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BRAZILIAN MIDDLE-CLASS MUSIC:
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IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MPB

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LUCIANO SIMÕES SILVA

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BRAZILIAN MIDDLE-CLASS MUSIC: TRADITION, HIBRIDITY AND COMMUNITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MPB

By

Luciano Simões Silva

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ABSTRACT

BRAZILIAN MIDDLE-CLASS MUSIC: TRADITION, HYBRIDITY AND COMMUNITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MPB

By

Luciano Simões Silva

The Brazilian musical genre known as MPB was created in the late-1950s by members of the rising Brazilian middle class. In this thesis I will argue that MPB has been for fifty years the cultural form *par excellence* of the urban and educated Brazilian middle class. The intersection of Nestor Garcia Canclini's theory of hybrid cultures, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's theory of invented traditions, and Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities will provide an interpretative framework within which the development of MPB and its interaction with the middle class can be more clearly and fully understood. The first chapter of this thesis presents these theories in their original contexts and explains how they apply to MPB and the Brazilian middle class.

In subsequent chapters the middle class and MPB are placed in perspective within the social, economic and political transformations that shaped the Brazilian society from the 1930s to the 1970s, with special attention to the 1960s, a period during which both the middle class and MPB developed. Genres and styles which influenced MPB, as well as subgenres, movements and musicians which are part of the genre's history, are examined, explained, and placed in context. The last part of the thesis exposes how MPB's hybrid nature and its connections to Brazilian musical traditions helped to shape the cultured middle class as an imagined community.

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, art historian Joanna Hecker-Silva.

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INTRODUCTION

The process of consolidation of the Brazilian musical genre known as *Música Popular Brasileira* (MPB) in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the consolidation of the urban middle class in Brazil.[1] In the twentieth century, first with massive immigration from Italy, Germany, Lebanon and Japan among other countries and then with massive internal migration from rural areas to large Brazilian cities, Brazilian urban society became multifaceted. The rise of an educated middle class of doctors, lawyers, teachers and businessmen brought with it the anxiety to find their identity and culture among so much diversity. The nascent middle class was, in many ways, a subculture with a need to represent itself in the larger society.

To complicate matters, however, the Brazilian urban middle class has many characteristics of what Garcia Canclini calls "border culture."[2] They are in constant contact and dialogue with both the lower classes and the upper classes, sometimes transiting between them if times are better or worse. Persons can move up or down socially depending on achievements in life. One of the characteristics of border peoples and cultures is the cosmopolitanism of its members. This delicate position of the middle class, situated on the border of the less and the most privileged classes in the society, creates constant tension between popular and elite culture that surrounds and penetrates the middle class. As often happens

[1] The translation of *Música Popular Brasileira* (MPB) to the English "Brazilian popular music" leads to a common misinterpretation of the genre. It should not be mistaken for general popular music made in Brazil, which Brazilians refer to as *música popular*.

[2] Néstor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 259.

with discussions that involve race, however, it is a delicate matter to stress the role that class plays in the development of a genre that is so representative of national pride.[3] Perhaps it is due in part to such discomfort that many authors, such as Martha de Ulhôa Carvalho, Charles Perrone, Luiz Tatit and Gerard Béhague – while acknowledging the importance of class in this music – do not focus on its far-reaching implications. In fact, in Brazil, a person's skin color or origin are only two factors to be considered, since there is considerable mobility between classes. Artistic endeavors are too often a channel through which persons can move up in the social ladder. Actually, the main parameter to define the producers and consumers of MPB is education. Not only they tend to be better educated, but many of the composers and interpreters have had some contact with universities during their life. In the 1960s, university students were among the loudest participants in promoting MPB composers and their music.

It is generally true, then, to say that MPB is by and for a comparatively educated audience. Beyond this, the genre's boundaries can be difficult to establish. As Christopher Dunn points out, "it is more defined by what it is not

[3] Race relations in Brazil are an extremely complex issue, as roughly half of its citizens are of mixed blood. The problematic relationship between MPB and race deserves far more attention than I can give it here, in my consideration of the relationship between MPB and class – but it could easily serve as the focal point of future research. Nonetheless it is important to mention that most composers and listeners of MPB are white or light-skinned, as is the middle class. At the same time there was never a blatant attitude of racism that would discourage any person of color to become a composer or interpreter of MPB. Of the five composers considered by many to be the most respected MPB songwriters, two of them are black and one is *mestiço*. For further information on this subject, see Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Editora, 1984), Darcy Ribeiro, *O Povo Brasileiro: A Formação e o Sentido do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995) and Gilberto Freyre, *Casa Grande e Senzala* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Editora, 1950).

than by what it is."[4] Its main characteristics are its malleability and permeability that result from the number of different styles and influences that it absorbed since the late 1950s. For the purposes of this project, I will locate MPB's birth within bossa nova. But it was only with the *Tropicália* movement that MPB would "legitimize musical hybridity as a means of articulating cultural identity."[5] MPB is an art destined to absorb and re-imagine outside influences.

MPB is essentially a genre of popular song, but this definition is too broad to be useful when we seek to locate the genre's boundaries. On one hand MPB presents several elements of structural continuity and homogeneity, such as arrangements, instrumentation, styles and lyrics, which reflect the social class from which most of the songwriters and interpreters come. On the other hand MPB balances precariously at the intersection of various musical trends. Referring to MPB, the musicologist José Wisnik observes that

> In its body, the popular song spins cultural lines in a complex net that involves rural tradition and avant-garde, classical and popular, national and foreign, artisan and factory. [The song] originates from illiterate popular culture in its rural substrate, and then frees itself to enter the market and the city; it lets itself be penetrated by erudite poetry, but it does not follow the evolutionary logic of literary culture.[6]

This music is a repository of multiple musical influences. Brazilian regional and folk music (*baião*, *maracatu* and *toada*), Brazilian traditional urban music (samba, *choro* and *modinha*), American music (rock and jazz), Hispanic-

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[4] Christopher Dunn, "Tropicália: Modernity, Allegory and Counterculture," in Carlos Basualdo, ed., *Tropicália: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture (1967-1972)*, trans. Aaron Lorenz, Renata Nascimento and Christopher Dunn (São Paulo: Casac Naify, 2005), 61.
[5] Lorraine Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music: Caetano Veloso and the Regeneration of Tradition* (London, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 101.
[6] José Miguel Wisnik, *Sem Receita* (São Paulo: Publifolha, 2004), 210-1.

American music (tango, *chacarera* and bolero), and classical styles (art song and church music) have given a wide range of source material that MPB composers cited and recombined. Since MPB is formed by unstable elements that are constantly recombined, its boundaries are extremely flexible, and within it one can notice the heterogeneity that characterizes the middle class in Brazil.

Boundaries defining middle-class culture can be similarly problematic, however, economic measures notwithstanding. While members of this class sought to distinguish themselves as a subgroup of Brazilian society in the middle- and late-twentieth century, they also tend to see themselves as representative of Brazilian national sentiment in many ways. Brazilian middle-class composers often regarded themselves as "nationalists" in part to counteract the rise of American cultural penetration in Brazilian music since the Second World War. In the 1960s, the strategy worked both ways: nationalism could be used to promote middle-class music and culture, and the arts could be used to promote national sentiment for political purposes.[7] For middle-class composers, to be "nationalistic" was to reason that their music was the best representation of national culture; and at the same time, "nationalists" defied the government with socially and sometimes politically explicit messages against government policies and in favor of universal values (such as freedom of speech). This nationalism perpetrated by the middle class in the 1960s is very different from the government sanctioned nationalism of the 1930s, when President Getúlio Vargas promoted samba to strengthen his central government. MPB in the 1960s is a "product of

[7] Similarly to what Haitian art music composers did during the US occupation of Haiti between 1915 and 1934. Thomas Turino, cited in Michael Largey, *Vodou Nation: Haitian Art Music and Cultural Nationalism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 4-5.

cultural nationalism which manufactures national sentiment through emotional attachments to an imagined past."[8]

MPB reached its pinnacle of popularity in the 1960s and 1970s – but it was never the most popular genre in Brazil, even at that time. Its greatest power has been its cultural relevance, and its influence on other types of Brazilian popular music, neither of which can be measured in terms of album sales. To explicate this apparent contradiction, I will use examples from the oeuvres of MPB singers and songwriters, including Chico Buarque, Mílton Nascimento, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil and Elis Regina. These examples will demonstrate that the influence of MPB on Brazilian and, eventually, international musical genres was a complex and multilayered phenomenon with its origins in the Brazilian urban middle class.

Nevertheless, the success of MPB exists not within the dialectic it represents, which opposes cosmopolitanism to nationalism, but in the presentation of a viable alternative to this opposition. This alternative is the appropriation of many different and sometimes opposing styles, and their transformation into an artistic expression that challenges the dogmas of modernity and tradition. It is a story that members of the middle class tell themselves, about themselves, that helps them to shape and understand their place within broader society.[9] MPB is not only essentially constructed of middle-class elements, but also is consumed

[8] Largey, *Vodou Nation*, 19.

[9] Ritual theorist Clifford Geertz has made this observation about various kinds of ritual performance, both within and outside the realm of religious practice. Geertz would argue that the performance of music can easily be seen as a sort of ritual. See Clifford Geertz, *Negara: the Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 13-16 and 102-103.

primarily by the middle class. It is necessary to place the socio-economic aspect of MPB's historical and contemporary context in order to understand its true significance within the broader spectrum of twentieth-century Brazilian music. The art produced by middle-class artists was and still is a reflection of their social position, and their resulting worldview, even when they reach out to the nation as a whole.

CHAPTER 1
IMAGINED COMMUNITIES, INVENTED TRADITIONS AND HYBRID CULTURES

While the growth of the Brazilian economy during the twentieth century may have been responsible for the development of a middle class in its major cities, these citizens themselves – educated, socially-conscious, and unable to self-identify wholly with either their wealthier or their poorer countrymen – began in the 1950s to conceptualize an entirely new kind of Brazilian community. In laying out his theory of the "imagined community," Benedict Anderson discusses the process by which groups imagine connections amongst their members, and distinctions between them and everyone else.[10] Imagined communities are created through practices that are performed by few and replicated by many others; while the former are aware of the existence of the latter, they likely have no sense of their individual identities.[11] Anderson observes that the newspaper is one of the most important examples of these practices. He notes that

> The newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barber shop, or residential neighbors is continuously reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life.[12]

In large Brazilian cities, the rapid development in literacy, telecommunications and technology after the Second World War facilitated the growth of such communities. First the radio and the newspaper, then television, together with more traditional communicative/communal practices such as the

[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).
[11] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.
[12] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

singer in the neighborhood bar, were instrumental in creating this imagined world exemplified by Anderson.

Lacking a long tradition to which they could identify with among the other groups in Brazilian society, members of the urban, educated middle class found themselves needing to create new forms of tradition by way of appropriation and recombination. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger developed the concept of invented traditions to describe situations that refer to a historical past, and which create continuity with that past that is "largely factitious."[13] Hobsbawn notices that invented traditions "are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations."[14] These novel situations are more common in societies which are being rapidly transformed, be it by industrialization, modernization or social revolution. This transformation "destroys the social patterns for which old traditions had been designed."[15] People are disconnected from these old traditions, therefore necessitating a connection with a new or invented one. Hobsbawm observes that invented traditions can sometimes establish or symbolize "social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities."[16] These invented traditions, then, become a "cement of cohesion"[17] for rapidly-changing or newly-developing imagined communities. MPB provided this type of "cement" for the new social patterns of the Brazilian middle class, in the novel situation of the mid-twentieth century.

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[13] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.
[14] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention*, 2.
[15] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention*, 4.
[16] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention*, 9.
[17] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention*, 12.

