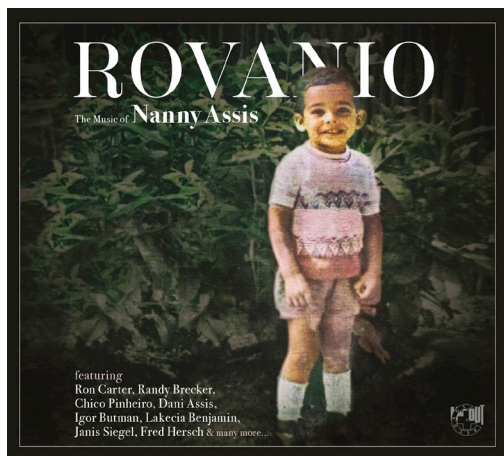




PRESS RELEASE



NANNY ASSIS
ROVANOIO
IOR CD 77152-2



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|----------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|
| 1. No Agora | (5:47) | 6. Back To Bahia | (4:12) |
| 2. Nenhum | (3:34) | 7. Proponho | (3:57) |
| 3. Manhã De Carnaval | (5:31) | 8. The Northern Sea | (4:12) |
| 4. Amor Omissio | (5:14) | 9. Insensatez | (5:07) |
| 5. Human Kind | (5:15) | 10. Intimate Acquaintances | (5:03) |

featuring

Ron Carter, Randy Brecker,
Chico Pinheiro, Dani Assis,
Igor Butman, Lakecia Benjamin,
Janis Siegel, Fred Hersch
& many more...

NANNY ASSIS ROVANOIO (IN+OUT Records)

THE MAN

Nanny Assis was born August 25, 1969, in Salvador, Bahia, in northeastern Brazil. He was actually born with the given name of Rovanio. "I didn't like the sound of that name when I was young," he explains. "I thought 'Rovanio' would be difficult for people to pronounce or to remember. I've had this nickname since I was a kid, Nanny. Not a lot of people have known my real name, until now."

When he was 7, his musical gifts began manifesting themselves before an audience—or rather, before a congregation. "My father was a pastor, so I grew up playing sacred music. My first instrument was drums, played in the church, and I sang in the youth choir." He learned guitar by osmosis, simply because the instrument was ubiquitous in Brazilian culture. With those skills in hand, and much to his parents' (initial) displeasure, Assis began making money playing secular music with his friends. He did rock in clubs, samba at carnaval, and even delved into jazz after discovering American players at a record store in Salvador.

Though he studied linguistics and Portuguese literature at Catholic University of Salvador and worked for a while afterward as a writer, Assis had always intended to be a professional musician. He harbored ambitions to move to the United States even as he married and started a family of his own in Salvador. "I was really attracted to American music, and many of the albums I loved were live albums," he says. "We didn't get a lot of live American music in Bahia. Those albums made me feel like I needed to go to that place and connect directly to this music."

The opportunity came in 1993, when the Austin, Texas-based band Rolling Thunder held auditions for samba percussionists. Assis passed the audition and came with them to Texas as a member of the band, touring the U.S. and Europe with them. This was the proverbial foot in the door; he kept seeking out opportunities to work in the States, finally moving to New York in 1999 and quickly becoming a noted player of samba and Brazilian jazz, both as a leader and a sideman.

While Assis considers himself a samba musician, not a jazz musician, it's the jazz players who are most curious about Brazil's traditions

and are thus his most frequent collaborators. His 2006 debut album, *Double Rainbow*, included contributions from **John Patitucci**, **Eumir Deodato**, **Michael Leonhardt**, and **Erik Friedlander**, among others. His subsequent projects partnered him with **Arthur Lipner** (2010's *Brazilian Vibes*) and **Janis Siegel** and **John di Martino** (on 2014's *Requinte Trio*). He's also produced several recordings across multiple genres.

THE ALBUM

By 2020, **Nanny Assis** had 40 years as a performing musician under his belt. His esteem as a bossa/jazz vocalist, percussionist, and guitarist was well established, but for the Bahia native (now based in New York and South Florida) that was only part of the story. "Coming from Brazil, I have so many different styles and roots for my music," he says. "It's very rich—I wanted to present an album that would show the real me."

To drive the point home, for the first time in his professional career, he signed his real first name to the album. *Rovanio* is indeed a remarkable kaleidoscope of styles, textures, ideas, and even languages, yet it never strays from the distinctive Brazilian elements that form the foundation of Assis's music. It doesn't have to: that kaleidoscope itself is part of what makes the country's music special.



"Brazil was a Portuguese colony, of course," Assis points out. "Portuguese is my first language. But it also has the second largest concentration of Japanese people in the world. And then in Bahia, the place I come from, 75 percent of the population is of African descent. There is a Japanese community, an Arab community. There's so much information in one place, and it's really strong in the Afro-Brazilian culture, the dance, and the music. And I figure I'm the glue for all that."

The glue, perhaps—but Assis is holding together multiple parts. No less than 20 artists appear across *Rovanio's* nine tracks (even more, if each member of the **St. Petersburg Studio Orchestra**—which plays on three pieces—is counted separately). He also co-wrote all but one of the songs. Those many contributors enhance, rather than detract from, his mission of self-revelation. Part of "the real me" Assis wants to portray is that he is a natural and enthusiastic collaborator.

