

MUSIC, MIGRANCY, AND MODERNITY:
A STUDY OF BRAZILIAN FORRÓ

BY

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Para minha mãe

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MAP OF BRAZIL	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE – WHAT IS FORRÓ?	22
THE TERM <i>FORRÓ</i>	23
INSTRUMENTATION	29
THE GENRES	34
<i>BAIÃO</i>	38
<i>XOTE</i>	46
<i>XAXADO</i>	53
<i>ARRASTA-PÉ</i> (or <i>marcha junina</i> , or <i>marchinha junina</i> [June march])	58
<i>COCO</i>	63
<i>ROJÃO</i>	68
<i>FORRÓ</i>	72
CHAPTER TWO – THE STARS AND INNOVATORS OF FORRÓ IN THE MASS MEDIA	81
INTRODUCTION	81
“RACE” AND PREJUDICE	86
GETÚLIO VARGAS AND NATIONALIST POPULISM	88
EARLY MASS MEDIA DISSEMINATION AND SUCCESS OF FORRÓ IN THE MEDIA (1900-1940)	91
CODIFICATION OF FORRÓ IN THE MEDIA THROUGH LUIZ GONZAGA’S <i>BAIÃO</i> (1940s)	97
GONZAGA’S INNOVATIONS AND STYLE.....	105
CANGAÇO AND LUIZ GONZAGA’S IMAGE.....	108
GONZAGA AND VARGAS.....	111
GONZAGA’S FOLLOWERS.....	111
THE MID-1950s TO MID-1960s – JACKSON DO PANDEIRO’S ERA	113
JACKSON’S INNOVATIONS AND STYLE.....	120
JACKSON’S NEW TRENDS AND FOLLOWERS	122
THE MID-1960s TO 1980s – YEARS OF MARGINAL ACTIVITY	124
THE FIRST MAJOR FORRÓ HOUSE – PEDRO SERTANEJO’S FORRÓ ...	126
TRIO NORDESTINO, MARINÊS AND DOMINGUINHOS.....	132
PORNO-FORRÓ – GENIVAL LACERDA.....	136
FORRÓ, YOUTH, ROCK-AND-ROLL, AND A FORRÓ HOUSE IN THE NORTHEAST	139
FORRÓ AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS.....	141

THE 1990s-2000	144
FORRÓ UNIVERSITÁRIO.....	147
FORRÓ ELETRÔNICO OR KEYBOARD FORRÓ.....	155
ORQUESTRA BRASILEIRA DE FORRÓ – OBF (RECIFE, NORTHEAST).....	163
FINAL COMMENTS	167
CHAPTER THREE – FORRÓ AS SOCIAL EVENT AND CONTEXT	171
INTRODUCTION	171
LOWER CLASS FORRÓ	171
1. DOIS UNIDOS (OUTSKIRTS OF RECIFE – NORTHEAST).....	171
2. A FORRÓ DAY AT CTN.....	177
3. A FORRÓ NIGHT AT FORRÓ DA CATUMBI (SÃO PAULO).....	196
MIDDLE CLASS FORRÓ	207
A FORRÓ NIGHT IN PINHEIROS (SÃO PAULO) AMONG STUDENTS ...	207
UPPER CLASS FORRÓ	223
A FORRÓ NIGHT AMONG WEALTHY NORTHEASTERERS	223
FINAL COMMENTS	232
CHAPTER FOUR – THE DANCE	236
INTRODUCTION	236
NORTHEASTERN DANCE STYLES	237
THE “ARM” STYLE	240
A FORRÓ DANCE CLASS IN THE “ARM” STYLE	243
RULES OF BEHAVIOR ON THE FORRÓ UNIVERSITÁRIO DANCE	
FLOOR	244
ABOUT MUSIC AND DANCE – WHAT ARE THEY ABOUT? (university	
dance scene)	247
A NEUROLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE	254
A LITTLE BIT OF PHILOSOPHY	260
FURTHER SUPPORT FROM FIELDWORK	264
WHY NORTHEASTERERS CREATED FORRÓ HOUSES IN THE BIG	
CITY	266
BIBLIOGRAPHY	270
BOOKS, DISSERTATIONS, ARTICLES IN ENGLISH, AND REFERENCE	
BOOKS	270
ARTICLES IN PORTUGUESE	285
DISCOGRAPHY	290
WEBSITES	296
RECORDED INTERVIEWS	297

APPENDIX	300
SCORES	301
BAIÃO – JUAZEIRO.....	301
XOTE - CINTURA FINA.....	305
XAXADO - OLHA A PISADA.....	307
ARRASTA-PÉ - SÃO JOÃO NA ROÇA	314
COCO – SEBASTIANA.....	318
ROJÃO – FORRÓ EM LIMOEIRO	322
FORRÓ – FORRÓ DE MANÉ VITO AND MANÉ GARDINO.....	327
AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY	332

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a history of Northeastern Brazilian dance music styles known collectively as *Forró*, from the year 1946 through the year 2001, as practiced by Northeastern migrants who settled mainly in São Paulo city. Information concerning earlier practice is drawn from historical documents; observations of more current practices are based on ethnographic data collected between June, 2000 and March, 2001 in the cities of Recife and São Paulo. The study looks at dance music as practice made popular among Northeastern migrants in the Southern cities, and its various periods of waxing and waning in the mainstream popular media. Finally, this study is concerned with the influence of mainstream popularity on the continuing use of *Forró* as emotion-laden signs and markers of ethnic/regional identity for the migrants with whom it is most closely associated.

Forró is an umbrella term for several different genres of Northeastern Brazilian dance music including *baião*, *xote*, *arrasta-pé*, *fórró*¹, *xaxado*, and *coco*. This study will focus on migrants from the Northeast, who typically leave the region and head for the bigger cities of the South, such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Brasília, in search of better living conditions and economic opportunities. They usually settle in the South and adapt to big city life, eventually returning to the Northeast only to visit relatives. Their adaptation in these cities is mediated by *Forró* music and *Forró* houses, which are centers of migrant social life. *Forró* houses did not exist in the Northeast where migrants come from; they were created in the Southern

¹ Since the umbrella term, *Fórró*, includes a specific genre also called *fórró*, I will differentiate between the two by referring to the general term, designating a musical event, a dance party where certain music genres are likely to be heard, using an initial capital letter (*Fórró*). When referring to the specific genre, lower case italics will be used.

cities as gathering places where people exchanged letters and news, ate dishes and danced to music of their home region, and generally felt at home.

The issue of modernity plays a relevant role in this story because to be “adapted,” for them, means to integrate “modern,” cosmopolitan ways into their lives. They migrate because they want to ascend socially, to be able to own goods that are both necessary to and emblematic of the urban lifestyle, such as TV and other technological devices; in short, they head south in a deliberate search for “modernity.” For a variety of reasons, they have maintained the regional dance and music traditions of the Northeast in their new environment. However, in practicing Furró in the context of a big city they went through processes of modernizing it. According to a variety of migrants’ needs and different responses to adapting to the city, and considering age, generation, and historical time, this “modernization” had different profiles. Nevertheless, the sense of being a Northeasterner - from the poorer populations of the hinterland, reinforced through the practice of Furró, remained a core aspect of their identity, not only for individuals, but also for the group of Northeasterner migrants as a whole. Throughout this work, it is possible to see different representations of the community of Northeasterner migrants through their relation with Furró music. It should be noted that not only poor Northeasterners migrated. Middle and upper class Northeasterners also traveled south and established themselves in the big cities. They, too, practice Furró in their gatherings. In restaurants serving typical Northeastern cuisine for tourists and wealthy Northeasterners, live Furró music is heard and often danced to. Therefore, Furró is a common denominator

among all Northeastern migrants, despite social class position; it is also a general signifier of regionality for tourists and migrants alike.

After the late 1940s, Forró music attained mass media success largely through the efforts of Luiz Gonzaga (1912-1989), a Northeastern migrant musician who made the style palatable to the urbane public of the cities. He incorporated other popular musical elements and styles into Forró, creating a broader appeal, while simultaneously maintaining clear signs of Northeastern-ness. For example, he changed instruments from the button accordion to the piano accordion, and he tried to imitate the vocal stylings of the great crooners of Brazilian popular music of the 1940s. In 1965, another Northeastern migrant musician, Pedro Sertanejo (1927-1997), created the first space in a Southern city where a Forró event could be practiced in its entirety. His Forró house – *Forró do Pedro Sertanejo* - included a dance floor, elevated stage, and sound equipment. It also introduced such “modernities” as the sale of tickets, food, and drinks for profit, security guards, tables and chairs. In the Northeast Forró events were more informal parties; the Forró house was a new phenomenon, meeting the new needs and conditions in Southern cities.

Migrants assert and maintain their position and regional identities in a big city through their dance music in the mass media. However, this identity was expanded with the new values and practices that they encountered. The styles and practice of Forró shifted accordingly with this “modern” way of being. My work sets out to untangle these relations as manifested in Forró, its trajectory in the mass media, its actors, and how the discourse of modernity plays a role in the meaning of Forró. As a style complex it was transformed through hybridization, flexibility and an eclecticism that drew in a variety of

elements ranging from new instruments to reggae rhythms. Forró must be understood in its dialogue with other cultural forms found in the big cities; it became a combination of elements and evolved into a new genre of popular music that was highly successful in the mass media for more than a decade (1946 to 1960). Forró remains important in various cultural spheres through the present, but presented, interpreted, practiced, and understood in very different ways depending on social context. This process of transformation, both of the forms and meaning, has to do with the people that first practiced Forró in the Northeast, poor people, who had to migrate in order to survive and ascend socially. Southern cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were seen as places where there was an abundance of jobs and varied opportunities to learn, to encounter the latest technologies, and generally improve life conditions.

THE ORIGINS OF FORRÓ

The term “Forró,” or “*forrobodó*,” originally referred to a dance party among poor people, commonly of the working class. This sort of entertainment began around the last quarter of the 19th century as a backyard pastime after a hard day’s labor in the dry hinterland of Northeast Brazil called *sertão*. The dancing was initially accompanied by purely instrumental music, played by self-taught musicians on button accordions. As time passed, both the style of music and instrument, eventually accompanied by some sort of percussion, became central parts of community gatherings. They were particularly indispensable elements during the feasts of Saint John, Saint Peter, and Saint Anthony, which all fall in the month of June within the Catholic calendar. Largely through the efforts of Luiz Gonzaga, a key figure in the development of the style, Forró also became

a vocal genre and attained widespread popularity in the mass media after 1946. Gonzaga was influenced by earlier successful Northeastern musicians who recorded poetry-based styles of Northeastern music known as *emboladas* (jaw-breakers) and *repentes* (improvised music and lyrics).² The two main Northeastern migrant musicians of the early 20th century who served as models for Gonzaga were João Pernambuco (1883-1947) and Manezinho Araújo (1910-1993); they performed and recorded Northeastern music in Rio de Janeiro after they settled there in 1902 and 1933, respectively.

The rural, interior of the Northeast, known as the *sertão* area, has been susceptible to many long periods of intense droughts since the early years of Brazilian colonization in the 16th century. Although the Northeast coast was the center of initial colonization, and the production of sugar cane enriched some landowners, the dry hinterland was not economically significant because of the climate. The main occupation of the *sertão* was raising livestock, which began in the Dutch settlement at Olinda, Pernambuco, in the 17th century. In the 18th century, the center of the Brazilian economy moved to the Southeast because of profitable coffee plantations. The Northeast began to decline in importance and the economic situation there worsened because of seven big droughts throughout the 18th century (1710-11, 1721, 1723-27, 1736-37, 1745-46, 1777-78, 1791-93). Things did not improve in the next century, and the relations between the Northeast and the South deteriorated. The economic fortunes of the Northeast improved somewhat in the 19th century, although by then much of the wealth generated had to be sent to Rio de Janeiro, the new political center of the country. In addition to droughts, the Northeast had many internal problems, such as crime, religious fanaticism, and violent clan wars.

² *Emboladas* and *repentes* share a characteristic manner of word delivery. In *emboladas* the challenge is on speed of delivery, in *repentes* it is on the content of the improvised verses.

Northeastern authorities did not have the funds to combat these social ills, and blamed the South for siphoning off much of their wealth. Gradually, the Northeast came to be seen by the government and the elite class as a *região problema* (problematic region).

Some knowledge of the social, economic and political situation in the Northeast is crucial for understanding the typical themes in Forró songs. By the 1950s the lyrics often referred to the images, lifestyles, and problems of the region, which resonated with the experiences and aroused the nostalgia of migrant audiences in the Southern metropolises.

MIGRANCY

Reasons for Moving

Owing to the harsh living conditions in the sertão, there has been a more or less constant migration of people both inside and outside the region. The Northeast, as a whole, has generated one of the largest demographic movements in the country. Migration was encouraged by government actions during the 19th century. There were state incentives for Northeastern people to go to the Amazon and Pará regions during the rubber boom of 1850-1920 (see Map of Brazil). There were laws that compelled drought victims to move to the coast in order to avoid more suffering, because the government had no means to solve the problem (Rio Grande do Norte, 1877). The drought that lasted from 1877 to 1879 was the worst of the century; approximately 4% of the Brazilian population (500,000 people) died because of it and as many as three million were driven from their homes in the Northeast. According to Villa (2000), although there were some Northeasterners migrating to the South during the 19th century (there was a variola epidemic during the drought that reached Rio de Janeiro), a massive influx of migrants

first began to arrive in São Paulo in the 1930s, and did not stop. It followed an established pattern: the head of the family would migrate first, and then, after finding a job and a place to live, he would send money so that the rest of the family could join him. Less often, but still common, single males would migrate and either send money home to support parents and siblings, or they might send for them to come and live with him, either one-by-one or all at the same time. Thus, migration was a long-term, multi-staged process, but an inexorable one. São Paulo has come to be known today as the main “Northeastern” capital, because of its large numbers of Northeastern migrant residents.

Since the 19th century, the region, and by extension its people, have been considered “problems” by the people of the South, and their massive migration southward contributed to increasingly tense relations in their daily lives in their new home. Prejudice was common, but at the same time the Brazilian upper classes needed the migrant working force to do the labor that they did not want to do. This “functional underclass” as Galbraith calls it, “serves the living standard and the comfort of the more favored community” (1992, p. 31).

Human movements across geographical space around the world have been studied from different perspectives, whether as migration (Hauser 1961; Wilson 1993; French 1989; Kearney 1986; Hirabayashi 1986) or immigration (crossing international boundaries) (Zolberg 1989; Schramm 1986, 89). Tamar Diana Wilson wrote a basic study on Latin American migration, where she posits theories for the occurrence of migration. The first one is called “push-pull theory” (which, curiously, Michael Kearney [1986] called “modernization”), where living conditions at home and at the destination are compared. The push (minus) factors would be, for example, inequalities of land

ownership, need of food, and low profits in rural production. The pull (plus) factors might consist of a greater number and different sorts of jobs, better wages, or simply some sort of hope to improve one's quality of life. This theory does not point to the structural and political origins of these factors, nor to agrarian reform projects, which can make the understanding of this phenomenon clearer.

Another theory is called the "world system" or "dependency theory" (Braudel; Rhoades and Wiest quoted in Kearney 1986) and offers a more comprehensive understanding of migration. It looks at economic systems and the international division of labor, considering capitalism and its levels of exploitation. It takes into consideration capitalism's inherent need of imbalance. This system involves, first of all, someone willing to buy and someone else willing to sell. However, the buyer wants to profit from this trade as much as he can, and will look for the cheapest product. The cheapest product is the one that takes advantage of the cheap free labor force. Migrants offer this cheap labor power either inside the country (wealth imbalance among regions) or crossing international borders (wealth imbalance among countries). So, the buyer tends to get richer and the worker tends to get poorer. Migrants from areas like the Northeastern hinterland offer cheap labor power because they have few choices and even low pay is an improvement over no jobs at all. According to dependency theory, this imbalance and exploitation is necessary for capitalism to work. However, since the theory takes a wider point of view, it tends to homogenize this phenomenon.

Michael Kearney adds another theoretical orientation that considers contextual idiosyncrasies in his "articulation theory." This position denies that there is a unified global capitalist system. According to the articulation theory "capitalism, rather than

replacing noncapitalist modes of production, may coexist with them and even strengthen them...” (p. 342). Kearney’s hypothesis pertains to a very important sector of third world countries’ economies, carried out mainly by migrants, what he calls the “informal economy.” These local, small scale economies work in dialogue with capitalist modes of production. As an example of informality, a family may own an enterprise where all family members work in the establishment but do not receive wages per se. Rather, the head of the household distributes money to family members as he sees fit on an ad hoc basis outside of any formal wage structure. Another example is someone who works for himself as a street vendor. All the money he makes by selling things to other people, who earn their money in the formal economy, stays with him. Usually the street vendor does not pay taxes, and avoids the legal market as much as possible, getting his merchandise from smugglers, for example. This kind of business can be very profitable and, if it goes well, it can bestow a certain status on the people who practice it. They have money to buy things and they can even ascend socially, by changing their class ideology and identity and masking their proletarian origins. Migrants are very predisposed to participate in this kind of economy because of their past experiences with non-capitalist modes of production (usually structured around family-based economies).

An example of a more focused ethnographic study on migration is by Matos Mar (1961). He offers a case study of *barriadas* in Lima, Peru, which, according to him, “reflect the lack of balance in the national economic and social structure” (p. 171). Andean highlanders in the *barriadas* have as objectives home ownership and better education for their children. The highland migrants also join regional associations of provincial residents to find relief for the social and economic problems faced by the

group in the city. Matos Mar observed that *barriadas*' members come from Indian communities, usually organized on a cooperative basis and they reproduce that kind of organization on an urban scale. They "bring with them their own way of life which is that of an underdeveloped people of peasant mentality" (p. 174). This study was updated through another ethnographic work by Thomas Turino (1993), where he observes that "in conjunction with the economic, educational, and health-care factors that inspired people to migrate, and which undeniably are often primary, ideological issues (for example, specific definitions of "a better life") were involved" (p. 180).

Andrew Pearse's (1961) study of *favelas* (slums) in Rio de Janeiro provides a foundation for my work. Pearse reinforces Matos Mar's assertions about migrants bringing with them their peasant way of life into an urban system. Pearse investigated family organization and the continuing process of migration, as well as the populist relations involved in daily life (clientage structure that hands down benefits in return for votes or personal loyalties in maneuvers, p. 201-02). He also focuses on the main pastimes of these people: soccer, animal games³ (*jogo do bicho*) and radio, through which their links, identity and moral values are reasserted. In my work, it is through Forró music and Forró houses that I analyze this assertion of values and identity and the influence of modernity discourses on migrant cultural practices and worldview.

³ An animal game is similar to a lottery in which each number is associated with a particular animal. The game is controlled by people who have links with organized crime. It is illegal but practiced on a regular basis and used to launder money.

Migrants in São Paulo

Considering my focus on Forró music and migrants in São Paulo, broader theories of migrancy must be applied with some caution, particularly in a third world country, where idiosyncrasies are very likely to happen because of its heterogeneity and the coexistence of multiple levels of development (Canclini 1995). Therefore, studying Forró and Northeastern migrants, I am considering all these theories combined and focusing on this particular case of migration in order to get at its distinctive characteristics. What Kearney calls “informal” economy I would call marginal economy, because the latter expresses the dialogue established between a dominant economy and other spheres. In the marginal economy, Brazilian migrants (as well as most lower class people) can be economically invisible for an undetermined time, because they do not pay taxes, and most of the people do not have job contracts; nonetheless this marginal economy can work as a venue for upward social mobility. Hence, although they get paid with money that originates in the formal economy, usually it does not return to it in the form of taxes paid by migrants. Only after they are established in a higher social rank do they begin to pay taxes. Otherwise, as much as possible, they “work the system.”

Northeastern migrants participate in the urban economy as maids, construction and factory workers, concierges, building guards, cooks, cleaning crews, drivers, bartenders, street vendors, staff persons, and musicians, and most of the time they learn their jobs as they work. Migrants typically work for less money than others. In Brazil, because of the abundance of cheap labor, members of the higher classes are able to avoid many tasks such as mowing grass, fixing pipes, remodeling, ironing, cleaning, and

cooking. At the same time, the migrants in these jobs are able to observe Brazilian middle class life intimately. This close contact can change their worldview and class taste to the point of giving them a middle class cultural outlook, despite their economic proletarian conditions. For example, I had a maid who was a migrant from a farm in the South, and one evening I met her in a grocery store where I used to buy most of my food. She, her husband and son were all very well dressed, as if going to the grocery store was in itself an evening's entertainment. As my maid, I taught her how to cook a variety of vegetables, fish, and whole grain food as part of my vegetarian diet instead of her Southern style of cooking, which heavily emphasizes red-meat-based meals (barbecuing is a major practice and is emblematic of the Brazilian South). At the cashier, I met her again, and she had a larger variety of merchandise in her cart than I had in mine: besides a lot of red meat, she also had whole grain bread and brown rice. As a proletarian in a city she has access to middle class facilities and products. Lessons learned while working in middle class households and access to these goods gradually changed her habits—she “needs” more things than I do because she is trying out new ways of being as she interacts with her new surroundings. In summary, my maid was widening her sense of self; she could select among her old habits and her newly acquired ones and so combine them in her own way towards a new subjectivity and identity.

The flexibility and eclecticism of style in Forró music described in the following chapter mirrors this same process of combining “old” elements from the Northeast and “new” elements from experiences in the Southern cities. The eclecticism both reflects and influences the emerging subjectivities of the migrants. Given the migrants' aspiration for upward social mobility, the variable of geography (Northeast-South, rural-urban) must

also be understood in class terms—the actual as well as desired movement is not only horizontal through space but also vertical, hopefully upwards, in the economic hierarchy. Middle class cultural habits, models, and elements are learned and internalized over time, out of a desire to “get where they are going” in their migration upward. Indices of region, of ruralness and urbanness, and of different class positions are combined and recombined in Forró in various ways depending on the time, place, intended audience, and particular stylistic trajectory.

My case study of Northeastern migrants in Brazil is one more prism through which to view migrancy in Latin America, since there is a movement across socio-economic spaces as well as geographic places, with subsequent changes in ways of thinking and behaving. When considering Forró music recorded today, for example, you can find elements from different social classes and regions combined, such as *xote* and reggae, with *xote* as a Northeastern genre from poor classes, signifying ruralness or “home,” and reggae, a Jamaican genre adopted by urban middle classes in the South, as signifying a developed and cosmopolitan people.

MODERNITY AND HYBRIDITY

The term “modern” was historically applied to the period after the industrial revolution that began in England in the 18th century, which introduced new ideas and technologies (rationalism, scientific method, heightened economic specialization, among other aspects). Economic production changed from primarily agricultural to primarily manufacturing. The assembly line mentality changed society and people’s worldviews dramatically.

As part of a broader discursive practice a temporal category (“modern”) was transformed into a cultural category. Northeastern migrants learned from the examples provided by the dominant social classes what modernity was, and its inherent value. I follow Foucault’s definition of discursive practice, where style, terms, and legitimate knowledge and ideology compose the whole discourse. Modernity discourse incorporates a series of binary oppositions such as tradition/modern, old-fashioned/new, past/eternal-present, underdeveloped/developed, always under the evolutionary idea of progress. That which is “modern” is “better.” In Brazil this current of thought pervades the class structure. The lower classes believe that moving up in the social-economic structure means becoming “modern” and “better”; and lower class people tend to devalue their class habits more than the middle class. Brazilian regions were also framed by the traditional/modern dichotomy. The Southern cities were associated with modernity and progress while the Northeast was associated with the “traditional”—sometimes with the positive attributes of the term, but mostly with connotations of backwardness, i.e., a lack of progress.

Renato Rosaldo, presenting and summarizing Canclini’s book “Hybrid Cultures,” says that Canclini shows that there is a tendency to link modern to all that is secular, innovative, economically productive and democratic. There is an ideological equation of modernity with the superiority of high culture, and tradition with the inferiority of popular culture (p. xiii). There were some predictions that the world would soon be one, homogeneously “modern,” politically and economically. However, as the centuries passed we are still “incorrigibly plural” (Mac Neice quoted by Comaroff). Although Europe was the center for the spread of technology, which is one index of modernity, its

spread and adoption by different societies took particular paths, yielding a wide variety of modernities (Turino 2000; Comaroff 1993; Canclini 1995). The problem is that, since it is “an old song in our ears” modernity discourse has effects and reactions among people around the world; but it affects social habits in very different ways, according to ideology, experience, time, and beliefs. Even though the discourse of modernity might appear black and white, it has never stopped being colorful.

Modernity, Tradition, and Forró

This dialectical, multi-faceted view of modernity discourse is fundamental to the analysis of Forró practice. The modern/traditional dichotomy is a pervading issue in this dissertation, and I want to show not only the continuities between these two terms, but also their constant feedback and re-invention. For example, Forró houses among Northeastern migrants in São Paulo were an “invented tradition.”⁴ There were no such institutions in the sertão or in Northeastern cities. Their commercial features were created in the city and it was through this commercial structure that the institution has survived all these years. Forró houses are thus, at once, a “modern” urban economic institution that thrives because of migrants’ desire for Northeastern “tradition.” They are centers for Northeastern music and dance but over the last three decades have been a primary site for the modernization of the music and dance styles through the inclusion of electric keyboards, cosmopolitan genres and the like. The analysis of Forró houses illustrates the constant interaction of “modernity” and “tradition,” and while these ideas remain salient

⁴ According to Hobsbawm: “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual of symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past...a suitable historic past.” (1993, p. 1)

for migrants, the forms through which they are represented become increasingly tangled. According to Northeastern migrant community experiences in the big city, changes took place on stage, through the performances, as well as on the dance floor, where an extended family party was converted into an event that celebrated “migrants of same origins.”

Given their origins in popular culture, Forró music and dance were typical products of creative collaboration. Forró began as a combination of different musical and dance elements that become codified as a new genre. Hybridity is applied here as Canclini defined it—the combination of two different elements that originates a third, that can reinforce or de-emphasize characteristics of the original two. Following Canclini’s reasoning for Latin American societies, the growth of the cities helped in the hybridization process, making it a propitious environment for hybrids to appear, exactly because of the intense human movement that cities comprise. The city and the country are not as culturally contrasting as is often thought, however, due to intense migration, the cities grew quickly, sheltering many different groups from different origins and grouping them in different places. This makes the cities a common venue for hybrid processes to take place and where different “modern” projects can be found occurring at the same time, at the same place. I intend to show some of these processes and the “modernities” at work while analyzing Forró.

The elements that gave rise to Forró were from subaltern groups on subaltern contexts, especially those of hinterland origins, and because of similarities in experiences and worldview most of the time the elements had rural roots in common. This is why Northeastern Forró music came to be associated, at the national level, with another

subaltern genre in Brazil, country music. During the periods when the “country” styles fall from popularity in the mainstream, Forró and country musicians and audiences recognized each other through class and “countryroot” solidarity, and Forró houses shelter country musicians as well as other styles ignored in the mass media (romantic, *brega* music,⁵ for example).

The music from the hinterland in Brazil can have, nowadays, two meanings. “Old,” “roots,” *caipira* (hillbilly, boorish) music is based mainly in acoustic guitar performance (ten metal-double courses-strings, seven and six strings) with lyrics about rural life in an epic language, sung in duets. In the 1970s harp, accordion, trumpet, violin were added to this music, and the duets began to include the typical mariachi “cries and shouts.” Also, west-frontier genres were incorporated, such as Paraguayan polka and *guarânia* (in 6/8 and or 3/4 meter). These elements add to this music its “far away in the interior” characteristic, and associations with “underdeveloped” people, working class folks who need to wear hats to protect their heads from sunlight (they always present themselves wearing hats) and rural-styled checked, colored shirts. Caipira music does not have an associated dance; rather, it is music to be listened to and appreciated in a more passive way. The other style is the new “sertão” music (*música sertaneja*), with a strong influence of North American country music and rock of the 1960s. Still sung in duets, the instruments used in this style were the electric guitar and bass, and drumset. Electric guitar, bass and drumsets are expensive instruments, associated with an urban middle class who can afford them; there is a

⁵ Romantic music in Brazil means a ballad with love themes; *brega* music is related, and is more of an interpretative style more than a real genre. It uses a lot of musical clichés and talk about the universe of maids and taxi drivers, for example, in a melodramatic way. Romantic ballads can be interpreted in a *brega* style.

connection implied here with “developed,” “urban” people. The lyrics tend to be about love, in an exaggeratedly romantic way. One thematic archetype is about a relationship break up and the finding of a hair strand that was “once stuck to our sweat.” Different from caipira, música sertaneja has more of a dance-music character. The dancing is in imitation of North American country dance style. Since this is completely foreign to Brazilian dancers, participants often pay for dance lessons to learn it. Musicians often dress in “rock” style, such as clothing styles worn by the Rolling Stones during the 1970s, very tight leather pants, leather jackets with fringe, and white cowboy hats (Panama style, not work style). In both country music styles (*caipira* and *sertanejo*) one can see two tendencies: one valuing its “traditional,” “underdeveloped” origins, and the other valuing its urban, modern, or foreign and cosmopolitan features.