Nestor Garcia Canclini's discussion of "hybrid culture" as a characteristic of Latin American cultures is particularly instructive as we seek to understand the culture of the Brazilian middle class.[18] Canclini points out that hybrid cultures are the product of recombination of popular traditions with modernization.[19] Even though Canclini does not specifically mention the middle class as a repository of such recombinations, he stresses that "renovating impulses of modernity were more effective in 'cultured' groups."[20] He goes on to define the state of being cultured as "knowing how to incorporate the art and literature of the vanguard, as well as technological advances, into traditional matrices of social privilege and symbolic distinction."[21] This cultured class in Brazil is the well-educated middle class.

Hybrid cultures become the solution to two of the most common dichotomies of Latin-American peoples: the local versus the cosmopolitan, and the traditional versus the modern. These oppositions have been reworked (not without conflict) in urban centers to create viable ways to organize the many influences brought to the cities. In Brazil, these cultures were articulated in the large urban centers that since the 1920s have become centers for foreign immigration, and since the 1940s centers for internal migration. In these cities, markets expanded, new technologies were created or imported and a new cultural industry was formed. These cities, of which São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are the most important, were centers where artists could be invested in formal

[18] Néstor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
[19] Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 2.
[20] Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 46.
[21] Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 46-7.

experimentation and rupture with tradition at the same time that they were trying to bring democracy to artistic production.[22]

Musicians from the new enlarged middle class were reacting to these situations, feeding on musical traditions from all over the country and from their own urban past, as well as any foreign influence available. Using folk and traditional music as source was a way to give a sense of continuity and connection to the past. Many times, composers added foreign and modern influences which were diluted by the use of folkloric material, making it easier to achieve the goal to be instantly recognized as both "Brazilian" and "modern." The presence of traditional elements made this music to have the "sanction of precedent" and be inserted in "social continuity."[23] For example, elements of traditional samba in the hybrid samba-jazz style diluted the influence of foreign jazz and made it easier for the listener to accept this music as continuity at the same time that foreign elements brought the idea of modernity to this music.

MPB is based on alterations and transformations of musical traditions that allow composers to create and invent beyond the boundaries of a given style.[24] These transformations could be based on basic elements such as instrumentation and rhythms, but could also be more straightforward, such as when composers were inspired by old songs. Using the canon of Brazilian songs first established in and developed since the eighteenth century as source to many new compositions, middle-class songwriters could transform a specific idea present in an old song into an expression of the times they were living in. This is the case of Chico

[22] Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 56.
[23] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention*, 2.
[24] Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 97.

Buarque's "Samba e Amor," (Samba and Love) which is loosely based in the 1930s samba "Madrugada e Amor," (Late Night and Love) by José Messias. Buarque transforms a naïve idea of love ("my love was so tired/she rested in my arms/and slept") into a song with sexual overtones ("I make samba and love until very late/And I am very sleepy in the morning") that expresses the social ("The factory starts to honk/The traffic around our bed, complains") and political realities ("I don't know if I am lazy or a coward"). Composers reinforced this link to tradition continuously renovating the canon, therefore not only building bridges to a distant past, but also to their own recent past; bossa nova, for example, just a few years after its creation became rich source material for songwriters.

The hybrid song of the Brazilian middle class, mediated by radio, television and recordings, was certainly a significant factor in the creation of a nation-wide fellowship of listeners.[25] Listeners from all over the country could be reached by the ideas and feelings expressed in MPB songs. The unique complexity and hybridity of MPB allied to economic restrictions (such as being able to buy records or a television set) resulted in this fellowship being primarily from the urban well educated middle class. In addition, since most interpreters were from the urban middle class, the connection was reinforced because of immediate identity. Song became an aural representation of the imagined community of this educated middle class.[26]

Access to technology and economic growth caused MPB to be promoted primarily from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, after composers there rearranged

[25] This term is adapted from Anderson's expression "fellow-readers."
[26] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 54.

music coming from other parts of the country. Rural and folk styles went through a complex process of migration, translation and propagation that changed their original features. Conversely, middle-class communities all over the country became aware of each other, and this awareness created a sense of belonging and shared experience among groups of people who would never meet.

Within MPB, national and class identity intertwine to such an extent that it can become difficult to separate them. In its appropriation of musical styles and traditions from across the Brazilian geographical, cultural and economic spectra, MPB transcended the socio-economic definition of its own composers and interpreters. This fact helped MPB to become nationally respected, but it also helped the middle class to imagine itself as an important community within the Brazilian society that could contribute to the growth of Brazilian culture.

In these ways, a combination of the theories of Anderson, Hobsbawm and Ranger and Garcia Canclini provides an effective framework within which we can better understand the way that MPB was shaped by, and subsequently contributed to the shaping of the "imagined community" of the Brazilian urban middle class in the final decades of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 2
URBAN MUSIC BEFORE MPB

Before we can delineate the main characteristics of MPB, it is important to understand the primary urban styles and their historical context that were the source for its compositions.[27]

Modinha

The romantic song in Brazil can be traced back to the eighteenth century with the creation of the *modinha*. In 1775, Domingos Caldas Barbosa became well-known in the Portuguese court when he performed a Brazilian version of the Portuguese song (*moda*), calling it *modinha* or "little *moda*."[28] The *modinha* was often sung in *serestas* (serenades), accompanied by guitar, becoming a popular genre during the nineteenth century. This type of ballad was the preferred genre for romantic lyrics and has melodic similarities with the *cantigas d'amor* (love songs) by medieval Portuguese troubadours.[29] By the early twentieth century, this lyrical song style was becoming less popular than more rhythmic popular genres, but it became the style of choice for art song composers such as Heitor Villa-Lobos and Alberto Nepomuceno. Villa-Lobos' series of *Serestas* and *Modinhas e Canções*, in which he adapts *modinha*-style melodic contours and rhythms to Brazilian art songs, became an important influence for MPB composers such as Tom Jobim.

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[27] Foreign styles that are important influences in MPB such as cool jazz, bolero and rock & roll will not be explained in detail.

[28] José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular* (São Paulo: Círculo do Livro, 1973), 10.

[29] Jeremy Yudkin, *Music in Medieval Europe* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1989), 302.

Choro

The *choro* developed in Rio de Janeiro in the second half of the nineteenth century. Popular musicians started to improvise on the *polkas*, a Polish dance very popular at the time. Those instrumental groups were always formed by guitar, *cavaquinho* and light percussion.[30] As the groups started introducing other solo instruments (mainly flute and clarinet) they developed a type of challenge between soloists improvising and guitarists and percussion accompanying. The name of this genre refers to the practice of the first *chorões* (*choro* players) who explored languid modulations in their improvisations, giving an impression of crying or weeping (*choro*).[31] Some of the best popular composers at the turn of the century, such as Francisca Gonzaga and Ernesto Nazareth, became masters of this genre.

Samba and samba-song

Samba is a result from a mixture of diverse African-Brazilian rhythms such as the *batuque* and the *lundu*, and it developed in poor neighborhoods in Rio during the first two decades of the twentieth century. By the late 1920s, samba became the most popular style in Rio, surpassing *choro*, which suffered from being a genre that asked some level of musicianship from its interpreters and was mainly instrumental. In an early version of samba, called *partido-alto*, singers improvised verses accompanied by the guitar and light percussion. This form of samba was later developed into a more accessible song form, with written verses

[30] The *cavaquinho* is a small acoustic guitar of Portuguese origin, similar to the ukulele.
[31] Tinhorão, *Pequena História*, 103.

instead of improvised lyrics.[32] The late 1920s and early 1930s saw the rise of samba from a lower class style in Rio to represent Brazilian culture just ten years later.

Hobsbawm observes that invented traditions can be devised to establish or legitimize "institutions, status or relations of authority."[33] When President Getúlio Vargas came into power in 1930 through a revolution, he felt the necessity to assert his authority, promote national union, centrality and cultural identity. The social and cultural changes resulting from his government are relevant because they mark the rise of the Brazilian bourgeoisie. The historian Boris Fausto explains that

> Beginning in 1930, an exchange of elites took place. The traditional oligarchies fell from power. Their place was taken by military men, technocrats, young politicians, and, a little later, by industrialists. The 1930 victors early on attended to the problem of education. Their main objective was to create a wider, better-trained elite. Beginning in the 1930's, measures intended to create a system of schools and to support education took a different direction and emanated from the center toward the periphery.[34]

Vargas governed with a nationalistic agenda. His federal government increased its control over the states. He knew that in order to increase and secure national unity, Brazilians would have to relate to a national culture that would represent the people's identity. Hermano Vianna observes that "because of its social and regional heterogeneity and its lack of a unifying ideology [Vargas'] Liberal Alliance needed national organizing principles to undergird its political

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[32] Luiz Tatit, *O Século da Canção* (Cotia: Ateliê Editorial, 2004), 94.
[33] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invented Traditions*, 9.
[34] Boris Fausto, *A Concise History of Brazil* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 194.

strategies."[35] The government moved forward with a plan to promote samba from Rio as the national musical genre. One aspect of this plan was Vargas' constant use of samba as a tool for international promotion of the new Brazilian identity. A clear example of this political strategy was the use of Carmen Miranda and her group, *Bando da Lua*, as artistic members of the presidential committee during his trips in South America in 1935.[36]

At the same time, newly established recording companies were looking for a genre that could be transformed into a commodity for the growing national market. Before producers and recording engineers could choose a genre, there were technological and practical aspects to take in consideration. Genres associated with dance and festivals were discarded because of the dependence on non-musical aspects. Certain genres, like the *batuque*, were not fit for recording due to the loud volume of percussion. Instrumental genres such as *choro* were disregarded as lacking commercial possibilities.

During the mid-1930s promoters and musicians finally found the solution in the newly born samba-song. Also called *samba-de-meio-de-ano* (or middle-of-the-year samba), this style grew out of the necessity of finding a genre that could be commercialized during the part of the year without carnival. Carnival sambas (*marcha, samba-enredo, and samba-exaltação*) were fast-paced and used heavy percussion. Composers soon found that the samba rhythm could be played in a slower pace, and could be connected to the lyrical vocal lines found in the

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[35] Hermano Vianna, *The Mistery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil*, ed. and trans. John Charles Chasteen (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 40.

[36] José Ramos Tinhorão, *História Social da Música Popular Brasileira* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1998), 300.

modinhas. The result was perfect for the new recording era: a more lyrical, slow-paced version of samba, with the focus on the singer and the lyrics and with much less percussion than samba. The Brazilian musicologist Luiz Tatit defines samba-song as "an unstable and flexible form, based on the intonations and expressions of everyday speech, of which the melodic properties oscillate between two genres, the romantic song (*modinhas*) and carnival music."[37]

[37] Tatit, *O Século*,148.

CHAPTER 3
MPB AND THE BIRTH OF MIDDLE-CLASS MUSIC

Bossa nova

After Vargas left the government in 1945, the Brazilian economy became more vulnerable to the flow of foreign goods.[38] In addition, the United States started to expand their economic ties with Latin America in accordance with their Good Neighbor policy. A market more open to foreign culture resulted in the Brazilian middle class, which had access to American music as never before. The *Rádio Nacional*, for example, broadcasted more international music than Brazilian. Corporations such as Coca-Cola had their own programs. Radio was widely consumed by the emergent middle class and was an instrument of modernization of the urban society and the most important communication vehicle in the 1940s and 1950s. It increased the feeling of cosmopolitanism and connection to the industrialized world. The growing of the radio market transformed the samba-song genre into the most popular genre in Brazil, and promoted its interpreters to the position of national stars.

The 1950s were marked by the growth of the economy and the middle class. President Juscelino Kubitschek's policies to stimulate internal development and balance industrialization with open markets became the symbol of a new modern country. A good example of this policy is the automotive industry, which saw an immense growth in its production when Volkswagen inaugurated its first

[38] Joseph A. Page. *The Brazilians* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1995), 207.

plant in Brazil after being convinced of the market potential.[39] The crowning achievement of Kubitschek's golden years was the construction of the new capital of Brasília. Situated close to the geographical center of the country, and showing the modern architecture of Oscar Niemeyer, the new city was a powerful symbol for integration and development.

