

# Bridging Disciplinary Divides in the Study of Brazilian Instrumental Music

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Academic and popular investigation of Brazilian popular music has burgeoned in recent years. In keeping with trends of cultural and political pluralization throughout Brazil, recent scholarship has expanded dramatically in its range—from the sacred music of umbanda rituals in Porto Alegre to the history of Paraense pop, Brazilian music is under investigation.<sup>1</sup>

Although most recent work is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on methodologies and ideas from musicology, ethnomusicology, anthropology, history, literature and political science, to list the most obvious participating disciplines, the publication and dissemination of this work still tends to conform to disciplinary boundaries. Historians publish in history journals, anthropologists publish in anthropology journals, and although Google Scholar, JSTOR and Project Muse make nearly everything instantly searchable, cross-fertilization is still more likely to happen out in the field than in the conference room or editorial process. The *Luso-Brazilian Review* represents an ideal forum for interdisciplinary work on Brazilian music.

The gap between musicologists and ethnomusicologists on one hand and scholars from all other disciplines on the other is particularly vexing, for several reasons. To begin, this work has expanded dramatically in recent years—the Brazilianist faction of the Society for Ethnomusicology is now one of the most vital and productive subsectors of that association. Because many musicologists and ethnomusicologists either remain professional musicians or are teaching in programs that do not emphasize publication, much of this work remains unpublished. But it deserves to be read by scholars from other disciplines, not only for its rich analyses of Brazilian musical practices, but for the paths it opens up for broader investigations of Brazilian history and current life.

A number of senior scholars in this field are already relatively well-known to interdisciplinary scholars. Gerard Behague's work on Heitor Villa Lobos and on Latin American music more generally set a standard for musicology

of the Americas.<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Kubik's wide-ranging ethnomusicological work has influenced the way two generations of scholars think about African influence in the Americas.<sup>3</sup> Anthony Seeger's work on Amazonian indigenous music is a touchstone for anthropologists of the region, and his thought on musical traditions has shaped a broader array of inquiries.<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Travassos, Larry Crook, John Murphy and Suzel Reily have all become crucial interlocutors for scholars of the Brazilian northeast and southeast.<sup>5</sup>

Martha Tupinambá de Ulhôa's pathbreaking work on Brazilian rock, popular reception and categorization has strongly influenced work by literary scholars on similar scenes.<sup>6</sup> Frederick Moehn's recent work on the production of MPB and its political resonance in the 1990s has similarly been met with great enthusiasm from a broader cultural studies audience.<sup>7</sup> Carlos Sandroni's work on samba has been crucial to a broader reconsideration of the history of that form.<sup>8</sup> Samuel Araújo's work has led the way for investigations of the intersections of popular music and politics.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Garcia's and Tamara Livingston-Isenhour's work on choro has helped awaken interdisciplinary interest in this genre.<sup>10</sup> And Cristina Magaldi's work on erudite music in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro has added sharp detail to our understanding of the ebb and flow of cultural influence in this period.<sup>11</sup>

But the work of many younger scholars has yet to cross the disciplinary divide. There is a strong contingent of young ethnomusicologists of Brazil whose work will be of great interest to historians, anthropologists, political scientists and literary scholars. In addition to Gidal and Lamén, cited above, Andrew Connell on choro and its experimental offshoots, Dan Sharp on samba de coco and Pernambucan rural music, Jeff Packman on music and labor in Salvador da Bahia, and Ron Conner on maracatu in Ceará have all pursued work that is deeply-grounded in the concerns of social history.<sup>12</sup> Michael Silvers's research into forró and drought in Ceará, Michael Iyanga's research on samba-de-roda and the politics of cultural patrimony, and Laila Rosa's research on Afro-Brazilian sacred music in Olinda are all projects that will reach fruition in the next several years, and should be of great interest to interdisciplinary scholars.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, a young generation of Brazilian scholars conducting interdisciplinary work on music deserves greater international exposure. Prominent in this category are scholars like Maurício de Carvalho Teixeira, writing on music and modernism, and Rita de Cácia Oenning da Silva, writing on child street performers in Recife.<sup>14</sup>

Work on Brazilian instrumental music has been particularly slow to cross disciplinary boundaries. The body of evidence for this work tends to require musical annotation, requiring some musical literacy from intended readers. And because this music tends not to be the best-known by international fans

and scholars, it has been more difficult for scholars of instrumental music to reach out to an interdisciplinary audience.

Towards that end, this volume brings together the work of five exciting young scholars of Brazilian instrumental music. The diversity of their work reflects the broad array of concerns and methodologies characterizing this recent scholarship, and can be taken as representative of broader movements.

Eric Galm's work on the berimbau brings to light the key contributions made by Naná Vasconcelos, Dinho Nascimento and Ramiro Musotto in the expansion of this instrument's possibilities. The berimbau is still often dismissed as folkloric, static, and highly limited. Galm's sensitive analysis reveals the recent artistic history of the berimbau, and brings the innovations of its key practitioners to light.

Julie Koidin's article on Benedicto Lacerda investigates the career of one of Brazil's most influential musicians, whose pivotal career has previously received little investigation. Because Lacerda has been criticized—unjustly, for the most part—as the man who convinced Pixinguinha to give up the flute and as someone who registered other people's compositions under his own name, his own artistry has not received the critical attention it deserves. Koidin sets the record straight with her analysis here.