The role of mass media is crucial to understanding the hybridity of Forró in São Paulo. Mass media play a significant role in spreading ideas about the value of migration, as they did, for example through the success story of Luiz Gonzaga after he became famous and rich. So, the mass media led migrants to believe that it was possible to find the pot of gold in big cities. On the other side, because of their close alliance with technology (the recording industry, radio and television), the mass media are considered “modern,” progressive, updated, and developed; hence, their products were a necessary acquisition for migrants on their path to modernity. The release of Forró music in the mass media brought Northeastern migrants and the Northeast itself to the attention of middle class Brazilian society. It brought fame and money to its creator, Luiz Gonzaga, and his followers, and it raised people’s empathy and consciousness about Northeastern problems.

This does not mean that everybody was understanding and supportive of migration. The prejudice against lower-class people of rural extraction continued. The São Paulo middle class wants and needs the cheap labor offered by migrants, but they do not want them in their city for anything else. In the face of prejudice, Northeasterners protect themselves by gathering together and sticking to their “roots,” to legitimate their identity. They created and frequented Forró houses in São Paulo, in part, to satisfy these ends.

Forró in São Paulo began as a Northeastern migrant worker’s pastime, but also included other musical styles that had been rejected by the media and middle class São Paulo society in general, such as country music. After its golden age (1946-1960) Forró would be brought to public attention occasionally when it was recorded as a “roots” style by some important MPB (middle-class Brazilian Popular Music) singer/composer. For a brief time following such events, Forró would be seen as “cool” and in vogue, only to fall into obscurity again. But, for whom? In the chapters that follow, I show that despite the mass media’s sporadic attention, Northeastern migrants kept Forró vibrant as an important pastime and site of identity construction. As a recent phenomenon, Forró has once again been embraced by Southern middle class youth as a “return to our Brazilian roots” movement, while Northeastern middle class youth have created an electric version of Forró, the “modern” Forró. Yet, another branch of the middle class in the Northeast created orchestral Forró, in order to add an air of sophistication to the style and gain broad approval. Through these multiple middle class trajectories, Forró is still alive on the national scene; meanwhile, lower and working class migrants in Southern cities continue with their own activities and stylistic developments involving Forró.

This study discusses different modernities, considered through the interaction of mass media, regional and class struggle, and migrancy through Forró music. It shows that early concepts posed as dichotomies in reality are part of a variety of modernity discourses. There are parallel realities and modernity projects that cannot be seen through hegemonic premises, but through a dialectical game. There are, in short, multiple Forrós.

THE WORK

In the first chapter, I deal with the musical genres that comprise the Forró complex of styles: *baião*, *xote*, *arrasta-pé*, *xaxado*, *coco*, *rojão* and *farró* itself. A definition of Forró is outlined and explanations of each genre are provided. A transcribed example of each genre is included in the Appendix, and the accompanying compact disc recording.

In the second chapter, an overview of migrancy and politics provides the foundation for constructing a chronological history of Forró music in the mass media, from the early 20th century to the year 2000, and of the various low/middle class trajectories involving the style. This chronology is grounded in the stories of the main Northeastern musicians who migrated and were successful with this music in the big cities of the Southeast, beginning with the story of Luiz Gozaga, the “King of Baião.”

In the third chapter, five fieldwork sites are analyzed in order to provide a panorama of how Forró is practiced today. It is a description and analysis of different contexts because I want the reader to have a multidimensional perspective of Forró as reflected in my fieldwork. This discussion concludes with a consideration of the explicit

mechanisms used to maintain Forró throughout the twentieth century in relation to migration and the discourse of “modernity.”

In the final chapter, I discuss Forró as dance. In the first half of the chapter the goal is to describe the dances, their styles, steps, and the behavioral norms of performance. In the second half, I offer an approach to understanding what happens when music and dance are experienced together. I look for answers in neurology and philosophy, as well as an analysis of data collected during my fieldwork.

In the appendix, there are music scores. The scores are just guides for listening, for the most part limited to the melody and the chords, following the pattern of popular songbooks.

CHAPTER ONE – WHAT IS FORRÓ?

In this work, I define *Forró* as a Brazilian dancing occasion accompanied by the live performance of a particular set of musical genres. The genres that I am considering as part of Forró are *baião*, *xote*, *arrasta-pé*, *xaxado*, *coco* and *forró*. Note that the umbrella term “Forró” is also the name of a specific genre within the class. For the sake of clarity, an initial capital (Forró) will be used throughout to designate the performance context and collection of genres as a whole, while the lowercase italicized form (*forró*) will be reserved for the specific genre within it. Forró genres were influenced by other Northeastern dance and music forms associated with carnival (*frevo*), drama festivals (*maracatu*, *bumba-meu-boi*), itinerant, street musicians (*embolada*, *repente*), and informal social gatherings (*ciranda*), which can only be mentioned in passing.

Forró dance is typically heterosexual couple dancing; the accompanying music may be instrumental or sung. Instrumentation, style and lyrics (when present), are evocative in some way of the Northeast region and culture. Participants and consumers of Forró are, for the most part, of the lower, working class, and the majority come from the Northeast region, or descend from Northeasterners. Forró music and dance occurs in Northeastern rural or urban areas, as well as among migrant populations in Southern cities. In the cities, Forró usually is found in working class neighborhoods; dances can be held in private backyards, or in Forró houses, usually as commercial ventures in rented spaces. The social context of a Forró is like an extended family party, and proper, respectful behavior is appreciated and valued. Nevertheless, with the intense migration over the years from the Northeast to the Southern states, and its inclusion in the mass

media, Forró has been adopted by urban middle classes in a variety of contexts, not always related with migrants, as mentioned in the Introduction.

THE TERM *FORRÓ*

The origins and meaning of the term “Forró” are not easily defined. Neither my informants nor scholars are clear or consistent in their use of the word. The flexibility of popular culture, where the term “Forró” originated and is used, should be borne in mind.

The Meaning of Forró in Early Documents

When asked about the meaning of the term, many of my contacts cited Luís da Câmara Cascudo, a well-known Brazilian folklorist, who said that Forró is a contraction of another word: *forrobodó*. This assertion is not found in his 9th edition of the Dictionary of Brazilian Folklore (2000), but the two words are intermingled. In the entry for “Forró” Cascudo says:

Música e dança surgida por volta da segunda metade do século XX, com a migração de nordestinos para Brasília, Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo, que chegava ao auge com a construção da nova capital do país e se espalhava na esteira da corrida imobiliária e da explosão industrial no Centro-Sul.... (Cascudo 2000)

[Forró] Music and dance originated around the second half of the 20th century, because of the migration of Northeasterners to Brasília, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, which was reaching its peak with the construction of the new capital of the country and was spreading with the real estate race and the industrial explosion of the Center-South...

Besides relating Forró with migration, Cascudo directs the reader to other related words such as *choro*, *samba*, *arrasta-pé*. In another entry, *forrobodó*, Cascudo defines it as “entertainment,” “party.”

The term “forrobodó” was commonly used at the turn of the century (19th to 20th) in Brazil, and following the fashion of the time, it gained the attention of musical theater writers and producers. The music theater of that period used to be a sort of “live newspaper”—a close ancestor of the mass media. There was a very famous theatrical play produced in 1912 in Rio de Janeiro, entitled “Forrobodó,” written by Luiz Peixoto and Carlos Bettencourt with music by Chiquinha Gonzaga (1845-1938). The plot was set in that current year, 1912, and was about a party in a supposedly private club in a lower class neighborhood of Rio, with a majority of black attendants. The party for lower class people had live music performance, dancing, abundant drinking, and a dinner at the end of the night. During the play there was always a threat of violence among the characters, but nothing serious. This play was very successful, with a run of more than 1500 performances. In 1994, I interviewed a historian (Dr. Décio de Almeida Prado, 1917-2000) who remembered and sang the title song, “Forrobodó.” This song was taught to Dr. Décio by his father, who saw the play—a good indicator of its popularity. For the critics and audiences of the time, the play was an authentic representation of a forrobodó, a suburban party among lower class people.

This meaning is clearly stated by Cascudo in his forrobodó entry, and documented through many quotations of newspapers of the turn of the century. However, it overlaps with his definition of Forró, when he quotes and agrees with Tinhorão, a famous historian of Brazilian popular music, who said that Forró was entertainment with dance and music for the humble classes who lived in the suburbs of the big cities (Idem). Doing so, Cascudo begins to reveal the difficulties of delimiting the term. At this point, my partial

conclusion about these definitions is that Forró involves music and dance among lower class people.

Another story about the origin and meaning of Forró is related to an English expression used during the construction of the Great Western railroad in the Pernambuco state by the British during the last quarter of the 19th century (1880s on). The company used to throw parties for the workers and posted a sign on the door stating “for all.” As the workers heard its pronunciation they “brazilianized” it – Forró. Cascudo also mentions this in his Forró entry, and suggests that it would be a “natural passage.”¹

Contemporary Meaning of Forró

Among lower class people living in the rural areas of the Brazilian Northeast, where the term originated, Forró (as well as samba and *choro*) designates a dance party in someone’s house. Usually they call the party by the name of the owner of the house or host, or by the site where it is taking place: “*Forró de Mané Vito*” (Mané Vito’s Forró), “*Forró em Limoeiro*” (Forró at Limoeiro). In a small rural community where everybody knows each other, Forró is a bonding occasion in a familiar place such as someone’s home, where music, dance, food and drink are offered and enjoyed. One of my

¹Brazilian television would contribute to the dissemination and acceptance of this etymology of the term. One recent example is a Brazilian movie made for television (ca. 2000) called “*For All – O Trampolim da Vitória*” (For All – The Victory’s Trampoline). The movie is about a North American military base near Natal, the capital of Rio Grande do Norte state in the Brazilian Northeast, during World War II. It narrates the life of soldiers (Brazilians and North-Americans) and their reciprocal adaptation to each others’ cultures. Therefore, the movie is a North-American war-style movie, with music, prostitution, cigarettes, and politics (Mussolini and Getúlio Vargas) in a Brazilian setting. What caught my attention was the overture: a vocal arrangement of a famous forró song recorded by Jackson do Pandeiro (1919-1982) called “*Chiclete com Banana*” (Bubble Gum with Banana) (1959), the only reference to Forró music in the movie; and the title reinforcing the supposed English origin for the word Forró. During the movie, among many parties, there was a particular reference when the director shows the sign on the “ballroom” door announcing a party “for all.”

informants told me that Forró could be held for specific occasions, such as communal activities like house building (using clay and sticks) where the whole community helps. At the close of the construction, it is necessary to make the dirt floor inside the new house very compact; they throw a dance party at night and, as everybody dances, they tap the soil and finish the work. There is someone attending to this process, making the soil wet when needed in order to have the work done properly, while everybody else is having fun and resting after a hard day's work.

When talking about Forró in Brazil, one name continually comes up in conversation, Luiz Gonzaga (1912-1989), the artist responsible for bringing Northeastern dance music into the mainstream of Brazilian popular culture. In an interview for the newspaper *Jornal da Tarde* in 1980 Gonzaga said that:

Forró é dança de ponta de rua, de cabaré, de cachaça, de fole de oito baixos. Era bom. Mas hoje não frequento mais, porque sou cantor de juízo, e Forró é pra cabra mais novo. (19/08/1980 at Vozes do Brasil 1990)

Forró is street-corner dancing, [it is] a cabaret, with alcoholic drink, and button accordion. It was good. But today I do not go anymore, because I am a mature singer, and Forró is for a young man.

Gonzaga uses the adjective “juízo” to describe himself, which means having the ability to make balanced judgments, and it seems that young people, in his opinion, lack this wisdom, and so continue go to Forró. His comments about Forró suggest a derogatory view of it as a somewhat vulgar event (these are connotations of the words “ponta de rua” and “cabaré” in Portuguese) where participants are mostly looking for a good time, and not necessarily great music or dancing. For Gonzaga, the participants of a Forró are too young, and go there primarily to dance and drink. For him, as a mature man in 1980, this time was over, although he confessed that he went to Forrós when he was

younger. Therefore, Gonzaga's view of Forró is in accordance with the definitions provided by Cascudo; forró is a popular event, and he adds, a risky place because people there would not be capable of good judgment since they are young, and often drunk. It is worth noting Gonzaga's specificity about the instrument played in a Forró: button accordion, which was his father's instrument in the Northeastern hinterland.

In my investigation of the meaning of the term "Forró," I interviewed Ari Batera (Aristóteles de Almeida Silva), the son of Pedro Sertanejo—a leading Forró authority in São Paulo. Forró do Pedro Sertanejo (Pedro Sertanejo's Forró) was the first and longest surviving Forró house in São Paulo. It opened in 1965 and lasted until 1992, on Catumbi street, in the Belenzinho neighborhood (it was also known as Catumbi's Forró). Because of this long life, it passed through many phases following mainstream vogues.

For Ari Batera the definition of Forró is threefold: 1) it is a specific rhythm; 2) it is a musical 'genre'; 3) it is a business. Dance is the common denominator. Forró involves dance, most commonly couple dancing, although this is open to exceptions. The rhythm is the fuel for the dance, and is included in a variety of musical genres (*fórró, xote, baião, coco, xaxado, and arrasta-pé*), depending on time and fashion. Dances in which these Northeastern rhythms are prominent are designated as the "genre" Forró by Ari Batera (he says that the 'genre' is "*aquilo que dá vertente*"—something that yields branches). When this Forró settled in the city, within the context of a nightclub (admission charges, the selling of food and drinks, hired musicians,) it turned into a business—the Forró house (Interviews, November 2000).

Ari Batera's definition addresses the dynamic involved in the word, diachronically and synchronically. Diachronically it tracks the formation of Forró as a

musical ‘genre.’ Synchronically, it shows how the three aspects—rhythm, genre and business—go hand-in-hand.

According to Dominique Dreyfus, the main biographer of Gonzaga, Forró is an abbreviation of *forrobodó*; according to her, the word originally designated a dance party, but at the end of the 1970s came to mean a rhythm played during a Forró party, influenced by disco and funk vogues. For Dreyfus, Forró represented another choice of dance among urban people, and Gonzaga became a pioneer of the style when he composed “*Forró de Mané Vito*” in 1949, describing a Forró context. She calls the 1980s the “Forró years” (Dreyfus 1997, p. 274-77). Another researcher, Elba Braga Ramalho analyzes Luiz Gonzaga’s career and music. She says about Forró:

...Gonzaga also created for his audience’s mind, songs which are sketches of Forró in the *sertão*, mainly some of those over-lively events which ended in the intervention of the police because of the excess of *cachaça* drinking, and the introduction of certain forbidden dance genres. (Ramalho 1997, p. 119)

After this, Ramalho quotes and translates “*Forró de Mané Vito*,” as an example of a Forró that ended (probably) because of excessive drinking, and “*Forró do Quelemente*” (Luiz Gonzaga and Zédantas, 1951) as an example of “forbidden” dances in the “family parties” (Idem, p. 120). She also calls attention to the region where Forró take place: the *sertão*, the semi-arid area in the hinterland. Contextualizing Forró in the *sertão* adds another element to characterize the attendants of a Forró and the event itself. People in the Northeastern *sertão* commonly carry weapons (mainly knives). So, if they are the main participants in a Forró situation, where dance and drink are combined, their weapons bring a threat of violence to a Forró context. This “dramatic” aspect, when comically described in lyrics, contributes greatly to the popular stereotypes of the event (Forró as a violent place), which are exploited and fed by the mass media. However,

among Northeasterners, the insiders, a very strong characteristic of Forró is a link with the family unit, where there are ethics, morals and self-control. In all my fieldwork and interviews it was clear that the existence and endurance of Forró was bound up with strong extended family ties, and that “family” can be understood as a migrant community from the same region, the Northeast, or a group of people with the same goal—to dance and have fun.

When I asked my younger informants about the contemporary meaning of the term “Forró,” many of them told me that it is simply a dance party, where any genre of music is welcome. I should say that this openness and flexibility is itself part of Forró’s identity. Thus, a basic, generic definition of Forró would describe an informal dance party, with live music featuring an accordion (or the sound of an accordion provided by a keyboard), where the musicians play mainly genres known in and associated with the Northeast, such as *xote*, *arrasta-pé*, *baião*, and *forró*, as accompaniment for couples dancing.

INSTRUMENTATION

Nowadays, the music played at a Forró can come either from recorded sources or live performances; often, recorded and performed music will be used in casual alternation throughout a night of Forró. Depending on the audience’s socio-economic class associations, the instrumentation of Forró groups can vary, but the trio formation popularized by Luiz Gonzaga in the 1950s, comprising a triangle, accordion and

zabumba,² is seen as the standard model. In the context of lower class migrants in Southern cities since the mid-1990s, electronic keyboards are more commonly found. Often, the keyboard player is the sole performer, with the keyboard playing a synthesized accordion sound over preset rhythms resembling the classic trio instrumentation. Sometimes a saxophone player can be included, playing short solos. In a lower class context in the suburbs of a Northeastern city, quartets comprised of the button accordion, *zabumba*, triangle, and electric bass are typical. The button accordion can be replaced by piano accordion, and sometimes an electric guitar can be added.

In the context of the middle class Northeastern migrants and non-migrants in the South, the classic trio format and placement created by Luiz Gonzaga is dominant: *zabumba* on the left, piano accordion in the middle and triangle on the right side (as seen by the public). However, this formation can vary in non-migrant contexts. In some cases, electric guitar and bass, drumset, and auxiliary percussion including bells, chimes, metal plates, and shakers may be added to the typical core ensemble.

This variety of instrumentation has been a feature of Forró music since its beginning and it has to do, in my opinion, with the environment where it was created - poor communities. They used whatever instruments were at hand—silverware, boxes, gourds, sticks, and, of course, button accordions. Button accordions were quite popular in the countryside during the last quarter of the 19th century. According to the *Enciclopédia da Música Brasileira* (Marcondes 1998), button accordions arrived in Brazil around 1836, supposedly introduced in the South by European immigrants, and were diffused

² The *zabumba* is a double-headed drum that tends to be wider than deeper. It has a hand made version and an industrialized version. It is played with a mallet on the top head and with a thin stick called *bacalhau* on the bottom head.

throughout the country around the time of Paraguay war (1864-1870). Luiz Gonzaga's father was a famous button accordion player. Pedro Sertanejo, a Northeastern migrant and owner of the first successful Forró house in São Paulo (1965 to 1992) was a button accordion player, as was his father. Therefore, at the turn of 19th to 20th century, button accordions were very popular in the Northeast. This popularity of the accordion is confirmed by Gonzaga's comments about Forró above: button accordion (*fole de oito baixos*) was a typical instrument of these "street-corner dances," playing mainly instrumental music, a point of agreement among my informants. Gonzaga and Pedro Sertanejo accompanied their fathers to parties where they learned their skills. Therefore, initially, Forró was an event with mainly instrumental music for dancing, played on the button accordion. Gonzaga shifts to piano accordion later in his life after migrating to Rio de Janeiro, and soon after, he begins to record adding lyrics to his music. Pedro Sertanejo continues to play button accordion, but also follows Gonzaga's new trend of adding lyrics.

Before the advent of accordion, so closely associated with Forró today, the music was performed on a variety of instruments. The *zabumba* ensembles, comprising two or more six-hole cane-like transverse flutes (*pifanos*), deep sounding drums (*zabumba* and *surdo*), and triangle are one important precursor. They supplied music for different communal occasions such as birthdays, baptisms, weddings, religious parties, leisure times, Forró parties, and even harvesting parties such as June festivals (Crook 1991). Guitars and *rabeca* (a country violin) were also used in these events. These *zabumba* ensembles are older than the mass-mediated and accordion-based Forró that is my focus here. Forró as dance parties existed long before the arrival of accordions, the music at

these events thus was played by other instruments, such as those in a *zabumba* ensemble, as well as guitars and rabeca.

The first recordings of Forró music, in the 1920s-40s, have as the instrumentation the *conjunto regional* or *choro* ensemble: guitars (seven and six strings), *cavaquinho* (small four-string guitar), *pandeiro*, (a sort of large tambourine with little jingles around the side), flute, and piano accordion (sometimes a clarinet was added). By the early 1950s, Luiz Gonzaga had created and popularized the trio formation (which, according to my informants, did not exist before), as a way to bring together sounds that were familiar to Northeasterners: *zabumba*, accordion, and triangle. With Gonzaga there was a codification of an ensemble style, a certain repertory of genres, as well as performance style features, that came to be associated with the word Forró, which like the words referring to other major genres such as samba, initially referred simply to a “party,” but came to mean a particular musical genre or at least style complex. Gonzaga serves as the standard for what is known as Forró *pé-de-serra* (bottom-of-the-hill, hill’s foot Forró), meaning “traditional,” “authentic,” or “root” Forró, to distinguish it from other Forró styles that developed later. Owing to Gonzaga’s profound influence on the style complex, the trio is a “requirement” for a Forró, as are his songs, his style, and those of his followers. Even when it is not used, which is the case with keyboard Forró nowadays, the trio is taken as a sonic point of reference.

Also, during the 1950s the *pandeiro* (a large tamborine with jingles) took a prominent role in the overall Forró sound, because of the migration of another Northeastern musician to Rio de Janeiro: Jackson do Pandeiro (José Gomes Filho, 1919-1982). Jackson was a great *pandeiro* player with considerable experience playing in jazz

bands and orchestras. His recordings initially used the *choro* ensemble but also added, in various combinations, accordion, *zabumba*, triangle, brass, flutes, a variety of percussion instruments, electric bass and guitar, traps and other instruments.

In the 1990s, young Northeastern migrants in the South have adopted keyboards as the preferred instrument to play Forró music, thus “modernizing” it. They use the accordion preset timbre and the *fórró* or *baião* preset rhythm that comes on Korg, Yamaha, Cassio, or Roland keyboards. Gonzaga’s trio is thus still a reference because they play the keyboard with accordion timbre. This innovation has to do with bands created in Fortaleza city (Ceará state in the Northeast), by Somzoom Recording Company who sought to “improve” Forró music. This improvement was made mainly through the switch from accordion to keyboards. This is parallel to the switch made by Luiz Gonzaga when he migrated: he abandoned the more “rustic” button accordion for piano accordion because it had a greater range, looked like a portable piano (an instrument of the elite) and was associated with the big city. Northeastern migrants in the South began to favor keyboards because they were seen as a new sound, related with their new environment and experience, and were considered more “modern.” This combination of indices of modernity with those of Northeastern “traditions” is a stylistic constant of Forró, although the specific indices chosen and combinations fashioned vary in different contexts. For example, non-migrant university students involved in a Forró “revival” in São Paulo during the 1990s-2000s, in the Southeast, blended “modern” reggae rhythms with the “traditional” trio instrumentation. During fieldwork in 2000-2001, the variety of band formations coexisting was quite large, depending on social class and locale.

Significant Changes in Forró Instrumentation:

1920s-1940s	Choro ensemble: guitars (6 and 7 strings), cavaquinho, pandeiro, flute, piano accordion (sometimes clarinet)
Luiz Gonzaga's time (1950s)	Trio: piano accordion, zabumba, and triangle
Jackson do Pandeiro's time (1960s)	Pandeiro and other percussion; Gonzaga's Trio, brass, flutes, electric guitar, traps, etc.
1990s	Keyboards and saxophone among lower class Northeasterners; Gonzaga's Trio "revival" among young middle class Southeasterners

THE GENRES

In this section I provide a description of the main musical genres that fall under the umbrella category Forró. These genres have as their primary difference the rhythmic mode played on the percussion instruments, especially the *zabumba*, that “defines” a particular genre and lays the basis for improvisation. However, this is not the only characteristic that distinguishes the Forró genres. Actually, lines between the genres are often blurred, and it is the overall sound complex of Forró as an umbrella, which includes interpretative style, lyric themes, melodic delivery, groove, and swing that define this type of music and differentiate it from other popular musics.

I define Forró music here as a groove meaning a deeply felt style, when perception and feeling are brought together. Once one is in the Forró groove, feeling-full participation is at work. It involves the musicians, the music, and the audience; a dialogue is established and synchronicity is at stake (you are the music). To get into this synchronized mode, another element – swing – plays an important role, because of its “changing sameness” (Amiri Baraka’s term quoted by Keil and Feld 1994, p. 23). Each

of the genres has its own swing (or feel), its own way of dealing with the tension between the rhythms and the beat. The feel of a given genre is created by the temporal relationships between different parts. Dynamism is created when certain parts are articulated on top of or ahead of (pushing) the beat while others balance them by laying slightly behind the beat. Swing is a particular kind of rhythmic feel and there is a continuum between straight and swung rhythmic feel when considering Forró genres (*arrasta-pé* is least swung and *fórró* is the most). When in sync and in the groove, one is drawn into over this “relaxed dynamism,” provided by the rhythmic feel, where there is “repetition and redundancy of information with minor but frequent variations” that can unleash feelings and emotions of pleasure (Keil and Feld, p.23). Grasping this relation between the broader impact of style (groove), swing, and rhythmic feel are key to understand the impact that music has in a human being, as I am going to discuss in the last chapter. Different genres and even different performers of a given genre articulate these micro push-layback relationships differently that generate their own unique feels or forms of musical and dance movement. These temporal aspects are key to creating the sense of groove - of being in the moment with sound, movement and other people – because of the simultaneous sense of familiarity and excitement generated by the overall style.

Forró sound complex is like a country and western complex style. Country bands might play a waltz, two-steps, slow ballads, or different song types and yet most North Americans would be able to recognize any of these as country and western. Rhythm cannot be the only reference to define Forró music because they are very close to each other and it is easy to cross boundaries, making Forró genres flexible and fluid. Hence,

the key when classifying this music is the overall sound complex. For style I use Greg Urban's definition combined with Meyer's: "a general form that is recognizable apart from specific instances in which it is used" and where meaning arise (quoted in Keil and Feld 1994, p. 110). For clarity, I will discuss each of the main Forró genres and styles separately; however, they are so close to each other in their particulars that when the word Forró is mentioned it should effectively evoke all these genres together.

After describing the general characteristics of the various genres I will analyze one example of each in greater detail, in order to highlight particular distinguishing elements. As often as possible, the examples have been drawn from the repertoires of Luiz Gonzaga or Jackson do Pandeiro, since these were the artists who codified Forró music and served as models for subsequent performers. Their repertory thus serves as an anchor for my analysis of Forró music throughout the historical period studied here (1946-2000), although I also examined many other pieces for a deeper and broader understanding. My criteria for choosing a particular song as an example were based upon the relative importance or prominence of the song within its genre, its endurance through time, and its particular characteristics that are indicative of the genre as a whole.

The main genres included under the umbrella of Forró are *baião*, *xote*, *xaxado*, *arrasta-pé*, *coco*, and *forró*. It is also necessary to include a genre called *rojão* that is no longer considered part of Forró, but is closely related. Since Gonzaga, the repertory is primarily vocal, but instrumental pieces are also present, reminiscent of the earlier button accordion styles of Forró. Among these individual genres falling under the general Forró rubric, there are common elements. Most are in 2/4 meter, and they employ forms comprised of alternating refrains and verses. There is, likewise, typically an alternation

between sung and instrumental sections, which is not common in other Brazilian popular music genres. Instrumentation is based on the trio of *zabumba*, accordion and triangle (or at least having this trio as a basic reference). It is usually tonal music, but the use of church modes is a commonly recurring characteristic. Most Forró songs begin with a textual anacrusis set to a musical upbeat, or simply with a musical upbeat if it begins with an instrumental solo. The main chord sequences used are V-I, IV-V-I, sometimes with the minor seventh added to the dominant triad; ii-V-I progressions can also be found. Chords built on the third and sixth scale degrees appear sporadically, as well as interchange between major and minor modes (I-i, IV-iv). Lyrics tend to express Northeasterners' worldview—their memories, observations, their habitus (to use Bourdieu's term). There is always room for virtuosic improvised passages, depending on the skill of the performers. Forró performance typically has an informal aura; the musicians talk to friends among the dancers and audience from the stage, invite other musicians that are not officially performing to join them, and tell picturesque/funny stories over instrumental accompaniments.