President Kubitschek's plan helped the country to develop technology and industry. Conversely, this economic growth in major cities accentuated poverty in the North and Northeastern regions. The result was an intense migration movement from the countryside to the cities fueled by the increased employment opportunities in the South region. This large intensification of the industrial park and the services sector in so little time created a search for workers that could not be covered only by immigration from Europe and Japan. The most obvious consequence of this migratory movement is the accelerated growth of major cities in the Southern part of the country.[40] In addition, a new young middle class raised during the prosperous 1950s was looking for its place in the society and was eager to create new art forms, such as *poesia concreta* (concrete poetry)[41] and bossa nova.

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[39] Werner Baer, "Review of Leigh Payne's *Brazilian Industrialists and Democratic Change* and Helen Shapiro's *Engines of Growth*," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 45, no. 2 (1997): 459.

[40] The city of São Paulo had 2 millions inhabitants in 1950. By 1970 it became the biggest city in Brazil, with more than 6 millions inhabitants. Raquel Rolnik, *Folha Explica: São Paulo* (São Paulo: Publifolha, 2001), 43.

[41] The *concretistas*, formed by Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari, were a group of poets from São Paulo that proposed in 1958 a kind of poetry that could represent Brazilian modernity, ignoring classic formalism. Inspired in Niemeyer projects for the new capital, this movement acknowledged "graphic space as a structural agent." See Basualdo, *Tropicália*, 208.

Bossa nova can be confidently identified as the first musical genre to develop from within the new urban middle class. This genre initially developed as a reaction of the young urban middle class from Rio to the exaggerated sentimentality of the samba-song of the time. In the 1930s, the success of samba-song was due, in part, to its ability to stay halfway between the romantic song and the carnival samba. With the ascendance of radio stars in the 1940s, an exaggerated vocal approach inspired in bel canto technique (in part because of sound technology that did not allow the singer to get too close to the microphone) took over the market. The overtly dramatic interpretation of romantic songs, the contemporary descendants of *modinha*, was less appealing to the new middle class, which was not inclined to appreciate the overuse of emotional appeal.

In this climate, João Gilberto, a singer and guitarist that had just moved to Rio from the Northeastern state of Bahia, made his debut recording in 1958. Gilberto used basic features of samba to create a modern style: using only the *tamborim*[42] beat of the samba in his guitar, he created a clear and economical sound. The beat of the *tamborim* is a mixture of down- and upbeats, which allows the listener to sense the pulse, but takes the accent off the downbeat. His first success, "Chega de Saudade," a song by Antônio Carlos (Tom) Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes, is a fine example of the above features. The lyrics express the feeling of loneliness and longing the singer experiences:

Go, sadness,
And tell her that
It's so hard without her
Save a prayer for her
To make her come back

[42] *Tamborim* is a small high-pitched percussion instrument.

For I can't bear this suffering any longer
No more blues
The truth is that without her
There is no peace, there is no beauty...

(Vai, minha tristeza
E diz a ela que
Sem ela não pode ser
Diz-lhe numa prece
Que ela regresse
Porque eu não posso mais sofrer
Chega de saudade
A realidade é que sem ela
Não há paz não há beleza...)[43]

The song plays with the idea of contrasting the sentiment of longing with anticipation for the future, which is expressed by the word "saudade"[44] and by the supposedly mixed messages that are sent by the sad lyrics and the upbeat swing. In fact, the first verse, "go, sadness," could be understood as the singer trying to get rid of this feeling.[45] As a samba, it embodies the nostalgia that it is purportedly trying to end. At the same time, its title plays with the anticipation for a modernized society which does not want to be tied to the past (even though it is inevitable) and looks to the future (in the new swing created by Gilberto and the altered chords written by Jobim). Jobim and Moraes already used in this song elements that later are going to be regarded as fundamental characteristics of MPB, such as the relationship between melody and lyrics, as can be attested in the verse "colado assim, calado assim" (glued like this, quiet like this). In the melody,

[43] In all lyric examples, my translation to English precedes the original text in Portuguese in parenthesis.
[44] The Portuguese word *saudade* has no direct English translation. Depending on the situation it can mean nostalgia, pining or longing, and it can be related to good or bad memories, or even anticipation for the future.
[45] If the same lyrics were interpreted in samba-song style, there would be no doubt about the singer's feelings, because the interpretation would probably be overtly romantic. The cool style of delivery from bossa nova singers creates the doubt: does the singer really miss her or is he already "over her"?

the second part (quiet like this) is a repeat of the same notes of the first part, only half step down, creating the effect of "quietness."[46]

Young, educated songwriters from the middle class such as Gilberto and Jobim were in tune with American styles, such as bebop and "crooning," introduced by American singers in the 1940s. A few singers related to the early years of *bossa nova* were fans of Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby and even adopted American names, such as Johnny Alf and Dick Farney. Gilberto took the crooning style a step further. Returning to a style of delivery that respects the popular articulation and intonation of everyday speech used by samba singers from the 1930s, such as Noel Rosa and Mário Reis, he took all the extra emotion from the voice. Due to innovations in recording technology, Gilberto was able to sing with the microphone very close to his mouth. He could then focus on the most important feature of the lyrical side of Brazilian song: the freedom of the melody above the rhythm, creating its own rhythms that were apparently free from the beat but end up together every time it was necessary. As Gerard Béhague describes,

> Projection of the singer's personality in a starlet singing style is altogether avoided. Strongly contrasting effects, loudness of voice, fermatas, high pitches are generally excluded from a *bossa nova* singing style. The singing should flow almost like the normal spoken language, in a subdued tone.[47]

In addition, composers began to introduce new complex harmonies and chords into urban song borrowed from jazz and French impressionism. Jobim was

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[46] Augusto de Campos, ed. *Balanço da Bossa e Outras Bossas* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1968), 39.
[47] Gerard Béhague, "Bossa and Bossas: Recent Changes in Brazilian Popular Music," *Ethnomusicology* 17, no. 2 (1973): 212.

one the songwriters responsible for initiating a harmonic revolution in Brazilian popular music. Coming from a classical background, he expanded the innovations in performance brought by Gilberto. His altered chords expanded the traditional universe of Brazilian samba's basic triads. Cadences became bolder and modulations to distant tonalities more common. Maybe the most interesting consequence was the expansion of the melodic lines that could suggest to an unprepared audience the impression of being out of tune. As Béhague notes, the success of bossa nova comes from its "deliberate avoidance of the predominance of any given musical parameter."[48] The song "Samba de uma Nota Só" (One Note Samba), by Jobim and Newton Mendonça, is a fine example of this new way of composition:

Here you have this little samba
Made of just one note
Other notes are coming in
But the base is just one
This other note is a consequence
Of what I have just said
As I am the inevitable consequence of you

(Eis aqui este sambinha
Feito de uma nota só
Outras notas vão entrar
Mas a base é uma só

Esta outra é consequência
Do que acabo de dizer
Como sou a consequência
Inevitável de você)

While the verses describe a naïve romantic story, the integration of melody and lyrics is perfect. He begins by repeating a single note that represents his loved one. The melody leaps to a fourth, but the singer warns that "this other one is a

[48] Béhague, "Bossa and Bossas," 212.

consequence" and returns to the initial note. In the second part, the melody goes up and down, in a succession of scales, meaning his romantic adventures that did not go well. He returns to the initial note, to his original love, and state that "who wants all the notes ends up with none." The simplicity of having just one note in the refrain, enhanced by Gilberto's dry interpretation, exposes the bone structure of bossa nova; the verse "the base is just one" refers to this apparently simple structure. In addition, Jobim and Mendonça managed to insert several inside jokes in the lyrics. To refer to their own song as a "sambinha" (little samba) was a joke on the nationalistic samba composer Ary Barroso, who thought of bossa nova as too foreign influenced. Once Jobim and Mendonça devaluated their own achievement calling it a little samba (even more because it was made of "just one note"), they emptied the argument with Barroso, making it clear that bossa nova was not going to threaten samba.[49] In the second stanza, while singing scales the singer observes that "there are so many people who talk a lot but don't say anything." Again, the composers are playing both with the critics who don't accept bossa nova, at the same time that they stress the fact that bossa nova is not jazz, because the former needs "just one note" to make sense.

This reinterpretation of traditional samba was only possible because there was an adaptation of Brazilian music and jazz by middle-class composers to their own tastes, which largely reflected the tastes of the educated middle class from urban centers such as Rio and São Paulo. One of the characteristics of middle-class music at this time was its cosmopolitanism, its natural melting pot of

[49] Ruy Castro, *Bossa Nova: The Story of the Brazilian Music that Seduced the World*, trans. Lysa Salsbury (Chicago: A Capella Books, 2000), 196.

musical languages. In bossa nova, samba and jazz were combined to create a new genre, but the recombination was based on subtraction, not addition: just single elements of both genres were chosen. These aspects also made bossa nova ideal for exportation: following their success, João Gilberto and Jobim moved to the United States to open new markets for bossa nova, helping the urban popular song to become the first and most important Brazilian musical commodity to be exported.[50]

Bossa nova can be considered the starting point of a pure middle-class musical culture since it creates an irreparable division between the intellectualized song (marked by literary influences, for educated taste and high aesthetics) and the romantic song (for the masses, with strong influence from samba-song).

Protest song

In the early 1960s, Brazilian urban centers saw the advance of political movements that looked for more just social relations and equality. These movements sought to democratize artistic production and found in universities a perfect environment to develop ideas of how to transform thoughts into action.

In 1964, President João Goulart's socialist plan made the military and the United States uneasy, and he was deposed by the military on 31 March of that year. General Castelo Branco, the new president, promised to reinstate democracy in two years. The coup d'etat ended almost twenty years of democracy and resulted in a radicalization of political movements. From 1964 until December 1968, before the Institutional Act number 5 (AI-5) suspended civil liberties, the

[50] Bossa nova was exported as a genre, a different case from Carmen Miranda, who became famous in the 1940s as a singer and performer through the creation of an individualized image.

dictatorship allowed most artistic expressions, and censorship was not intense.[51] There was still a feeling in the air that the coup was temporary and would not last long. In this period, therefore, artists had reason and opportunity to create an array of politically engaged plays, films and music.

Protest song in Brazil developed with a clear political message. The style of protest song, however, was less clear: composers shifted their work among disparate, and sometimes meaningfully contradictory, musical traditions. Composers were initially influenced by bossa nova, and some of the most famous *bossanovistas* began to change their lyrics of love and happiness at the Copacabana beach to reflect the turbulent times of the political and social reality. Carlos Lyra, one of the main bossa nova composers, mocked his own background with the song "Influência do Jazz" (Jazz Influence), in which he criticizes how samba lost its identity under the influence of American songs, in a clear reference to the American cultural penetration in Brazilian society. Lyra develops social commentary in many other songs, including "Pau-de-Arara" (literally "Arara[52]'s stick," but it is an expression which describes the migrant's way of transportation to work at the back of a truck) in which he describes the difficult life of a Northeastern worker in the big city.

