

For UN International Day of Forests, musicians Viktoria Mullova, Matthew Barley and Tasmin Little lead a campaign to save the endangered pernambuco trees used to make bows, with only 6% habitat left



Sunday 21 March 2021
UN International Day of Forests

Launching on **UN International Day of Forests**, Sunday 21 March 2021, a new campaign from the classical music world, **Trees of Music**, will protect and reforest threatened pernambuco trees in Brazil – essential in the manufacture of musical bows – whilst restoring their native habitats and addressing the historical impact of classical music on the environment.

The campaign launches with a video by violinist **Viktoria Mullova**, cellist **Matthew Barley** and **Misha Mullov-Abbado** of two compositions by the pioneering **Chiquinha Gonzaga** (1847-1935), the first woman conductor in Brazil, an abolitionist campaigner and feminist icon. They perform Gonzaga's 'Lua Branca' and 'Yayá Fazenda' accompanied by a lockdown string orchestra, in a specially commissioned arrangement by ambassador Ben Comeau.



[Watch the campaign video here](#)

The video will be available on the [Trees of Music YouTube channel](#). A simplified arrangement will be made available for individuals, ensembles and school orchestras to perform as part of the campaign.

Years of exploitation and illegal deforestation mean the tree that gives its name to Brazil is now on the brink of extinction. Pernambuco was listed as an endangered species in 2007, and Brazil's Atlantic Forest, the tree's native and only habitat, has **shrunk to just**

6% of its original size. The forest is estimated to be reducing at upwards of 1-3% per year. It is home to over 800 different animals and can have more than 450 species of tree in an area the size of a football field. In 2018, over 20,000 violin bows made with illegally logged wood from the black market were seized. Without help, the pernambuco tree could be gone for good in less than a decade.

Led by Master bow-maker and ecologist **Marco Raposo**, and with support from the global classical music community, Trees of Music aims to distribute **50,000 pernambuco saplings** to small-scale farmers in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo. A portion of the saplings will be planted along environmentally-sensitive waterways or ecological corridors, helping to regenerate natural habitats. The remainder will be planted by rural agriculturalists, providing vital livelihood opportunities and securing a sustainable harvest for the long-term future of classical string instruments.

Originally exported to Europe in the 1500s for use as a red dye, **pernambuco** – also known as brazilwood (paubrasilia) – was found to be ideal for manufacturing bows in the mid-18th century due to its ability to hold a fixed curve, championed by bowmaker François Xavier Tourte and violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti, who declared: "*Le violon, c'est l'archet*" – "*the violin, it is the bow.*" 250 years after its introduction, most professional bow-makers – mainly found in France, Italy, Germany, the USA, and the UK – now use pernambuco wood, which has gained favour with classical musicians due to its unique resonance and sound quality.

Trees of Music is calling on lovers of classical music to help replenish these overexploited trees, restore their degraded native ecosystems and create a sustainable, long-term source of pernambuco to keep the music playing for generations of classical music lovers to come.

The Trees of Music community already includes **high-profile ambassadors** from the classical musical world such as New Jersey Symphony Orchestra violinist JoAnna Farrer, violinists Viktoria Mullova and Tasmin Little, cellists Nathalie Haas and Matthew Barley, and pianist and composer Ben Comeau.

Cellist **Matthew Barley** said:

"It is indescribably exciting to support a project that makes a difference on so many levels close to my heart: the ancient craft of bowmaking; biodiversity; sustainability; the art of string playing; and beautiful music."

Violinist **Tasmin Little OBE** said:

"For a violinist, the bow is an essential partner to the violin – without a beautiful bow, a violin will never sound at its best. No musician wants to make music at the expense of our environment so it is imperative that we find a way to ensure that nature and music continue to nourish and inspire us in a symbiotic way."

On 21 March 2021, Trees of Music launches a **year-long series of international events**, activities and performances, including:

- **Film screenings:** opportunities to screen [The Music Tree](#), a feature-length film about the pernambuco tree, combined with live musical performances and Q&A sessions to stimulate conversations around local reforestation.
- **String section:** musicians can apply to receive a part in a large string ensemble and film themselves playing in an inspiring natural setting. Trees of Music will collate all performances into a single video which will be released online.

Trees of Music is driven by three key principles:

- **Education:** increasing consciousness around the environmental impact of the classical music industry, such as instruments made from endangered trees.
- **Engagement:** connecting musicians around the world to create cross-cultural opportunities that inspire behavioural change.
- **Action:** building strategies to help the classical sector address its carbon impact and raising money to plant endangered pernambuco trees in Brazil.

There is a [website](#) where people can learn how to get involved, social media accounts to connect the global classical music community and a crowdfunding campaign to help mobilise resources.

Trees of Music



Trees of Music uses classical music as a platform to inspire cross-cultural collaboration, encourage behaviour change and transform the impacts of harmful extractive industries into opportunities for reforestation. In future, the movement will extend its support to other endangered trees – the pernambuco tree is just the beginning!

Follow Trees of Music online:

- Website: treesofmusic.org
- Facebook: facebook.com/TreesOfMusicfb
- Twitter: twitter.com/treesofmusic
- YouTube: youtube.com/channel/UCRE7NnDYQNVNCm0VLnCsjtA
- Instagram: instagram.com/trees_of_music



International Day of Forests

Notes to Editors

Photos, audio and video available for download here:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9gcpwwqk2uvmril/AACbhGteupjNihZcFYj1uf_ya?dl=0

The pernambuco tree is also known as *Caesalpinia echinata* and brazilwood (paubrasilia). It is a medium-sized leguminous tree reaching a height of around 12 metres, with flowers that last for ten-fifteen days in August/September, staying open for less than 24 hours.

The pernambuco tree occurs principally in low-lying coastal areas and wide plains in Rio de Janeiro and the southernmost part of Bahia, where it is restricted to the Mata Atlântica (Atlantic Coastal Forest), which now covers less than 100,000 km², or 7.3% of its original extent in Brazil. In the 16th Century, the Mata Atlântica covered practically all of the Atlantic seaboard from south of Rio de Janeiro to Rio Grande do Norte and extended 80 to

150 kilometres inland; it was the second-largest tropical rainforest in Brazil, comparable only to the Amazon.

The main reasons for deforestation of the Mata Atlântica in recent years are urban sprawl, agriculture and timber harvesting, with some areas closest to the sea having suffered a considerable impact in recent years through tourist development.

A violin bow typically requires approximately 1 kg of wood. Annual worldwide demand of the pernambuco tree for bow-making is estimated at around 200 m³, although it is probably higher, as a considerable amount of wood is wasted in the bow-making process. Of 1,500 kg of cut timber, only 100 to 200 kg are suitable for high quality bows, owing to flaws in the wood.

Tests have been performed with different timber species as alternatives to pernambuco wood for manufacturing bows, but none of them have been accepted by professional musicians.

In concert, the delicate interplay of materials, strength, resilience and balance that Tourte worked out gives performers a magical tool, allowing them to both dance and dig, to execute delicate and difficult phrasing, bouncing off the string with a strong attack in one place and, in another, settling into the string to draw the sound out of the instrument's belly.

The Pau-Brasil Program in 2005 recorded 1,754 trees remaining. Of these, 1,669 occurred naturally and the remaining 85 had been planted.



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