In the rhythmic transcriptions below, there is a coded pattern notating the different types of attacks on percussion instruments; it is to be read as follows:

-  Open Stroke
-  Muffled Stroke

BAIÃO

Baião music is in 2/4 meter with a distinguishing rhythmic pattern played by the rhythm section, as seen below. The tempo of the *baião* was typically somewhat slower in the 1950s, ranging between 75 and 130 beats per minute, with an average speed of 90 beats per minute. It got faster throughout the years. Melodies tend to be sung with longer held notes, which does not bring rhythmic contrast between vocal line and the accompaniment,³ in contrast to other genres. *Baião* melodies move smoothly through arpeggios and stepwise motion, they do not require demanding vocal technique, and are easily memorized. In general, lyrics tend to describe very specific elements found in the Northeast, such as a tree, a road, a dialect, and the way they see things like love and sex. Gonzaga was the main interpreter and composer of *baião* music, which is the most recorded genre in his discography. Nowadays, it is rare to have new *baião* compositions.

The example that I use here is “*Juazeiro*,” (1949) composed by Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira. Its main characteristics are the 2/4 meter and slower tempo (91 bpm). Formally it has the following structure, repeated four times:

Introduction	Section A	Section B	Interlude/ Ending
10 bars	8 bars	8 bars	10 bars/9 bars
Accordion solo	Sung solo	Sung solo/choir	Accordion solo/sung

Harmonically, the song is in the key of F-major, and restricted to I, IV, and V chords throughout, with instances of the ii and VI chords in the introduction. Many of these chords add the minor seventh degree. The instrumentation is comprised of piano

³ Depending on the words used and the phonetics of the language, songs with lyrics can add more layers of rhythm and melody to a given piece because of the intrinsic percussive characteristic of consonants and melodic characteristic of vowels.

accordion, triangle, *zabumba*, *pandeiro*, wood blocks, guitar (6-string), and *ganzá* (shaker). The melody is based on arpeggios (triads and tetrads) in ascending and descending motion, and stepwise passages. The rhythm section repeats the characteristic pattern:

The musical notation shows four staves: Triangle, Pandeiro, Zabumba, and Wood Bloks. The Triangle staff has a series of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. The Pandeiro staff has a series of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, and labels 'Fingers', 'Thumb', and 'Wrist' below. The Zabumba staff has a series of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, and labels 'Under (baca)hau' and 'Over' to the right. The Wood Bloks staff has a series of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them.

When discussing Forró music, tempo is important, and it often changes even within a given genre. This is the case with *baião*, as heard on old recordings and more recent ones. “Estrada de Canindé” (1950) has a tempo of 78-79 bpm, “Xote das Meninas” (1953), which despite the “xote” in its name is played with a *baião* rhythm, has a tempo of 84 bpm. “ABC do Sertão” (1953) moves at 129 bpm, and when Luiz Gonzaga recorded with an MPB composer/singer, Raymundo Fagner, in the 1980s, he sang his *baiões* even faster, between 125 and 155 bpm.

Juazeiro – 1949 (see Appendix for scores)

“Juazeiro” (Juazeiro Tree) (Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira)

Introdução (instrumental)

Introduction (instrumental)

Juazeiro, juazeiro

Juazeiro tree, juazeiro tree

Me arresponda por favor

Answer me please

Juazeiro velho amigo

Juazeiro old friend

Onde anda o meu amor

Where is my love?

Ah Juazeiro (coro)
Ela nunca mais voltou (solo)
Viu juazeiro (coro)
Onde anda o meu amor?(solo)

Interlúdio – acordeon

Juazeiro não te alembra
Quando o nosso amor nasceu
Toda tarde à tua sombra
Cunversava ela e eu

Ai juazeiro (coro)
Como dói a minha dor (solo)
Viu juazeiro (coro)
Onde anda o meu amor? (solo)

Interlúdio – acordeon

Juazeiro seja franco
Ela tem um novo amor
Se não tem porque tu choras
Solidário à minha dor

Ai juazeiro (coro)
Não me deixe assim roer (solo)
Ai juazeiro (coro)
Tô cansado de sofrer (solo)

Interlúdio – acordeon

Juazeiro meu destino
Tá ligado junto ao teu
No teu tronco tem dois nomes
Ela mesmo é que escreveu

Ai juazeiro (coro)
Eu num güento mais roer (solo)
Ai juazeiro (coro)
Eu prefiro inté morrer(solo)

Coda
Ai juazeiro, ai juazeiro, ai juazeiro
Ai juazeiro (solo e coro)

Oh Juazeiro (choir)
 She never came back (solo)
 See juazeiro (choir)
 Where is my love? (solo)

Interlude – accordion

Juazeiro don't you remember
 When our love began?
 Every afternoon under your shade
 She and I talked

Oh juazeiro (choir)
 How my pain hurts (solo)
 See juazeiro (coro)
 Where is my love?(solo)

Interlude – accordion

Juazeiro be honest
 She has a new love
 If she doesn't why do you cry
 Sympathetically with my pain?

Oh juazeiro (choir)
 Don't let me suffer (solo)
 Oh juazeiro (choir)
 I'm tired of suffering (solo)

Interlude – accordion

Juazeiro my destiny
 Is linked with yours
 There are two names on your trunk
 She wrote them herself

Oh juazeiro (choir)
 I can suffer no more (solo)
 Oh juazeiro (choir)
 I even prefer to die (solo)

Ending
 Oh juazeiro, oh juazeiro, oh juazeiro
 Oh juazeiro (solo and choir)

Background Information on *Baião*

It is very well known that Luiz Gonzaga “invented” *baião*. However, he based the genre on previous models. Gonzaga himself said that he was inspired by the viola (a ten-string guitar characteristic of “roots” country music) players in a *repente* (improvisation), when they played instrumental interludes between the players’ lyric improvisations. These instrumental interludes were called *baião* or *rojão* (according to Cascudo).

I interviewed Sebastião Marinho, the president of the União dos Cantadores Repentistas e Apologistas do Nordeste (Union of Improvisers and Apologists of the Northeast) in São Paulo. He demonstrated his style of strumming the guitar intertwined with rhythmic knocks with his nails on the body of the instrument (a technique that probably originated with Spanish, flamenco techniques); this was an older style of guitar playing during improvisations, common at the time of Gonzaga’s youth.⁴ According to Marinho, Gonzaga took the *baião* rhythm from these knocks. In the improvisation (*cantoria* or *repente*), the word *baião* designates the whole instrumental section between improvised sung lyrics. It can also connote each improviser’s turn as soloist during the section. Gonzaga used the same word, *baião*, to name a new genre with the specific rhythm described above (Interview, January 24, 2001).

The rhythms that Sebastião Marinho knocks on his guitar are not exactly Gonzaga’s *baião* rhythm but they are similar, and could well be a source for its creation.

⁴ His demonstration reminded me of Spanish guitar playing style.

Examples:



Looking at other sources, such as Alvarenga (1982) and the *Enciclopédia da Música Brasileira* (Marcondes 1998), *baião* can be a synonym for *baiano* and it is a dance in the Northeast related with *lundu*.⁵ It was dance and music at the same time. A couple used to dance with each other, tapping, clapping, playing castanets⁶ and giving each other *umbigadas*.⁷ The music could be instrumental, improvised by guitar players, or sung.

The misuse of *baião* and *baiano* as synonyms is noted by Larry Crook. He studied the *Zabumba* ensemble in the Northeast, which probably was brought to Brazil by the Portuguese as early as the 16th or 17th century. It comprises mainly percussion instruments such as drums (two bass drums: *surdo* and *zabumba*, and two military-style snare drums), two triangles, and two *pífanos* (cane-like transverse flutes), which were added later, in Cascudo's opinion. Crook, when discussing *Zabumba* ensembles in Caruaru, observes that *baião* and *baiano* are not the same thing, at least in rhythmic terms:

Several other authors may have mistakenly labeled the *baião* and *baiano* as synonymous. As will be described below, the latter genre is a fast march-related

⁵ According to Bruno Kiefer *lundu* comes directly from the rhythms played on percussion instruments by black slaves (called *batuques*). In the 18th century, the dance was an adaptation of *fandango* choreography to the black way of dancing to *batuque*. The "song" type (*lundu-canção*) that arose in the 19th century, with lyrics and accompanied by guitar, will be well-known and wide spread even in the Portuguese court (1977).

⁶ Another element of Spanish origin.

⁷ *Umbigadas*: the touch or the intention to touch the belly buttons between two dancers, usually of opposite sex.

genre which, at least in Caruaru and other areas with which I am familiar, is quite distinct from the *baião* (p. 235-36).

Crook basically shows these two rhythms:

Baião: (average = 109 bpm)

The musical notation for *Baião* is presented in two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Surdo' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Zabumba'. Both staves are in 2/4 time. The Surdo part consists of a repeating pattern of a half note followed by a quarter note. The Zabumba part consists of a repeating pattern of a quarter note followed by an eighth note, then a quarter note followed by an eighth note. A 'Variation' section is indicated by a double bar line, showing a different rhythmic pattern for both instruments.

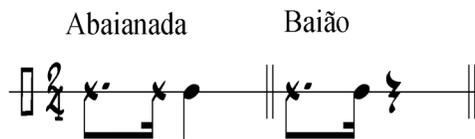
Baiano: (average = 156 bpm)

The musical notation for *Baiano* is presented in four staves. The top staff is labeled 'Tarol', the second 'Pratos', the third 'Surdo', and the bottom 'Zabumba'. All staves are in 2/4 time. The Tarol part consists of a repeating pattern of eighth notes. The Pratos part consists of a repeating pattern of quarter notes. The Surdo part consists of a repeating pattern of a half note followed by a quarter note. The Zabumba part consists of a repeating pattern of a quarter note followed by an eighth note, then a quarter note followed by an eighth note.

Baião and *baiano* are, according to Crook, fast rhythms (145-156 bpm) in the *Zabumba* ensemble, and if we compare them “[in *baiano*] there is no use of systematic syncopation at the sixteenth note level comparable to that found in the *baião* related pieces” (Crook, p. 248). Therefore, in musical terms, *baião* and *baiano* are not the same.

However, Crook is careful to point that there are significant regional variations, and thus it is possible that in other regions *baião* and *baiano* were the same thing.

Nevertheless, in the *zabumba* ensemble the *baião* rhythm played nowadays comes from an older rhythm called *abaianada*:



The similarity between the two rhythms (*abaianada* and *baião*) in the *zabumba* ensemble is striking, although according to Crook’s research, the *baião* rhythm in these groups is associated with commercial music, presumably Luiz Gonzaga’s earliest recordings (Crook 1991, p. 200). So, while contemporary *zabumba* musicians may have learned their version of *baião* from Gonzaga’s recordings, Gonzaga may have fashioned his *baião* from the earlier *zabumba* genres. Gonzaga himself admits that he was influenced by *zabumba* ensembles, since he used to play *zabumba* in them and “When I decided to make the *baião* I remembered the *zabumba*” (Crook, p. 235). It is not possible to point to just one musical element as the crucial influence on Gonzaga’s *baião*. He had been exposed to many different genres, all of which provided sources for his new synthesis.

Baião gained international exposure in movies and also through the recordings of Humberto Teixeira and Carmélia Alves. Humberto Teixeira was the first of Luiz Gonzaga’s partners. He left the partnership to become a federal deputy in 1953. As such, he got the approval of a cultural incentive law through which he could send groups of Brazilian musicians and performers to different parts of the world, thus diffusing

Brazilian music. Carmélia Alves, the “Queen of *Baião*” toured Europe and even the USSR singing and dancing *baião*. In 1949, an Italian movie called “Arroz Amargo” (Bitter Rice), directed by Giuseppe de Santis, was released; it featured the actress Silvana Mangano singing a *baião* called “*Baião de Ana*,” composed by V. Roman and F. Gionda. In 1953, the Brazilian movie “O Cangaceiro” (The Bandit) won a prize at the Cannes Festival, France. It had as its opening song “*Mulhé Rendeira*” (Lace Woman), a well-known anonymous song played, in the movie, with *baião* rhythm and style. There are recordings of Japanese versions of *baião* hits interpreted by Keiko and Kuta such as “*Baião de Dois*,” and “*Paraíba*.” Carmen Miranda sang an English version of “*Baião*” in the movie “Nancy goes to Rio,” accompanied by the Vic Shoen Orchestra, Bando da Lua and the Andrews Sisters, called “*Baião Ca-Room’Pa Pa*.” Dizzy Gillespie recorded “*Pau de Arara*” on an undated 45 rpm disc on the German Phillips label. There is also a French recording of “*Cintura Fina*” (Ceinture Fine) called *baïon (baião)*.

An important figure in the brief history of *baião* is Luís Vieira, called the “Prince of *Baião*.” He was one of the few artists besides Luiz Gonzaga who composed *baião* in the 1950s. However, it is interesting to note how *baião* is performed in his recordings. Lyrics tend to express not only the Northeastern worldview, but also a more general and stereotyped, hinterland, country view. They talk about an idyllic countryside and country life, where the countryman is happy with his simple house and simple life. Vieira’s lyrics suggest that his urban audience harbored a certain nostalgia, or even envy, for the rustic lifestyle. Instruments used in Vieira’s recorded *baião* include: bass drum, triangle, agogô, accordion, guitars (6- and 7-string), trumpet, flute, clarinet and bass clarinet. One of his songs from 1952, “*Chova ou Faça Sol*” (Rain or Sunshine) has accordion, triangle, six-

string guitar, electric guitar and bass, bass clarinet and some sort of synthesizer or organ. Although singing in a “caipira” (country) style about Northeastern droughts, the overall sound is strikingly different for that time, yet still classified as *baião*. Considering that Luiz Vieira and Carmélia Alves were part of the *baião* dynasty and were “crowned” by Luiz Gonzaga, I assume that Gonzaga agreed with these stylistic innovations and approved of them as a way to spread his music.

Going still further afield, some critics assert that “Save the Last Dance for me” by The Drifters (Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman), “Stand by Me” by Ben King, and “She Loves You” by Lennon and McCartney were influenced by *baião*. Listening to these recordings, one can find *baião* rhythmic influences, but not Forró music in general (style, swing, and groove). It is apparent, though, that the international exposure that *baião* gained through the mass media was used in various ways by various musicians, through borrowing and combining in the realm of commercial popular music, making explicit how important and popular *baião* was.

XOTE

Xote is in 2/4 meter, with a distinguishing rhythmic pattern played in the rhythm section, as notated below. *Xote* is the slowest of all Forró genres, with tempos around 70 bpm. It can be played faster nowadays, but not faster than 78-80 bpm. As in *baião*, there is a tendency to alternate vocal and instrumental sections, solo and choir. *Xotes* tend to have rests (stops) that can last from one to three beats in length. These interruptions are more likely to happen in a *xote* than in any other genre under the Forró umbrella. The melody tends to be sung in arpeggios and repeated notes, and interpreted in a smooth

fashion. Most of its lyrics talk about love and love-related themes, in the way that Northeasterners see and feel it, which means that the metaphors and images recalled are strongly associated with their environment and lifestyle.

Instrumentation is based on the *conjunto regional* (regional ensemble)⁸ or *choro* ensemble, with the addition of triangle, cowbell and possibly a piano (pandeiro and cavaquinho are not typically present). The accordion accompaniment stresses the upbeats, playing chords there. This emphasis on the upbeat is the link between *xote* and reggae that will be exploited in the middle-class university Forró “revival.” In the case of *xote* there is also a swing feel applied to the last eighth note, as if it has an accent. The accordion is the instrument that most emphasizes this, followed by the triangle and the rhythm played on the bottom head of zabumba (this is played with a flexible stick called *bacalhau*) which produces a higher pitched sound, calling attention to it and hence, emphasizing it (see the zabumba variation below). Also, the singer emphasizes the upbeats in the vocal line, and often interpreters will drag or swing it a bit, thus making it sound even more like a reggae groove.

Many *xotes* were recorded by Gonzaga, and throughout the years *xote* was a genre that influenced and was adapted to other styles. Nowadays, among the middle class university students in the southeast who participate in Forró, this is the most popular genre; most of the new Forró compositions fall into the *xote* category. Of all the genres under the Forró umbrella, *xote* is the most popular among practitioners. One of my informants, a dancer from Recife, in the Pernambuco state (Northeast), told me that *xote*

⁸ *Conjunto regional* was defined by Dominginhos as an ensemble that plays *choro* and accompany singers. It has 6- and 7-string guitars, cavaquinho, pandeiro, flute and accordion. It is possible to add a clarinet.

is the “bolero” of the Northeast, because its lyrics “talk about love, overwhelming passions and prohibited love.” She also noted that “it has a strong beat” (informal conversation, 2000).

The example selected to represent *xote* is *Cintura Fina* (Narrow Waist), recorded in 1950 by Luiz Gonzaga and Zédantas. It is in 2/4, and displays the slower tempo of the genre (74 bpm). The tonality is F mixolydian and the structure below is performed once through, with a modified repetition; in the repeat there is no section C, it moves straight from section B to the ending. The interlude section combines the melody of the introduction and the melody of section B.

Intro	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section B	Interlude/Ending
8 bars	10 bars	8 bars	8 bars	8 bars	16 bars/16 bars
Instrumental accordion solo	Sung solo	Sung solo/choir	Sung solo	Sung solo/choir	Instrumental/sung solo

The harmonic progression is almost identical to that found in the previous example of *baião*, but includes more minor chords, such as ii, iii, and vi. The addition of the minor seventh to the triads is more likely to be found in tonic and dominant chords. Instrumentation found in this example is guitar (6- and 7-string), triangle, cowbell, piano accordion, zabumba, clarinet, and probably a piano. Clarinet, piano and 7-string guitar are not very common in Forró music of the 1950s, but they still make an occasional appearance. The melody of *Cintura Fina* is based on arpeggios (triads and tetrads) in ascending and descending motion, and repeated notes. There are very few scale passages,

but the tune is easy to sing and memorize. A notable feature of the melody is the stops, planned measured interruptions in the flow of the music.

Rhythm section:

The musical score for the rhythm section consists of four staves. The top staff is for the Agogô, showing a melodic line with rests and accents. The second staff is for the Triangle (variation), featuring a rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks. The third and fourth staves are for the Zabumba, showing a simple rhythmic pattern. The score is divided into four measures, with the first measure being the main theme and the following three labeled as Variation 1, Variation 3, and Variation 3.

Cintura Fina – 1950 (see Appendix for scores)

“Cintura Fina” (Narrow Waist) (Luiz Gonzaga and Zédantas)

Introdução (instrumental terminando com breque) Introduction (instrumental ending with a stop)

Estrofe 1:

Minha morena venha prá cá

Prá dançar xote se deite em meu cangote e pode cochilar

Tu és muié prá home nenhum butá defeito

Por isso sastifeito com você vou dançá (breque)

Strophe 1:

My tan girl come closer

To dance *xote* lay on my shoulder and have a nap

You are a woman with whom no man can find flaws

Hence, happy, I will dance with you (stop)

Refrão (solo):

Vem cá cintura fina cintura de pilão

Cintura de menina vem cá meu coração (coro)

Vem cá cintura fina cintura de pilão

Cintura de menina vem cá meu coração

Refrain (solo):

Come narrow waist, pestle waist

Miss’s waist, come closer my sweetheart (choir)

Come narrow waist, pestle waist

Miss’s waist, come closer my sweetheart

Estrofe 2:

Quando eu abarco essa cintura de pilão

Strophe 2:

When I embrace this pestle waist

Fico todo arrepiado quase morro de paixão
E fecho os óio quando sinto teu calor
Pois teu corpo só foi feito pros cochilo do amô (breque)

I get goosebumps and almost die of passion

I close my eyes when I feel your heat
 Because your body was made just for love naps (stop)

Refrão

Refrain

Interlúdio

Interlude

Estrofe 3:

Strophe 3:

Minha morena venha prá cá
Prá dançar xote se deite em meu cangote e pode cochilar
Tu és muié pra home nenhum butá defeito

My tan girl come closer
 To dance *xote* lay on my shoulder and have a nap
 You are a woman with whom no man can find flaws

Por isso sastifeito com você vou dancá (breque)

Hence, happy, I will dance with you (stop)

Refrão

Refrain

Coda:

Ending:

Oh vem cá cintura
Cintura, cinturinha
Cintura cintadinha
Fina, fina, fina, fina
Cintura inforcadinha
Bem fininha de pilão
Cintura de menina
Vem cá meu coração

Oh, come waist
 Waist, little waist
 Very “waisted” waist
 Narrow, narrow, narrow, narrow
 “Hanged” waist
 Very narrow as pestle’s waist
 Miss’s waist
 Come closer my sweetheart

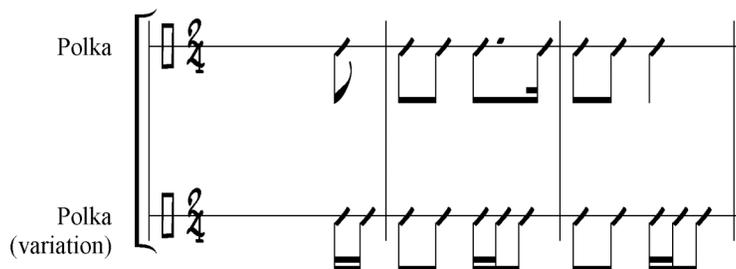
Oh vem cá cintura
Cintura cinturinha
Cintura cintadinha
Fina, fina finazinha (sumindo)
Cintura inforcadinha
Bem fininha de pilão
Cintura de menina
Vem cá meu coração
Oh...

Oh, come waist
 Waist, little waist
 Very ‘waisted’ waist
 Narrow, narrow, very narrow (fading out)
 “Hanged” waist
 Very narrow as pestle’s waist
 Miss’s waist
 Come closer my sweetheart
 Oh...

Background information on Xote

The name *xote* is a shorter form of the European *schottisch* in Brazil. Inside the country there are differences between a *xote* played in the Northeast region and in the South, which was the focus of European (mostly German) immigration. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001) describes the *schottisch* as a “round dance, like a polka, but slower.” The connection between polka and *schottisch* seems close, but no agreement has been reached among researchers. However, it is worth noting that the polka was very widely diffused and appreciated in Brazil through performance, and the rhythms associated with the polka after 1850 in the above-cited dictionary (although they do not specify which type of polka) are interestingly close to the rhythm that I propose as the distinguishing feature of Northeastern *xote*. In the case of the polka rhythmic variation below, for example, if you shift it forward in time by one eighth-note, making the second eighth-note of the bar beat one, the result is the *xote* rhythmic pattern played by the zabumba.

Polka rhythm:



According to Cascudo (2000), the *xote* in the South has a lively rhythm in 2/4 meter and a fast tempo. This is very different from the swung Northeastern *xote*; it seems

that at least by 1851 this slower form was present, as observed by Rio Branco's Viscount.⁹ He said that it was not as delirious as a polka and it was full of swing and had grace, more in accordance with Brazilian taste (quoted by Cascudo 2000). Therefore, as Northeastern *xote* developed through the years, it likely grew gradually slower in tempo from its original polka tempo, and it is quite possible that the first beat moved around due to accents, styles and interpretations, as I showed above. This sort of development within a certain genre seems to be common in popular musics.

Another instance of rhythmic transformation in relation to *xote* is seen in its links with reggae, a connection largely established by Gilberto Gil and Dominginhos in the 1970s. “*Só Quero um Xodó*” was conceived as an *arrasta-pé* by Dominginhos and Anastácia, and recorded by Marinês as such. In 1973, Gilberto Gil recorded “*Só Quero um Xodó*” in a *xote* version, but with the addition of a reggae swing feel to the characteristic *xote* rhythm. At that time, Gilberto Gil was involved with the Black movement and with Bob Marley.¹⁰ As another example of this rhythmic flexibility in Forró genres, the song called “*Xote das Meninas*” (Girls' *Xote*) was recorded by Luiz Gonzaga as a *baião*, but later artists played it as a *xote*, probably influenced by the word *xote* in the title. Such changes typically involve the rhythmic feel rather than other musical facets. The rhythms that characterize the genres are also the vehicles for transforming a piece from one genre to another. This is facilitated by the similarity among the characteristic rhythmic patterns in each genre and the fluidity of the genres, showing clearly the dynamics of oral transmission at play. Considering that this music is

⁹ Rio Branco's Viscount was an important noble figure when Brazil was in its last days as a Portuguese colony.

¹⁰ Gilberto Gil also improvises in this song with vocables, and according to Severiano and Mello, this sort of improvisation is an influence of African dialects (1998, p. 194)

not transmitted through scores, but rather through performances and recordings, the dynamics involved are very different. There is much more freedom and flexibility in the way musicians interpret it. A wide range of variations is permissible, making these genres somewhat interchangeable and facilitating the adoption of other elements within them.

When university students rediscovered Forró music in the 1990s, the link between *xote* and reggae was reinvigorated, and bands from the student movement recorded and composed *xotes* with a reggae feel. According to Mundicarmo Ferretti (1988, p. 81), as early as the 1980s, Anastácia, one of Dominginhos' partners, called attention to the proximity and even excessive similarity between *xote* and reggae. As noted earlier, both *xote* and reggae have a tendency to stress the upbeat. In Brazil, Jamaican reggae remains a popular genre, and there is also Brazilian reggae that has reggae rhythms and instrumentation, but the lyrics are in Portuguese and about Brazilian topics.

XAXADO

Xaxado is the least commonly played of the Forró genres, and the least popular. The music is in 2/4 meter with a signature rhythmic pattern played by the rhythmic section, as notated below. The tempo is fast, and varies little (105 or 106 bpm) in the few examples of *xaxado* music. The interpolation of vocal and instrumental parts, solo and ensemble parts are not as common here as in the other genres. Melodies tend to rely on the rhythm of the words, and sometimes the words tend to be sung in a more speech-like way, yielding many layers of rhythmic friction and contrast. This style of percussive syllabic vocal delivery is present in another Northeastern genre called *embolada* (a tongue-twisting singing style accompanied by pandeiro). The lyrics of *xaxado* tend to

describe or tell stories about bandits (*cangaceiros*) and banditry (*cangaço*). The accordion is a featured instrument on the few extant *xaxado* recordings. The only recorded *xaxado* that I have encountered were by Luiz Gonzaga and Marinês (who was called the “Queen of *Xaxado*”) in the 1950s and 60s.

Below I discuss “*Olha a Pisada*” (Look at the Tapping) by Luiz Gonzaga and Zedantas, recorded in 1954. The basic characteristics of this example are the 2/4 meter and the faster tempo (around 105 bpm). It has a broken structure because of the contrasting differences among its sections. The tonality moves between G major and G Mixolydian. Similar to *xote*, there are stops, or rests, at certain points in *xaxado*, as heard in this example. The structure of the composition is shown below; it has an entire section in which the well-known tune, popular among bandits, *Mulhé Rendeira* (anonymous), is inserted as a musical quotation. After performing the whole structure, a repetition takes place starting with section A through the last section C. An ending is performed with the quotation of *Mulhé Rendeira*, with a stop at the end and a short speech (not very common in Brazilian popular music).

Intro	Quotation	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section C	Interlude (quotation melody)
11 bars	10 bars	16 bars	7 bars	9 bars	10 bars	9 bars	10 bars
Accordion solo	Sung solo (almost spoken)	Sung solo	Accordion solo				

Harmonically, there is an interchange between major and minor modes (I and i and IV and iv). Minor sevenths are used with the V and I chords, but not consistently.

The introduction has a pedal note on the tonic chord. Instrumentation is scant: triangle, zabumba, piano accordion and agogô. The melody comprises repeated notes, triads and tetrads ascending and descending, short scalar passages and a tendency toward spoken, rather than sung, lyrics.

Rhythm section:

The image shows a musical score for the rhythm section of a song. It consists of three staves: Agogô, Triangle, and Zabumba. The music is in 2/4 time. The score is divided into an introduction and a 'Variation' section. In the introduction, the Agogô plays a single note, the Triangle plays a single note, and the Zabumba plays a single note. In the variation, the Agogô plays two notes, the Triangle plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, and the Zabumba plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

In this specific song, there is no use of choir, it is all Gonzaga’s solo voice or accordion solos. Overall, this example has more sung parts than instrumental ones, and the singing is more word-driven with emphasis on word delivery (in this case telling Lampião’s story, a famous Northeastern bandit). The harmony mirrors the play between scale systems and sections of different lengths. The G tonic and its E-minor relative switch roles. It is interesting to note the “drone” over the tonic in the C section, which resembles the *repentes* (improvisations) that are common in the Northeastern region. Melodies are based mostly on repeated notes, and stops are used fairly often. Instrumentation is restricted to only a few instruments.