Songwriters soon began to search for rural, folk or traditional styles that could be associated with their patriotic sentiment and agenda. Folkloric expressions became available to the urban citizen due to the massive internal migration from the Northeast to São Paulo and Rio. The hope for a better life

[51] The historian Élio Gaspari calls this period the "ashamed dictatorship." See Gaspari, *A Ditadura Envergonhada* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002).
[52] *Arara* is a bird similar to a parrot typical of the Amazon region.

brought millions of people to the south, bringing their own particular regional music into the urban cultural mix. Luiz Gonzaga, an accordionist from the Northeastern state of Pernambuco, changed the landscape of urban music in the 1940s when he introduced the *baião* (a typical syncopated rhythm) in a stylized way with the help of Humberto Teixeira.[53] More than a song style, the *baião* is also a dance rhythm. It brought vitality different from that of samba, and opened the way to other Northeastern dance rhythms closely associated with *baião*, including *xaxado*, *xote*, *maracatu* and *frevo*. At around the same time, Dorival Caymmi, a song composer from the state of Bahia, took to Rio his slow-paced lyrical song style that expressed the pains and solitude of workers at the Northeastern shore.[54] During the newly-revived interest in rural expressions in the 1960s, these composers and many others became more appreciated by the middle class.

Middle-class composers also looked back to traditional samba as another source of inspiration. In order to enhance the socially conscious message, *sambistas* (samba players) and rural musicians who never had much contact with middle-class composers were being invited to join them in concerts and recordings. A good example is the musical *Opinião* (Opinion) in Rio, 1964, which became the quintessence of the inclusive early MPB style. This musical was performed by Nara Leão, an upper middle class bossa nova singer, Zé Keti, a *sambista* from the poor neighborhoods of Rio, and João do Vale, a Northeastern

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[53] Tinhorão, *Pequena história*, 211.
[54] Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2004), 106.

folk singer.[55] This concert/play used protest song in samba, *baião* and bossa nova styles to contest the recently installed dictatorship. Interspersed with the performance of songs with a libertarian character, Leão, Keti and do Vale read excerpts from government reports that described the situation in the Northeast, and listed the percentages of the Northeastern population that migrated. "Carcará" is one such song, invoking the name of a bird native to the Northeast to symbolize the survival skills, courage and decisiveness of the migrant:

Carcará catch, kills and eat
It will not starve to death
Braver than man
It is going to hunt
It eats even burnt snake

(Carcará pega, mata e come
Ele não vai morrer de fome
Mais coragem do que homem
Vai fazer sua caçada
Come até cobra queimada)

The refrain became a catch phrase of resistance to the government ("Carcará pega, mata e come"). Another song with a catchy refrain was the samba "Opinião," which inspired the title of the show. In an epic style, the singer announces that "you can arrest me, you can beat me/ you can even starve me, I won't change my mind," in a clear provocation to the military government. The vast majority of the audience was from the middle class, as were the performers (with the exception of the two guests) and production. The goal was to inspire the audience to "wake up" and challenge the government.

[55] Carlos Calado, *Tropicália, a História de uma Revolução Musical* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1997), 64.

Televised music programs and festivals

The musical *Opinião* was not the only successful musical play. In São Paulo, the theater group *Teatro Arena* was becoming famous with thematic musical productions such as *Arena Conta Zumbi* (*Arena* Tells [all about] *Zumbi*), telling the story of the seventeenth-century slave revolt led by Zumbi dos Palmares, and *Arena Canta Bahia* (*Arena* Sings Bahia), which showed the new generation of singers and composers from Bahia. Their success brought popular music to the attention of television producers.

Since the first Brazilian TV station was inaugurated in 1950, television sets were quickly replacing radios in Brazilian middle-class households. Luiz Duarte points out that "TV in Brazil grew under the influence of an already established radio industry, absorbing its structure, programming and even its professionals."[56] The most successful radio professionals migrated to TV in search for better salaries. During the 1960s, TV stations were elevating the quality of their productions to reach the middle class.

Television producers soon successfully created and adapted shows currently being performed on stage to the television auditorium, not only multiplying the audience, but also giving a national exposure to new interpreters. One of these shows was *O Fino da Bossa* (The Best of Bossa), presented by the singers Elis Regina and Jair Rodrigues. Soon after it opened in 1965, it became the most popular music program on TV. Besides music interpreted by the presenters, every week a variety of guests performed music which combined

[56] Luiz Guilherme Duarte, "Television Segmentation: Will Brazil Follow the American Model?" (Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1992), 30.

elements of bossa nova, jazz, samba, and folk styles translated into a "modern" popular music presentation.[57] Almost all important MPB musicians at the time performed at this program.[58] *O Fino da Bossa* transmitted signs of social and cultural structure. The mostly middle-class audience was presented with a variety of Brazilian styles that reflected the cultural heterogeneity of the big city. In a time of heightened political radicalism, this TV program showed no political agenda. There was a clear goal to show a variety of styles that represented the richness of Brazilian popular music, but it did not guarantee the performance of pure Brazilian musical forms due to the influence of jazz in many arrangements.

Programs such as *O Fino da Bossa* successfully helped to invent a tradition for MPB. The acronym itself began to be used at this time (around 1965). Traditional *sambistas* such as Ataulfo Alves and Elza Soares interpreted their songs accompanied by the jazzy Zimbo Trio. Elis Regina interpreted songs from folk composers ("Carcará"), new vanguard composers ("Lunik 9" by Gilberto Gil) and bossa nova ("Tristeza em Mim" by Baden Powell).[59] The name of the program already made reference to a new tradition (bossa), even though it was not aesthetically linked only to bossa nova. The hybrid result did not sound strange to the audience, because many traditional elements were being carefully inserted and mixed. In fact, the new urban Brazilian music managed to give the impression of continuity even when it was full of novel elements (jazz, new compositions, mixed styles). Furthermore, the presence of so many musical guests in the show strengthened the aspect of MPB as a cohesive community. The

[57] Elis Regina, *Elis Regina no Fino da Bossa, Volumes 1, 2 and 3*, Velas 11-V030.
[58] Regina Echeverria, *Furacão Elis* (Rio de Janeiro: Nórdica Editora, 1985), 60.
[59] Elis Regina, *Elis Regina no Fino da Bossa, Volumes 1, 2 and 3*, Velas 11-V030.

audience watched a community of musicians of new (i.e. young middle class) and old (i.e. folk and/or traditional) generations. To have these musicians performing together validated MPB as the ultimate expression of urban song.

On *O Fino da Bossa*, continuity and tradition were strengthened by the idea of social integration of the middle class with the lower classes through music such as samba performed by black *sambistas* from poor Rio neighborhoods. The black Jair Rodrigues and the white Elis Regina strengthened the visual message of racial integration. It was a different message than that of the musical *Opinião*, in which the message was to open the public's eyes to Brazilian diversity and inequalities.

In spite of fervent nationalism of part of the middle class reflected in the search for cultural identity, television also introduced audiences to foreign styles such as rock and roll. Soon enough, part of the middle class was receptive to a Brazilian version of the naïve early 1960s rock and roll. The *Jovem Guarda* (Young Guard), a name that alluded to the expression by which older samba players were known (*Velha Guarda* or Old Guard) was the first TV program with that audience in mind. Naïve lyrics, simple harmonies, electric guitars, and attractive performers guaranteed success with young audiences that instigated fierce opposition from left-wing nationalist students, who interpreted that music as cultural imperialism.

TV stations began promoting music festivals around the same time as music programs. In April 1965, *TV Excelsior* from São Paulo inaugurated the festival era. These competitive music festivals were transmitted live, with live

audience, and competitors were judged by a panel of critics and musicians. Because festivals provided one of the few open forums for political protest when civil activism was increasingly suppressed by the government,[60] audiences became fiercely involved in the performances, booing and applauding as if they were in a soccer stadium. For the nationalistic and radical left part of the audience, it became extremely important that only songwriters performing "true Brazilian music" should win.

A good example of a song supported by the nationalistic side of the audience was "Arrastão," composed by Edu Lobo. This song won first prize in the first TV festival in 1965. Even though Lobo himself was a young middle-class composer from Rio, he managed to compose a song with regional flavor, talking about a typical fishing technique of Northeastern fishermen, but with bossa nova influence, inspired by the lyrics of Vinicius de Moraes, one of the most respected bossa nova poets. The interpreter was Elis Regina (the final was just two days before her first recording of *O Fino da Bossa*[61]). The audience loved this combination of urban and rural aspects. Edu Lobo also won in 1967, with "Ponteio,"[62] a song clearly influenced by rhythms from the Brazilian Northeast, and interpreted by another middle-class female singer, Marília Medalha. Chico Buarque's "A Banda," a *marcha*[63] that described the feelings and situations that shook a little town during the parade of a band is another example of deeply

[60] Basualdo, *Tropicália*, 64.
[61] Echeverria, *Furacão Elis*, 57.
[62] The name "Ponteio" comes from the typical way of playing the acoustic guitar called *ponteado*.
[63] *Marcha* is a type of carnival samba. Buarque slows the pace and uses light percussion, but keeps the characteristic rhythm, turning his *marcha* into a song more appropriate for listening than dancing.

rooted national sentiment. This song won the *II Festival da TV Record* in 1966 and catapulted the young Buarque to success. During the following two years he still managed to go to the finals of every festival he participated in, winning two more times.

Festivals were an important medium to promote new music from young songwriters. They also witnessed many polemic performances, sometimes with the audience reacting harshly. Some of the most important performances were created by Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso, two singer-songwriters from Salvador, Bahia. Veloso moved to São Paulo to accompany his sister Maria Bethânia, who replaced Nara Leão in the show *Opinião*. He ascended to stardom after one of his songs, "Alegria, Alegria" (Joy, Joy) won fourth place at the III Festival de Música Popular Brasileira in 1967. Veloso was accompanied by an Argentinean rock group called *Beat Boys*. The English name, the electric sound, and the psychedelic clothes were an astonishing example of cultural imperialism for many in the audience, who reacted vigorously by booing during the whole performance. Gil also provoked the audience, interpreting his song "Domingo no Parque" (Sunday at the Park) with the *paulista* (i.e. from São Paulo) rock group *Os Mutantes*. In "Domingo no Parque," Gil cleverly uses a cinematic language, using short phrases to describe action as if he were editing a movie. He told a story of jealousy and revenge that ends in tragedy, mixing the sound of the *berimbau*, an instrument of African origin used in *capoeira*[64] dance, with the

[64] *Capoeira* is a fight technique created by Brazilian slaves who disguised it as dance so white owners would not interfere.

electric guitar. His talent in mixing traditional rhythms with modern instruments and cinematic language earned him a second place at the festival.

The aesthetic paths presented during the golden years of TV festivals (1965-1968)[65] were diverse. Nevertheless, the competition results mostly show how tendencies could quickly change. In general, festivals saw the rise and the fall of politically engaged songs and of a controversial movement called *Tropicália*. Songwriters who were able to adapt their political discourse to a more socially concerned aesthetic (which would be more prevalent after 1968) survived. Geraldo Vandré, one of the most highly regarded protest song composers, hardly recorded anything after he won second place at the *III Festival Internacional da Canção* with "Pra Não Dizer que Não Falei das Flores" (Only so you can't say I didn't talk about flowers) in 1968, an anthem against the military, which made the government uneasy about artistic freedom. In the meantime, composers associated with urban vanguards were gaining prestige. In 1968, the *tropicalista* Tom Zé won first place at the *IV Festival da TV Record. Tropicalistas* also snatched third and fourth places. Edu Lobo and Chico Buarque, also in the winner circle in 1967 and 1968, already signaled to songs which reflected social issues rather than straightforward protest.

Tropicália

The initial distaste from part of the audience for rock and avant-garde influences was not enough to stop Gil and Veloso from going further with their proposition of mixture of styles. They were admirers of global pop culture, from

[65] There were festivals until 1972, but after 1968 because of the AI-5, the avant-garde and polemical characteristics of the festivals disappeared under the censorship and the absence of MPB main composers.

