

## MUSIC REVIEW

# Landmarks Orchestra tells bedtime stories on the Esplanade

By **Jeffrey Gantz** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 13, 2015

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There's nothing like a bedtime story to cap a lulling evening on the Esplanade, and Wednesday the Boston Landmarks Orchestra told two: Ravel's "Mother Goose" and Rimsky-Korsakov's "Sheherazade." But those works shared the program with the world premiere of "Cirandadas" by Brazilian native Clarice Assad, who had her own fascinating story to tell.

The program opened with a four-minute Afro-Brazilian appetizer, "Batuque," from Oscar Lorenzo Fernández's 1933 opera, "Malazarte." The piece, heavy on brass and percussion, made for a kinetic start to the evening.

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"Mother Goose" began in 1908 as a four-hand piano suite before being orchestrated and eventually, in 1912, expanded into a ballet. It mostly tells the story of Sleeping Beauty, but in the middle we hear a conversation between Beauty and the Beast, and then Tom Thumb gets lost in the woods when the birds eat his trail of bread crumbs.

Full of subtle touches, the piece tends to evaporate outdoors; if there was anything special about music director Christopher Wilkins's interpretation, it got obliterated by passing sirens and motorcycles and one low-flying helicopter. All the same, Ravel's

magical moments registered: the hunting horns representing Prince Charming, the birdsong flutes, Beauty's clarinet against the Beast's contrabassoon, Tom's oboe meanderings, the chinoiserie of the Empress of the Pagodas.

Assad is the Music Alive: New Partnerships composer-in-residence with the Boston Landmarks Orchestra. But she's also a pianist, improviser, and singer, and she played and sang in her own 25-minute work, for which she was joined by Japanese percussionist Keita Ogawa and local outfits ZUMIX, Grooversity, and Camp Harbor View.

The title "Cirandadas" refers to a type of music and dance from northeastern Brazil. Assad described the piece as a "Japanese Brazilian orchestral samba rap"; it was all of that, with folk-like tunes, call-and-response singing, clapping and waving of hands in the air, ferocious drumming from Grooversity out front, and a dance pulse everywhere, yet it held together. The kids from ZUMIX and Camp Harbor View were more than all right, and Wilkins himself swayed to the samba beat, but Assad was the star, singing of the "fishies of the sea" and then scating up a storm.

Rimsky-Korsakov provided titles for the four parts of "Sheherazade," which he composed in 1888, but no program. Still, it's easy to hear the Sultan raging throughout (the big opening theme is his), and Sheherazade pleading, often as a violin solo, as she tries to stave off execution. Concertmaster Gregory Vitale played Sheherazade's theme with laudable freedom, and Wilkins made the composer's bright colors speak out loud and clear. Climaxes were well constructed, and yet it was the tender finale, as the Sultan relents and accepts Sheherazade, that lingered.

### **"Sheherazade Meets Clarice Assad"**

Conducted by Christopher Wilkins

At: DCR Hatch Shell, Wednesday

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