Olha a Pisada - 1954 (see Appendix for scores)

“Olha a Pisada” (Look at the Tapping) (Luiz Gonzaga and Zédantas)

*Introdução (instrumental)**Citação:**Ô ô mule rendeira**Ô ô mule rendá**Chorô por mim não fica**Soluçô vai no borná**(breque)**Estrofe 1:**Assim era que cantavam**Os cabras de Lampião**Dançando e xaxando**Nos Forró do sertão**Entrando numa cidade**Ao sair dum povoado**Cantando a “Rendeira”**Se danavam no xaxado**Estrofe 2:**Eu que me criei na pisada**Vendo os cangaçeiros na pisada**Danço o sucesso na pisada de Lampião**Refrão:**Olha a pisada! Tum, tum, tum, tum**Olha a pisada! Tum, tum, tum, tum**Olha a pisada! Tum, tum, tum, tum**Olha a pisada de Lampião**Estrofe 3:**(fala entoada):**Em Pernambuco ele nasceu**Lá no Sergipe ele morreu**(cantando)O seu reinado a ninguém deu**(breque)**Mas o xaxado (breque)**tem que sê meu tem**Tem que sê meu tem**Tem que sê meu**Refrão**Interlúdio(melodia da Citação)**Estrofe 1 e 2**Refrão*

Introduction (instrumental)

Quotation:

Ô ô lace woman

Ô ô woman who laces

[If you] cried for me you don't stay

[If you] sobbed you go in my feedbag

(stop)

Strophe 1:

This is how they sang

The men of Lampião

Dancing and “xaxading”

In the sertão's Forró

Entering in a city

Leaving a community

Singing the “lace woman”

They had fun in the *xaxado*

Strophe2:

I who was raised tapping

Seeing the bandits tapping

[I]Dance the fame on Lampião's tapping

Refrain:

Look at the tapping! Tum, tum, tum, tum

Look at the tapping! Tum, tum, tum, tum

Look at the tapping! Tum, tum, tum, tum

Look Lampião's tapping

Strophe 3:

(“chanting”):

He was born in Pernambuco

He died in Sergipe

(singing)He didn't give his kingdom to anyone (stop)

But the *xaxado* (stop)

It has to be mine, it has

It has to be mine, it has

It has to be mine

Refrain

Interlude (Quotation's melody)

Strophe 1 and 2

Refrain

Estrofe 3

Refrão

Citação

Fala: “essa é que é a ‘schstória!’ (arpejo e acorde no acordeon)

Strophe 3

Refrain

Quotation

Speech: “this is the story!” (arpeggio and chord in the accordion)

Background information on *Xaxado*

This is a dance music genre linked in people’s minds with a legendary bandit named Lampião, who popularized it, although it existed before him and has strong indigenous influence. Lampião is part of a history of banditry in the Northeast called *cangaço*. His activities lasted from the 1910s to 1938, when Lampião and his group were killed. Originally, *xaxado* was a male dance. According to researchers, Lampião and his group danced it using their muskets as surrogate “female partners” (although they had women in their group). The music for the dance was probably provided by button accordion (apparently Lampião himself could play the instrument), without lyrics (but *Mulhé Rendeira* was their favorite tune). The *xaxado* dance of those days consisted of two lines of dancers. Most of the movement was in their legs, as well as tapping and dragging their feet. They used to wear an all-leather sandal called *alpercatas* or *alparcatas*; supposedly the name of the dance is onomatopoeic for the sound the sandals make during the dance. It is possible that *xaxado* (dance and music) is closely related to a style of war songs called *parraxaxá*, sung by bandits during battle (Cascudo 2000).

Lampião’s legend is linked with images of violence in the Northeast, and contributed to the stereotype of Northeasterners as violent people. However, there is a playful image too: the romanticized outlaw bandit group having fun singing, dancing, and playing music together. Throughout the years, the violent image associated with Northeasterners and *Cangaçeiros* yielded to this more playful image, to the point of using

the name of Lampião and Maria Bonita (his wife) to indicate the male and female restrooms in the Forró houses. In the same fashion, lyrics talking about violence tended to disappear in Forró, yielding to more romantic and funny themes. I think that the images of violence image disappear progressively with the migration and the adaptation of the migrants to an industrialized place such as São Paulo. The habit of carrying weapons was connected to the environment and survival needs in the Northeast. These needs changed in the big city. When Luiz Gonzaga or Marinês interpret *xaxados* the theme is most of the time related with *cangaço*. As we shall see, the Lampião legend played an important role in Forró imagery. Gonzaga and his followers used a costume based on Lampião's hat and jacket, and statues of Lampião are seen in Forró contexts as icons of the Northeast, but little by little, it was the more benign aspects of Lampião's image that were emphasized in Southern cities and the violent aspects were down played.

ARRASTA-PÉ (or *marcha junina*, or *marchinha junina* [June march])

Arrasta-pé seems to be the oldest style of Forró music. It is associated with the festivals of June, when three Catholic saints have their feast days. In all likelihood, it was mainly an instrumental genre in the past, although it became a vocal genre after Gonzaga. It is associated with harvesting, and with the rainy season in the Northeast. The dance suggests the influence of the French *pas-des-quatre* or quadrille dance. *Arrasta-pés* usually are in 4/4 (the only Forró genre in this meter) and faster tempos (around 112-158 bpm). Unlike some other Forró genres, the typical tempo of *arrasta-pés* did not change over the years. The characteristic rhythm notated below is basically a type of march. There is here, more than in the other genres, an emphasized alternation of vocal solo and

choir parts, resembling the quadrille dance, with its two lines of dancers who perform some steps separated, by themselves, and others together, embraced or hand in hand, as in antiphonal singing. Instrumental interludes, usually with accordion solos, are a necessary section in *arrasta-pé*, probably a holdover from its instrumental origins and an influence of Luiz Gonzaga's main instrument. Melody tends to be sung smoothly, with a nostalgic air for Brazilians who participated in Saint John's parties in their youth. Lyrics address a variety of topics associated with Northeastern contexts; many of them tend to describe a Saint John's party, or a Saint John's night, which contributes to the nostalgic feelings that it may provoke. Instrumentation is based on the standard trio, with guitars added. This genre is a favorite of accordion players, since it allows virtuosic displays although it is more popular among musicians in live performances than in the mass media.

The example discussed here is *São João na Roça* (Saint John Party in the Country), a song composed by Luiz Gonzaga and Zédantas in 1952. The basic characteristics are the 4/4 meter and a tempo of around 141 bpm. It is in D major, and follows a structure that goes the first time from the Intro to section B1 and then repeats sections A, B and B1. After this repetition, there is an interlude with the melody of section B, one more repetition of section A and then an ending with the same melody of the introduction.

Introduction	Section A	Section B	Section B1	Interlude/Ending
8 bars	8 bars	8 bars	8 bars	8 bars/8 bars
Accordion solo	Sung solo	Sung solo	Solo/choir	Accordion solo

Harmonically, it is based on ii-V-I sequences with much less use of IV chord and very few vi chords. Minor seventh degrees are restricted to a few I and V chords. The melody is basically constructed over repeated notes and there is a tendency toward descending lines. There is balance between arpeggios and scale passages. All sections begin with an upbeat/anacrusis. There is an emphasized interplay between solo and choir singing, resembling quadrille dance steps. Considering the genre's origins in instrumental music, it is interesting that in this particular example Luiz Gonzaga plays few instrumental sections in it.

Rhythm section:



São João na Roça – 1952 (see Appendix for score)

“São João na Roça” (Saint John’s Party in the Country) (Luiz Gonzaga and Zédantas)

Introdução (instrumental)

Introduction (instrumental)

Estrofe 1 (primeira vez solo, segunda vez coro):

Strophe 1 (first time solo, second time choir):

A fogueira tá queimando

The woodfire is burning

Em homenagem a São João

In tribute to Saint John

O Forró já começou

The Forró already began

Vamo gente rapapé nesse salão

Let’s “drag the foot” in this ballroom

Estrofe 2 (solo)

Strophe 2 (solo)

Dança Joaquim com Zabé

Joaquim dances with Zabé

<i>Luiz cum Yayá</i>	Luiz with Yayá
<i>Dança Janjão com Raqué</i>	Janjão dances with Raqué
<i>E eu cum Sinhá</i>	And I with Sinhá
<i>Traz a cachaça Mané</i>	Bring the [alcoholic] drink Mané
<i>Eu quero vê, quero vê paia voá</i>	I want to see, I want to see “straw flying”
<i>Estrofe 3</i>	Strophe 3
<i>Dança Joaquim com Zabé (coro)</i>	Joaquim dances with Zabé (choir)
<i>Luiz com Iaiá (solo)</i>	Luiz with Iaiá (solo)
<i>Dança Janjão com Raqué (coro)</i>	Janjão dances with Raqué (choir)
<i>E eu com Sinhá (solo)</i>	And I with Sinhá (solo)
<i>Traz a cachaça Mané (coro)</i>	Bring the [alcoholic]drink Mané (choir)
<i>Eu quero vê, quero vê paia voá (coro)</i>	I want to see, I want to see “straw flying” (choir)
<i>Estrofe 1, 2 e 3</i>	Strophes 1, 2, and 3
<i>Interlúdio (melodia da estrofe 2)</i>	Interlude (strophe 2’s melody)
<i>Estrofe 1</i>	Strophe 1
<i>Coda (instrumental, igual à Introdução)</i>	Ending (instrumental, same as Introduction)

Background Information on Arrasta-pé

There is not much information about *arrasta-pé* (literally, “foot-dragging”), which derives its name from the associated dance. It is a march played during June festivals for the three saints - Anthony, John, and Peter - accompanied by quadrille-style dancing. According to *The New Grove Dictionary*, quadrille dance was in vogue in France in 1745 and in England in 1815; hence it can be assumed that it was introduced in Brazil around the same period as a dance for elites. *Arrasta-pé* is a very important genre in the further development of Forró since it is an instrumental music played on an accordion during the June festivals. Note that both Luiz Gonzaga’s and Pedro Sertanejo’s fathers were button accordion players of instrumental music; it can be assumed that *arrasta-pé* formed a part of their repertoire. According to Crook in reference to Zabumba ensembles (1991), *arrasta-pé* is an opportunity for the musicians to develop and display

their skills and virtuosity. In my childhood this was the case among accordion players in the June festivals. Musicians would often improvise on this genre throughout an entire night.

This genre connects Forró closely to the religious parties in the Northeast and, hence, with issues of religion. Although most Brazilians are Catholic, according to Kent Maynard (1985) a sort of popular religion arose among mainly the poor population involving a mosaic of different and even contradictory beliefs. In the case of Northeast Brazil, popular religion synthesizes indigenous beliefs and practices with those of Africans, Iberians, and immigrants of different origins (Muslims, and Jews, for example). In the Northeast, popular Catholicism is also combined with shamanistic healing practices and belief in magic.

Into this heady stew, dashes of messianism and millenarianism are added, including Sebastianism (the belief in the return of Portuguese King Sebastian, killed in a battle with the Moors). According to Queiroz (1965), messianism is a practical force, a promise to fix what is wrong, and championing the collective good over individual interests (p. 7). Messianism promises salvation and redemption for a group of people, not only one person, hence its leader is both political and religious. It contests hegemony, by suggesting a new order of justice and happiness (p. 9-10). The leaders are intermediaries between common humans and God and their “holiness” is taken for granted, establishing a patron-client relationship between the followers and the leader. In general, lower class Northeasterners have this as a part of their world view. They are raised with these beliefs, through stories of Canudos and Antonio Conselheiro (as we are about to see in the second chapter), or Father Cícero who was Lampião’s friend, and others.

Many forms of art, usually oral, come to play a role in disseminating these beliefs, and the *arrasta-pé* music played and danced during a Saint John's celebration is one example of a party related with a saint. Through *arrasta-pé* the profane/sacred characteristics that are also present in other contexts, such as the novenas described by Larry Crook, make their presence, creating indexical signs reinforcing the links between religion and party. Drama, dance, festivals, singing (*repentes*, for instance), and literature (like *cordel*¹¹ literature) are some of the possible means of inculcating popular religious values.

COCO

There are not many recordings or performances of *coco* in a Forró context anymore. The genre is more related to popular musicians outside the mass media and it is still practiced nowadays in poorer neighborhoods along the Northeastern coast. However, *coco* did influence Forró music and the *forró* genre, particularly through the work of Jackson do Pandeiro (1919-1982), who popularized it in the mass media. *Cocos* recorded by Jackson do Pandeiro are in 2/4 meter played at moderate tempi (around 100 bpm). The genre is characterized by a call-and-response structure where the calling is usually improvised and the response is collectively known. The melody is based on the rhythms and inflections of the words, and is closer to speech than to singing (usually refrains are sung and strophes are closer to speech-like). Lyric themes are very broad and based on daily experiences. Instrumentation tends to be percussion and voice.

¹¹ *Cordel* means literally "string" and it is a homemade publication sold on the streets of the Northeast in which one can read long narratives, similar to Iberian medieval romances.

The *coco* genre influenced Jackson do Pandeiro's music strongly, since his mother was a *coco* singer and he used to accompany her, that is how he learnt to play the pandeiro. However, in Jackson do Pandeiro's recorded output, *coco* is intermixed with other Forró genres, and there are few examples of it in Forró music discography as a whole. I found a *coco* in a recording by Marinês, but it is mixed with *baião* and *embolada*. There are *cocos* in the recordings of Manezinho Araújo (the king of *embolada*, a jaw-breaker genre) but these are from the 1930s, and were interpreted in a *choro* style.

The example here is *Sebastiana*, composed in 1953 by Rosil Cavalcanti and recorded by Jackson do Pandeiro. The characteristic meter and tempo (2/4 and around 108 bpm in this case) of *coco* are present. It is in the key of A major, and follows the structure shown below:

Introduction	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section B	Interlude/Ending
12 bars	12 bars	8 bars	12 bars	8 bars	12 /5 bars
Accordion solo	Sung solo	Sung solo/choir	Sung solo	Sung solo/choir	Accordion solo/solo/choir

Harmonically, the song is based on tonic and dominant chords; sometimes a ii-V-I progression is used, other times a IV chord is used. Minor seventh degrees are added only to the dominant triads. At the end, the tonic sixth chord is used as the last chord, imparting a tentative, slightly unstable feeling. The melody is built up over repeated notes and scalar passages. The melodic shape is taken from the inflection of the words and their percussive syllabic deliveries, which drive the piece and define melodic rhythm as well. This procedure yields another rhythmic layer in the song, distinct from the accompanying

rhythmic instruments. Instrumentation comprises piano accordion, cavaquinho, agogô, afoxé and acoustic bass.

Rhythmic section:

Coco, as interpreted by Jackson do Pandeiro in recordings for the mass media, is already commingled with other genres—it uses more instruments, and it is very close to *rojão* and *farró*. Distinctive elements of *coco* can be found in the style played and practiced by poor people on beach gatherings where just voice (call and response) and percussion (coconut shells, pandeiro, claps) make up its “traditional” features (see Ayala 2000).

Sebastiana - 1953 (see Appendix for score)

“Sebastiana” (Rosil Cavalcanti)

Introdução (instrumental com breques)

Introduction (instrumental with breaks)

Estrofe 1:

*Convidei a comadre Sebastiana
Pra dançar e xaxar na Paraíba
Ela veio c’uma dança diferente
E pulava que só uma guariba*

Strophe 1:

I invited godmother Sebastiana
To dance and “xaxar” in Paraíba
She came with a different dance
And jumped like a monkey

*Ela veio c'uma dança diferente
E pulava que só uma guariba*

She came with a different dance
And jumped like a monkey

Refrão 1:

(solo) E gritava:

(coro) a, é, i, ó, u, ipisilone

(solo) E gritava:

(coro) a, é, i, ó, u, ipisilone)

Refrain 1:

(solo) And[*she*] shouted:

(choir) A, e, i, o, u, y

(solo) And [*she*] shouted:

(choir) A, e, i, o, u, y

Estrofe 2:

Já cansada no mei' do brincadeira

E dançando fora do compasso

Segurei Sebastiana pelo braço

E gritei: não faça sujeira

O xaxado esquentou na gafieira

Sebastiana não deu mais fracasso

Strophe 2:

Tired amid the play

And dancing out of rhythm

I held Sebastiana by her arm

And shouted: don't make a mess

The xaxado heated up in the dance room

Sebastiana did not make more fiasco

Refrão 2:

(solo) Mas gritava:

(coro) a, é, i, ó, u, ipisilone

(solo) Mas gritava:

(coro) a, é, i, ó, u, ipisilone

Refrain 2:

(solo) But she shouted:

(choir) a, e, i, o, u, y

(solo) But she shouted:

(choir) a, e, i, o, u, y

Interlúdio (melodia da Introdução)

Estrofe 1, Refrão 1, Estrofe 2, Refrão 2

Interlude (Introduction's melody)

Strophe 1, Refrain 1, Strophe 2, Refrain 2

Coda:

(solo) Sim, mas gritava

(coro) a, é, i, ó, u, ipisilone

Ending:

(solo) Yes, but she shouted

(choir) a, é, i, ó, u, y

Background information on *Coco*

The *coco* that Jackson do Pandeiro used as a source for his mass-mediated version is an old dance music genre from the Northeast. Cascudo defines it as Northeastern popular dance. It has existed at least since the 18th century, and it differs in terms of dance configuration, instrumentation and song form from one Northeastern state to another. It can even be different if practiced on the coast or in the hinterland. The name comes from the fruit of the palm trees (coconut); coconut dried shells were actually used as percussion instruments accompanying the song and dance. In certain choreographies, the

umbigada (touching the belly buttons) is present, but the current dance style is made up of whirls and foot tapping. *Coco* is usually a circle dance, with both men and women participating. There may or may not be a person in the center taking turns at solo dancing, or even making up the sung strophes. Parallel line dancing and couple dancing have also been observed in connection with *coco*. The common musical form is a strophe-refrain, where the refrain is fixed and the strophe usually improvised by the *coqueiro* or *tirador de coco* (*coco* leader). The Paraíba and Alagoas states are the main centers of this practice. The instrumentation is traditionally limited to percussion (Jackson do Pandeiro was known for his ability to play the pandeiro in a *coco* circle), but *coco* can also be accompanied by an ensemble called a Cabaçal or Zabumba ensemble (zabumba, two flutes, and snare drum; with any of the following instruments possibly added: reco-reco, ganzá,¹² and pandeiro. The expression “*vamo quebrá o coco*” (“let’s break the coco”) is used as an invitation to the event and later “*quebrá*,” or “*quebra*” (to break) is used to incite the dancer and or the improviser. During fieldwork, I heard among Northeastern migrants shouts of “break her” as an incitement for the male partner when his female dance partner was a particularly good follower.

Moura and Vicente (2001) suggest that Jackson do Pandeiro would have cited *coco* as the foundation for all Northeastern music. This assertion is possible, in the case of Forró music at least, since, as noted, Forró genres are very closely related to one another. However, I am not sure that it is appropriate to identify a single, unique source for all of these genres. Since they are in the realm of popular music, fusions of all sorts are inevitable. Also, expanding the assertion to include “all” Northeastern music is a

¹² *Reco-reco* is a sort of güiro, the sound is produced by the friction of a stick on a regularly notched piece of wood. *Ganzá* is a shaker made of metal, used mainly on samba.

broad generalization. But the fact that Jackson said this shows the importance of this genre, at least to him.

ROJÃO

There are no references to this genre nowadays. Even Jackson do Pandeiro, who was known as the “King of *Rojão*,” did not record many *rojões* (the plural of *rojão*). Actually it was not, originally, a distinct genre. Rather, it was, like *baião*, the name for instrumental interludes among improvisers (*repentistas*) in the Northeast. There are very few examples of *rojão* in Jackson’s or Gonzaga’s discography. I consider *rojão* a *forró* in embryonic stage. The recorded examples of *Rojão*, like most other Forró genres, are in 2/4, with a tempo of around 100 bpm. Melodies are based on the sound and rhythm of the words (percussive syllabic delivery), and because of the influence of *embolada* (a jaw-breaker genre), they are closer to speech than to singing (mainly the strophes). Lyrics tend to be descriptions of balls that turned violent, but told with a touch of humor and a dash of over-reaction and excessive details that sound like a jesting exaggeration (Brazilians call them fishermen’s stories). In his recorded *rojões*, Jackson do Pandeiro uses instruments more commonly associated with *samba*, such as *afoxé* (a wood shaker with beads hanging around it on the outside), or with orchestral music, such as acoustic bass. I am almost sure that Jackson would play the pandeiro too in this music when performing live, although not many of his recordings feature him playing the pandeiro in this genre.

My example of *rojão* music is *Forró em Limoeiro*, composed by Edgar Ferreira in 1953 and interpreted by Jackson do Pandeiro. Basic characteristics here are the 2/4 meter

and moderate tempo, around 100 bpm (slightly slower than a *coco*). It is in A major, and follows an A-A1-B-A1-A1-B1-A-A-B1-A1, with an instrumental introduction and interlude.

Introduction	Section A	Section A1	Section B	Section A1 (twice)	Section B1	Interlude/Ending
8 bars	8 bars	8 bars	10 bars	8 bars	10 bars	16 / 8bars
Accordion solo	Sung solo	Solo/choir	Sung solo	Solo/choir	Sung solo	Accordion solo/choir and accordion solo

Harmonically, it is built up over I-IV-V chords, with minor sevenths added freely. The melody is driven by the lyrics, following rhythm of the words. There is a tendency for descending lines, repeated notes and the combination of arpeggios and stepwise motion. Instruments used include the piano accordion, afoxé, agogô, bass, cavaquinho, flute, and 6-string guitar.

Rhythmic section:

Agogô (Both Bells)

Afoché

Cavaquinho

Bass + Zabumba

or:

Forró em Limoeiro - 1953 (see Appendix for score)

“Forró em Limoeiro” (Forró at Limoeiro) (Edgar Ferreira)

Introdução (instrumental)

Introduction (instrumental)

Refrão 1: (solo)

Refrain 1: (solo)

Eu fui pra Limueiro

I went to Limueiro

E gostei do Forró de lá

And I liked the Forró from there

Eu vi um caboco brejeiro

I saw a nice “native” guy

Tocando a sanfona e entrei no fuá

Playing accordion and I got into the skittish party

Refrão 2:

Refrain 2:

(coro) Eu fui pra Limueiro

(choir) I went to Limueiro

E gostei do Forró de lá

And I liked the Forró from there

(solo) Eu vi um caboco brejeiro

(solo) I saw a nice “native guy”

Tocando a sanfona e entrei no fuá

Playing accordion and I got into the skittish party

Estrofe 1:

Strophe 1:

(fala entoada) No mei' do Forró houve um tereré

(sprechgesang) In the middle of the Forró there was a tereré [problem]

Disse o mano Zé, agüenta o pagode

Brother Zé said, hold on to the party

Todo mundo pode, (cantando) gritou o Teixeira

Everybody can, (singing) shouted Teixeira

Quem não tem peixeira briga no pé

Who does not have a fish knife, kick fights

Refrão 2 (duas vezes)

Refrain 2 (twice)

(Estrofe 2)

(Strophe 2)

Foi quando eu vi a Dona Zezé

That's when I saw Mrs. Zezé

A mulher que é, diz que topa parada

The woman who is, who says she faces a situation

De saia amarrada fazer o cocó

With her skirt tied up, she said the cocó [imitating a chicken]

E dizer: eu brigo com cabra canalha

And said: I fight with a riffraff guy

Puxou a navalha e entrou no Forró

Pulled a razor and got into the Forró

Refrão 2 (duas vezes)

Refrain 2 (twice)

Estrofe 3:

Strophe 3:

Eu que sou do morro, não choro, não corro

I am from the hill, I don't cry, I don't run

Não peço socorro quando há chuá

I don't ask for help when there is a “chuá” [problem]

<i>Gosto de sambar na ponta da faca</i>	I like to sambar [dance] on the point of a knife
<i>Sou nego de raça e não quero apanhar</i>	I am pure black and I don't want to be beaten
<i>Interlúdio (variação sobre melodia do refrão duas vezes)</i>	Interlude (variation based on refrain's melody twice)
<i>Estrofe 3</i>	Strophe 3
<i>Refrão 2 (uma vez)</i>	Refrain 2 (once)
<i>Coda:</i>	Ending:
<i>(coro) Eu fui pra Limueiro</i>	(choir) I went to Limueiro
<i>E gostei do Forró de lá</i>	And I liked the Forró from there
<i>(termina instrumental com a melodia da Introdução)</i>	(instrumental ending with Introduction's melody)

Background Information on *Rojão*

The word *rojão* was used for the same instrumental interludes in the *repentes* (improvisations) that gave us the word *baião*. Supposedly, it was slightly different because of speed (a *rojão* should be faster than a *baião*). I am inclined to believe that calling Jackson do Pandeiro the “King of *Rojão*,” as opposed to the “King of *Baião*,” had more to do with marketing and the mass media than anything else. In the 1940s and 50s, creating a “new” genre (or at least a new name) was a big deal. It had to do with novelty and advertising strategies. It is reported that many times Gonzaga would be asked if he was going to play *baião* “again!” In response, he would come up with a different name for his songs (such as *xenhenhém*, *siridó*) just to satisfy his public’s thirst for novelty. Following this pattern, we can surmise that *rojão* was just a name better suited for commercialization at the time. The genre for which Jackson do Pandeiro is known as “the king of *rojão*” is actually a hybrid of a faster *baião*, with *coco/embolada* style word declamation, *samba* instruments, and swing. In addition, observe that the example above which uses the word “*forró*” in its title, is a description of a Forró party where some sort

of violence happened. Therefore, this example of *rojão*, in my opinion, is actually a *forró* in its early stages of development.

FORRÓ

The specific genre *forró*, which shares its name with the broader umbrella term, is in 2/4 meter, and tends toward faster tempos (around 100 bpm or faster); the average tempos of *forró* pieces have gradually increased over the years. The influence of Jackson do Pandeiro on the genre is evident in that there are several layers of different rhythms, played by different instruments. There is a lot of swing in the *forró*, and rhythmic contrasts between timbre layers. There is a loose alternation among solo and choir, and vocal and instrumental sections. Lyrics usually refer to a Forró dance situation, interpolating strophes that are sung with others that are rendered in a speech-like declamation. Instrumentation varies, but when Luiz Gonzaga interprets *forró* he uses accordion. When Jackson do Pandeiro performs it, accordion can be used along with other instruments, and there are typically more percussion instruments in his recordings. During my fieldwork, I observed that *forró* was as popular as *xote*, which together comprised the two main genres played during a Forró night.

In an attempt to trace the origins of the genre *forró*, Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro must be considered together. I analyze a song by Luiz Gonzaga and Zédantas from 1949, *Forró de Mané Vito*, as well as *Mané Gardino*, a *forró* interpreted by Jackson do Pandeiro in 1959, composed by Ari Monteiro and Elias Soares. These analyses are compared in this section, in order to better understand the genre.

Forró de Mané Vito has the characteristic 2/4 meter, and a tempo of around 92 bpm. It is in E major, and its structure follows the diagram below until section B. After B it returns with different lyrics, making up sections A1 and B1. An interlude follows it with a melody drawn from the introduction, and spoken words over it. The whole structure is repeated and, after section B1, moves to the ending, which also uses the introduction's melody and speech.

Introduction	Section A	Section B	Interlude/Ending
12 bars	8 bars	8 bars	12/ 8 bars
Accordion solo and speech	Sung solo	Sung solo	Accordion solo and speech

Its harmony is based on tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords. There is just one chord with a minor seventh added, at the end of section A. Instrumentation includes piano accordion, triangle, agogô, zabumba, guitars (6- and 7-string). The melody consists of repeated notes, most of them in sixteenth-note figures, which calls attention to the rhythm. Arpeggios are used, combined with stepwise motion, and there is a tendency toward descending lines, although often beginning with ascending motion.

Rhythmic section:

The image shows a rhythmic section for three instruments: Triangle, Agogô (improvised), and zabumba. The music is in 2/4 time. The Triangle part consists of a series of sixteenth-note patterns, each starting with an 'x' (representing a triangle strike) followed by a sixteenth-note figure. The Agogô (improvised) part features a series of eighth-note patterns, each starting with an 'x' followed by a rhythmic figure. The zabumba part consists of a series of eighth-note patterns, each starting with an 'x' followed by a rhythmic figure. A 'Variation' section is indicated in the zabumba part, showing a change in the rhythmic pattern.