The Beatles and Rolling Stones to João Gilberto. They were friends with many poets of the new generation, such as Wally Salomão and Torquato Neto, and the polemic poets from São Paulo Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari. They were in contact with film directors, like Glauber Rocha, who were changing the way movies were made in Brazil.[66]

They were also in contact with many artists such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark who were igniting entirely new approaches to art, including mixing modernity with Brazilian folklore. As the theater director José Celso Martinez Corrêa pointed out in an interview in 1977: "What existed were ruptures on numerous fronts." Artists from every field, including theater, music, painting and movies, were concerned about the insertion of Brazilian art in the modern world. They were trying to break up with the past and at the same time trying to find new ways to use Brazilian traditional expressions in their art. These ruptures were happening without necessarily being interconnected or overlapping,[67] but each reflected the turbulent times of a middle class in search of a culture of its own that could somehow harmonize the "Brazilian" (local) with the "foreign" (cosmopolitan). All these ruptures were later loosely called part of the *Tropicália* movement, which lasted roughly two years, from 1967 to 1968. The name came from a song by Veloso that expressed all the hybridity and kaleidoscopic pop-culture that was being absorbed by the middle class. The first stanza is translated below:

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[66] Veloso acknowledges Rocha's movie *Terra em Transe* (Hypnotized Earth) as one main inspiration for his songs at the time. Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth*, trans. Isabel de Sena (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 67.

[67] Basualdo, *Tropicália*, 32.

Over my head the airplanes
Under my feet the trucks
Aim at the flat country, my nose
I organize the movement
I direct the carnival
I inaugurate the monument at the central plateau of the country
Hail the bossa sa sa
Hail the *palhoça ça ça ça ça* (straw hut)

(Sobre a cabeça os aviões
Sob os meus pés os caminhões
Aponta contra os chapadões, meu nariz
Eu organizo o movimento
Eu oriento o carnaval
Eu inauguro o monumento no planalto central do país
Viva a bossa sa sa
Viva a palhoça ça ça ça ça)

The seemingly nonsense phrases, which are present in the whole song, make several references to a wide spectrum of features of modern life (airplane, pool, speakers), traditional places (Amaralina, a neighborhood in Salvador; Ipanema, a neighborhood in Rio; the *sertão*, the arid area in the Northeastern Brazil from which most of the migration to the south comes), and traditional music (samba, carnival). Implicit is an homage and a critic to the fast modernization of Brazil, a dual sentiment present in abundance in the middle class. The airplanes "over my head" are opposed to the trucks "under my feet," and the narrator is placed in the middle. He sees the airplanes, a symbol of development, but also of the upper classes, and the trucks, a symbol of the transportation of goods, but also of workers that went to the "central plateau" of the country to build the new capital Brasília. He hails the bossa (nova), a symbol of modernity, but also the straw hut, a symbol of rural tradition (and poverty). In

the second stanza, he describes a monument which can only be a reference to the new capital, Brasília:[68]

The monument is made of crepe paper and silver
The green eyes of the *mulata*
The hairdo hides behind the green bushes
The *sertão* moonlight
The monument has no door
The entrance is an old and twisted street
And on its knee a smiling ugly dead child raises his hand
Hail the *mata ta ta* (jungle)
Hail the *mulata ta ta ta ta*

(O monumento é feito de papel crepom e prata
Os olhos verdes da mulata
A cabeleira esconde atrás da verde mata
O luar do sertão
O monumento não tem porta
A entrada é uma rua antiga estreita e torta
E no joelho uma criança feia e morta estende a mão
Viva a mata ta ta
Viva a mulata ta ta ta ta)

The new capital is a symbol of modernity, but is made of crepe paper and silver, or people sweat and national riches. A smiling ugly dead child rests on its knee, asking for money. Veloso uses the description of the child to criticize first the passivity of the Brazilian people (smiling), then the middle-class prejudice (the child is poor, therefore ugly) and finally the high rates of child mortality at the time. The last stanza goes as follows:

Sunday *O Fino da Bossa* is on
Monday is the pits
Tuesday he goes to the farm, however
The monument is quite modern
You said nothing about the model of my suit

[68] Brasília was a planned city built from scratch in the middle of the country. The planned political center had the shape of an airplane, another reference Veloso makes in the song. The buildings, including the presidential palace, congress and ministries, were projected by Oscar Niemeyer, an architect that in Brazil was the inspiration for many modernity inspired artistic expressions, including bossa nova.

To hell with everything else my love
Hail *A Banda* da da
Hail Carmen Miranda da da da da

(Domingo é o fino da bossa
Segunda-feira está na fossa
Terça-feira vai a roça porém
O monumento é bem moderno
Não disse nada do modelo do meu terno
Que tudo mais vá pro inferno meu bem
Viva a banda da da
Carmen Miranda da da da da)

Veloso works with oppositions to represent the dialectic of tradition and modernity that the urban society experience. He opposes "samba" ("his heart swings to the samba"), representing tradition, to "dissonant chords" ("transmit dissonant chords on the five thousand speakers"), representing modernity. "Iracema," a name invented by the writer José de Alencar to a Native-Indian character, but which is in fact an anagram of America[69] is opposed to Ipanema, a real Indian name of a very middle-class neighborhood. Astutely, he manages to position himself equidistant from *O Fino da Bossa* and *Jovem Guarda* (mentioned here through the verse "To hell with everything else," a famous line from a Roberto Carlos song). Finally, he opposes Buarque's famous song "A Banda," which represented at the time the accepted, mainstream song, with Carmen Miranda, at the time considered part of a shameful past of misrepresentation of Brazilian culture. Veloso was proud of all expressions of Brazilian culture, and he tries to recuperate Miranda rereading her role from forgotten diva to inspirational icon. The repetition of the last syllable in every refrain makes more sense with the

[69] America for Brazilians means the whole of both continents, North and South. When referring to "America" as a nation, Brazilians use "United States."

repetition of the last syllable of her last name, Miranda: dada, a reference to Dadaism, and how she could be reinterpreted.

The *tropicalistas* criticized the "folklorization" of the urban culture, which would idealize places where "real Brazilian culture" could be found, such as the *morro*, hills in Rio and the original home of samba, and the *sertão*. According to them, one should not try to ignore the cosmopolitan aspects of Brazilian culture. Just the opposite: they tried to absorb in their art all aspects of urban culture, including its campy or kitsch aspects (such as the extremely popular but outrageously cheesy TV presenter Chacrinha), which was part of the daily life, but ignored in principle by the middle class who did not identify with popular culture.[70] In addition, Veloso and Gil questioned the formality of concert attire introducing colorful and futuristic visual in their shows.

In a recent interview in *The London Times*, Gil declared: "I knew that the Beatles were the new thing. That inspired me to try to bring rock and roll elements into Brazilian music, as well as the experiments of Stockhausen and the avant-garde, and use open speech to talk about society, politics and the source of life itself."[71] The introduction of apparently opposite elements in their songs was intended to show the public that they were living between modernity and tradition.

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[70] Nevertheless, part of the middle class never missed a Chacrinha program. Nowadays in North America this behavior would be called "guilty pleasure."

[71] Interview with Gilberto Gil, "A Totally Tropicália Revolution." *The London Times*, 12 February 2006.

Veloso justified his sound as the logical next step for MPB because it respected an "evolutionary line." In an interview with the *Revista de Civilização Brasileira* in 1966 he explains that

> If we have a tradition and we want to do something new with it, not only do we have to feel it, but know it. This knowledge will give us the possibility to create something new and coherent with it. Only the evolutionary line can give us organization to select and judge the creation... João Gilberto represents for me the moment that it happened: the information of musical modernity used in recreation, renovation, and the 'let's take a step forward' on popular music.[72]

Veloso's idea of evolution in Brazilian popular music is closely related to the concept of hybrid culture. Hybridity was also in Gil's mind when he established a new concept: the universal sound, music with no borders, which absorbs many different influences. Within the universal sound, foreign music was combined with various national traditions and transcended the limitations of culture, class and even language. At the root of this, of course, Veloso and Gil's ideas were inspired by bossa nova; the adoption of an "evolutionary" philosophy justified the development of their rock- and pop-influenced sound: it was natural for 1960s MPB to dialogue with rock the same way bossa nova had dialogued with jazz.[73] Moreover, for them evolution meant constant change: *Tropicália* did not want to become the final answer, but just the means to understand that MPB needed to keep changing and adapting if it wanted to stay relevant.

The *tropicalistas* revisited the concept of "anthropophagy" in the arts, an idea that the modernist writer Oswald de Andrade had created in the 1920s as the

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[72] Caetano Veloso, cited in Celso Favaretto, *Tropicália Alegoria Alegria* (Cotia: Ateliê Editorial, 2000), 39.
[73] Basualdo, *Tropicália*, 63.

logical path for Brazilian art. Andrade's play *O Rei da Vela*, which had been a success in São Paulo directed by Martinez Corrêa, instigated curiosity about his work. In 1928, Andrade became distraught by the attitude of modernists in Brazil toward the search for things Brazilian and published his *Anthropophagous Manifesto*, in which he develops the idea that the only thing that is essentially Brazilian is "anthropophagy." He recalls to an episode in which the Portuguese Bishop Sardinha was eaten by Native-Brazilians in 1554 to celebrate the "absorption of the sacred enemy to be transformed into totem."[74] In his time, Andrade was not taken seriously, but the *tropicalistas* saw in his theory of absorbing foreign culture and transforming it into theirs as a perfect theoretical basis for their work. For Veloso, instead of fighting the advance of foreign influences, Brazilian composers should welcome and "eat" them, transforming them into Brazilian music. Haroldo de Campos stresses the importance of "critical assimilation of foreign experience and its re-elaboration in national terms and circumstances."[75] Logically, only the part of the population who had access to foreign culture through radio, TV, theater, exhibitions, long plays and concerts could participate in the deglutition.

The artist Hélio Oiticica used to say that "purity is a myth."[76] Stuck between the elite and the popular, middle-class culture is characterized by the selection and filtration of elements from the high and low classes. *Tropicália* was a cultural movement that presented a viable alternative for MPB, which struggled

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[74] Basualdo, *Tropicália*, 207.
[75] Charles Perrone, *Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Song* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 54.
[76] Hélio Oiticica, cited in Cited in Basualdo, *Tropicália*, 206.

to be at once original (i.e., national) and modern (i.e., cosmopolitan). In that sense, *Tropicália* was instrumental to the consolidation of MPB as a hybrid culture: in just a couple of years all the novelties presented by *Tropicália* were accepted and promoted by mainstream MPB interpreters and composers.

After the AI-5

The military government felt threatened by the increase in artistic manifestations and popular social movements during 1967 and 1968 and many sectors of the society called for an intervention on "unpatriotic" events. One such event was a series of concerts by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil at a famous club in Rio in November 1968. A right-wing radio pundit asked the police to cancel the concerts because he knew that the flag was being torn apart by Veloso and Gil during the concert. Of course, it was pure invention. On December, the government promulgated the Institutional Act number 5 (*Ato Institucional* n.5 or AI-5), severely cutting civil liberties; many composers had to leave the country or were imprisoned. Habeas corpus rights were indefinitely suspended and the government began to hunt "terrorists." Congress was closed and many politicians lost their mandate. From this point until 1974, censorship was intense and there was minimal oversight from the legislative or judiciary powers. Enemies of the regime – artists, writers, students, politicians – went into exile on government warnings, went to prison, or "disappeared."

Government censors impeded the recording and performance of a large number of musical compositions, often forcing composers to change lyrics or record songs entirely without them. In doing so, they unwittingly became

responsible for a boom of creativity among songwriters. Clearly, the worst period of political repression in recent Brazilian history would be reflected in the work of socially-conscious composers – but to slip past the censors, they had to cast their messages within the artifice of metaphors or veiled language. Thus the 1970s, the period during which government censorship was at its height, were also the most prolific period for composers of MPB. Under the threats of the censors many songwriters who had begun their careers in the era of the festivals, such as Chico Buarque, Gilberto Gil and Mílton Nascimento, found inspiration and motivation to develop their most mature work to date.

