thank you for all of his work with me on this project as well as his continuous mentoring and encouragement in my percussive endeavors.

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Conceived in the Spring of 2013 but not truly composed until later that summer, my **Berimbau Duo no. 5** is dedicated to my student, Alexis Lamb. It was inspired by a duo improvisation that Alexis and I played together in the Spring of 2013 during the course of our first semester of work together for Projeto Arcomusical. The gentle introduction of unpitched sounds under a simple hocketed melody in part A eventually becomes the only remaining texture in the second section. The third section of the work re-examines the original melody, adding additional pitches to build up the texture. The final section re-introduces the unpitched materials against a four-chord progression that speeds up excitedly to the end of the piece.

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**Berimbau Trio no. 1, "harmonia."** Over the summer of 2013, thinking ahead to the prospect of writing a trio for berimbau, I sat down at the piano one evening and developed a 12-bar harmonic progression playable on three instruments in which no chord is ever repeated. This

progression became the basis for the work upon which a series of increasingly dense rhythmic hockets ensues.

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**Palíndromo.** Over the summer of 2013, I was experimenting with ideas for a berimbau solo. One of these solo ideas became the main theme of this trio, and I used the piano to expand and define the harmonic landscape for the piece. The main theme of this piece is an expanded model of call and response. Using the technique of hocketing, I created an upper line using the smaller wires of all three instruments, which fits neatly inside the main theme. After the main theme and upper voices are presented fully, the collection of subsequent sections of the work are a set of variations upon this theme and countermelody.

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The opening harmonic progression presented in **Quartet no 1, "Chip,"** comes from two sources of inspiration. My very first composition project for berimbau, *Bahian Counterpoint (2002)* began not so much as a composition as an attempt at an arrangement of Steve Reich's *Electric Counterpoint* for the guitarist, Pat Metheny. The first movement of *Bahian Counterpoint* hewed very closely to the rhythmic patterning of Reich's "long-breath" manner of presenting a chord progression. The second inspiration for the progression comes from the success of a similar progression in my *Berimbau Trio no. 1*. For the progression presented in this quartet, I developed a consistent way to voice lead from suspensions to chord-tone resolutions in 6 pairs of harmonies. The middle section of the piece was composed first, not for this quartet but as one segment of an original soundtrack for a short film entitled, "Chip", that film director, Nancy Kiang, commissioned us to create. The film is an intriguing retelling of Anton Chekov's short story, "The Father", and includes gorgeous footage shot in South Africa. Given the historical roots of the berimbau to its ancestors in southern Africa, this geographical connection, although not conscious in Kiang's mind when she approached Arcomusical, was very inspiring for us as we created the music for the film.

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**Caída de quatro (or "falling on all fours")** is a common defensive maneuver in the Afro-Brazilian tradition of Capoeira Angola, and it seemed an appropriate title for a berimbau quartet. I also wanted the title to reflect the falling patterns that are consistently found throughout the piece, both pitched or unpitched. There are common themes in which the upper wire notes are "falling down" in pitch while the lower wire notes are "falling up" in pitch. The two falling patterns meet in the middle, creating a beautiful melody from both sides of the wire. During the course of rehearsals my colleagues and I nicknamed rehearsal letter B "sapinho" ("little frog" in Portuguese). Sapinho is another movement from Capoeira Angola named for its hopping, frog-like movements. Rehearsal B presents a series of 16th note figures, one for each player that leap into the existing 11/8 rhythmic ostinato. This section was cause for great merriment in rehearsals.

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In **Berimbau Quintet no. 1**, it seemed natural to meditate on the number five and to consider how I might weave together a piece revolving entirely around a play of numbers. Inspired by the way five is made manifest in southern Indian rhythmic *solkattu*, I set about a creating a pleasing way to systematically string together every 3+2 and 2+3 binary combination. I came up with:

3+2, 3+2  
3+2, 2+3  
2+3, 3+2

2+3, 2+3

This numeric DNA can be found throughout many parts of the work, as I intended it to be the touchstone and unifying factor of the composition. The chord progression appearing midway through the piece is further exploration of harmonic possibilities to be found in a berimbau ensemble. I first explored this in my *Berimbau Trio no. 1*. Other influences in the piece are Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celeste* (e.g. the accel/decel gesture in mm. 120 -124, and the utilization of odd meters) and, of course, Steve Reich (mm. 125-132), whose work, *Electric Counterpoint*, was the point of origin for nearly everything I do with the *berimbau*.

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**Mudança de onda** (or "Wave Shift") is the fourth piece I have written for Projeto Arcomusical. Similar to my other berimbau compositions, it focuses and expands on a singular motive throughout. Prior to writing this piece I spent two weeks in the Mediterranean with my family, during which I stayed four days in the heart of Rome. There, I was struck by the omnipresence of ambulance sirens flying through city streets, a soundscape that reignited my fascination with the Doppler "effect" or "shift." In **Mudança de onda**, the rhythmic cloud of the opening gesture and the frequent glissandi are rooted in the memory of this exotic urban experience. The Northern Illinois University Bau-House's recent performances of Alexandre Lunsqui's berimbau sextet, *Repercussio*, were also "shifting" through my mind during the composition of this quintet.

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Some ten years ago an old friend presented me with *New Ancient Strings*, a recording by the master Malian musicians Toumani Diabate and Ballake Sissoko. This recording is an exemplar of music for Kora (a harp-like instrument from Mali). When I first heard the music, I became completely entranced and imagined that someday I would be able to provide the berimbau with such music. The experience was similar to the sensation I had when I first heard Pat Metheny playing Steve Reich's "Electric Counterpoint." I could literally hear the berimbau inside of that sound world. The central ideas throughout **Berimbau Sextet no. 1** are undeniably inspired by the sound of *New Ancient Strings*, which has been my constant musical companion for the past several months. In a manner of summing up my writing for this cycle that we now call *MeiaMeia*, toward the end of the work I make reference to *Electric Counterpoint*.

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**Apenas Seja (or "Just Be")** is a celebration of the past five semesters of composing for the Afro-Brazilian berimbau with Dr. Gregory Beyer. This sextet was written at a time when I was dealing with issues of self-confidence and my "artist statement," so to speak. Writing this work helped me through that time and became a mental refuge that I could resort to for peace. One of the most inspiring mentors in my life once told me that I should just be, and everything will fall into place; this piece is dedicated to that philosophy. This composition explores various ostinati that pass through the ensemble, additive processes, and layered textures over seemingly simple and familiar harmonic progressions. *Apenas Seja* is also inspired by the music of Imogen Heap, the XX, and Emmy Rossum and is written for Projeto Arcomusical and the *MeiaMeia* song cycle.

#### **About Arcomusical:**

Arcomusical is a multi-faceted resource for the Afro-Brazilian berimbau dedicated to performance, publication, research, and community building. Arcomusical has developed a vibrant culture for creative berimbau performance. Through composition, collaboration, and commission of new works, Arcomusical places the berimbau in diverse performance contexts. As

a publishing entity, Arcomusical offers scores ranging from solos to sextets, from concerti to mixed ensembles, and from acoustic to multi-media environments.