Rhythmically, this song has a predictable structure. Compared to *coco* and *rojão*, it has less syncopation, accents and swing, what makes me wonder if it can be really classified as *farró*. It has stops, as do *xotes*. Note the melodramatic parts (introduction, interlude and coda) where the singer breaks into a narration, informing the listeners that the song's protagonist actually killed a man, and is negotiating his arrest with the sheriff. Again, a bit of tongue-in-cheek exaggeration is evident, even when treating a sad and serious subject, such as a homicide.

Forró de Mané Vito -1949 (see Appendix for score)

“Forró de Mané Vito” (Mané Vito's Forró) (Zédantas and Luiz Gonzaga)

Introdução (instrumental e fala)

Introduction (instrumental and speech)

Seu delegado

Mr. Sheriff

Digo a vossa senhoria

I tell your excellency

Eu sou fi' d'uma famia

I belong to a family

Qui num gosta de fuá

That doesn't like confusion

Mas trasantonte

But two days before yesterday

No Forró de Mané Vito

At Mané Vito's Forró

Tive qui fazê bonito

I had to be brave [beautifully]

A razão vou lh'explicá

The reason I will explain to you

Quim cola no ganzá

Quim with the shaker

Preá no reco-reco

Preá with the guiro

Na sanfona Zé Marreco

In the accordion Zé Marreco

Se danaro pra tocá

They played a lot

Daqui prali pra lá

From here to there and there

Dançava com Rosinha

I danced with Rosinha

Quando Zeca de Soninha

When Soninha's Zeca

Me proíbe de dançá

Forbids me to dance

Seu Delegado

Mr. Sheriff

Sem encrenca eu num brigo

Without reason I don't fight

Se ninguém buli cumigo

If no one provokes me

Num sô home p'a brigá

I don't like to fight

Mais nessa festa

But in this party

Seu doutô perdi a carma

Mr. Doctor I lost my sense

Tive que pegá nas arma

I had to pull my weapon

Pois num gosto de apanhá

Because I do not like to be beaten

<i>Pra Zeca se assombrá</i>	To fright Zeca
<i>Mandei pará o fole</i>	I ordered the accordion to stop
<i>Mas o cabra não é mole</i>	But the guy is not easy
<i>Quis parti pra me pegá</i>	He came to me
<i>Puxei o meu punhá (breque na segunda vez.)</i>	I pulled my dagger (stop in the second time)
<i>Soprei o candieiro (breque na segunda vez.)</i>	I blew out the gas lamp (stop in the second time)
<i>Botei tudo pro terreiro (breque na segunda vez.)</i>	I sent everything to the backyard (stop in the second time)
<i>Fiz o samba se acabá</i>	I put an end to the ball
<i>Interlúdio (com fala)</i>	Interlude (with speech)
<i>Repete tudo</i>	Repeat all
<i>Coda (instrumental com fala)</i>	Ending (instrumental with speech)

Introduction's speech:

Seu delegado, por Nossa Senhora doutô, eu num matei o home não, só dei uns risquim, o cabra é que era morredô, doutô, juro por Nossa Senhora!

Mr. Sheriff, by Our Lady, officer, I did not kill the man, no, I just made some lines (with a dagger on the victim), but the guy was a “dier,” officer, I swear on Our Lady!

Interlude's speech:

Seu delegado, juro por Deus, doutô, eu sô fi' de boa famia, doutô, eu sô home dereito, doutô!

(Luiz Gonzaga imita o delegado com se os dois estivessem conversando) – Tá cunversando sujeito!

(responde gaguejando) – Fa-faço isso não doutô! Fa-faço isso não doutô!

Mr. Sheriff, I swear to God, officer, I am from a good family, officer, I am an upright man, officer

(Luiz Gonzaga imitates the Sheriff as if they were talking) – You're just saying that, man!

(stuttering answer) – I, I didn't do this, officer! I, I didn't do this, officer!

Coda's speech:

Rará doutô, pisa, pisa no...(?), doutô. Mas juro por sinhô, hein, sô fi' de boa família, doutô. Faço isso não doutô!

Rára (laughing) Officer, tap, tap on...(?), officer. But I swear to you, huh, I am from a good family, officer. I didn't do this, officer!

In contrast, *Mané Gardino* is an example of a *fórró* as interpreted by Jackson do Pandeiro. It shares the basic characteristics: 2/4 meter and a tempo of about 104 bpm. There are shifts between tonality and modality (G major and G Mixolydian) as well as between solo and choral passages. The structure follows the chart until section B and then returns to section A1, performing it twice. Then, new lyrics are set to the melody of section B, hence B2, and again A1 is performed twice. Then it repeats section B and moves to an interlude with the melody of the introduction. Section B2 returns, as well as A1 (twice), and then the ending (A-A1-B-A1-A1-B-interlude [intro melody]-B2-A1-A1-Ending).

Introduction	Section A	Section A1	Section B	Interlude/Ending
8 bars	8 bars	8 bars	8 bars	8 bars twice
Accordion solo	Sung solo	Choir	Sung solo	Accordion solo with speech

Harmony is based on the tonic, subdominant, and dominant triads, with minor sevenths sometimes added. Instrumentation is made up of piano accordion, triangle, zabumba, guitar (6-string), bass, cavaquinho, ganzá, and pandeiro. The melody is structured of repeated notes, most of them in sixteenth note figures, calling attention to the rhythmic aspect. There are arpeggios combined with stepwise motion, and a tendency toward descending lines.

Rhythmic section:

The image shows a musical score for the rhythmic section of a Forró dance. It consists of four staves, each representing a different instrument: Ganzá, Pandeiro, Triangle, and Zabumba. The music is in 2/4 time and is divided into four measures. The Ganzá part is a melodic line with accents. The Pandeiro part is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Triangle part is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The Zabumba part is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

Lyrics in this example refer to a Forró dance, as in Gonzaga's example. The spoken, melodramatic part is another similarity between the two songs, although in Gonzaga's case he brings the narrative to some sort of conclusion. In this example, Jackson's spoken passages have more to do with comments made during a live performance.

Mané Gardino – 1959 (see Appendix for score)

“Mané Gardino” (Ari Monteiro and Elias Soares)

Introdução (instrumental)

Introduction (instrumental)

Refrão 1 (solo)

Refrain 1 (solo)

Taí, taí, taí, Mané Gardino

That's it, that's it, that's it, Mané Gardino

Taí taí pra você ver

That's it, that's it for you to see

Taí, taí, taí, Mané Gardino

That's it, that's it, that's it Mané Gardino

Fulorinda bota os homes pra roê

Fulorinda torments the men

Refrão 2 (coro)

Refrain 2 (choir)

Taí, taí, taí Mané Gardino

That's it, that's it, that's it, Mané Gardino

Taí, taí pra você vê

That's it, that's it for you to see

Taí, taí, taí, Mané Gardino

That's it, that's it, that's it Mané Gardino

Fulorinda bota os home pra roê

Fulorinda torments the men

Estrofe 1

*Mané dizia
Que era mentira minha
Que a mulhé que ele tinha
Não dançava cum ninguém
Eu disse a ele
Cumpadre, não se avexe
Tu vai ver cum' ela mexe
Quando cai no xenhenhém*

*Refrão 2 (duas vezes)**Estrofe 2*

*Mané Gardino
Quando viu tremeu o queixo
Olhando o remelexo
Da mulher no xenhenhém
Franziu a testa
E disse num desafogo
Que botava a vida em jogo
Sabendo a mulher que tem*

*Refrão 2 (duas vezes)**Estrofe 1*

Interlúdio (instrumental com fala)*

*Estrofe 2**Refrão 2 (duas vezes)*

*Coda (instrumental com fala**)*

Strophe 1

Mané used to say
That I was lying
The woman that he had
Did not dance with anyone
I said to him
Godfather, don't be embarrassed
You are gonna see how she moves
When she "falls in the dance"

Refrain 2 (twice)

Strophe 2

Mané Gardino
When he saw he quivered his jaw
Looking at the movements
Of his woman in the dance
Knitted his brows
And said in alleviation
That he had his life at risk
Knowing the woman he has

Refrain 2 (twice)

Strophe 1

Interlude (instrumental with speech*)

Strophe 2

Refrain 2 (twice)

Ending (instrumental with speech**)

Speech for the Interlude:

** Isso Reimundim, segura o fole meu fi, é aqui é só na base do chinelo tsi, tsi, tsi, tsi...isso vai até o dia 'manhecê nessa pisada. Virge Nossa, parece até Limuêro!*

**That's it Reimundim, hold the bellows my son, here it is just on the flip-flop, tsi, tsi, tsi, tsi...this goes in this step (tapping) 'till sunrise. Blessed Virgin, it even looks like Limuêro!*

Speech for Coda:

***Isso Reimundim, Virge Nossa Senhora, meu Deus. Aquele Norte véi', é tudo nessa pisada.*

**That's it Reimundim, Blessed Virgin, my God. That old North, it is all in this tapping (step).

Background Information on *farró*

The genre *farró* developed progressively, and is closely linked with Jackson do Pandeiro's music, influenced by *coco* and *samba*. Although Dominginhos, Gonzaga's disciple, said that Gonzaga was the "creator" of *farró*, as well as *baião*, this is not what I conclude from my research. When Gonzaga released songs designated as *farrós* in their titles, they were in a very embryonic stage; it was only later, when Jackson began his recording career, that Gonzaga adopted the genre (his first recording that had the indication of *farró* as a genre is *Farró no Escuro*, 1958). But, once more, looking at Gonzaga's discography, *baião* overwhelms all other genres. This discrepancy between the song title and the actual genre of the song can be seen earlier in Luiz Gonzaga's discography. He recorded a song called "*Farró de Zé Tatu*" in 1955, for example, with a genre indication of *rojão*. Note that it was released after "*Farró em Limoeiro*" by Jackson do Pandeiro, which was also called a *rojão*, but is, in my opinion, a *farró*. Therefore, "*Farró de Zé Tatu*" by Luiz Gonzaga, released in 1955, although having *farró* in its title (and I suppose it just meant "party"), was classified as *rojão*, showing a fluidity of the genres' names in those days. The example that I analyzed above, "*Farró de Mané Vito*," was called *farró* in the title and released in 1949. In the original recording there was no indication of genre after the song title. If I had to classify it, I would put it in the *baião* genre, because of the rhythm, style and speed. However, I chose to include it here because it was Gonzaga's first song with the word "*farró*" in the title, and because it has

a theme and content that is close to a later stage of Jackson do Pandeiro's *farró*. Thus, *Farró de Mané Vito* is a *baião* with a *farró* theme.

Ten years separate Luiz Gonzaga's example and Jackson's example. The evident stylistic similarity between Jackson's *coco*, *rojão* and *farró* is notable. It is difficult to impose limits among them. Therefore, Jackson do Pandeiro's style is, from the beginning, evolving towards the *farró*, and it is this genre that prevailed in his career. Nowadays, he is known as a *farró* master, the *coco* and *rojão* genres play a secondary role in his legacy.

I would suggest that *farró* developed progressively from early genres of *Farró* music; it is a melding of *baião* and *coco*, heavily influenced by *samba* (particularly the Rio de Janeiro variety) when considering its swing and instrumentation. *Rojão* can be seen as an earlier form. From early on, Jackson do Pandeiro used a cavaquinho in his ensemble, and an exquisite syncopation in the melodic line that adds another layer of rhythmic complexity. In the end, by the time of recording "*Mané Gardino*," Jackson had codified the genre, and increased the tempo. He took something from each of the earlier genres: zabumba and triangle from *baião*, pandeiro from *coco*, cavaquinho and afoxé from Rio de Janeiro's *samba*, bass from orchestras and jazz bands. For both musicians, *farró* lyrics tend to describe a dramatic situation in a joking mood, and both speak during interludes, adding comments and giving it a taste of live performance.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STARS AND INNOVATORS OF FORRÓ IN THE MASS MEDIA

INTRODUCTION

Forró music gained national and international attention after becoming popularized in Southern cities, among Northeastern migrants and through the mass media. The Northeasterner Luiz Gonzaga became a media star in the late 1940s with this music. In this chapter I begin by discussing the economic, political, and social conditions that motivated the North-South migration. Then, I move on to an overview of different manifestations of Forró, taking into account its presence in the mass media and how it was practiced mainly in São Paulo and the Northeast. This information is organized roughly as a chronological history, taking as points of reference the main musicians of each period in an attempt to show the mechanisms of Forró's persistence.

Northeasterners, who are most closely associated with Forró have a long history. Brazil began in the Northeast, even though, at that time, it was known simply as “the North.” From the 1500s to the 1900s, political and economic changes altered Northeasterners' relations with the rest of the country, prompting southern migration; harsh droughts in the Northeast also pushed people to migrate to Southern cities. The droughts created an almost constant flow of migrants. It was through migration to Rio de Janeiro, the capital of the country in the first half of the 20th century, that the main figures of Forró music entered the mass media, and thus came to be known more widely.

Portuguese landed in Brazil and divided the country into fifteen captaincies in the 1500s. These captaincies were large tracts of land that were “lent” to favored people, the

donatários. They had almost unlimited privileges and rights. The size of these few pieces of land was enormous, far beyond what we know today as the states. The most prosperous were one in the “North” (called Pernambuco, but much bigger than the modern state of that name) and another in the “South” (called São Vicente). At this time, the latifundium system was established, involving big portions of land under the control of very few people. The Pernambuco captaincy (actually in the Northeast region) was the center of wealth, and production focused on sugar cane. Brazil began, as a nation-state, in the Northeast: the capital of the country was Salvador (actually in Bahia state), which was the main port. It was here that the political and economic center of the country was established; the entire Brazilian economy was based on the production of sugar cane, and the plantations were all near the coastal region of the Northeast at that time. When the economic base shifted to gold and coffee (produced in the South during the 1800s), the means of production were still grounded in latifundium. This shift in the economic center of the country, coupled with frequent droughts in the Northeast, created the conditions for a massive migration to the south.

The issue of droughts is intertwined with political actions and maneuvers that were meant to solve the drought problem but were, in fact, used as an excuse to preserve the power of the elite. Institutions were created, and a lot of government money was spent in projects that ended up enriching a few, well-connected people and companies—what is known as the “drought industry.” Meanwhile, people were dying of hunger and thus left their homeland in search of better life. This situation continues to this day, although the corruption scandals are drawing media attention now, and a campaign against corruption is taking place.

In the economic realm, not only the change in the center of wealth production led to migration, but also the latifundium system itself since it is a frozen structure that does not allow for social ascension and mobility; you either have land or you work for those who have it. The patriarchal family structure adds to the problem. Inside a family group, relations are based on extended family links, disguising the distance between the owner of the land and his subordinates. Family groups are created, having as their head a man, usually the father, or the owner of the land (usually a man). The patriarchal structure creates vertical relations among different families, usually relations of competition and rivalry. Therefore the economic and the social structures were not propitious to changes in social status. This social stagnation that widened the gap between the poor and the wealthy resulted in some social movements that were an attempt to change the social order. One of them was based on religion, and is known as the War of Canudos (1896-97); another movement was related with banditry, and is called *Cangaço* (end of the 19th century until 1940).

Canudos's war involved a religious settlement headed by Antonio Conselheiro, a messianic leader. He founded a community where members led a sort of communist life while waiting for the final destruction of the world, when the sinners would be consigned to hell, and believers would be granted salvation and eternal life. Antonio Conselheiro was against the republican movement that was occurring in the end of the 19th century in Brazil. Conselheiro wanted the emperor back, as well as the monarchic system, because he blamed the republican movement for the problems of poverty. As a messianic leader he was a conservative. After a few attacks by the military, their community was destroyed and government soldiers killed most of the residents.

The other movement, called *Cangaço* (banditry) lasted for more than ten years. It occurred mainly in the Northeast hinterland, and scholars explain its occurrence through the economic system that was slightly different from sugar cane-based economy practiced near the coast.¹ The economy practiced in the hinterland of the Northeast, the sertão area, was based on livestock appropriate for meat and leather supply (usually cows and goats), but the labor relations were the same as in the areas of sugar cane production. The people of the area were acquainted with butchering skills; from an early age they helped their fathers work with cows and goats for meat and skin. Frederico Pernambucano de Mello (1993) asserts that blood, death and weapons (mainly all sorts of knives) were a standard part of these people's world. Considering that they were isolated from the coast and that the environment was very unsuitable for living, family relations were very close and the patriarchal system was even stronger there. Wars between families were common (and still are) and hence they had armed men as "safeguards," that worked protecting family property against other clans and maintaining their boss's local political power. Violence between family groups was common: ambushes, plundering, rapes, tortures, death threats, blood revenges, besides actions to torment the daily life of enemy clans, such as burning property, closing roads, and damaging water supplies. In the middle of these wars there were also love disputes, heroic and brave deeds, excessive loyalties that supported particular views of honor, morality, and power.

¹ The Northeast region (1,552,614 Km²) is divided into four different natural landscapes, from east to west: the coast or *Zona da Mata* (forest zone) where sugar cane was planted and where most of the capitals are situated; the *agreste* which is a slim, semi-humid transition area that goes from Rio Grande do Norte to Bahia; the sertão or the *caatinga* area which is semiarid with frequent droughts. It has an area of approximately 1,100,000 Km². In the extreme west is the *Meio-Norte* area, which comprises Maranhão and Piauí and it is a transition between the *caatinga* and the Amazon forest.

Contributing to the spread of these values and worldview, there was the *cordel* literature (popular writings that have similarity with Iberian medieval romances) and *repentes* (sung improvisations) that were fantastic narratives exploiting these themes. Since violence and murder were part of daily life, it was not a big step from being bodyguards to being bandits, but the latter were opportunists who took advantage of this violent, unsettled situation to gain power and social status for themselves. That is how *Cangaço* originated, and groups of *cangaçeiros* (bandits) were formed.

According to Queiroz (1997) and Mello (1993) joining the *cangaço* or their opposites, the police force, provided two avenues to better economic position and power. The droughts were especially suitable for the formation of *cangaçeiros* groups, because most people would leave, usually for the coast, and often the first ones able to migrate were the landowners, who were also the local authorities. Therefore, with authority weakened and with very real life threatening conditions, *cangaço* developed, and turned into a viable career opportunity. The bandit groups were focused in few regions and continued to serve the purposes of local bosses, thus *cangaço* was tolerated and even supported by political authorities. However, when these groups defied the bosses, Federal military forces were called in.

According to Hobsbawm (1963) neither *Canudos* nor *Cangaço* were revolutionary movements, because they had internalized values and structures of the latifundium and the patriarchal system, and therefore could not change the order of things. So, to improve the quality of life, migration seemed to many the best option.

Around 1930, migration to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo became the most common, because they were the main cities in the country where industrialization was

taking place and the job market was expanding drastically. At the same time a theory of “racial democracy” based on the writings of Gilberto Freyre became widely influential. Migration to the South was fuelled by this discourse as well as the populist-nationalist policies of dictator Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945).

“RACE” AND PREJUDICE

With the shift of the center of wealth production in the 1700s, and consequently the move of the capital of the country from Salvador to Rio de Janeiro, a “naturalist paradigm,” to use Albuquerque Jr.’s (1999) terminology, was established. According to him, intellectuals and the elite “considered the differences among spaces in the country a consequence of nature, environment, and race” (p. 41). In the early 1900s, the country was divided between “traditional,” “old” Brazil (the Northeast, where the country was born), and the “new,” “modern” Brazil (the South, where industrialization was taking place). Further supporting the naturalist paradigm, the main population of the Northeast consisted of people of mixed race; they were seen as “inferior,” and unable to contribute to the development of the country. As proof of this, the elites maintained that, from its discovery through the 1800s, Brazil had not developed because its labor force was not skilled enough; they were of mixed “races.” On the other hand, the elites maintained that the South, with its concentration of European immigrants (mainly Italians, and Germans—all “white” races), had the more skilled labor force to make industrialization a reality. So, in the 1930s, when massive migration began to happen, Northeastern migrants coming to the big cities were seen as “inferior,” “non-skilled,” “non-educated,” “under-developed,” and “poor.” Their life styles, world views, phenotype characteristics, and

accents were ridiculed on a daily basis. The racial ideal was of European origin; hence, the South was where “skilled,” “educated,” “beautiful” people lived. There is thus a very particular association here between the concepts of the “traditional,” “old” Northeast and an “inferior,” “poor,” “non-educated” population. Conversely, the “modern”, “developed” South was associated with a “superior,” “rich,” “polite” population. This is how prejudice against Northeasterners took root.

However, in the 1930s Gilberto Freyre, taking as his reference the Northeastern patriarchal and latifundium system, tried to prove that “mixed races” were better adapted to the tropical life. But this was just a ploy to gain international attention, because “race” was a big issue during this pre-World War II period. Freyre was compelled to answer European claims of the superiority of Whites. Brazil was mainly a mixed race country and it did not fit the European model. Freyre later agreed with the European bias, claiming that despite Brazil’s predominantly mixed-race population, the white race would eventually form the majority, through racial mixing and its natural dominance. However, Freyre would argue that, contrary to European thinking of the era, the different “races” could live together in Brazil in harmony. He projected Brazil as a singular model of racial democracy. This was his agenda when he wrote his important sociological study, *Casa Grande & Senzala* (Masters and the Slaves – 1930), about the relations between landowners and slaves. It was an intellectual battle about the preferable model to be followed by other countries. Political prestige and power were at stake.

However, reality was a little different from Freyre’s utopian vision, and prejudice did exist. Inside the patriarchal and latifundium system, inter-ethnic relations were of an authoritarian nature. Most of the “marriages” had to do, indeed, with rape and coercion.

However, his discourse about a “whitening” process throughout the years was inculcated in people’s minds, mainly among people of mixed origins. Today it remains common to hear mention of “purifying” blood through marriage with Whites, and there are some “race” groups that try to impose the idea of white supremacy. Race crimes against Northeasterners in Brazil are still common, especially in São Paulo. Some of these groups have neo-Nazi fundamentals, and so have a strong prejudice against Northeasterners because “they are of inferior race,” or “they are invaders” of the big city, and so forth.

GETÚLIO VARGAS AND NATIONALIST POPULISM

Although the racial democracy theory is a contradictory invention, because of its authoritarian base, the Brazilian elite endorsed Freyre’s idea, since it contributed to the “nation building” process, and the search for national emblems. I argue that this theory facilitated the emergence of Forró music in the media during the mid-1940s, as a concession to the masses and an attempt to establish an emblematic national music and dance—a way to demonstrate “racial democracy.”

Populist concessions were common during Getúlio Vargas’ dictatorship, and they had a powerful impact on the lives of lower, working-class people, including Northeastern migrants. Vargas’ method of government can be classified as populist, an attempt to neutralize “the opposition between the people and the power bloc” (Hall 1980 quoted by Grossberg 1996). The effect of populism on the Brazilian poor was a powerful one. Faoro (1975) explains that populism in Brazil had to do with migration from the country to the cities. Upon migrating to the cities, people that were formerly subject to an authoritarian and paternalistic boss in the hinterland within the latifundium and

patriarchal systems, had as their ultimate authority the president, “in the role of protector and father, always in an authoritarian way, the father who distributes symbolic favors and real punishments” (my translation, p. 707). Therefore, Northeastern migrants anticipated the same relations that they had at home in their new urban environments, and they found the patriarch during the Vargas period, in the figure of the president. They had internalized authoritarian values. Their social relations were based on exchange, the trade of food, shelter and protection for work. When they migrated and were able to find a job and a place to live, and they improved their life conditions through a monthly wage and health assistance, they recognized in the president the figure of the landowner, their main authority, hence the patriarchal frame was still at work. They also reproduced these common sense relations in their daily activities; when they gathered in a *Forró* event, the family ties were activated. Now, however, in this new context, the “family” had become the entire group of Northeasterners who lived in the big city, far from their origins, and the head of this extended family was, in the end, the president.

Getúlio Vargas ruled the country from 1930 to 1945 as a dictator, and from 1951 to 1954 as an elected president. Although Vargas was not the president during the period from 1946 to 1950, his ideas and practices were followed by president Dutra, and the Vargas period is one of strong nationalism. Nationalism, as Turino (2000) points out, is the “political movement or ideology that bases the idea of legitimate sovereignty on a coterminous relationship between a ‘nation’ and a ‘state’” (p. 27). The state is the political territory and government institutions, the nation is the group of people who “recognize or come to accept common bonds of some type as the basis for social unity” (p. 27). Therefore, during Vargas’s time, the government was looking for these “common

bonds” and emblems, and that is why Luiz Gonzaga’s music was seen as useful by the state.

Although Vargas was a dictator, he was (and still is) adored by the masses, because he knew how to manipulate them. Vargas’ way of government gave the proletariat and lower income people many opportunities to improve their lives. He created a program of mass education, *Mobral*; he established a minimum monthly wage (the biggest in Brazilian history); he authorized the expansion of newspapers in circulation, giving the false impression of a free press; he bought a radio network, *Rádio Nacional* (National Radio), through which nationalistic ideas could be broadcasted and deeply rooted in people's minds. It was not without reason that he was called “the father of the poor people.” Although Vargas had a populist side, he was still a dictator.

During the Vargas period, music was seen as very important in the fostering of nationalist sentiment. Choral singing and musical education were part of the state school curriculum, with Heitor Villa-Lobos (the most famous “classical” nationalist composer in Brazil) himself engaged in this project (he was the dean of the SEMA: Superintendence of Musical and Artistic Education, from 1932). *Rádio Nacional*, “the voice of Brazil,” played a big role in this project. It had a huge audience throughout the country, and every housekeeper, every construction worker, every wage worker had a small radio (a very common sign of technology) accompanying him in his work and leisure time. There were special programs opened to the public with live audiences, where new talent could perform and compete for prizes, or at least gain the attention of agents and recording companies. This was how the most important Northeastern migrant Forró musician, Luiz Gonzaga, became known.

It is important to remember that in the mid-1930s Mário de Andrade, an important scholar of Brazilian popular music history, was Secretary of Culture of São Paulo state. He created the *Discoteca Pública Municipal de São Paulo* (Municipal Public Recordings Collection). "...the Discoteca dispatched a Folklore Research Mission to Brazil's North and Northeast to document regional folklore, ritual music, and dance" (Marks 1997, booklet of the CD: *The Discoteca Collection – The Library of Congress: Endangered Music Project*). Therefore, not only was the record industry interested in Brazilian popular music, state-sponsored institutions and scholars, moved by their own interests and by President Vargas' nationalist-populist policies, also helped create a space for styles like Forró in the mainstream.

Although marginalized and living in poor or working-class neighborhoods, Northeasterners managed to survive in the big city. The populist government of Getúlio Vargas helped with a familiar frame (patriarchal system). The success of Northeastern music in the media, and Luiz Gonzaga's career in particular, were powerful and widely known examples of the possibility of social ascension that a big city could provide. Hence, Forró had an important role in the migration process and although it is now no longer the exclusive practice of Northeasterners, it remains closely associated with Northeastern migrant social identity.

EARLY MASS MEDIA DISSEMINATION AND SUCCESS OF FORRÓ IN THE MEDIA (1900-1940)

In the early 1900s, an "exotic" Northeastern music that was brought by migrant musicians to Rio de Janeiro began to be heard. This music was a hybrid of popular

musics native to the Northeast, played by a *choro* ensemble, in a *choro* music style² from Rio de Janeiro. Northeastern music was also influenced by musical theater, a place where this music could be presented in comic acts and skits. It was called regional music and had to do with people from far away in the hinterland.

The first two prominent Northeastern musicians who popularized Northeastern music in the South were João Pernambuco and Manezinho Araújo. Lyrics that spoke of the Northeast were what characterized their music as regional.