CHAPTER 4
HYBRIDITY, TRADITION AND COMMUNITY

Lyrics and poetry

The educated middle class in Brazil is what Anderson calls a "reading class"[77] and what Garcia Canclini refers to as "cultured class."[78] In fact, the rise of the middle class in Brazil has accompanied the rise of literacy in the population. Even though one does not need to know how to read to listen to a song, MPB lyrics often have more than one layer of meaning, and the constant use of references and vocabulary specific to cultured classes creates a cultural border that narrows the accessibility of the music. Poetic language, meta-literary references,[79] philosophical ideas and melodic/lyrical acrobatics present in so many lyrics oblige the listener to be attentive, and informed, if a deep understanding is to be gained.

In the 1950s, Vinicius de Moraes was not only a prestigious poet but also a diplomat. His partnership with Tom Jobim, Baden Powell, Chico Buarque and Toquinho, among others, gave the infant MPB an air of sophistication and elevated the expectations for song lyrics. Such elision of artistic genres has only increased since the 1960s, as the frontier between written and sung poetry has grown increasingly ambiguous.[80] A majority of prominent poets of the 1960s and 1970s had their poetry incorporated in MPB.[81] MPB produces an interaction of the two languages (music and poetry) to the point that they are interchangeable;

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[77] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 75.
[78] Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 46.
[79] Perrone, *Masters*, 213.
[80] Wisnik, *Sem Receita*, 216.
[81] This group including Ronaldo Bastos, Aldir Blanc, Wally Salomão, Torquato Neto and Fernando Brant, among others.

one can thus understand MPB as a poetic, as well as musical, product of culture.[82] Furthermore, many MPB composers are themselves very capable lyricists. Chico Buarque and Caetano Veloso are often regarded as among the most important Brazilian poets of this generation. It might be argued that, on the one hand, the literary complexity of MPB tends to narrow its audience; on the other hand these songs also bring literary poetry to a broader public than it would reach on the page alone. Within the genre of MPB, the popular songwriter could thus serve as the vertical link between writers and public.

MPB lyrics tend not to be linear or situational. Often, the lyrics seek to single out just a moment or a feeling. This is the case of "Coração Vagabundo," (Vagabond Heart) by Caetano Veloso. The lines

Not just the memory
Of the fleeting image of a woman who smiled
And passed through my dreams without bidding farewell
Making of my eyes it seems another endless weeping

(Não é só a lembrança
De um vulto feliz de mulher
Que passou por meu sonho sem dizer adeus
E fez dos olhos meus mais um chorar sem fim)

are representative of the willingness to transform an ordinary moment – a woman passing, and smiling – into sustained poetic bliss.

Veloso's main contribution to MPB lyrics may be his courageous experimentalism, which sometimes results in "melodic and lyrical acrobatics."[83] In a seminal album released in 1975, *Jóia* (Jewel), he carefully balances extreme

[82] Wisnik, *Sem Receita*, 218.
[83] Perrone, *Masters*, 67.

experimentalism with lyricism and tradition.[84] He alternates avant-garde songs that explore the possibilities of minimalist communication and alliteration ("Asa, Asa," "Guá" and "Pipoca Moderna") with The Beatles ("Help," in an acoustic bossa nova style), Northeastern folklore ("Na Asa do Vento") and samba ("Escapulário," with lyrics by Oswald de Andrade). In the song "Pipoca Moderna" (Modern Popcorn) accompaniment from the *Banda de Pífanos de Caruaru,* a band of typical flutes from the Northeast, gives the arrangement a strange regional tone. The use of alliteration in the lyrics stresses the letter "p" – "Porém parece que há golpes de pê de pé de pão" (But it seems that are strikes of "p," of foot, of bread) – which can be related to hard attack of the percussion. The letter "n" does this work, as well, in the line "E era nada de nem noite de negro não" (And it was nothing, not even black night), which can be related to the soft attack of the flutes and strings. In the lyrics overall, only the consonants present in the title are relevant. The title itself stresses the dialectic of modern (moderna) and traditional (pipoca), a feeling that is increased by the presence of traditional instruments and modern poetry.

Veloso expresses his minimalism in the creative superimposition of words and meaning to explore the possibilities of the language. In "Cá Já," he rearranges the syllables "ca" and "ja" to exalt his love for typical Northeastern food and culture ("cajá" and "jaca" are fruits of the region) and to implore his loved one to come back ("esteja cá já:" be here now).[85]

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[84] Veloso took even greater risks three years earlier in his mainly experimental 1972 album *Araçá Azul*, or Blue *Araçá*, named after a typical bird of the Northeastern region of Brazil.

[85] This style of word composition and recombination is typical of *Poesia Concreta*. For example, in the Augusto de Campos' poem "Amortemor," two words, "amor" (love) and "temor" (fear) are

Some of his most sublime moments as a poet happen when he reflects on the language itself. With "Língua" (tongue or language, depending on the context), he was the first Brazilian composer to introduce rap into the MPB universe.

I like to feel my tongue brush
Against the tongue of Luís de Camões
I like to be and being
And I want to dedicate myself
In creating confusions of prosody
And a profusion of parodies
That curtails pains
And steal colors like chameleons
I like the person in Pessoa
The rose in Rosa
And I know that poetry is to prose
As love is to friendship
And who can deny that it is superior?
Let the Portuguese lie and languish
My country is my language!
Tell it Mangueira!
Flor do Lácio Sambódromo
Lusamérica Latim in powder
What does this language want? What can this language do?

Let's pay attention to the syntax of the *paulistas*
And the fake relaxed English of the surfers
Let's be imperialistic
Let's go in the speed of the "choo-choo" diction of Carmen Miranda
And that Chico Buarque de Holanda rescue us
And – check-mate – explain Luanda
Let's listen with attention the "theirs" of *TV Globo*

If you have and incredible idea, it's better to make a song
It is proven that it is only possible to philosophize in German

(Gosto de sentir a minha língua
Roçar na língua de Luís de Camões
Gosto de ser e de estar
E quero me dedicar
A criar confusões de prosódia

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combined to show the presence of a third word, "morte" (death) that relates to both. Augusto de Campos, *Poemas: Antologia Bilingüe* (Buenos Aires: University of Buenos Aires Press, 1994), 64.

E uma profusão de paródias
Que encurtem dores
E furtem cores como camaleões
Gosto do Pessoa na pessoa
Da rosa no Rosa
E sei que a poesia está para a prosa
Assim como o amor está para a amizade
E quem há de negar que esta lhe é superior?
E deixa os portugais morrerem a míngua
Minha pátria é minha língua
Fala Mangueira!
Flor do Lácio Sambódromo
Lusamérica latim em pó
O que pode o que quer esta língua?

Vamos atentar para a sintaxe dos paulistas
E o falso inglês relax dos surfistas
Sejamos imperialistas
Vamos no velô da dicção tchu-tchu de Carmem Miranda
E que o Chico Buarque de Holanda nos resgate
E – cheque-mate – explique-nos Luanda
Ouçamos com atenção os deles e os delas da TV Globo

Se você tem uma idéia incrível, é melhor fazer uma canção
Está provado que só é possível filosofar em alemão)

In this rap-samba, he explains his role as a poet ("I want to dedicate myself to creating confusions of prosody and a profusion of parodies") and lyricist, justifying his tendency to develop philosophical ideas ("If you have an incredible idea it's better to make a song; it is proven that it is only possible to philosophize in German"). He pays homage to some of the most important writers of the Portuguese language in history (Luís de Camões, Fernando Pessoa, Guimarães Rosa), not only asserting the traditions of literature as the basis for Brazilian culture, but also connecting literature and song lyrics as valid expressions of language. Furthermore, he inserts many indications of how the language in Brazil is being continuously transformed in the modern world,

regionally (the Italianized syntax of the people from São Paulo, the tendency of Brazilian surfers to transform English words into "Portuguese") and nationally (the power of the biggest TV station in Brazil to change the way people speak).[86] In the refrain, sung by the *sambista* Elza Soares, Veloso creates the expression "Flor do Lácio Sambódromo." This phrase links the expression used by early twentieth-century poet Olavo Bilac to describe the Portuguese language (the last flower of Lácio), with the new word that described the recently inaugurated "sambadrome" in Rio. Thus Veloso connects the upper-class culture of Bilac to the popular culture of samba in a "complex dialogue of mutual reinforcements and contradictions."[87]

The poetic use of lyrics during the 1960s and 1970s was undoubtedly linked to the social and political situation in the country. Many lyricists sought ways to express their criticism of the dictatorship and of social inequalities without attracting the attention of the censors. Among the lyricists who most successfully performed this balancing act was Chico Buarque.

Called Francisco Buarque de Holanda at birth, Chico Buarque came from an intellectual upper middle-class family of São Paulo. His father was a famous Brazilian historian and had published books about the racial formation of Brazil that were used in many universities; his uncle was a professor of linguistics whose name became synonymous with "dictionary" in Brazil after he edited the most

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[86] In the lyrics, Veloso specifically refers to the use of the pronouns "deles" and "delas" (their), which is grammatically incorrect, but was popularized by soap operas writers and now is common among Brazilians.

[87] Luiz Werneck Vianna, "Os 'Simples' e as Classes Cultas na MPB," in *Decantando a República: Vol. 1: Outras Conversas sobre os Jeitos da Canção*, ed. Berenice Cavalcante, Heloísa Starling and José Eisenberg (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 2004), 86.

popular Portuguese dictionary to date. His parents were personal friends of Tom Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes, so Buarque grew up listening to bossa nova and sambas performed at home.[88]

After the AI-5 was imposed, he was advised by the authorities to leave the country and he moved to Italy for two years. After he came back he released the album *Construção*, in which he shows a collection of well-crafted sambas and bossa novas in which the focus is in the complexity and social commentary of the lyrics. A fine example can be found in the song *Deus Lhe Pague* (God Bless You) which opens the album:

For this bread to eat, this floor to sleep on
A certificate to be born, a concession to smile
For letting me breathe, for letting me exist
God bless you

For the pleasure of crying, the "we're here to serve you"
For jokes at the bar, soccer to root for
Crimes to discuss, sambas to distract
God bless you

(Por este pão pra comer, por este chão pra dormir
A certidão pra nascer, a concessão pra sorrir
Por me deixar respirar, por me deixar existir
Deus lhe pague

Pelo prazer de chorar e pelo "estamos aí"
Pela piada no bar e o futebol pra aplaudir
Um crime pra comentar e um samba pra distrair
Deus lhe pague)

The structure of the melody is dictated by the verses, and the result is a repetitive tune that accompanies the stresses and accents of the language. The presence of piano, flute and *berimbau* in the beginning lend a tragic character, and the repetition of elements gives the impression that we are dealing with the life of

[88] Fernando de Barros e Silva, *Chico Buarque* (São Paulo: Publifolha, 2004), 20.

blue collar worker. The somber tone contrasts with the ironic refrain (God Bless You), in which the listener concludes that the narrator is not really thanking anybody, but defying his situation of hopelessness in a repetitive life that sees no light at the end of the tunnel. The listener could conclude that his sarcasm is directed to the government, which could be related to an overall feeling of oppression enhanced by the instrumentation that becomes heavier until the end of the song with the addition of brass, percussion, choir and more woodwinds. In verses such as "For the free *cachaça*[89] that we have to swallow/For the curse of smoke that we have to cough/For the dripping scaffolding that we have to fall/God bless you," Buarque translates a bleak view that the socially conscious middle class has of the blue collar life. The only way out for redemption from this life is death ("For the final peace that redeems us at last.").