Which makes participants like bassist **Ron Carter**; guitarist **Chico Pinheiro**; trumpeter **Randy Brecker**; pianist **Fred Hersch**; saxophonists **John Ellis**, **Igor Butman**, and **Lakecia Benjamin**; and vocalists **Janis Siegel**, **Vinicius Cantuária**, **Emanuel Yerday**, and **Laura** and **Dani Assis** part and parcel of the titular music of Nanny Assis. "It should really be called *The Music of Nanny Assis and Friends*," he says. The album also includes one standard, "Manhã de Carnaval." "The other tracks are all collaborations: I partnered with somebody to do either words or music." In addition, Assis and guitarist **Chico Pinheiro** together arranged every tune but one.

THE TRACKS

Ron Carter, the legend of jazz bass, gets a bright spotlight with his composition "Mr. Bow Tie," to which Assis adds a lyric titled "**No Agora**." Randy Brecker's gorgeous flugelhorn and the St. Petersburg Studio Orchestra's lush backdrop make the track a throwback to the 1960s bossa nova records (by the likes of **Astrud Gilberto** and **Antonio Carlos Jobim**) on which Assis first heard Carter playing Brazilian music.

Assis wrote the music for "**Nenhum**" ("None") in his early Brazilian days with poet **Paulo Alcoforado**, a lifelong friend. "The song talks about the many 'I's inside yourself—all those voices that one person can hear inside themselves," he explains. "You are all of those people, but it's better to be none of that." While Pinheiro plays a beautiful acoustic guitar solo, it's really the orchestra that takes center stage on this performance, putting a delicate drama behind Assis's passionate vocal.

"**Manhã de Carnaval**," of course, is the theme from the 1959 film *Black Orpheus*. He included the song after he was able to draft Carter onto the project; Assis has long been entranced by Carter's conception of Brazilian jazz and thought the Antonio Maria/Luiz Bonfá classic would be a great fit for it.

Music lovers might immediately identify "**Amor Omisso**" with Manu Dibango's 1972 Afrobeat hit "Soul Makossa": the glut of percussion, the chantlike, deep-voiced spoken word (by Yerday), the sudden burst of saxophone (from Benjamin). The song's Brazilian-ness quickly makes itself apparent with gentle acoustic guitars and Assis's Portuguese singing. Yet the African vibe is no coincidence. "There's a lot of Afro-Brazilian grooves on there," Assis says. "We start with 5/8, then go to 4/4, and then 6/8."

Chico Pinheiro's "**Tempestade**" has been a staple of the guitarist's repertoire since at least 2005, when it appeared on his debut album. "It blew my mind," recalls Assis, particularly taken with the song's marriage of odd rhythm and lyricism. He wrote (with some help from his friend, jazz radio personality **Mark Ruffin**) the English lyric "**Human Kind**" to accompany it. Assis's soulful duet partner in delivering that lyric is his son Dani, currently completing his degree in vocal performance at Oberlin Conservatory.

Assis's daughter Laura wrote the wistful words to "**Back to Bahia**" when she was just six years old. The family had just moved to New York from Brazil, and the homesick little girl wrote down her feelings with astonishing poetry: "Wind is blowing through the palm trees/And creating the rhythms of Bahia." Assis was so moved that he wrote music to go with her words, emphasizing those nature-inspired rhythms.

Esteemed pianist Fred Hersch wrote, arranged, and plays his song "**Mandevilla**," which Assis, his son Dani, and Janis Siegel's lyrics in Portuguese and English give the alternate title "**Proponho**" ("I propose"). The sad love song takes on an extra level of poignancy with the harmony vocal from Siegel, with whom Assis has worked for years in his Requite Trio.

"**The Northern Sea**" features lyrics co-written with Janis Siegel, but Assis handles vocal duties alone. "It's a very difficult song to sing," he says of the melody by his friend **Ivan Bastos**. "It was never meant to have lyrics, so there's no space in it to breathe." Assis does a masterful job with such challenging material, with he and Ellis's solos giving it further emotional resonance.

In addition to her wordsmithery, Laura Assis proves herself a gifted singer with her sweet lead vocal (with her dad backing her up) on Assis's composition with **Morrie Louden**, the litting "**Insensatez**"—not to be confused with the Jobim song rendered in English as "How Insensitive."

"**Intimate Acquaintances**," the album's jaunty, ironic closer, comes from an award-winning off-Broadway score that Assis wrote with lyricist **Matt Gurren**. In keeping with the intimacy of the title, he keeps it very simple: Carter on bass, **Ulysses Owens Jr.** on (brushed) drums, and Assis himself on vocal, with a little extra help from **Mattan Klein**—a friend from Tel Aviv—on flute to wrap things up on a slyly upbeat note. Perhaps it's inevitable that a tightly knit gathering of friends playing a charming but intimate song would be the last word on an album designed to show the real Nanny Assis to the world.

"After playing this recording session, I thanked Mr. Assis for the music lesson his compositions and lyrics gave me!"
Ron Carter

"Nanny's music is full of joy, soul, and Brazilianness. What a pleasure it's been to work with Mr. Assis on this beautiful album. I wish long life to Nanny's music!"
Chico Pinheiro

"Every once in a while, an artist creates something that should be shared, not only amongst artists, but also those we'd like to impress. [...] Nanny has truly created a masterpiece."
Lenny White

"'Rovanio...' is simply a masterpiece on every level: performance, production and content. I don't throw that word around easily, but there's never a single second that doesn't amaze. The compositions mostly by Nanny himself, and his haunting singing will deeply touch your heart."
Randy Brecker

"This music will uplift listeners with his joyful, contemplative and inspiration compositions. [...] among others, Nanny has created a masterpiece."
Mark Ruffin