João Pernambuco (João Teixeira Guimarães) was born in Jatobá, Pernambuco state in the Northeast (Nov. 2, 1883) and died in Rio de Janeiro (Oct. 16, 1947). He was a son of an indigenous woman from the *Caeté* group and a Portuguese father. He learned how to play the 10-string guitar and sing with *repentistas* (improvisers) early in his life. He migrated first to Recife, where he was an ironsmith apprentice; and then to Rio de Janeiro in 1902, to live with his sister. He worked as ironsmith and, later, on the staff of the City Hall (Rio de Janeiro was the capital of the country at that time). He developed a friendship with other musicians and taught himself 6-string guitar. João Pernambuco knew Catulo da Paixão Cearense (born in São Luís, Maranhão state in the Northeast, 1866 and died in Rio de Janeiro in 1946), another Northeastern migrant, who arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1880 with his parents and siblings. Catulo da Paixão Cearense was a poet and composer, and their friendship led to a musical partnership; together, they wrote some songs based on the “folklore” of the Northeastern sertão. A good example is “*Caboca di Caxangá*” (Sertão’s Girl from Caxangá), a *toada* (song) from 1913 which

² *Choro* is an instrumental music that appeared in Rio de Janeiro around 1870s. Initially it was a “style of interpreting popular European dance music developed by ensembles based on the trio of flute, cavaquinho (a small 4-string guitar), and guitar. The style of accompaniment was characterized by syncopation and elaborated bass line...” (Livingston 1999, p. 1-2). Later on, it turned into a genre by itself and pandeiro and bandolim (a variant of the mandolin) were added to the group.

was a hit during the carnival of 1914. Around this time, João Pernambuco formed a group called *Caxangá* that would become a musical vogue: the musicians dressed as *sertanejos nordestinos* (people from the Northeastern dry land), and used characteristic instruments of the region. The members were, among others, Pixinguinha, Nelson Alves, Donga, and João Pernambuco, and were most active during the carnival season. The group began in 1914 and was dissolved in 1919. After this, João Pernambuco continued to compose, play, and record with many other groups, including *Os Oito Batutas*. Along with Pixinguinha and Donga, and through the support of Arnaldo Guinle (1884-1964), a millionaire philanthropist, they collected folkloric themes in various Brazilian states. The first recorded reference to *baião* as a musical genre is found in João Pernambuco's composition called "Estrela d'Alva" (Morning Star – 1930 sung by Stefana de Macedo) at the audio archives of Centro Cultural São Paulo (São Paulo Cultural Center). It sounds much like the other songs that João Pernambuco recorded. It used a *choro* ensemble accompaniment, and the singing style followed the parameters of the time, which was more lyric as influenced by Italian opera singers. I presume that this classification as *baião* (designated on the label) had to do with the origins of the word as an improvisation (*repentes*), or perhaps it was just an exotic name to gain the public's attention, or maybe it was simply another way to refer to a song.

After João Pernambuco's fame in Rio de Janeiro, and before the success of Manezinho Araújo in the music media, there was an important group called *Turunas³ da Mauricéia* (Toughs from Mauricéia) formed in 1926 in Recife, Pernambuco state (Northeast) by Luperce Miranda (guitar, bandolim, piano, composer), Augusto Calheiros

³ This word comes from the indigenous language Tupi, meaning a strong black person. The plural form is used here.

(singer), Manuel de Lima (blind guitar player), Piriquito (guitar), Riachão (bandolim) and Romualdo Miranda (guitar). The group traveled to Rio de Janeiro in 1927 to perform in the *Teatro Lírico* (Lyric Theater) dressed as *sertanejos*, wearing hats with wide wings (Mexican style) and singing Northeastern native music, “unknown in Rio de Janeiro at that time,” according to the *Enciclopédia da Música Brasileira* (Marcondes 1998). Their success was brief, but they recorded two songs: “Helena” (by Luperce Miranda) and “Pinião,” which was the biggest hit of the 1928 carnival. Luperce Miranda (b. 1904 in Recife, Pernambuco), the leader of the group, did not travel with them at this time. However, prompted by his success in Rio de Janeiro, Miranda formed another group: *Voz do Sertão* (Voice of the Sertão) with Meira (guitar), José Ferreira (cavaquinho), Robson Florence, Miranda himself (bandolins), Minona Carneiro (singer) and Romualdo (guitar). They went to Rio de Janeiro around 1928-29. *Voz do Sertão* recorded with Parlophon, and Luperce Miranda then formed a regional ensemble (a *choro* group that accompanied other musicians) and many other groups throughout his career, recording, performing, accompanying, and composing. In 1946, he went back to Recife and, in 1955, returned to Rio de Janeiro, where he died in 1977.

The performance conventions of this era, with musicians dressed as rustic *sertanejos* playing a music that was supposedly from the hinterland, and “unknown” to urban audiences points to the affinity between Forró and country music. Because Northeastern migrants were, most of the time, from the sertão, the semi-arid hinterland, they were called *sertanejos*. However, the word sertão gradually came to refer to the countryside in general, especially among urban dwellers in the South; it lost the exclusive connection with the semi-arid area of the Northeast. Adding to this dynamic, in theatrical

performances, the characters from the hinterland were dressed similarly in stereotypical *sertanejo* clothing and hats. Among the first theatrical performers who were successful playing *sertanejo* characters was the duet of Jararaca and Ratinho, both Northeastern migrants themselves. They would act and play music on stage in imitation of stereotypical country bumpkins. They were very much like the North American hillbilly musicians performing in a stylized, theatrical way, with corn-cob pipes, overalls, and hay bales on stage. In the late 1920s, Jararaca and Ratinho recorded many Northeastern native genres (*emboladas*, *cocos*, *rojão*), accompanied by *choro* ensembles. They laid the foundation of what is now known as *caipira* duets (*dupla caipira*), as well as the duet structure that pervades Brazilian country music even today. This, then, is how Forró music came to be seen as a branch of country music. They were both related to the rural people, life in the hinterlands, and urban stereotypes of rural people.

The other prominent Northeastern musician in the early days of recorded Forró was Manezinho Araújo (Manuel Pereira de Araújo), who was born in Cabo, Pernambuco state in the Northeast (Sept. 27, 1910) and died in São Paulo in the Southeast (May 23, 1993). He learned how to sing *emboladas*, a jaw-breaker⁴ genre from the Northeast, with Minona Carneiro (Severino de Figueiredo Carneiro, 1902-1936 Recife, Pernambuco state). Manezinho Araújo migrated to Rio de Janeiro in 1933 and stayed with a friend, Josué de Barros (guitar player), who helped him gain the opportunity to record. From 1933 to 1954, he performed and recorded *emboladas*, and other Northeastern genres, as well as *sambas*, usually accompanied by a *choro* ensemble. He was manager and host of

⁴ *Embolada* means something that is folded and rolled over and over getting a ball shape. *Embolada* is a vocal music genre accompanied by percussion (usually pandeiro). It is characterized by fast word delivery making it difficult to understand what is being said. The best *embolada* performers are those who can deliver their poetry fast but clearly pronounced and not really sung (percussive syllabic delivery).

radio programs, and also worked as a journalist in the radio and in the press. He is known as the “King of *Embolada*.” In 1954 he abandoned his recording career and opened a restaurant in Rio de Janeiro called *Cabeça Chata* (Flat Head),⁵ where he would also perform. In 1960, he began to paint and in 1962 he moved to São Paulo city, opening another *Cabeça Chata*, which was shortlived. He left the restaurant business and became exclusively dedicated to nativist painting until his death. He is an important figure in the history of Northeastern dance music in the media because of his influences on later performers.

Considering these musicians and their hybrid styles, it becomes evident that their early contributions to Brazilian Popular Music were crucial, particularly in the area of *sertaneja* or *caipira* music (country music). Their regional characteristics were often classified as specific branches of country music, especially *caipira* and *sertaneja*, without accurate attention to the regional origin of a musician or style. The media abetted in melding together regional genres, probably for marketing purposes, and country music from any rural area, along with traditional Northeastern music, was all viewed as much the same and as exotic for the urban public. Within the context of the history of Forró in the mass media, a few main characteristics of this period are particularly notable: 1. the musicians’ were linked with Pernambuco (most of them are from that state) and eventual migration to the Southeast (Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo); 2. their music centered around the musical traditions of their homelands in the Northeast, hence they would play *emboladas* and *cocos*, which were typical Northeastern genres, but with a *choro* ensemble characteristic of Rio; 3. they sang lyrics that portrayed an exotic and

⁵ *Cabeça Chata* is a pejorative term for Northeasterners, because of the stereotypical shape of their heads.

romanticized sertão;⁶ and 4. dressed and played the part of rural bumpkins in line with urban stereotypes. *Emboladas* and *cocos* were particularly popular among the general public and in the mass media because of their rhythmic and dance appeal, their exoticism, their funny lyrics, and their “Brazilian” character. It is notable that, since musicians were trying to gain and maintain popularity through the mass media, genres that today tend to be very distinct from one another other were, at that time, really intertwined—such as *choro*, country music (*música caipira* or *sertaneja*) and Northeastern music. The boundaries between the genres were vague, and genre classifications by the artists themselves were often made with little thought, or with an eye towards enhancing a song’s popular appeal by classifying it as a fashionable genre of the moment. As with the flexibility of Forró genres noted earlier, genre labels in the popular realm are not a great concern.

CODIFICATION OF FORRÓ IN THE MEDIA, THROUGH LUIZ GONZAGA’S *BAIÃO* (1940s)

During the 1940s, *baião* and other Northeastern genres became very popular in the mass media, particularly as they were interpreted by Luiz Gonzaga. Luiz Gonzaga was born in Exu, in the interior of Pernambuco state, in 1912. Exu is situated at the bottom of a plateau called *Chapada do Araripe*. This specific location is also known as the *pé-de-serra* (foot of the hill). Because of this geographic origin, Gonzaga’s repertory came to be known, at the end of the 20th century, as *Forró pé-de-serra*. Indigenous people, called Açús, inhabit the area and the fraternization between them and the larger

⁶ There was also a romantic regional literature movement in the beginning of the century when important books and authors were known: *Rebellion in the Backlands (Os Sertões)* by Euclides da Cunha (1902), José de Alencar, Graciliano Ramos, Rachel de Queiroz, Joaquim Manoel de Macedo’s writings.

population resulted in, among other things, changing the name to Axu, and then to Exu. Gonzaga's father (Januário) was a button accordion player, performing at dance parties called "*sambas*," and he would also fix and tune accordions in the region. His mother (Santana) was a singer at religious gatherings, and took care of the family: planting, selling and exchanging food, sewing the family's clothing and other items to be sold in the open market on Saturdays, and cooking. The entire family was encouraged by their parents to learn music, and they would participate in their father's performances when they were close to home, initially as audience members and dancers, later as members of the band.

Although he lived within the latifundium system, Luiz Gonzaga was privileged. He began to work with a landowner, who was called *colonel* and was the mayor and chief justice of the city. Gonzaga took care of his horse during the colonel's travels (horses were still the primary mode of transportation in the region) and served as his "escort." They traveled a lot in the region and became friends (a good example of the patriarchal system), and so Gonzaga enjoyed special access to his house, to the point of learning how to read and write with the colonel's daughters (none of Luiz's siblings had this intimacy with the landowner). He bought his first button accordion with the money earned in this job, and he began to play professionally, without his father, when he was about twelve years old. Gonzaga's relationship with this powerful patron (the colonel) granted a special status to Gonzaga in the village, and among the women:

When Gonzaga was 15, the girls were crazy for him, they wanted to marry him. They fought for him. It was because he had style...he was tall, slim, civilized. He knew things, how to talk, he was smart... .(testimony by Maria das Dores quoted in Dreyfus 1997, p. 50)

Because of his inclination to date a lot of women and often impetuously propose marriage to them, his mother would frequently intervene and undo his engagements. One of these occasions prompted Gonzaga to leave his family. He was in love with a girl whose father refused to sanction a marriage with any “little accordion player.” Gonzaga was offended, and threatened his prospective father-in-law with a fish knife, after a hearty swallow of *pinga* (sugar cane alcoholic drink) for courage. Nothing happened, but his parents punished him severely over the incident, and he decided to leave home. He went to Crato in Ceará state first, and then to Fortaleza, the capital of the state, to enlist in the army, having lied about his age. The year was 1930, and there was a revolution in the country against communism.⁷

In the army, Gonzaga learned a little music theory, and played cornet, guitar and drums. His natural discipline helped him to obey his superiors (again, the patriarchal and latifundium systems were influential here) and he traveled to some states in the Northeast (Paraíba, Ceará, Piauí), Southeast (Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, São Paulo), and mid-west (Mato Grosso). It was in Minas Gerais, 1936, that Luiz Gonzaga began to play accordion again, this time the piano accordion, studying with a policeman: Domingos Ambrósio. Gonzaga bought a new accordion in São Paulo. With Ambrósio, he learned how to play the tunes that he heard on the radio: *choros*, waltzes, foxtrots, blues, and tangos. In 1939, he left the army and went to Rio de Janeiro. There he played in the port district, initially on the street and later in the bars, cabarets and brothels. He was heard by a diverse foreign audience from all over the world (it was pre-WW II), and he learned from them, including their music. He knew a musician from Bahia, Xavier Pinheiro, a

⁷A communist movement called *Coluna Prestes* was on the road throughout the country trying to recruit members and install a communist system in Brazil.

fado guitar player and radio musician (accompanist) married to a Portuguese girl. Gonzaga lived with them in a Portuguese neighborhood, and played with Pinheiro at live performances. Gonzaga moved to a neighbor's house, and in addition to Portuguese music he also studied more commercial repertoire. When his audiences complained that he did not know how to play the tango, he began studies with Antenógenes Silva, the Accordion Wizard. Silva also taught Gonzaga how to speak in a refined manner, and Gonzaga was soon obsessed with a desire to assimilate into Southern urban culture, imitating the lifestyle of his audience and denying all his Northeastern characteristics (Dreyfus 1997, p.75-81). At the same time, there were famous amateur singer programs (*programa de calouros*—"freshmen" program) on the radio that could open doors for those who succeeded in these live performance competitions. Gonzaga began to participate, but it took him several attempts to garner the prize of best musician of the day.

Playing in a bar, he became the favorite of a group of students from Ceará state (Northeast), who were unconditional fans. They were always there, and often brought friends along. One night, they were tired of hearing "Viennese" waltzes and asked Gonzaga to play some tunes from the Northeast, with that regional accent; they were nostalgic for their "homeland." After some days of practice to refresh his memory, Gonzaga reluctantly played two Northeastern songs; the bar became crowded instantly, and his hat grew heavy with tips. From this moment on, Gonzaga understood that by emphasizing his Northeastern roots rather than trying to assimilate into mainstream Brazilian styles, he would enhance his future prospects. This prompted him to play "*Vira e Mexe*" on a radio amateur hour, garnering him the best musician of the program award

for that day. His fame began to spread and a friend recommended him for a recording session with the Victor Recording Company, as accompanist for Genésio Arruda in a “sertaneja” song called “*A viagem de Genésio*” (Genésio’s Travel). The song told the story of a trip between Rio and São Paulo and featured vocalists Genésio Arruda and Januário França, with Gonzaga playing the accordion and another musician on the guitar. This was in 1941. The managers of the recording company were in need of an accordion player to compete with Antenógenes Silva at Odeon Records. Gonzaga recorded his first 78-rpm records with Victor in that same year—an instrumental disc consisting of two waltzes, one mazurka and one *xamego*. But the term “*xamego*” (correctly spelled *chamego*, and meaning attraction, seduction, sexual excitation in Northeastern Portuguese) did not signify a specific music genre or style, but rather was the designation Gonzaga gave to “*Vira e Mexe*,” which was actually a *choro*. This would become a common practice throughout Gonzaga’s career. He was creative in naming his songs and genres, and the recordings until 1960s bore a genre designation next to the song title, though these labels did not mean to formally classify or sort genres, they were just labels.

After recording many instrumental 78s, *Rádio Clube* finally hired him as accordion player. Meanwhile, wishing to appeal to different kinds of audiences, he continued to play in the port zone for the North American soldiers posted there during WW II. Gonzaga learned how to dress as a Creole and dance boogie-woogie (as it was shown in movies featuring Glen Miller). He also composed a samba in tribute to the girl who taught him how to dance in this style (*O Xamego da Guiomar* [Guiomar’s *xamego*], 1943). Around 1943, he decided that he should sing as well, but the quality of his voice did not fit in with the popular crooner style of the time. He thus began to look for other

vocalists to interpret his songs with lyrics. Manezinho Araújo was one of his choices, but Araújo just recorded one disc with him, owing to a disagreement between him and Gonzaga about how best to interpret the songs. In 1945, after some successful trials before live audiences and his persistent entreaties with Victor’s recording manager, he recorded a 78 with him singing on one of the sides: “*Dança Mariquinha*,” a mazurka with lyrics by Miguel Lima, his first partner. However, by this time Luiz Gonzaga had formulated a plan—he wanted to bring Northeastern music to the cities of the South, and so he needed a Northeastern partner, a “cultured” man; someone that had education, and who knew how to deal with words, and preferably, someone from the upper classes. Social hierarchy remained prominent in his thinking. He recognized in the upper classes a cultural prestige and influence, and he tended to accept it without question. I interpret this as a consequence of the patriarchal system in which he was socialized, and observe that he displayed this same tendency with his patron (the colonel) for whom he worked and befriended in the Northeast. Therefore, in this new musical partnership, he was trying to reproduce a relationship that he knew very well and recognized as beneficial. Luiz Gonzaga had some lyricist partners during his career; one of the most important was Humberto Teixeira (b. 1915 in Iguatu, Ceará state in the Northeast; moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1930; d. 1979), a lawyer and musician who worked with Gonzaga from 1945 to 1952. Their partnership began with “*Pé-de-Serra*” (Hill’s foot), a *xote* that would be recorded finally in November of 1946, delayed for much of a year with last minute “refinements.” Gonzaga said that this music portrayed his longing for the Northeast. Humberto Teixeira was mainly responsible for the lyrics.

*Lá no meu pé de serra
Deixei ficar meu coração*

There on my hill’s foot
I left my heart

<i>Ai que saudades tenho</i>	How much I miss it
<i>Eu vou voltar pro meu sertão</i>	I will return to my sertão
<i>No meu roçado trabalhava todo dia</i>	On my plantation I worked everyday
<i>Mas no meu rancho eu tinha tudo que queria</i>	But on my ranch I had everything that I needed
<i>Lá se dançava quase toda quinta feira</i>	There, we danced almost every Thursday
<i>Sanfona num faltava</i>	Accordion was never absent
<i>E tome xote a noite inteira</i>	And we had <i>xote</i> all night long
<i>O xote é bom</i>	The <i>xote</i> is good
<i>De se dançar</i>	To dance
<i>A gente gruda na caboca sem soltar</i>	We grab the girl tightly
<i>Um passo lá</i>	One step there
<i>Um outro cá</i>	Another here
<i>Enquanto o fole</i>	When the bellows
<i>Tá tocando</i>	Are playing
<i>Tá gemento</i>	Are squeaking
<i>Tá chorando</i>	Are crying
<i>Tá fungando sem parar...</i>	Are sniffing endlessly

It was, however, the second song recorded in partnership with Teixeira, “*Baião*,” which was recorded in October 1946 by *Quatro Ases e Um Coringa* (Four Aces and a Joker) with Luiz Gonzaga on accordion, that became a hit and marked the beginning of Gonzaga’s real success in the mass media. According to Teixeira, Luiz Gonzaga wanted to mount a huge campaign to release Northeastern music in the big cities. His intention was to release this music “stylized,” “softened,” and “adapted” to urban taste (Dreyfus 1997, p. 112). The song “*Baião*” was the first fruit of this idea, and its composers had already mastered the mechanisms of the mass media. They released a song that was a novelty, a new style of dancing. They marketed it as a new consumer product, and ensured that all stylish people who wanted to be “in fashion” would want to know it, as the song says. This shows Gonzaga’s and Teixeira’s saavy with regard to mass media and the culture industry. One has to create something new (or just market it as something new), with an exotic name (the word *baião* can thus be seen just as a marketing device)

and through it gain the attention of people who want to see themselves as hip— knowledgeable about new technologies, gadgets, and fashion. The concept of the “new” is firmly embedded in the idea of being “modern.” This modernity discourse is apparent whenever music is marketed as a new trend.

*Eu vou mostrar pra vocês
Como se dança o baião
E quem quisé aprendê
É favô prestar atenção
Morena chegue prá cá
Bem junto ao meu coração
Agora é só me seguir
Pois eu vou dançar o baião*

I'm gonna show you
How to dance *baião*
And who wants to learn
It is a favor pay attention
Girl come here
Very close to my heart
Now just follow me
Because I'm gonna dance *baião*

*Baião,
Que baião,
Baião,
Oi que baião,
Baião,
Oi que baião*

*Baião,
What a *baião*
Baião,
Oh what a *baião*
Baião,
Oh what a *baião**

*Eu já dançei balance
Xamego, samba e xerém
Mas o baião tem um quê
Que as outras danças não têm
E quem quisé só dizê
Pois eu com satisfação
Vou dançar cantando o baião*

I already danced *balancê*
Xamego, samba and *xerém*
But *baião* has something
That the other dances don't
And who wants [to learn] just say it
Because I will happily
Dance singing the *baião*

Interlúdio

Interlude

(repete primeira e segunda estrofes)

(Repeat first and second strophes)

*Eu já cantei no Pará
Toquei sanfona em Belém
Cantei lá no Ceará
E sei o que me convém
Por isso quero afirmar
Com toda a convicção
Que sou doido pelo baião*

I already sung in Pará
I played accordion in Belém
I sang there in Ceará
And I know what is convenient
Because this I want to state
With all my conviction
I am crazy for *baião*

Repete segunda estrofe

Repeat second strophe

Gonzaga and Teixeira's partnership was so successful that Teixeira ran for Federal Deputy in 1952, and won. After the election Teixeira left the partnership. He continued to be linked, however, with music and he passed a law supporting foreign tours under Federal patronage.

Another important partner of Gonzaga's was ZéDantas (José de Souza Dantas Filho 1921-1962), who worked with him from 1949 to 1962. ZéDantas was a medical doctor, a migrant from Pernambuco state, and according to studies and reports, he wrote lyrics that had more to do with the Northeastern common man and his worldview, as opposed to Teixeira's more refined lyrics. There were other partners as well, such as José Marcolino, Rosil Cavalcanti, Hervê Cordovil, João Silva and Luiz Gonzaga's son, Gonzaguinha. It is characteristic of Gonzaga's music that he, as well as his disciple, Dominginhos, preferred to have someone else write the lyrics. According to Dominginhos, it is better to have a poet as a partner, because they know how to deal with words in such a way that the lyrics communicate in harmony with the melody that the musician composes (Interview 2000).

GONZAGA'S INNOVATIONS AND STYLE

When Luiz Gonzaga began his recording career, he had, as usual, a *choro* ensemble accompanying him (*conjunto regional*). It was early in 1950 when he devised the standard Forró trio: zabumba on the left, piano accordion in the center and triangle on the right. This ensemble had a Northeastern sound quality, and was intended by Gonzaga to evoke the region, according to Dreyfus. Dominginhos calls it the Northeastern regional ensemble (*regional nordestino*, interview 2000). There was a concern about

sound balance, lower and higher timbres, and this is the reason for the placement of the instruments on stage, with the accordion in the center. However, listening to Luiz Gonzaga's recordings throughout his career, this Northeastern sound is open to additions. Even in the 1950s, one can hear 6- and 7-string guitars on many recordings, as well as agogô or cowbells. Later on, electric bass and drumset were added to his music.

Luiz Gonzaga's singing style can be described as a "warm baritone voice," very even in its range, and full of emotional expression. It is often reminiscent of Brazilian cowherd cries. When listening to the *xote* example it is possible to hear these elements in the ending section, juxtaposed with an almost whispered sweet invitation (come narrow waist) emphasized by the use of diminutive forms ("*inha*" endings: *cinturinha*, *finazinha*, *fininha*).

The *xotes* that Luiz Gonzaga recorded, more so than the other genres, have women, romance, and sex as recurrent themes, though not necessarily in an obvious way (figures of speech were used). It can be through, for example, a narrow waist, or the sanfona, a female name for accordion, that references to women and sex occur. Gonzaga describes the sanfona as a female who cries, whispers, and sniffs. Considering the lyrics he interpreted as a whole (throughout the genres), one sees a tendency to lend "human" characteristics to inanimate objects, such as a pestle's curve, which he calls "waist." Sometimes there are oblique references to sex, as in the song *Ovo de Codorna* (Quail's Egg, which is known in Brazil as a sexual stimulant). Other times, the lyrics that Gonzaga interprets express longing for, or dancing with, someone.

It is important to note the relation that Gonzaga's music and career had with dance. His first hit was about dancing and, when calling his instrument by a female name,

he alluded to playing and dancing with a female partner: the *sanfona*. He embraced her and they mirrored each other's movements. Her role was to follow him, exactly as a woman follows her male partner in the Forró dance. Therefore, there is a strong connection between Forró music and dance, not only in the lyrics and in dance parties, but also in Gonzaga's very mode of performance.

Among the interpreters and composers of Northeastern Forró music, Gonzaga is one of the few who dedicated his entire career to it. Even in the rough times, when he tried to record pop music (1968-69), it did not work out because his records did not sell well and the critics openly disapproved them. Gonzaga recorded until the end of his life. His last recording was released in 1989, the year of his death. He was prolific in the studio, and his discography consists of some two hundred discs (around 1400 titles), many of them 78s and the others vinyl LPs, as well as a few compilations. Once a year or at least once every two years Gonzaga released a new recording. His success waxed and waned in the mainstream media, but his performances were always well-attended throughout Brazil. His popularity extended to not only lower classes, and Northeasterners, but also to the middle and upper classes. He performed in Forró houses, such as Pedro Sertanejo's Forró in São Paulo and Cheiro do Povo Forró in Olinda, Pernambuco. He traveled by car or by truck, usually accompanied by the zabumba and triangle players. Sometimes Dominginhos, his main disciple, would be his driver and also a second accordion player on stage. As he was passing by little cities, he would look for the mayor and propose a show in a public square, where he could park the truck and perform from it as a makeshift stage. I had the opportunity to attend one such concert in the mid-1980s, in a square, in my hometown. I was in my teens, but I remember that it

was well-attended, and was promoted by political leaders. His music was great and I really enjoyed it.

The 1980s were particularly significant for Luiz Gonzaga's career, because musical authorities and institutions recognized his importance by bestowing prizes and special tributes on him. In 1980, Pope John Paul II visited Brazil and Luiz Gonzaga played "*Asa Branca*" for him, the Gonzaga song considered the hymn of Northeast. It was a very emotional moment in this predominantly Catholic country. In 1981, he won two Golden discs (100,000 discs sold), and, in 1984, he received a special mention in the MPB-Shell festival. In 1985, he won the Golden Nipper (he sold 240,000 with the LP "*Sanfoneiro Macho*," or Macho Accordion Player. In 1982, Gonzaga played in Paris at the Bobinot Theater, and again in 1986, in a project called "*Coleurs Brésil*" (Colors of Brazil).

Another characteristic of Gonzaga's performance was his attire. He dressed as a Northeastern cowboy, with leather hat and mantle. However, these accessories were seen in the South as *Cangaceiro's* (bandit's) clothing, and, indeed, Gonzaga was a big fan of Lampião, the King of *Cangaço*.

CANGAÇO AND LUIZ GONZAGA'S IMAGE

Gonzaga began wearing the stereotypical Northeastern leather hat and mantle in imitation of another musician, Pedro Raymundo, who was from the South and presented himself wearing the common cowboy attire of his region. However, the Northeastern hinterland cowboy clothing was linked in people's mind with banditry rather than with cow herding, particularly because of the recent death of Lampião (killed in 1938).

Cangaço history was already veiled in romanticism, and Lampião's image and history had come to embody the Brazilian version of the Robin Hood legend. Gonzaga's use of *cangaço*-styled dress linked him to this romanticism and to Lampião himself, an icon of the Northeast.

The history of *cangaço* is tragic and sad. However, their way of life was taken up by authors of popular literature, who transformed it through poetic license into fantastic and imaginary narratives. The image of bandits was changed, and they were portrayed as courageous heroes defending the downtrodden.

Lampião himself contributed to this transformation because he was a very singular bandit. He would invade little villages and plunder them, but not without first sending a telegram to the most important person in the village in an attempt to negotiate a price to withhold the attack. He had a system of spies, admirers and supporters providing him with information about weapon cargos, ambushes, military moves, and so on. He would visit a priest, Fater Cícero, confess his crimes and eventually establish a lasting friendship with him. It was Father Cícero who gave Lampião a captain patent, as well as weapons, in order to enlist Lampião's aid in fighting the communist movement. He would work as bodyguard, as well as an avenger, for some landowners. In the last years before his death (1938) he established a system of taxes, collecting "protection" money from landowners.