Buarque manipulated the language to confound the censors. In "Apesar de Você" (In Spite of You), the listener may think at first that the singer is talking about a person: "In spite of you tomorrow will be another day/I ask where you are going to hide of the huge euphoria?" In fact he is talking to the AI-5, anthropomorphized into a person who "invented sadness." He had used similar subterfuge before to describe the state of MPB in "Essa Moça Tá Diferente" (This Girl is Different), in which he refers to MPB as a girl who has "decided to modernize herself" and is leaving him behind. In 1973's "Cálice" (Chalice) he uses a vocal group to sing the word "cálice" to represent the censorship which is trying to silence artists, since "cálice" sounds like "cale-se," which translates roughly to "shut up." In 1976's "Corrente" (Chain), if the verses are sung in their

[89] *Cachaça* is an alcoholic drink made from sugar cane.

correct order, they reflect a positive view of the situation, but if they are read backwards they give opposite impression. In fact, Buarque found an ingenious way to disseminate this information. In the recording, he sang the verses the way they are written until the last repeat, when he recorded the verses in the opposite direction, revealing its hidden meaning. The censors only had the written text, not the recording, so they never realized their mistake.

Community and social practices

The musicologist José Wisnik observed that MPB composers are "urban poets that dialogue with the public."[90] Their communication with the public can be based on banal conversations and moments of daily life that can be turned into exquisite songs. This sort of event comes from the composers' own experience and relates directly to the life of the audience. Common events such as inviting friends to a *feijoada*[91] or writing a letter can be a springboard for social commentary. In Buarque's "Feijoada Completa," the singer is talking to his wife, letting her know that his friends are coming for dinner. In the first stanza, he tells his wife:

Woman you are going to like it
I am bringing a few friends to chat
They are coming with a hunger that I can't tell
They are coming with a thirst of the day before yesterday
Let's have extremely cold beer for a battalion!
And let's put more food on the table

(Mulher você vai gostar
Tô levando uns amigos pra conversar
Eles vão com uma fome que nem me contem
Eles vão com uma sede de anteontem

[90] Wisnik, *Sem Receita*, 219.
[91] *Feijoada* is a traditional Brazilian dish. In this context means an event such as a barbecue. The dish itself is a combination of pork, black beans, rice, sausage, pepper, and oranges.

Salta cerveja estupidamente gelada prum batalhão
E vamos botar água no feijão)

The samba is upbeat, and the subsequent lyrics describe the many ingredients that are part of a *feijoada* that should be prepared and how they should taste. This song was released in 1978, just one year before the amnesty to political exiled citizens. The political tone in this case is mixed with the social aspect (after all many of the exiled people are his friends) and connected to a feeling of celebration.

Another Buarque song, the *choro* "Meu Caro Amigo" (My Dear Friend) relates to the same theme of exile. He wrote the text for this song in a form of a letter to a friend who is living abroad, describing how things are in Brazil ("Here in this land we are playing soccer/We have samba, choro and rock'n'roll"). He chose the traditional style of *choro* to emphasize the longing for home that the exiled artists must be feeling. Similarly, Paulinho da Viola's successful ballad "Sinal Fechado" (Red Lights) describes a chance encounter between two friends waiting for the red lights to turn green. The characters are obviously businessmen ("Pardon my rush, it is the soul of our business") and the landscape is the big city. The conversation is truncated and it is clear that they are not comfortable and are just waiting for the traffic to clear: "Please call, I need to drink something soon/This week/The lights/I'll call/It's going to clear/Please don't forget/I promise..." The somber tone, slow pace and the arpeggios in the acoustic guitar, the only accompanying instrument, give the listener a feeling of oppression that can be connected to a certain hopelessness of the situation of the artist under the dictatorship, and the awkwardness and difficulty of the interminable wait for

things to clear up and begin moving forward again. The interpretation of the title "Red Lights" as the feeling artists shared at the time was made clear when Chico Buarque recorded this song in 1974, the year that the censorship barred any song he wrote under his name.[92]

Buarque's instrument par excellence is the acoustic guitar. He composes all his songs on that instrument and later works with arrangers who will in turn transform his tune into the final product. He is not alone in this kind of process. Many other composers, such as Rita Lee, Gilberto Gil, João Bosco and Caetano Veloso write their music initially with the help of the guitar. In spite of the variety of arrangements and instrumentation found in recordings, the acoustic guitar is the basic accompaniment instrument for MPB songs, an aesthetic probably inherited from the nineteenth-century *modinha*. Even if a song was not recorded or arranged with this instrument in mind, it probably can be easily adapted to the guitar.

Voice and guitar necessarily create an intimacy of performance. The song is inserted in social life as an "evening conversation"[93] and amateur performances are common at parties and bars. At the same time, bossa nova created the paradox of the amateur performer of complex melodic-lyric relationships. This paradox creates a fine line between presentational and participatory music,[94] because the

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[92] Buarque was so frustrated with the situation that he began to sign his songs with the *nom de plum* Julinho da Adelaide. Under this name, he had many songs released until the farce was discovered in late 1974. Fernando de Barros e Silva, *Chico Buarque* (São Paulo: Publifolha, 2004), 75.

[93] Wisnik, *Sem Receita*, 221.

[94] The distinction between participatory and presentational music in live performances was developed by Thomas Turino. He defines participatory music as having "the fundamental goal of inviting the fullest participation possible, and the success of the occasion is judged primarily by the amount of participation realized." In presentational music, by contrast, artist and audience

participation of the group singing along could be at any moment waived to a single singer whose performance is more creative, and the "singers" could change to "public." Such insertion of MPB music into the quasi-private spaces of middle-class households, meetings and get-togethers was instrumental in MPB being recognized as a cultural property even by those who did not buy the records.

The bossa nova style of performance in mostly middle-class social groups situates itself midway between participatory practices such as the *batucadas* and presentational practices such as the *saraus*. On one hand, the *batucadas* are a practice in which everyone is invited to participate playing percussion, dancing or singing and it is generally related to lower classes and the periphery of larger cities.[95] The *saraus*, on the other hand, are private events of presentational music, mostly classical, which are common among the upper classes. Martha de Ulhôa Carvalho emphasizes the presentational aspect of bossa nova, observing that it is "music for listening and as such it is closer to art music, which emphasizes 'aesthetic pleasure,' than to dance music, which emphasizes sensual pleasure."[96]

MPB composers liked to stress the connection between the social world and private life. The social realities portrayed by composers are often translated at a personal level, allowing the audience to identify intimately with them. One of these social realities is the culture of consumerism that permeates the life of the urban middle class, and many MPB songs reflect a society and culture defined by

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distinctions are emphasized. See Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 48-9.

[95] In Brazilian large cities such as São Paulo, Rio and Curitiba, in general the middle class lives closer to downtown and the lower classes live uptown.

[96] Martha de Ulhôa Carvalho, "Tupi or Not Tupi MPB: Popular Music and Identity in Brazil," in *The Brazilian Puzzle: Culture on the Borderlands of the Western World*, ed. David J. Hess and Roberto da Matta (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 165.

commodities, where elements of mass consumerism are used in private ways.[97] MPB composers use popular international styles such as rock to demonstrate how elements of consumerism are part of middle-class lifestyle.

Rita Lee provides an effective example of how MPB composers – themselves, self-conscious members of the consumerist middle class – combined Brazilian music with foreign elements that helped to call attention to this educated class's preoccupations with status symbols and style. A former member of the rock group *Os Mutantes*, she became a popular singer-songwriter in the 1970s, and one of the most important composers to validate rock as an MPB influence. Lee, the daughter of an American and an Italian immigrant, grew up as a typical *paulista* middle-class girl. Since an early age, she used to listen to both Brazilian and American music[98] and her experience with the *tropicalistas* showed her she could mix Brazilian music with rock. In songs such as "Agora É Moda" (Now It Is Fashion), she manages to create collages of middle-class pop culture and social criticism in an upbeat pop-rock:

Now it is fashion
To be naked on the magazine cover
Now it is fashion
To gossip about artist's lives
Now it is fashion
To improve the whole body
Now it is fashion
To blame the foreign market

(Agora é moda
Sair nua em capa de revista
Agora é moda
Pichar a vida de artista
Agora é moda

[97] Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 136.
[98] Almir Chediak, *Songbook Rita Lee* (Rio de Janeiro: Lumiar Editora, 1990), 12.

Bionicar o corpo inteiro
Agora é moda
Culpar o mercado estrangeiro)

Other composers also translated the presence of mass consumerism and corporations in the daily life of the middle class to music. In the song "Baticum" (a neologism related to the word *batucada*), Gil and Buarque describe how corporations are going to sponsor a get-together at the beach: "Benetton agreed to sponsor/Sanyo guaranteed the sound system."

Another example of social practices translated to song by MPB composers is sexuality. In the 1970s the first songs to comment on homosexuality as a part of daily life were released, partly due to the craft of lyricists who disguised the homosexual component to escape censorship. Mílton Nascimento's "Paula e Bebeto" addresses same sex relationships. Nascimento had to change the male name "Paulo" to the female "Paula" after the censors threatened not to release the song, but the message remained clear in the verses "They loved each other in any way possible/Any way of love is worthwhile."

Between tradition and modernity

MPB presented the middle class with solutions for how to transform cultural influences coming from all sides into their own process of cultural self-identification. *Tropicalistas* such as Veloso, Gil, Oiticica and Corrêa noticed that "popular culture was not a collection of fads and pre-established images; rather, it consisted above all in a certain mechanics of apprehension, interpretation and reformulation of circulating information."[99] In other words, composers built songs through filtration, selection and recombination of elements that varied according

[99] Basualdo, *Tropicália*, 13.

to social and political concerns, ideology, market and personal experience. In that sense, *tropicalistas* felt free to appropriate foreign culture without judgment of value. They did not conform to ideas of "cultural imperialism" from American and British influences, or prejudice that many Brazilians had against Spanish-American music. In addition, they attracted the interest of avant-garde classical composers from São Paulo, such as Júlio Medaglia and Rogério Duprat, who ended up providing arrangements for many of their compositions, in a rare partnership of classical and popular composers. As Christopher Dunn remarks,

> The tropicalists contributed decisively to the erosion of barriers between *música erudita*, for a restricted audience of elite patrons, and *música popular*, for the general public. *Tropicália* was an exemplary instance of cultural hybridity that dismantled binaries that maintained neat distinctions between high and low, traditional and modern, national and international cultural production.[100]

Tropicália was important most of all because it opened the doors to musicians who wanted to use any style or influence, be it foreign or not, to create urban song. MPB post-*tropicália* is more diverse and complex than ever before and old rivalries such as rock versus MPB are no longer in place.

The musician who best exemplifies absorption and recombination of influences typical of MPB in a post-*tropicália* era is Milton Nascimento. Nascimento achieved national exposure during the festivals era with his song *Travessia*. Origins in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais made him one of the few that did not conform to the Rio/São Paulo/Salvador MPB elite. This status helped him to see MPB from the position of an outsider, maintaining safe distance from the militant protest song, the idealistic bossa nova and the provocative

[100] Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergency of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 3.

Tropicália, and allowing him to "elaborate a carefully crafted poetics based on a dialogue between these influences."[101]

Musically he is the most pluralistic of the main MPB composers. His music embraced traditions from Minas Gerais, which included the rich church music traditions from the Baroque era. He showed a preoccupation with Pan-Americanism[102] that went beyond the political message and inspired him to use Hispanic-American music material. His adoptive mother had been a student of Villa-Lobos,[103] who introduced him to classical music. He also was in tune with American music, mainly jazz and rock. His lyrics (many by his own hand, but also from partnerships with the poets Ronaldo Bastos and Fernando Brant, among others) show social concern, justice and repression, and how relationships are affected by these factors. As a black Brazilian, he helps to raise issues of racism and social displacement rarely addressed by the middle class. This large variety of influences can be heard in his work. In the 1976 album *Geraes,* for example, song styles include a nostalgic ballad, an adapted folk song from Minas Gerais, a Chilean protest song, a social song in bossa nova style, an adapted folk song from Bahia, an instrumental piece from Chile, a *samba de roda* and a soft-rock ballad. His kaleidoscopic style related to the middle class also for the complexity and textures of the arrangements, which include South American instruments such as the *charango* (a small acoustic guitar), electric guitar, full orchestra, and choir.

