

# artist bio

PLÍNIO FERNANDES: BACHEANDO

*In his sophomore album **Bacheando**, brilliant Brazilian guitarist Plínio Fernandes explores the enduring genius of Bach, the vibrant musical culture of Brazil, and all the richness in between.*

For decades, extraordinary Brazilian musicians have looked to the music of J.S. Bach as a wellspring of inspiration. Some, like composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, responded to the German master's ingenuity with an inventiveness that helped the creative vitality of Brazilian music ring throughout the world.

The Brazilian-born, London-trained, and globally recognized guitarist **Plínio Fernandes** is a dynamic inheritor of this tradition. In his new album **Bacheando** for Decca Records US—already the 29-year-old's second studio recording—Fernandes explores the kaleidoscope of connections between works by Bach and the rich musical culture of Brazil. Equal parts homage and innovation, *Bacheando* opens dialogues between artists across styles, regions, and time periods in a captivating journey across bridges of sound.

Fernandes established himself early as an exquisite player with a colorful, “gloriously rich tone” (*Gramophone*) in his acclaimed debut album, **Saudade**. And like generations of musicians before, Bach was key to his artistic formation. As a child in São Paulo, he cherished the composer's full catalog, from the solo works for violin and cello to vocal music and masses. The influence went beyond Bach's compositions: “being Brazilian and growing up listening to Villa-Lobos with Bach as his main outside influence, you see a transcendental element of Bach's music all over and throughout history. All who came after were influenced by him.” During his formal training (on full scholarship) at The Royal Academy of Music in London, playing Bach “came very naturally. It nourished me a lot as a musician, an artist.”

In shaping *Bacheando*, Fernandes had a formidable partner in **Sérgio Assad**, the renowned guitarist and composer and half of the dynamic Assad Brothers guitar duo. Assad composed original music and wrote brand new arrangements for *Bacheando*, and brought a seasoned perspective to the Bach-Brazil connection; for him, the project hearkened back to the seventies, when Brazilian music buzzed with Baroque and composers were eager to “try their take on the Bach world.” Assad felt it was important that the album capture this music, now rarely performed, for future listeners. The resulting collection is “quite charming - and some of it, completely unexpected.”

At the beating heart of *Bacheando* is music by the revered master himself. Bach's Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E-Flat Major, BWV 998, is a cornerstone of the classical guitar repertoire, and easily among Fernandes's favorite works. Equally essential to the set is Bach's arrangement of the Adagio from the Concerto in D Minor, BWV 974, originally written for oboe by Italian Baroque composer Benedetto

Marcello. That Bach created a keyboard version comes as no surprise, as the Adagio boasts a famously striking melody that Assad says, “comes from heaven.”

This music holds a challenge - plucked guitar strings, unlike an oboe, don't sustain the notes of a melody - for which Fernandes's lyric gifts are a perfect match. “If you are a good singer like Mr. Fernandes, you get it right,” Assad says. “The notes blend and create this illusion that all notes are lasting forever...what I admire in a player is their ability to express things. And Plínio can do that really, really well.” The arrangement also keeps with the album's inventive spirit. “You have Bach inserting notes and things in someone else's music. So we're going to arrange and insert into Bach's music.”

No figure looms larger in the rich vein of the Bach-Brazil tradition—as well as in classical music across Latin America—than senior statesman and foundational composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. Out of his renowned nine *Bachianas Brasileiras*, or Bach-inspired Brazilian pieces, *Bacheando* features the Prelúdio (Introdução) from No. 4, originally for solo piano. The movement's haunting melody unfolds like a stately Baroque dance; in Assad's arrangement and Fernandes's capable hands, the majestic lines takes on disarming immediacy.

*Bacheando* also brings back the voices of essential Brazilian composers whose works have fallen from view—at times, with a twist. In arranging the two *Bachianinhas* of guitarist Paulinho Nogueira, Assad was intrigued by the lesser-known No. 2 - and bridged it to the harmonically similar, but unrelated “Araponga” by Luiz Gonzaga, master of the rhythmic style baião. Fernandes performs both Nogueira works along with arrangements of the rarely-heard “Jequibach” by Mário Albanese.

The album brings the Bach-Brazil concept to a full circle with the world premiere recording of Assad's original work Preludio Fuga e Vivace, inspired by the Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E-Flat Major, BWV 998 and composed specifically for Fernandes. Delightfully, “Preludio” also contains for the venerable Assad a musical first: his debut fugue. The form, he thought, “was something linked to the past - expressed in Baroque times. You can't reproduce that.” But to finish the bridge to Bach, he took the leap, seamlessly incorporating Brazilian dance elements into a piece that, for all its meaningful musical connections, needs no explanation. Fernandes performs it with signature warmth and poetry, continuing the honored artistic tradition of “making it new,” and pointing to a bright vision for the future of Brazilian guitar.