Richard Miller's article on Tango Brasileiro, Maxixe and Choro pins down the subtle but defining differences between these rhythms, explores their dissemination in the musical world of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Rio de Janeiro, and analyzes their connections to broader Afro-Atlantic practices.

Kariann Goldschmitt and Jason Stanyek explore the reception and reproduction of Brazilian music in the United States. Goldschmitt's work on bossa nova dance is fine transnational social and cultural history with an ethnomusicological foundation. Stanyek's analysis of choro reveals that the genre is the longest-lived Brazilian musical import to the United States, but that its resonance has changed considerably in the last twenty years.

Each of these works represents an avenue for further study—the investigation of the evolving use of traditional instruments, analysis of the deep structure and cultural meanings of Brazilian genres and rhythms, critical reflection on the work of key performers and composers, and analysis of reception and diffusion. The scholars represented here draw on archival documents ranging from unpublished musical compositions and drafts of alternative musical notation systems to more traditional sources for scholars in other humanistic disciplines, such as personal and professional correspondence, written contracts and business records. They also rely on oral histories, field recordings, and sensitive evaluations of secondary sources (of

both published and recorded nature). Their use of this wide range of source material points to opportunities for scholars from other disciplines to push beyond words and images, incorporating music—as encountered in recordings, live performances, notation and description—into their source bases, and to look for the evidence of broader social and historical themes and transitions within that music.

Collectively, these articles reveal the vitality of a mature and expanding field, and offer indications of the promise of greater interdisciplinary investigation.

## Notes

1. Marc Gidal is completing his ethnomusicology dissertation on umbanda in Porto Alegre at Harvard University; Darien Lamen is currently conducting fieldwork for a dissertation on the history of Paraense traveling sound/dj crews for his dissertation in ethnomusicology at the University of Pennsylvania.

2. See, for example, Gerard Behague, *Musiques des Brasil, de la cantoria a la samba-reggae*, Arles: Cités de la Musique, Actes Sud, 199.

3. See, for example, Gerhard Kubik, *Theory of African Music*, Wilhelmsaven: F. Noetzel, 1994.

4. Anthony Seeger, *Why Suyá Sing: a musical anthropology of an Amazonian people*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

5. See, for example, Elizabeth Travassos, “Repente e música popular: a autoria em debate,” *Mana*, 1:1, 6–15, 1999; Larry Crook, *Focus: Music of Northeastern Brazil*, New York: Routledge, 2009; John P. Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006; Suzel Reily, “Música Sertaneja and migrant identity: the stylistic development of a Brazilian genre,” *Popular Music*, 11, 1992, 337–358

6. See, for example, Martha Tupinambá de Ulhôa, “Categorias de avaliação estética da MPB: lidando com a recepção da música brasileira popular,” *IASPM-Latin America IV*, 2002.

7. See, for example, Frederick Moehn, “A Carioca Blade Runner, or How Marcos Suzano Turned the Brazilian Tambourine Into a Drum Kit,” *Ethnomusicology*, 53:2, 2009.

8. Carlos Sandroni, *Feitiço Decente: Transformações do Samba no Rio de Janeiro, 1917–1933*, Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2001.

9. See, for example, Samuel M. Araújo, “Brega: Music and Conflict in Urban Brazil,” *Latin American Music Review*, 9:1, 1988, 50–89.

10. Thomas George Caracas Garcia and Tamara Livingston-Isenhour, *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.

11. Cristina Magaldi, *Music in Imperial Rio de Janeiro: European Culture in a Tropical Milieu*, Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2004.

12. Andrew Mark Connell, "Jazz Brasileiro? Música Instrumental Brasileiro and the representation of identity in Rio de Janeiro," PhD Dissertation, University of California-Los Angeles, Ethnomusicology, 2002; Daniel Benson Sharp, *Saudades de Arcoverde: Nostalgia and the performance of origin*, PhD Dissertation, Ethnomusicology, University of Texas-Austin, 2006; Jeff Packman, "'We Work Hard at Entertainment': Performance and professionalism in the popular music scenes of Salvador da Bahia, Brazil," PhD Dissertation, Ethnomusicology, University of California: Berkeley, 2007; Ron Conner, "Black Consciousness in Blackless Brazil: Activism, Alterity and Appropriation in Maracatu Cearense," Society for Ethnomusicology, conference presentation, Los Angeles, California, 2010.

13. Michael Silvers, "Rain Prophets and Song: Environmental Knowledge and Musical Preservation in Ceará, Brazil," Society for Ethnomusicology, conference presentation, Los Angeles, California, 2010; Michael Iyanaga, "International Politics and Intangible Heritage: UNESCO, Religion and the Brazilian Samba de Roda," Society for Ethnomusicology, conference presentation, Los Angeles, California, 2010; Laila Rosa, "Juremeiras e Bruxas: As Donas de uma Ciência 'Ilegítima'," *Caminhos*, Goiânia, 7:2, 2009, 175–201.

14. Maurício de Carvalho Teixeira, "Riscos no Fonógrafo: Mário de Andrade e os discos," In: Flavia Camargo Toni. (Org.). *A Música Popular na Vitrola de Mário de Andrade*. São Paulo: Editora Senac São Paulo, 2004, v. , p. 51–71; Rita de Cácia Oenning da Silva, "'Reversing the Rite': Music, Dance and Rites of Passage among Street Children and Youth in Recife, Brazil," *The World of Music*, Journal of the Department of Ethnomusicology Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg Vol. 48:1, 2006.