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[101] Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*,85.
[102] Pan-Americanism is the philosophy that The Americas shared history and concerns should help the integration of its countries toward policies to try to solve its problems. Even though in Brazil this feeling is more connected to Latin America because of the fear of US hegemony, the endgame of this philosophy is closely related to the Monroe Doctrine (America for the Americans).
[103] Perrone, *Masters*, 134.

Many of Nascimento's qualities of absorption and recombination of styles can be heard in his epic song "O Que Foi Feito Deverá/O Que Foi Feito de Vera" (What has been done shall be/What happened to Vera), on verses by Fernando Brant. The song is a message of hope and nostalgia represented by the memory of the film company *Vera Cruz*, which, in the early 1950s, defied Hollywood's grip in the Brazilian market with successful productions, but could not resist to the competition and had to close its doors after just four years.[104] The first part of the song is a ballad sung by Elis Regina and the message is positive: "I speak without longing/I speak because I know/If what was done was worth it/What will be done is worth even more." In the second part ("O Que Foi Feito de Vera"), the Afro-influenced percussion guides the beat, but a pop swing on the guitar and a multi-layered texture that includes keyboards, choir and Regina's vocal improvisations give the impression that the song is rootless and looks to the future. The memory of *Vera Cruz* here is used as proof of Brazilian resourcefulness, what is proved by the recombination of styles showed both in the song and in the album (*Clube da Esquina 2*).

Nascimento was not the only composer fascinated by Regina's capacity to give emotion and personality to a song. In the 1970s, Elis Regina became one of the symbols of the plurality of MPB. Her professional life roughly corresponds to the golden age of MPB.[105] After the *Tropicália* period she expanded her repertoire

[104] Carla Miucci Ferraresi, "Vera Cruz: A Herança de um Sonho," in *Mnemocine – memória e imagem* (database online, cited 03/23/2007, available at http://mnemocine.com.br/cinema/historiatextos/carla3Vcruz.htm).

[105] Regina started her professional life in 1965, around the time that the acronym MPB began to be used. She died of drug overdose in 1982; she was the most famous MPB interpreter in Brazil at the time.

and became one of MPB composers' favorite interpreters. In her 1970 album *...Em Pleno Verão* (In Midsummer), her choice of repertoire shows many sides, from Gil and Veloso's ballads to Baden Powell's bossa nova, Jorge Ben's samba, Tim Maia' samba-soul and even a romantic ballad by Roberto Carlos. Her repertoire later would include composers as diverse as Hermeto Paschoal, a multi-instrumentalist influenced by jazz and Northeastern rhythms, and Rita Lee.

Gilberto Gil's career was also focused on recombining opposites. In his 1969 song "Cérebro Eletrônico" (Electronic Brain), he questions modern society's relationship with technology. In the song "Refazenda" ("Re-farm") he creates a neologism to describe the transformation of the old (farm) into a new recombined reality, in which tradition, or what was known, is transformed. In "Do Japão," he praises technology as a means to connect past and present. In "Parabolicamará," a neologism which combines parabolic antenna and *camará*, the greeting of *capoeira* dancers, he compares old and new traditions: "In a *jangada* it takes an eternity/In a *saveiro*[106]takes a whole generation/In an airplane just the time to miss you." The pop swing mixed with *berimbau* helps the marriage between old and new. This "cultural syncretism"[107] is evident in many other compositions. In Jorge Mautner's "Maracatu Atômico" (Atomic *maracatu*[108]), traditional rhythms are the basis for avant-garde poetry ("Beyond the skyscraper there is the sky/Then another sky with no stars").

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[106] *Jangada* and *saveiro* are typical boats used by Northeastern fishermen.
[107] Jairo Severiano and Zuza Homem de Mello, *A Canção no Tempo: 85 Anos de Músicas Brasileiras* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1998), 203.
[108] *Maracatu* is a dance typical of the Northeastern state of Pernambuco.

MPB also absorbed influences from the African diaspora beyond sambas and related forms. Already in 1964, Baden Powell and Vinicius de Moraes composed together several *afro-sambas*, introducing other African rhythms in MPB. When Gil was in exile in London, he learned about Jamaican reggae and soon he mixed this new style into his own compositions, even recording a version of Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry" called "Não Chore Mais." The vast repertoire of MPB influences included also Native-Brazilian music. Marlui Miranda may be the most important name to bring this music to the mainstream. Tunes she collected herself when visiting the Amazon made way to Nascimento and Gil recordings, among others, besides her own.[109]

[109] A choral version of the first songs she collected is now a successful choral piece with American choirs in an arrangement by Marcos Leite.

CONCLUSION

MPB is rarely recognized as a symbol of class identity even among the middle class. One of the reasons is obvious: Brazil does not need its artists and critics – most of whom hail from the privileged, if socially conscious, middle class – accentuating the separation between classes; this separation is often all too self-evident in Brazilian urban areas. Therefore, MPB is often recognized as one of the best examples of Brazilian music, and the class element is acknowledged only peripherally, if at all.

In fact, the search for a "national sound" or Brazilian cultural identity by members of the middle class is intrinsically connected with class identity. MPB gives voice to middle-class aspirations and a reality that cannot resonate, at all levels, with every diverse facet of the nation's communities. Therefore, when middle-class composers purport to represent the concerns of "the people," there is a sense of incongruity because "the struggle of common people is told by a narrator who stays outside the portrayed reality."[110]

On the other hand, however, the idea of national identity is intrinsically connected to class identity because national identity is often shaped by the cultural elites. While MPB is by, for, and of the urban middle class, it nonetheless has come to represent national culture on the international stage. Therefore, even though Tom Jobim can represent Brazilian music at Carnegie Hall, it would be extremely rare to hear a Jobim CD being played in a poor household in a Rio slum. MPB is simply not popular among the underprivileged classes, a fact

[110] Carvalho, "Tupi," 164.

disregarded by several musicologists studying MPB composers.[111] Outsiders, such as musicologists or non-Brazilian audiences, tend to overlook MPB's middle-class origins precisely because it is promoted as an example of a wider, "default" Brazilian culture. An apt comparison might be the status of jazz in the United States: one could not insist that jazz is enormously popular, even though it is understood as being, in many ways, exemplary of the best of American musical culture.

Like the American audience for jazz, the Brazilian educated middle class is not tantamount to a generalized majority: it is a specific and small proportion of the population, and it cannot be mistaken for a national status quo. Appreciation of this fact is crucial to an understanding of MPB's remarkable appeal, and multivalent significances. MPB allowed members of the nascent middle class to define themselves by a cultural heritage that encompassed various regional Brazilian traditions, influences of the U.S. and Europe, and access to sophisticated higher education as well as soulful manifestations of lower-class communities. This economically, culturally and nationally diverse heritage may be partially or even largely invented, but it nonetheless provided a framework within which members of the middle class could understand themselves as a cohesive group of people who shared an experience that differed, in some significant ways, from the experiences of those wealthier and poorer than they.

MPB became one of the most important factors in helping the Brazilian middle class to imagine itself as a community exactly because of its hybridity. Re-

[111] It is a fact that if one lists all the published work by American musicologists about Brazilian popular music, MPB (bossa nova, *tropicália*, MPB composers) is by far the most common subject.

creation, reinterpretation and transformation of song can only be possible through a process of continuity and rupture. MPB manipulates tradition through this process, using it to let itself be connected to the history of Brazilian popular music. This manipulation began with bossa nova. Through the filtration of elements of tradition (samba rhythmic cells, repertoire) with the addition of elements of rupture (vocal style, harmonies, equality of vocal line and accompaniment), bossa nova recreated samba for the middle class. Caetano Veloso recognizes this ambiguity in bossa nova, calling it "a huge rupture that would have precisely the effect of maintaining continuity." [112] Veloso himself, like many other MPB composers, operates in the space between tradition and rupture. After the *tropicalistas* expanded the possibilities of hybrid forms already present in MPB, songwriters and interpreters felt free to absorb any popular styles and recombine them in a very personal way.

This complex hybridity allows for the practice of a certain sort of musical "connoisseurship" among the primary audience for MPB: only members of the educated middle class would be equipped with the knowledge that allows for recognition and appreciation of the various musical and lyrical forms represented in MPB. This class tends to have discerning tastes, and tends to be keenly aware of issues of "quality" in the spheres of arts and culture. MPB would not be successful within the middle class if not for its tendency toward sophistication. As Perrone observes:

> The production of Brazil's best contemporary songwriters represents sustained depth and formal sophistication, twenty continuous years of incisive creativity, and hundreds of songs with

[112] Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music*, 10.

> a minimum of throwaway lyrics or banally repetitive musical formats.[113]

This sophistication has many ingredients. One of the most important is the literary quality of its lyrics. Poets and lyricists were able "inventors of tradition," connecting their work to literary sources and writers that range from the Neo-classicism of the late 1700s to the avant-garde Concrete Poetry movement. On the neo-classical end of this spectrum, Jobim and Buarque's "Sabiá" (named after a typical urban bird) referred to the early Romantic poet Gonçalves Dias' "Canção do Exílio" (Exile Song) in describing an intention to go back to Brazil when times are better – which meant, of course, after the dictatorship was over. At the other end, in the realm of Concrete Poetry, Veloso's "Pulsar" is an exercise of "performed literature:"[114] he translates an inherently visual poem into an innovative aural language, connecting specific notes to specific symbols in the poem. This personalized and sophisticated production obviously never achieved mass consumption as did many other Brazilian styles. Veloso's single-record sales, for example, would only exceed one hundred thousand in 1981 with the album *Outras Palavras*.[115] The fact that MPB remained relevant and that its main composers are nationally and internationally famous is due to a strong and steady base of consumption within the middle class.

The genre of MPB certainly could not have come into being without the context and concerns of the new middle class; it is arguable, too, that the middle class would not be what it is, had it not been for the development of MPB. The

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[113] Perrone, *Masters*, 207.
[114] Perrone, *Masters*, 213.
[115] Guilherme Wisnik, *Caetano Veloso* (São Paulo: Publifolha, 2005), 132.

socio-economic realities of the history of this genre are central to our understanding of it, and its complex relationship with the broader corpus of Brazilian musical styles. It has come to represent Brazilian music on the international stage, much as, perhaps, the Brazilian middle class – educated, politically conscious, privileged within the national sphere but financially marginalized within global markets – seeks to represent Brazil. The story of MPB, and the class into which it was born, is a story of acute self-consciousness and the search for identity. This genre is inseparable from its community. Without a long history of their own, the middle class had to invent traditions in order to imagine themselves "somehow ancient."[116] In this process, to be able to adapt and transform musical traditions and mix them with cosmopolitan music was the perfect solution for the dichotomies that surrounds the middle class in so many ways. Oppositions such as the local versus the cosmopolitan, traditional versus the modern and popular versus the elite are part of the nature of the middle class. Only achieving equilibrium between these forces, the middle class can create original art, which is in its essence hybrid art, a feature demonstrated by such artistic movements such as bossa nova and *Tropicália.*

Theories of imagined communities, hybrid cultures and invented traditions allow us to begin putting the music back into its place of origin, from which point we can move forward to develop a more complete understanding of how it spread to communities throughout Brazil and around the world. It speaks to different people of different things; it is capable of communicating vastly different

[116] Anderson observes that "new imagined communities always regarded themselves as somehow ancient." Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 109.

messages, depending upon who listens. It is to the educated middle classes of the cities of Brazil, however, that MPB speaks most clearly, and communicates – in its ever-shifting lyrics, arrangements, rhythms, instrumentations and appropriations – the shared experience and identity of its composers, its interpreters, and its fellowship of listeners.

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