Lampião's eccentricities were probably what garnered him a Robin Hood image. Lampião was seen as a brave man, because he had courage to find another way for social ascension. He was an innovator; he allowed women in his group. He was smart and managed his group with discipline, hierarchy, moral principles, and strategies. He was a

politician and knew how to deal with colonels, policemen and authorities. He had a good sense of humor and knew how to enjoy life. He was a poet, a button accordion player, a *xaxado* dancer, a tailor (he could sew his own clothes), and loved gadgets and novelties of the industrial age, such as photographs, business cards, telegraphs, spyglasses, and (as befitted royalty) jewelry. Gonzaga's admiration for Lampião had to do with these aspects of his character and legend.

When Gonzaga crystallized his image in the South, he used the attire of a *cangaceiro*, which was actually common cowboy attire in the Northeast—a leather hat and mantle. Thus, Luiz Gonzaga's music and style were seen as “truly Northeastern,” and he cultivated this image by calling forth Lampião's persona, a Northeastern legend with many associations. Gonzaga also wrote and sang a few *xaxados*, and he crowned Marinês (Inês Caetano de Oliveira, 1935) as the “Queen of *Xaxado*.” When Luiz Gonzaga or Marinês interpret *xaxados*, the themes are very likely to be related with *cangaço*.

Gonzaga's *cangaceiro* outfit also contributed to the public association of Northeastern music with the broader category of Brazilian country, or rural, music in general. In some ways, Gonzaga was following a pattern familiar to the urban audiences of Rio de Janeiro, who were used to seeing performers in rural attire when they played music related with the hinterland. Like Jararaca and Ratinho, or the Turunas of Mauricéia, Gonzaga was bringing images of the countryside to his music through his use of specific attire.

GONZAGA AND VARGAS

Gonzaga fully supported the populist dictator Vargas throughout his years as president. It is known that Gonzaga played at receptions offered by the government in the *Palácio do Cadete* (Cadete Palace), as well as at rallies during election campaigns. Gonzaga also played for Eva Perón when she visited Rio de Janeiro in 1949 (Ferretti 1988). Some of his songs were composed and recorded exclusively to promote the accomplishments of the government, such as *Marcha da Petrobrás* (March of Petrobrás, the governmental petroleum company) and *Paulo Afonso* (the power dam built by the government in the Northeast). According to Luiz Gonzaga's account, politicians and rich farmers paid him for these songs, and that was his source of revenue. This fact, and his ties with the Catholic Church were the reasons offered to justify his not denouncing the often-oppressive political system overtly (Campos 1993, p. 192). Perhaps he could not see the problems with the political system at that time, or maybe he accepted them because it was to his benefit. The Vargas government also fit Gonzaga's moral framework: Vargas was simply another patron, like the colonel of Gonzaga's early years. *Baião* music fit in with the nationalism project. It was music for and of the masses, close to them, offering a means to forget their problems, or indulge their nostalgic longings. This kind of experience creates strong emotional links between the music and the people. As a consequence, it came to be used by the Vargas regime to promote nationalism.

GONZAGA'S FOLLOWERS

By popular consensus, Luiz Gonzaga was the "King of *Baião*," and he had a queen – Carmélia Alves (daughter of migrant parents from Ceará state). I had the

opportunity to interview her during fieldwork and to attend one of her shows in São Paulo in 2000. She was one of many radio singers in the 1950s who popularized *baião* and other Northeastern dance genres in orchestral versions. She was a crooner, and worked at the Copacabana Palace Hotel's nightclub, singing and interpreting the music for an elite audience that, most of the time, had nothing to do with Northeasterners and were often tourists. Therefore, since the early days of Northeastern music's success in the mass media, the instrumentation varied, depending on context, the audience's social class, and musician's style. Carmélia Alves benefited from Humberto Teixeira's law and traveled around the world singing Brazilian music, mainly Northeastern dance music, accompanied, most of the time, by orchestras and big bands, taking advantage of the novelty of the genre, but dressing it up in a way familiar to the international community. Carmélia Alves's success was made possible because of the impact Gonzaga's music had in the media during the 1940s-50s. According to Dreyfus, most of the famous singers and musicians of the time, performed, arranged or even recorded Gonzaga's hits in their own style.

This eclecticism in instrumentation and performance style is a very significant issue, because purists tend to point to the 1940-50s as the origins of "traditional," "roots," or "authentic," Forró music. There is a traditionalist tendency to only recognize the zabumba, accordion and triangle trio as legitimate Forró. However, with the "King's" consent and approval, other singers, interpreters and composers performed Forró music in their own style, using different instrumentation, and they had their own fans and followers. Carmélia Alves, the "Queen of *Baião*," sang Forró music with orchestral accompaniment. Luiz Vieira, the "Prince of *Baião*," himself a Northeastern migrant from

Pernambuco, composed his own *baiões* and sang them with different instrumentation such as bass drum, triangle, accordion, flute, clarinet, trumpet and bass clarinet (“*Baião de Vila Bela*,” 1951). Marinês, the “Queen of *Xaxado*,” married a famous button accordion player, Abdias, who was also her agent. Her recordings include a large variety of genres, instrumentation, not only *xaxado*, or Northeastern music for that matter. In 1999 she released a CD produced by Elba Ramalho, where she sings with the most prominent Northeastern musicians of that time. Once again, she moved easily among different genres and styles such as romantic, pop, and mangue beat—a “new generation” Northeastern genre.

THE MID-1950s TO MID-1960s—JACKSON DO PANDEIRO’S ERA

From the mid-1950’s through mid-1960’s, Jackson do Pandeiro (b. José Gomes Filho, August 31, 1919 in Alagoa Grande, Paraíba state, Northeast; d. July 10, 1982 in Brasília, federal capital, mid-West) was the most important artist of Forró music. His father worked in an *olaria* (ceramics) and his mother (Flora Mourão) was a *coco* singer. The region where he was born belonged originally to *Tapuias* (an indigenous people from the *Cariri* group) and during Jackson’s life it was an important sugar cane and cotton production area. Beginning on 1901, the production would reach the coast by train, which then brought back the latest news and fashions, connecting the interior and the capital of the state, and allowing people to expand their worldview. Until Jackson was seven years old he accompanied his mother to *rodas de coco* (*coco* circles, gatherings) observing, and later playing pandeiro. In 1930, Jackson and his family moved to Campina Grande, a bigger city about four days away on foot. Jackson worked as a bread maker, and was the

primary wage earner for his family. On his way to work he had to pass through a prostitution area called *Manchuria*; it was there that he first took the stage as a musician, at a very young age. It was also in Manchuria that he gained experience as a performer, interacting with other musicians and learning melodic instruments and the fundamentals of harmony. Jackson began to play drumset with a band while their regular drummer was sick. As a set drummer, he had difficulties with the foreign rhythms (foxtrot, swing, and rhumba). According to his biographers, he did not much like to play foreign rhythms.⁸

Due to his economic conditions, he used to walk a lot, and he became well-known in Manchuria and surrounding neighborhoods due to his walking and his easy camaraderie with people. At that time, people would install radio speakers on the streets to transmit programs, and in this way Jackson would listen to the popular musicians of the period: Francisco Alves, Mário Reis, Ary Barroso, Lamartine Babo, Vicente Celestino, Noel Rosa, Jararaca e Ratinho, Alvarenga e Ranchinho, Silvio Caldas, Moreira da Silva, Carmen Miranda, and Orlando Silva (Moura and Vicente 2001, p. 67). These are famous names of the history of samba, carnival and regional music, along with other great Brazilian crooners such as Vicente Celestino and Francisco Alves. Thus, even in walking the streets of his neighborhoods, Jackson had musical company through radios. Jackson began to sing and participate on these radio programs, and to perform in *pastoril*⁹ events. Influenced by successful singers of the time associated with regional music, from 1935 to 1939 he and a partner, Zé Lacerda, formed a duet: *Café com Leite* (Coffee with Milk) which would be most active during carnival, performing short sketches in which they

⁸Most of biographical data about Jackson do Pandeiro has been drawn mainly from Moura and Vicente 2001.

⁹*Pastoril* is the name for dances and songs performed mainly by young women commemorating the birth of Jesus. The performers are accompanied by shakers (maracás) and pandeiros, but other portable instruments can be added (Alvarenga 1982).

would sing, dance, play pandeiro and entertain people with funny numbers or live performances. This kind of duet reflects the link that Forró music has with music theater and country music. In 1937, a casino was opened in Campina Grande and from 1939 to 1944 Jackson worked in the orchestra there, playing pandeiro and other percussion; he finally was able to leave his bread-making job. In the orchestra, he encountered a large variety of rhythms, sounds, and arrangements, including foreign ones. He also earned enough money to go to the cinema occasionally, to see cowboy movies (his nickname came from Jack Perrin) and the productions of *Atlântida*, a Brazilian Film Company famous for its musicals.

Watching these musicals, Jackson saw Manezinho Araújo and Minona Carneiro performing, singing, telling funny stories, as well as Jorge Veiga, the “caricaturist of samba,” specialized in *samba de breque* (stop sambas) with anecdotal verses. Jackson liked them so much that he began to imitate them and include this music in his repertoire. In 1944, Jackson left for the capital of Paraíba, João Pessoa, after a fight at Manchuria. He soon began working in a cabaret there. His new audience included other musicians, students, and radio staff; towards the beginning of 1945, Jackson was invited to play in the most famous radio orchestra of the state: *Jazz Tabajara*, at *Radio Tabajara da Paraíba* (Paraíba’s Tabajara Radio). The orchestra had just suffered the loss of their most famous member, clarinet player and arranger, Severino Araújo, who had migrated to Rio de Janeiro. The formation of the orchestra was greatly influenced by North American big bands, such as those of Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey. It played foxtrots, rhumba, bolero, blues, waltzes, fados, tangos, mambo, marches, frevos, sambas, emboladas, cocos, and other Brazilian music. Jackson learned to play all these,

and during his free time he would participate in circle dances, religious parties and popular pastimes promoted by workers and residents in the poor neighborhoods.

In 1948, an invitation took him to Recife, the capital of the neighbor state Pernambuco. He worked in the Jazz Paraguay, the orchestra of another radio: *Radio Jornal do Comércio* (Commerce Radio News). At that time artists would frequently travel between Recife (in the Northeast) and Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. This circuit included not only nationally acclaimed performers, but also international celebrities such as Carlos Ramirez, Fernando Valencia, Cuquita Carballo, Lya Ray and Rayito de Sol (Cuba), Gloria Bara (Spain), Peter Kreuder (Austria), and Xavier Cugat (North America). Due to the success of Cuban music and musicians, Jackson do Pandeiro learned to play bongos in addition to pandeiro in the Jazz Paraguay. This radio station was so cosmopolitan that there was a program, “Brazil Calling,” presented in English by a blond girl—Janet Swanton. According to a music survey conducted at the end of the 1940s, the music genres preferred by people in Recife were all dance genres: *samba* in first place, foreign waltz in second, bolero in third, foxtrot in fourth, tango in fifth. *Frevo*, the carnival genre that was born in the region was in eighth position (Moura and Vicente 2001).

It was in Recife that Jackson greatly expanded his musical experience. Beside the foreign rhythms that he heard and played in the radio orchestra, he also had contact with *candomblé* music, and began to incorporate and adapt this style into his own singing and playing. He was known as “the best singer of rhythmic sambas.” It was in a *candomblé* circle that he met Edgar Monteiro, a composer who was trying to use the rhythmic instrumental interludes played by *repentistas* (improvisers) in the creation of a whole new

musical structure mixing *baião* (the name given to those interludes), *coco* and *samba*. This mixture was called *rojão*, and “Forró em Limoeiro,” discussed in the first chapter, is a good example of the form.

Jackson’s reputation as a samba player and interpreter spread quickly in Recife. One fan and supporter, Genival Macedo was the A & R man for the Copacabana Records Company in the Northeast and North regions. Macedo’s job was to recruit talent from other companies and also to discover promising new talent for Copacabana Records. In 1953, there was an important live concert series—a series of performances one month before carnival—promoted by Copacabana, *Rádio Jornal do Comércio* and the recording company *Som Indústria Comércio* S.A. This temporary alliance transformed the radio studios into recording studios; in exchange the name of the radio would be printed in the record labels. Also, the price of the records would be lowered, in a deal made with a North American company: Rosenblit Brothers & Company. The records would be made in Recife.

For the first night of the concert series, the producers arranged the program to showcase a large variety of local rhythms and musical genres. Jackson performed “*Sebastiana*,” (a *coco* composed by Rosil Cavalcanti, also analyzed in the first chapter), with Luiza de Oliveira singing backup vocals. The audience was frenetically enthusiastic. The success was so phenomenal that one week later Jackson would have his own program on the radio: *A, E, I, O, U, Ypsilone* (lyrics from the refrain of “*Sebastiana*”).

Initially he had two partners—Luiza de Oliveira and Almira Castilho—although the former was older and announced her retirement soon after the concert series. Almira Castilho was Jackson’s partner from that time on, not only on stage but soon also as his

wife. Following the models presented in musicals of that time, with which Jackson was well acquainted, they formed a duet: he was short, black and too slim; she was tall, very white and shapely. This contrast was exploited as a comic characteristic of the duet. He was musically experienced but illiterate. She was a beginner as musician but she had a teaching degree. Here, as with Gonzaga, the need for a partnership with someone from a more privileged social background is evident. Almira Castilho took care of the business side of their artistic life, because she was educated and literate. Jackson took care of their musical repertory, performances, and so on. Jackson and Gonzaga had inculcated hierarchical values derived from patriarchal structure and recognized in the upper classes (middle and elite) an innate cultural power.

Jackson's debut recording was made in 1953, for Copacabana with "*Forró em Limoeiro*," a *rojão*, on side A, and "*Sebastiana*," a *coco*, on side B. This recording was immensely successful, to the point of reaching cities quite far away from Recife, including Rio de Janeiro. In an interview in 1981, Jackson said that he invented *forró* (the genre) in this first recording, because he asked the guitar to play *choro*, the cavaquinho to play *samba* and the zabumba to play *baião* (Moura and Vicente 2001, p. 369). This statement shows the degree of hybridization in the formation of a new popular genre, and how easily a musician can move among different genres. This is also confirmed by my analysis of "*Forró em Limoeiro*" where the instrumentation and the rhythmic patterns are closer to "*Mané Gardino*", a *forró* in its more typical form.

In 1954, Jackson and Almira went to Rio de Janeiro (Southeast) for few days, working for Copacabana. They ended up spending almost three months there. Their performances excited the public and gained the attention of the press. The words *rojão*,

coco and *embolada* were used to classify Jackson's music, but the media began to summarize it under another term: *farró*, probably because the song titles and lyrics used this word a lot and also described it as a very typical place, something that was not present in the big cities, and hence an exotic novelty. The word *Farró* was seen as something new, and "modern," and so had better chances to sell.

In 1955, they had their own TV program—*Farró do Jackson* (Jackson's *Farró*) on TV Tupi in Rio, and in São Paulo at Record TV and Radio. From 1956 to 1962, they appeared in Brazilian movies called "*chanchadas*;" the comic elements of their partnership, evident in their music, dialogues, and visual performance, helped greatly in their appeal to movie audiences. However, the 1960s in Brazil were the years of bossa-nova, rock-and-roll, and dictatorship, and Jackson fell on hard times. He and Almira Castilho were separated in 1966. In 1968, he had a car accident and broke both arms, which had to be immobilized for a long time. In 1969, Gal Costa, a tropicália singer, recorded "*Sebastiana*" and Jackson do Pandeiro gradually found his way back into the mainstream again. Also in that year, a new record was released through Philips: *O Fino da Roça* (The Finest of the Country). The title was a parody of a TV program called *O Fino da Bossa* (The Finest of the Bossa). This record included many artists not currently in favor in the mass media, and was targeted to a Northeastern public. The "country" in the record title was synonymous with "Northeast." It sold well, and Philips decided to promote it through a caravan of live performances. As had happened with Gonzaga, Jackson do Pandeiro and other artists not currently in vogue in the mass media toured Brazil, performing live and maintaining their popularity among the masses throughout the country.

The Philips enterprise shows that the mass media and cultural industry did not forget the significance of the Northeastern market. However, it was becoming apparent that the popularity of Northeastern music had peaked some time before. Forró music had been all the rage since late 1940s. Consumers were getting tired of it and searched for other novelties. That is how “modernity” works in the mass media. The Cultural industry must release novelties before the last trends fizzle. However, in trying to balance all the musical trends that were appearing and succeeding in popularity in the late 1960s, the cultural industry was relegating Northeastern music to the general realm of country music, as they had at its beginning. The cultural industry could always return to Forró and make it again fashionable through a big push in advertisement. At that time, they just invested a little bit in order to keep Northeastern music alive and the market warm; the recordings would sell reasonably with only a little advertising, because of its loyal public—migrants from the hinterland who were attached to their regional music.

JACKSON’S INNOVATIONS AND STYLE

Jackson’s music employs a lot of swing, broken and unexpected rhythms, not only on the instruments that accompany him but mainly in his way of interpreting the melodies and lyrics. Singing along with his recordings is very difficult task and requires a lot of practice to attain the fluidity that he had. It is not only a question of the speed of his word delivery (a clear influence of *embolada* genre), but also its swing. Jackson could improvise any number of rhythmic variations for the same melodic line, and he could do this also in the accompanying pandeiro patterns. Thus, even when he performed the same refrain over and over again, each time was different because of his rhythmic creativity.

In his musical partnerships, Jackson was constantly looking for new sounds and new creations. In contrast with Luiz Gonzaga, Jackson had a great variety of partners throughout his career, and this contributed to the variety of interpretative possibilities that he exploited. Like Gonzaga, he was not much of a lyricist; his contributions lie in the arrangements, instrumentation, melodic lines, rhythm, interpretation, and pandeiro playing. His musical tutelage with orchestras, jazz bands and lower-class music entertainments (*coco* circles, *candomblé*) exposed him to a variety of new sounds, and prompted him to experiment with new timbre combinations (unlike Gonzaga, who pretty much stuck with the standard trio format).

Jackson and Almira's success had to do not only with Jackson's musical skills but also with their stage presence. Their performances were like theater sketches, caricaturing the rustic, "country" (*caipira, matuto*) couple. They dressed as "*caipiras*" and performed their music in comic scenes of musical theater, to the point that the press started calling Jackson do Pandeiro a comedian. Once again, Forró music was intertwined with the beginnings of Brazilian country music through this sort of mannered hillbilly performance style. They showed a stereotypical country couple that conformed to the image urban people had of them, reinforcing the dichotomies of rural/underdeveloped/illiterate versus urban/developed/cultured that figure so prominently in modernity discourse, and also reinforcing the prejudices that Southern urban people harbored towards people from the hinterland. This prejudice was so strong that even Gonzaga would adopt it. Gonzaga did not like Jackson's performances (of course jealousy was involved) and actually said that Jackson looked like a clown; this was taken as an insult by Jackson (Moura and Vicente 2001). Gonzaga was disturbed by

Jackson's performance because he, himself, was trying to escape the stereotypes that Jackson perpetuated. Gonzaga was already a celebrity, and worried about his successful position; in his comments he showed prejudice, and ridiculed Jackson's performances, as if Gonzaga himself was not a Northeastern migrant but already an "urban" musician. Gonzaga ended up sounding like a Southern urbanite with the typical prejudice against Northeastern migrants, despite the facts that he was a Northeasterner himself, and that he also exploited imagery from the countryside for commercial success.

Although Luiz Gonzaga exploited stereotypes by wearing his "*cangaceiro*" outfit, he did not go further. Jackson and Almira, by contrast, performed comic scenes and dances, made funny faces, interacting with each other and with the public, while performing their music dressed as country people. This visual aspect of their performances showed up again later in the trajectory of Forró music through electronic Forró.

JACKSON'S NEW TRENDS AND FOLLOWERS

Beginning in the 1970s, after Jackson and Almira broke up, Jackson returned to the recording studio, but with a new sound. He began using electric instruments such as guitars and organs, as well as other "modern" instrumentation, including drumset, brass sections, and expanded percussion. Rock-and-roll groups had already influenced Brazilian music, and Jackson was experimenting with these sounds. The lyrics tended to use more double entendre and, beginning in the 1970s, there was a style called pornographic Forró or porno-Forró. The main figure of pornographic Forró is Genival Lacerda (1931-) who recorded mainly *xote* and *fórró* genres, with double entendre lyrics.

Jackson influenced Lacerda's singing style through the rhythmic freedom in the interpretation of the melody. This new, baudier style was successful, and Jackson also recorded it, releasing records with some suggestive lyrics. Although he no longer had Almira as a partner, he was still committed to the visual aspect of his presentation. Hence, on the front cover of his recordings from this period, he was surrounded by women—bringing an overtly sexy image to him and to Forró music. This association between Forró and sexuality would come to be very important in the mass media later in the 1990s.

Jackson was, and still is, revered by younger musicians linked with pop music, MPB and Brazilian rock, such as Morais Moreira, Alceu Valença, Geraldo Azevedo, Elba Ramalho, and Zé Ramalho (all Northeastern migrants), as well as Gilberto Gil and Gal Costa. A lot of new versions of his hits have been recorded, as well as new compositions that are clearly influenced by his style, such as “*Coração Bobo*” released by Alceu Valença in 1980. I remember this music being a big success among my teenage friends because of its frenetic beat, which was very good for dancing; it adapted well to the type of dancing we did to rock music, and hence really synchronized with our “music world.” We would sing it a lot, because it was difficult to sing clearly and fostered competitions to see who could sing it better. Typically, this new version of Jackson's Forró had an opening section that was slower, and then a suspension. The second section began as a fast *coco* combining with rock instruments with *embolada* singing style. Valença composed this song with Jackson do Pandeiro in mind as the interpreter, but they could not schedule a recording session and so Valença recorded it himself.

Jackson do Pandeiro is very important in the development of Forró because he expanded upon the model that Gonzaga codified. Gonzaga created *baião* and also brought *xote*, *xaxado* and *arrasta-pé* to the mass media, using a standard trio format. It was Jackson who developed these genres, and invented the *forró* genre, giving it a much more flexible structure, and adding musical elements taken from other genres to expand it. This was the main strategy and characteristic that gave Forró the status that it enjoys to this day. *Baião* is barely remembered, except as a part of the structure of the *forró* genre, which remains the most popular genre played at Forró events currently.

Jackson do Pandeiro's Forró style also had a strong influence on younger musicians, in part because of his diversity and musical skill. While Luiz Gonzaga's presented a general view of Northeastern music and imagery, targeted to the whole population, and with a political agenda, Jackson's influence was more directed to musicians' performances, the pragmatics of playing, arranging, and singing. His virtuosity and interpretations are seen as a standard to be imitated among other musicians. While I was doing fieldwork, a new Forró house opened in a middle class neighborhood in São Paulo, called *Canto da Ema* (the Song of the Rhea), named after a hit in Jackson's style.

THE MID-1960s TO 1980s – YEARS OF MARGINAL ACTIVITY

In the last half of the 1960s, the music media in Brazil was dominated with rock-and-roll, and bossa nova was still in fashion. In the political scene, Brazil was under a strong military dictatorship that began with a *coup d'état* in 1964 and lasted until 1984. Late 1960s was the time of song festivals promoted by TV channels, where most of the

artists known as MPB musicians came to fame. The record industry also began to produce covers of foreign rock-and-roll groups, such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. That is when we had the “iê-iê-iê” and the “long-hair” acts, such as Roberto Carlos and the *Jovem Guarda*, followed by Beat Boys, Golden Boys, The Fevers, *Os Incríveis*, *Renato e Seus Blue Caps*, and others. Forró was marginalized during these years, and only rarely heard on the radio, except in the early hours of the morning, on stations dedicated to country music. It was “out of fashion” for a time, and this attitude both contributed to and was fed by the prejudices that the elite harbored regarding Forró and Northeasterners in general. Therefore, at the end of the 1980s, despite all of its stylistic variants and “modernisms,” Forró was still considered somewhat vulgar and unsophisticated by the middle and upper classes.

A movement called *Tropicália* emerged in 1968, pioneered by Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa, Tom Zé, Torquato Neto, and Os Mutantes. These young musicians, many of them Northeastern migrants living in São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, combined concrete poetry, rock-and-roll, “classical” music, theater, and performance. Because of this all-inclusive tendency, *Tropicália* musicians, eventually turned to Northeastern music. Caetano Veloso recorded “*Asa Branca*” by Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira, while he was exiled in London in 1971. Gal Costa recorded “*Sebastiana*” in 1969, using Jackson do Pandeiro’s interpretative style, and had a hit. Gilberto Gil recorded many of Jackson do Pandeiro’s hits on a 1972 LP (*Expresso 2222*) and, in 1974, Gil recorded a song by Dominginhos and Anastácia called “*Eu só quero um Xodó*” (I just want a Sweetheart), although he changed the piece to a *xote* from its original *arrasta-pé* rhythm. The *baião* genre was still remembered by musicians, and

some well-known songs were recorded using *baião* rhythm, such as “*Domingo no Parque*” (1967) by Gilberto Gil, and “*Ponteio*” (1967) by Edu Lobo and Capinam. In 1968, a false rumor spread by a music agent brought Luiz Gonzaga’s name and music to the attention of the media again. Carlos Imperial alleged that the Beatles were recording “*Asa Branca*” for their new release. Gonzaga, who was far removed from the media spotlight at this point, regained some fame and began, little by little, to be played and heard again on the radios during peak hours.

THE FIRST MAJOR FORRÓ HOUSE—PEDRO SERTANEJO’S FORRÓ

During the 1960s, outside the mainstream, other important activities were happening among Northeastern migrants, trends that had a direct impact on the survival of Forró music. In 1965, Pedro de Almeida e Silva, Pedro Sertanejo (1927-1997) opened his Forró house at Catumbi street, in the Belenzinho neighborhood of São Paulo (Southeast). The house had a capacity of 2000 people and 400 square meters of dance floor. It was open on Saturdays and Sundays. According to Ari Batera (Aristóteles de Almeida e Silva), Pedro’s son, this Forró house remained open until 1992—27 years of existence in the same rented place. The history of this particular Forró house, its patronage, and the musicians that performed in it, reveals much about Forró music, because it shows how its survival mechanisms influenced its aesthetics. Initially, Pedro Sertanejo played his button accordion in caravans, squares, and circuses, accompanied by his fellow workers in a trio formation. Their audience consisted of lower, working-class people of São Paulo. In 1960, he had a radio program at ABC Radio of Santo André (in São Paulo metropolitan area) on Sundays, from 1:00 to 3:00 PM, called *Audições Pedro*

Sertanejo (Pedro Sertanejo's Auditions). Between 1962 and 1964, he tried to host Forró in different places, with a nightclub structure, including paid tickets required for entry. At *Clube dos Trabalhadores do Ipiranga* (Ipiranga Worker's Club), he held Forró every other Saturday; the large audience demonstrated the possibilities for successful entrepreneurship. He rented an old fabric factory and turned it into a profitable business, followed by many other impresarios. According to Ari Batera, the main musicians and staff of Pedro Sertanejo's Forró were Pedro himself, and his family. Pedro Sertanejo played button accordion and his sons played zabumba and triangle. Pedro Sertanejo's children were city kids—raised in São Paulo—and soon electric bass and guitar, as well as a drumset, were integrated in their group of players. The most famous of his sons is Oswaldinho do Acordeon, a piano accordion player who eventually studied the instrument in Italy; he can read music, and play “classic” as well as any other genres he might choose. He has developed into a virtuoso piano accordion player. To compete with the new electric instruments brought in by his sons, Pedro Sertanejo had to amplify his button accordion with an internal microphone and speaker system of his own invention.

Recorded music was not used at Pedro Sertanejo's Forró, although he did begin to record, and eventually, created a recording and publishing company in an attempt to control the copyrights and the marketing of his music. He and other Northeastern musicians were breaking into the recording business, and were learning to exploit the culture industry. Pedro Sertanejo was taking advantage of the migrant market that was formerly dominated by larger companies not connected to the Northeastern community. His recording company, *Cantagalo*, was sold in 1974 to CBS, and had associations with Continental (later RCA Victor). However, Pedro Sertanejo continued as its artistic

director, and his job was to look for promising new musicians and to record them. His recordings were monaural, using just one microphone to record an entire group. According to Ari Batera, Pedro Sertanejo had great experience and a good ear, and a laid back approach, as if each recording were just another rehearsal (“*passar gravando*”). He also would produce the front covers of the discs, and worked on distribution too. These recordings were considered such a collective effort that there was no technical information or credits on the discs (composers, players, arrangers, instrumentation). This is a good example of marginal economy that I explained in the introduction; Pedro Sertanejo’s business was a family owned enterprise that ran in parallel with the formal economy, dialoguing with it but escaping as much as he could from taxes, labor and copyright laws, monthly wages, and so on. Besides recording Forró, Pedro Sertanejo also recorded *samba*, *bolero*, carnival music, *choro*, and other genres. As far as I can tell, the musicians that he recorded also performed at his Forró house; hence, Pedro Sertanejo’s Forró was a place where not only Forró music could be heard and danced to, but also other genres. The patrons of his Forró were varied and not limited to Northeastern migrants, the working class population in general were his core patrons. Throughout the years of its existence, Pedro Sertanejo’s Forró relied on its nightclub structure, with paid entry fees, and so, a variety of genres and patrons joined the mix with Forró music and Northeasterners.

