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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Nice piece. I compressed a little here and there — we are slammed for space.

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Two nations, one beat

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####BEGIN SUBHED####

With Bossa Nova across Borders concert, WWAC shows
how music can bridge cultures

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TEXT BODY:

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Windham World Affairs Council, a regular presenter of
provocative and timely talks, offers something different for
summer this Friday: a chance to experience how friendship,
curiosity, and a shared love of Brazilian music created a
collaboration that spans continents.

The evening at 118 Elliot in Brattleboro features “Bossa
Nova across Borders,” a performance of songs spawned in a

12 collaboration between Vermont musician and composer Jesse
13 Lepkoff and Vadeco Schettini of Astrolábio Studio in Curitiba,
14 Brazil.

15 Joining the two will be Lepkoff's Serenata Bossa Nova
16 band: Alison Hale (flute), Darryl Kniffen (drums), Daniel Kasnitz
17 (bass), and Ron Kelley (saxophone).

18 As a classical musician, Lepkoff has performed with both
19 the Boston Camerata and with his own Ensemble Amphion
20 Baroque. In another genre, he won the 2022 Vermont Blues
21 Society Challenge and represented Vermont at the International
22 Blues Challenge in Memphis, Tennessee (performing as Jesse
23 Brody). In recent years he's pursued the Brazilian bossa nova, a
24 style in which he writes and performs original tunes.

25 Through a circuit of connections, Lepkoff traveled to
26 Brazil in 2025 and 2026 to record with Schettini who, since
27 2022, a press release says, "has produced artists from both Brazil
28 and the United States, building musical collaborations that cross
29 cultures and languages. His work demonstrates how music can
30 create meaningful connections across borders while honoring
31 diverse traditions."

32 Interwoven into Friday's program will be stories and
33 anecdotes from the recording sessions the two shared with other
34 Brazilian musicians. It will also offer a conversation between
35 Lepkoff and Schettini about cross-cultural collaboration, the
36 creative process, and the universal language of music.

37 *The Commons* spoke recently via Zoom with Lepkoff in
38 Marlboro and Schettini in Curitiba in southern Brazil, which, he
39 says, has a rich European flavor and "a lot of little cultural
40 communities everywhere."

41 Having grown up in a family of musicians, and first
42 played professionally at age 16, Schettini was inspired by his
43 father, who "loves samba and Brazilian folk music."

44 Schettini's musical frame of reference ranges from rock to
45 classical. Having played jazz with Lepkoff, he's grateful for the
46 musical sharing. "It's a very good opportunity to learn, to share

47 knowledge, to share influence, and for me it's a huge pleasure
48 doing this with a person like Jesse." In turn, Lepkoff is grateful for
49 all he's learned from Schettini and his peers.

50 At Schettini's studio, Lepkoff recalls, "I played some of
51 my music, and Vadeco was very receptive, encouraging," and
52 responsive to the idea of collaborating.

53 "The energy and the connection between us was very,
54 very fast," Schettini recalls. "When I heard his song, I told him,
55 'Man, it's incredible: For us Brazilian people to think about
56 someone so far away doing music like us, you know, with this
57 kind of harmonical characters, rhythm characters — it was so
58 great, so great."

59 At first in Brazil, Lepkoff recalls, "I was shy about my
60 music," assuming that "I'm going to go there and play my songs,
61 and they'll say, 'Who is this gringo trying to play our music?' And
62 it was the exact opposite: It was like, 'What, you play our music?
63 You sound so good, come on man — play.'"

64 He said his audiences were "110% encouraging,
65 enthusiastic, and welcoming. That sums up my experience with
66 all the Brazilian people."

67 Several times, in bars and other public places, Lepkoff
68 was nudged to play his bossa nova compositions.

69 "The culture is different, it's very spontaneous. You know,
70 anything can happen," he says, in contrast to the U.S., where he
71 notes there's often competitiveness among musicians.

72 Lepkoff explains that Schettini arranged for musicians
73 "he knows to come and play [his compositions]."

74 "I wrote many of the lines they should play, particularly
75 the bass, the flute, and the percussion," Lepkoff says, noting that
76 "the amazing thing for me was that they heard this music and
77 they knew what it was. The flute's improvised; the percussion and
78 the bass were adding all these things that were just right."

79 And, he says, "it was immediately fantastic."

80 "The inspiration and the excitement was amazing,"
81 Lepkoff adds, as were the times he and Schettini composed and
82 arranged together at the piano.

83 "It was the best collaboration I've ever had," Lepkoff
84 says. "We were on the same wave length; it was magical."

85 Schettini nods. "It was magical," he says. "Beautiful."

86 He'll be sharing a visual presentation he's made to
87 introduce Brazil to a local audience and to discuss the process
88 and their joint experience.

89 "I would like to show the people our journey in this,"
90 Schettini says.

91 Among the tunes to be played will be Lepkoff's newest
92 recordings, including "Um Lindo Dia," ("A Beautiful Day"), a
93 signature track from his 2025 album, *Bosso Do Norte*.

94 All made in Brazil, the songs blend Brazilian rhythms
95 with American songwriting traditions. Schettini will sing and play
96 percussion; Lepkoff will sing and play guitar accompanied by his
97 band.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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98 Bossa Nova across Borders happens on Friday, July 17, at
99 118 Elliot in Brattleboro. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; the event
100 begins at 7 p.m. Admission is free, with donations appreciated.
101 For more information, visit windhamworldaffairsCouncil.org.

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104

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