For a time he broadcast the Forrós live on the radio, and the structure of Pedro Sertanejo’s Forró became more akin to a live television variety show. One of the main attractions of these variety shows at the Forró house was a sort of open stage competition, which is called “*programa de calouros*” (freshman program). In this particular section of

the variety show, unknown musicians registered to perform and win the prize as the best musician of that day. This structure was borrowed from famous radio programs of the past hosted by Ary Barroso, Paulo Gracindo, and Flávio Cavalcanti, who were the judges of the music competitions, helped by the studio audience. Migrants attended these radio programs consistently as live audience and as “freshmen performers.” This type of program helped many artists break into the media, because they provided an opportunity to show off musical skills and get media exposure. Luiz Gonzaga, for example, succeeded thanks to his persistent performances at Ary Barroso’s *programa de calouros*. Pedro Sertanejo’s Forró also included this sort of competition in order to facilitate Pedro’s search for new talents to record, thus the different aspects of his business supported each other.

Since Pedro Sertanejo’s Forró lasted so many years, surviving some difficult periods in the history of Brazilian culture and music, it had a reputation for sheltering marginalized musicians, mainly those that were famous for a very brief period and then were forgotten by the media. This was the case with *jovem guarda* and “*iê-iê-iê*”¹⁰ musicians, country music performers and composers, romantic singers that later were called “*brega*,”¹¹ and so on. Therefore, the Forró public throughout the years had opportunities to listen and dance to many different genres and styles of music. I assume that this was not a problem for Northeastern migrants, in general, because it was related with their new life in the city, their new, more complex subjectivities. Even when Pedro

¹⁰ *Jovem Guarda* and “*iê-iê-iê*” musicians were Brazilian versions of The Beatles and early rock groups of the 1960s.

¹¹ *Brega* music was a terminology that showed up in mid-1980s and was related with a music style appreciated by the lower, working class. A music associated with vulgar, dated, kitsch elements, which made excessive use of certain formulas that were perpetuated by media. For more information see Araújo 1988.

Sertanejo played Forró music with button accordion, it had to be amplified by “modern” resources and accompanied by a new generation of musicians, raised in the city, that had other instruments as part of their lives. Considering that they were migrants in São Paulo looking for better life, in the safe and familiar environment of their Forró house they could enjoy the novelties of the city applied to their music. These novelties were welcomed because it was a sign of social ascension and modernity, the accrual of urban signs to their own regional identities.

The popularity of television was another factor contributing to the establishment of “fashions” in the Forró. According to data collected during the research, the main jobs for Northeastern migrants were maids, construction workers, babysitters, waiters, taxi drivers, janitors, and vendors. Due to specificities of their jobs, TV and radio were inseparable companions, and the people appearing in these media were revered as celebrities and models of success. An opportunity to see and hear a once famous singer at the Forró was thus irresistible. It was taken as an honor to host a radio or TV celebrity at the Forró house, the Northeastern migrants’ local space. It gave a sort of legitimacy to Northeasterners, as if they were already considered part of their new environment. On the other hand, regional, or sertanejo programs, supposedly devoted to a more “rural” audience were part of the programming of television channels and radio. The number of migrants grew; this market proved even more attractive to mainstream media producers and advertisers. Such programs continue today, and are now the main venue for Forró music. It is in this context that Jackson do Pandeiro hosted his own program on TV in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Pedro Sertanejo produced his program at Radio ABC from Santo André, and Gonzaga, Teixeira and ZéDantas dedicated a radio program to *baião*,

called *No Mundo do Baião* (In Baião's World). The persistence of these kinds of programs for so many years shows a devoted public, despite competing music "fashions." It also reveals a relatively stable market and highlights the link between Northeastern music and country music in general.

During fieldwork, it was not very clear how the musicians were paid at Pedro Sertanejo's Forró. It seems that most performers were members of his family. However, I also gathered that there was a trade system at work. Musicians would perform for free, thankful for the public exposure, since they were out of the mainstream. Another arrangement was that Pedro Sertanejo would record an artist for free and, in exchange, the musician had to perform at the house a number of times. I know from other musicians that, when Pedro did pay for performances, he would pay very little.

Due to Pedro Sertanejo's business success, many other Forró houses were opened, not only in São Paulo, but also in Rio de Janeiro. By 1966, in São Paulo there was the *Forró do Zé Nilton* in the Mooca neighborhood; later, *Na Sombra do Juazeiro*, *Forró de Júlio Antonio*, *Forró do Severino*, and *Asa Branca* were all Forró houses well known among Northeasterners in that city. In Rio de Janeiro, Luiz Gonzaga tried to open a Forró house before 1965, in the Ilha do Governador neighborhood, but was unsuccessful. However, by 1975 there were at least seven different Forró houses open in Rio: *Xaxadão*, *Sombra do Juazeiro*, *Forró Mandacaru*, *Forró do Moraes*, *Forró de Sebastião Rodrigues*, *Forró de Anísio Silva*, *Forró Forrado* (João do Vale's Forró), and *Forró Jaboação* (which was also a *gafieira*¹²). The success of Forró houses with a nightclub

¹² *Gafieira* is a dance place where brass instruments play arrangements of mainly samba music and couples dance very acrobatic steps.

structure was so pervasive that a few even opened in the Northeast, where the informal (and non-commercial) Forró parties first arose and still existed.

TRIO NORDESTINO, MARINÊS AND DOMINGUINHOS

The years that followed Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro's media success were years of diversification, when many other groups emerged, imitating them and inspired by them. One example of it is *Trio Nordestino* which, in 1960, included Coroné on zabumba, Lindu (Lindolfo Barbosa) singing and playing accordion (he composed many of their songs as well) and Cobrinha¹³ playing triangle. Trio Nordestino had a very successful Forró hit in 1970, composed by Antonio Barros and called "*Procurando Tu*," (Searching You) with double entendre lyrics and heralding a new phase of Forró music. Trio Nordestino's sound was a transition between Luiz Gonzaga's and Jackson do Pandeiro's styles. Their singing style was similar, with melodramatic comments and backing vocals. Trio Nordestino also had the obligatory instrumental interludes, with virtuosic solos reminiscent of the great button accordion instrumental Forró.

Nevertheless, this trio experimented with new combinations of sounds and rhythms, just as Jackson did, and exploited the flexibility of the genres. One can hear electric bass, drumset, cavaquinho, flutes (sometimes they sound like a duo of transverse flute and piccolo, sometimes they sound like fifes), accordion, triangle and pandeiro in their recording "*Forró do Bole Bole*," with its characteristic *fórró* rhythm and a tempo of 100 bpm. "*Chililique*," another *fórró* recorded by them, has a tempo of 94 bpm, and included bass, triangle, agogô, accordion, drumset, zabumba and shakers (afoxé or

¹³ Data about these musicians are scarce. There are suggestions that they were from Bahia state, but I do not have their real names nor dates of birth. I know from informal conversations that Lindu is already dead and his son, Luiz Mário, is playing triangle in the 2000 incarnation of Trio Nordestino.

ganzá). Six- and 7-strings guitars can be heard on their recordings, as well as a guitar with 10 metal strings (*viola caipira*). They recorded mainly *forrós*, but also *xotes*, *baiões*, and *arrasta-pés* can be heard also, as well as a Portuguese rhythm called “*vira*,” a genre that is part of the *xote* family (as Oswaldinho do Acordeon pointed out in a videotaped lecture, 2000). In “*Arte Culinária*,” a slow double entendre *xote* (78 bpm), it is possible to hear the accordion imitating a bandolim, and in “*Por Causa da Pepita*” (same tempo) there is no drumset or zabumba, just cavaquinho, 6-string guitar, triangle, bass and accordion. Trio Nordestino was very important and active during the 1970s, but, for the most part, outside the mainstream media. They had hits in 1974 (*Chililique, Conversa de Motorista*), 1975 (*Forró Pesado*), and 1978 (*Chinelo de Rosinha, Forró no Claro, Petrolina/Juazeiro*) and were named the best Northeastern music group during the hard years of military dictatorship (1964-1984). Of course their music was not political.

In the 1960s, there was another important interpreter of Forró music: Marinês (Inês Caetano de Oliveira, born in Pernambuco state 1935). She was primarily a *baião* singer, and was known as the Queen of *Xaxado*. She was daughter of an indigenous father (of the Ariú group) who used to sing on the streets at night (*seresteiro*), and her mother was a church singer. When she was 14, she married a button accordion player, producer and composer born in Paraíba state: José Abdias de Farias (1933-1991). Around the 1950s, they had formed a trio (button accordion, triangle played by her, and zabumba played by Cacau) and often opened for Luiz Gonzaga’s live performances in the interior towns. Her first recording was in 1956, and throughout her career she interpreted compositions by João do Vale, ZéDantas, Rosil Cavalcanti, Gordurinha, Jacinto Silva, and others. She drew some fire from the Catholic church over the content of the lyrics in

some of the music she sang, such as “*Peça na Pimenta*” and “*Pisa na Fulô*,” by João do Vale (1933-1996)¹⁴, which many considered immoral.

Listening to Marinês recording of 1962 called *Marinês Outra Vez* (Marinês Once Again), one is struck by the variety of styles and genres represented: *arrasta-pés* with trombone, tuba and flutes, a comic *xote* in a very slow tempo, a ballad (with bandolim), *baiões* of varying tempos, an alleged *coco* (track 4) sang as an *embolada*, with *baião* rhythm on guitars and probably zabumba, and clapped with *coco* rhythm. There is one *xaxado* song (track 6), that mixes *repente*, *baião* and *embolada*. Wind instruments are often used, mainly flutes, but also clarinet, trombone and tuba. Track number 5, a *baião*, has political lyrics—it is a plea to help the Northeast.

In a 1966 recording called “*Meu Benzim*,” the variety of styles and genres is again evident. She recorded 22 discs between 1960 to 1969, with the majority of them completed in the first half of the decade. In a more recent recording, “*Marinês e sua Gente – 50 anos de Forró*” (Marinês and her folks – 50 Years of Forró 1999), it is possible to hear her singing side by side with a cross-generation of Northeastern composers and interpreters, such as Dominginhos, Elba Ramalho, Genival Lacerda, Alceu Valença, Zé Ramalho, Moraes Moreira, Lenine, Siba, as well as pop singers such as Margareth Menezes and Ney Matogrosso. In this recording, produced by Elba Ramalho and with arrangements and musical production by Marcos Farias, son of Marinês and Abdias, diversity is again the trademark. Marinês sings to the accompaniment of electric guitars, bass, 12string/steel/nylon guitars, accordion, rabeca, keyboards, string sextet, drumset, sax, flutes and fifes, percussion, and a backing choir.

¹⁴ João do Vale is another important Northeastern composer (born in Maranhão state) who wrote mainly protest songs besides Forrós and Northeastern genres.

The genres are not very delimited, and *xote* and reggae are intertwined as well as slower *forrós* with faster ones, and *cocos*; *baião* is mixed with a sort of pop ballad. In my opinion, the CD is a record of what has happened throughout the years to Forró music; this flexibility and fluidity of boundaries between genres was propitiated and nurtured inside the Forró houses, as a means of attracting diverse urban audiences and adapting to the big cities.

Also active during the 1960s was Dominginhos (José Domingos de Moraes, b. Pernambuco, 1941), considered the main disciple of Luiz Gonzaga. Besides accompanying the king in his tours, whether as second accordion player or driver, he began to play with Trio Nordestino (1957) along with two other musicians: Zito Borborema and Miudinho. However, his participation in the trio lasted just few years and they did not record. Dominginhos eventually also left Gonzaga's group and began to play in casinos and *gafieiras*, prompting him to learn other musical styles and genres. Pedro Sertanejo invited him to record, and he released eight LPs through Sertanejo's label (Cantagalo), beginning in 1967. In 1968, he collaborated with lyricist Anastácia (Lucinete Ferreira, born in Pernambuco), with whom he composed "*Eu só quero um Xodó*" (which would later be a hit in Gilberto Gil's 1974 version). In 1973, Dominginhos went to France for the MIDEM (Marché International de la Musique – International Record Industry Fair) in Cannes, playing with Gal Costa. Upon their return to Brazil, Dominginhos accompanied her national tour with the show *Índia*.

His career tended to be linked with MPB music and, even then, he had a captive public not only among Northeasterners but also among the population in general. His sound can be very rich harmonically, and he told me that he reserves his virtuosic

displays on accordion for live performances; he wants other accordion players to be able to follow him and play along with his recordings, because, he said, that is the way they learn. His compositions were the soundtrack for a *novela* (drama series), *Roque Santeiro*, with a Northeastern theme by the Globo Television Network in the 1980s. The soundtrack included a ballad recorded by Elba Ramalho (*De Volta pro Aconchego*—Back to [my] shelter) and an *arrasta-pé* sung by him and Chico Buarque (*Isso aqui tá bom demais*—This here is too good).

PORNO-FORRÓ – GENIVAL LACERDA

In 1975 a landmark recording was released. It was a *xote* called *Severina Xique-Xique*, sung by Genival Lacerda, and became a reference for a style later called porno-Forró. The initial strophe is:

<i>Quem não conhece Severina Xique-Xique</i>	Who doesn't know Severina Xique-Xique
<i>Que montou uma boutique para vida melhorar</i>	Who opened a store to have a better life
<i>Pedro Carçoço, filho de Zé Vagamela</i>	Pedro Carçoço, son of Zé Vagamela
<i>Passa o dia na janela fazendo aceno pra ela</i>	Spends the whole day at the window waving to her
<i>Ele tá de olho é na boutique dela</i>	He has an eye on her business (her store)
<i>Ele tá de olho é na boutique dela</i>	He has an eye on her business (her store)

The double entendre of these verses has to do with a suggestive interpretation of the Portuguese words, such as “boutique,” which typically refers an exclusive, expensive sort of a clothing store for women, but is also reminiscent of a slang word for vagina; the entire song can, thus, be interpreted as a reference to prostitution. On the one hand, it is just a girl trying to enter the commercial world ruled by men in small towns. Genival Lacerda, who is himself a Northeastern migrant, and part of Jackson do Pandeiro’s

family, recorded this *xote* with triangle, guitar, accordion, bass, drumset and clarinet, with a tempo of 84 bpm. Following Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro's style, he alternates solo parts and choral parts (back vocal) and makes verbal comments at the end over the instrumental conclusion.

Genival Lacerda kept faithful to this style throughout his career, and had several disciples. In the 1980s, Clemilda (Clemilda Ferreira da Silva, born in Alagoas state), Sandro Becker and Zé Duarte were followers, pushing the boundaries and making even more explicit the sexual or scatological connotations of their lyrics. As surprising as it may be, this style of Forró music is much appreciated by Northeasterners and the lower income population. In my opinion, it is a throw back to the early stages of Forró music and country music in the comic acts of musical theater. At that time, the jokes, sometimes bawdy ones, were part of the style. Gonzaga used jokes, for example, in "*Forró de Mané Vito*," which I analyzed before. Gonzaga makes fun of a violent party that ended up in a murder. Jackson also performed this kind of music, and I can see in "*Sebastiana*" and "*Mané Gardino*" references to a woman's behavior that attracted attention from men. It already had a risqué aura, appropriate for the double entendre of porno-Forró. "*Forró do Bole-bole*" by Trio Nordestino is also talking about a woman's behavior and her husband's cluelessness about it. I attribute this taste to life experience and their earthier hinterland lifestyle—much closer to nature and bodies (human and animals). Hence, lyrics talking about the body and sex have to do with their past experiences and worldview close to family life, which has various dynamics and facets, some closer to respect and proper behavior, others close to silliness and comical. But upper classes

living in the cities do not have this connection with nature, and porno-Forró just increased the prejudice that they already had against Northeastern music and migrants.

From another point of view, mass media was investing money in porno-Forró because sex sells, and it was an easy way to make money in times of economic crisis (of course the amount of investment was proportional with the context). It was directed to lower classes, which are a big consumer market and through it culture industry could survive. Although lower classes were crossing difficult times and to buy a record was not essential for surviving, due to its large numbers people who would buy a record despite the economic crisis were more likely to be found and these exceptions could keep the market warm. It is relevant that this style of Forró music was successful in the 1980s, when Brazilian elite struggled with economic hardship and basic survival was harder than ever. It was in the 1980s, too, that a mass movement was preparing to end of dictatorship in Brazil, which happened officially in 1984. After the end of excessive restrictions, censorship and military rule, there was a tendency to exploit excessive freedom. Pornographic movies, porno-Forrós and the lambada dance were popular venues to commemorate the arrival of democracy and the right to free expression. The reasons for this excessive sexual display probably had as much to do with a making fun of the military and its excessively strict morality. As at the end of a battle, when the winners make fun of the defeated enemy in the most vulgar ways, Brazilians were mocking the military.

FORRÓ, YOUTH, ROCK-AND-ROLL AND A FORRÓ HOUSE IN THE NORTHEAST

Contributing to the ever-growing diversification of Forró music, in 1977 Oswaldinho do Acordeon, son of Pedro Sertanejo, performed at the FAAP (*Faculdade Álvares Penteado* – Álvares Penteado College), a private school in São Paulo. The audience was university students who danced and listened to piano accordion, keyboards, drums, bass, and guitar. His music was called *Forrock* (combining “*farró*” and rock) and he performed this style of Forró at festivals for young audiences (financed by a jeans factory called USTop). He recorded *Forró Pop* (1977) and *Forró in Concert* (1979). Thus, by the end of the 1970s, university students were already involved with Forró as a dance music that could be combined with pop and rock music. This trend was spreading around the country through music festivals at which Oswaldinho do Acordeon was performing. But he was not alone in this enterprise.

In Recife, Northeast, during the 1970s the musical scene was changing. Rock was influencing young musicians and, actually before Oswaldinho do Acordeon in São Paulo came out with forrock, Alceu Valença and others in Recife/Olinda (Northeast) were mixing different genres such as *baião*, *farró* and rock using guitars, bass, drumsets and getting “help” from hallucinatory drugs. This tendency would grow and flourish in the 1990s, through a new generation of Northeastern musicians linked with the manguebeat movement.¹⁵ Still in the Northeast, another initiative took place, influenced by the success of Forró houses in the Southeast.

¹⁵ Manguebeat movement began in the 1990s and according to its creator, Chico Science, “the idea is to put a parabolic antenna on the mud and establish contact with all elements possible for a universal music, what is going to take people to look at the rhythm as it was before” (Teles 2000, p. 330 my translation).

In Olinda, Pernambuco, a Forró house was opened in April of 1979 called *Cheiro do Povo* (People's Smell),¹⁶ which stayed in business until 1981. According to its owner, Raymundo Campos (José Raymundo Ribeiro Campos, b. 1947 Pernambuco), who was 32 years old at that time and an engineering student, it was an attempt to bring back Brazilian music and dance as a way to assert Brazilian culture, mainly Northeastern culture. It was a response to the disco vogue that was "contaminating" the new generation and a means of promoting Forró, which had been marginalized since 1960s. According to him, the idea came up after a night in a discotheque in Brasília, capital of the country, when Campos asked the DJ to play Forró music and he taught the girls how to dance while embraced. He also said that Forró, as a business, was not practiced in the Northeast at that time.

Cheiro do Povo had an average of two thousand people each night (Fridays and Saturdays) and the public was varied: children, adults, middle and upper classes. According to Campos it was a family place, and his advertisement slogan was: "come and bring your family." There were many other Forró houses opening in Olinda and Recife after *Cheiro do Povo's* success, but political problems brought an end to the house. It seems that authorities wanted a share of the business's profits. Campos refused, and they forced him to close, using the bureaucratic system against him. The music played live at *Cheiro do Povo* was "pé-de-serra" (hill's foot) style (zabumba, button/piano accordion, and triangle), but sometimes, electric bass and or winds could be added. The groups interpreted hits by Luiz Gonzaga, Jackson do Pandeiro, Trio

¹⁶ This name had to do with a comment made by the president of the time, João Batista Figueiredo, a military. He was crazy for horses and in a visit to Olinda, Pernambuco, he passed by a slum and someone asked him about what he thought about that "smell," the "people's smell." Figueiredo answered that he preferred horses' smell. The population was really offended by his comment.

Nordestino and others; sometimes the “stars” themselves showed up to perform. According to Campos, he did not allow double entendre Forró (it was a house turned to an elite audience), hence Genival Lacerda’s music was not played at *Cheiro do Povo*.

FORRÓ AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

In the late 1970s, the military dictatorship in Brazil was beginning to loose its power. One clear sign of this was the founding of the workers’ party in 1979. The military authorities were aware of this dynamic and, as in the nationalist years, they would occasionally provide some money for cultural projects that could bring together as many people as possible in an attempt to tie the population and the state, so the people would feel united under the patronage of the military and forget about the harsh dictatorship. This extended the influence and power of the military, and is how a federal music project called *Projeto Pixinguinha* (Pixinguinha’s Project) came to be. It was so beneficial that it continued after the end of dictatorship.

The goal of this project was to help popularize promising musicians, and in the project’s peak years it was very important for maintaining Forró music in all its varieties. It began in 1977 and continued without pause until 1989. In the 1990s the project resurfaced for a few non-consecutive years, and it returned in 2004 through Gilberto Gil’s ministry.¹⁷ Dominginhos performed as part of the project, as did Carmélia Alves, Oswaldinho do Acordeon, Sivuca, Anastácia, Marinês, Jackson do Pandeiro, and Luiz Gonzaga, among others. The project activities involved caravans of performers that

¹⁷ Gilberto Gil, a Black musician and a Northeastern migrant, well-known internationally because of its role in the Tropicália music movement (late 1960s) and an important name in the MPB music today, was appointed by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (the first Workers’ Party President, also a Northeastern migrant himself) as Culture Minister in 2001.

toured the country visiting smaller as well as bigger towns and cities, offering free shows in squares and public sites.

Hence, the period from the mid-1960s through the 1980s, had a lot of activities involving Forró music, even though it was not particularly popular in the mass media. Pedro Sertanejo's Forró, porno-Forró, Forrock, Cheiro do Povo, Projeto Pixinguinha were all important for the continuation of Forró music. But the media, as I said before, never completely lost sight of Forró music, since it continued to appeal to many consumers, mainly from the lower classes. Hence, TV, radio, and recording companies would maintain Forró music in the market, as country music, with a minimal investment, but occasionally might bring it back into the limelight when, for example, the pioneers of the style passed away. Thus, in 1979, 1982 and 1989, when Humberto Teixeira, Jackson do Pandeiro and Luiz Gonzaga, respectively, died, the media "rediscovered" Forró music. In these years, one can find extensive articles in the major newspapers, special recordings and new compilations released, and special programs on TV and radio focused on this music.

Of course, there was also the influence of the drama series (*novelas*), mainly through Globo Network Television such as *O Bem Amado* (1973), *Gabriela* (1975), and *Saramandaia* (1976), all with Northeastern themes. These novelas were very popular among audiences throughout Brazil. They were aired around 10:00 PM, and directed toward adults and people that were arriving home from work or from school. These programs showed a tourist's view, as well as a folkloric vision of the Northeast and its inhabitants. In all of them there was sexual appeal and very suggestive scenes. I was between 8 and 10 years old when these shows were popular. I remember that my father

and mother, who were very much linked with the hinterland worldview, watched the shows avidly. They had a lot of fun, and I was naturally curious, because they would laugh a lot, and comment, but they would not allow me to see these programs. I assume that these novelas helped disseminate views of the Northeast and the Northeastern way of life among the general Brazilian population. They showed an exotic life, paradisiacal places, and a wealth of cultural practices in the Northeast. The programs captivated the middle and upper classes, because of this exotic image, and also the lower classes, especially Northeastern migrants, because of their nostalgia and memories of their former home. Hence, together with the spread and variety of Forró all over the country, the image of the Northeasterners as people with a strong cultural capital, that goes back to the time of discovery, exotic to the urban population in the South, added complexity to the way people thought about Northeasterners and the Northeast.

The continuity of migration and the career successes of various Northeastern musicians helped maintain Forró music in a “pop” version, in its vitality and flexibility of styles. A new generation of singers and composers from the Northeast migrated and attained some recognition in the mass media portraying a Northeastern worldview in their lyrics, although involved with pop music and MPB. Accordion players from the Northeast, playing instrumental music, were turning up in the music scene of the big cities in the South.¹⁸ Composer, arranger and/scholar César Guerra-Peixe (1914-1993), who was devoted to the study “folk” music, released an LP with orchestral versions of some of Gonzaga’s best-known music during this period.

¹⁸ Examples of pop/MPB singers and composers: Elba Ramalho, Zé Ramalho, Moraes Moreira, Fagner, Alceu Valença, Vital Farias, Elomar, Geraldo Azevedo, Xangai, and Amelinha. Accordion players were Sivuca, Oswaldinho do Acordeon, and Hermeto Paschoal for example.

THE 1990s - 2000

In the beginning of the 1990s, according to my informants, the urban middle class youth in the South did not have a lot of options for entertainment. The lambada craze was over, as well as the disco era. Brazil was about to commemorate the 500th anniversary of its discovery by Europeans. The media fashion of the late 1980s was dominated by a style of country music related to North American country music. There was a duet, Chitãozinho and Xororó, who sold a lot of recordings (they have been releasing records for 30 years and have sold about 30 million copies in total). In 1987, they participated in the special end-of-the-year programming on Globo TV network (a sign of their popularity) and in 1989 they won an award in the Latin Grammy as musical reference for the 1988-1989 period playing at Caesar's Park in Las Vegas—Nevada. They began to record in Nashville with Billie Ray Cyrus, Terry Shelton and Buddy Cannon. Their music was called *sertaneja* and had an evident rock influence (electric guitar, bass, drumset) as well as romantic lyrics. A distinction began to be made between this music, and the “old” style of Brazilian country music, based only on acoustic guitars (6-, 7-, and 10-string versions) and singing *caipira* - a “roots” country style. *Sertaneja* came to be greatly appreciated by people of rural heritage, especially youngsters related through their parents, with farming, horses, agriculture, and cattle. The urban youth, mainly in the big industrialized centers such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, were not much interested in it and were very critical of all the mass media attention it was receiving. It should be remembered, however, that Forró music throughout these years was classified as *sertaneja*, or country music, in music stores.

Meanwhile, in São Paulo, Forró do Pedro Sertanejo was in its last days of existence. There were other places where Northeastern migrants could go, including the CTN, Center of Northeastern Tradition, that was inaugurated in 1985 and could accommodate roughly two thousand people. The CTN came into being when three parallel initiatives by music agents and managers began to invest in the Forró business.

The first of these were paid parties, called “Dona Maria,” and held mainly for university students in downtown São Paulo, promoted by Paulo Rosa and Carlos Magno. These promoters had nothing to do with Northeastern culture or Northeasterners whatsoever. They were applying, on a small scale, the typical mass media strategy of looking for novelties in order to make money. Initially, these parties would have any sort of dance music, from mainstream hits to marginal music, or “*brega*” music. They had contacts with other promoters, who were also students in the veterinary program at São Paulo University. Being a vet student suggested that they were very close to a “rural” life. At vet parties, student promoters used to hire Northeastern trios (which would charge very little) to play live for mainly student audiences; these parties were a huge success at the university. Instead of recorded dance music they had live performances; instead of dancing by yourself, these parties promoted Forró as a couples’ dance, and this was a novelty for twenty-years-old at the time. So, Paulo Rosa and Carlos Magno, who were in the music business, began to hire Northeastern trios to play live for their Dona Maria parties and paid very good money for the musicians. One of these trios was *Trio Sabiá* formed by Northeasterners (Joca on accordion, Tião on vocals and triangle, and Zito on zabumba).

Another initiative was taken by Wagner, a teacher of physical education who had a space near the university campus (São Paulo University - USP) that he called *Projeto Equilíbrio* (Balance Project) and where he threw parties on the weekends, hiring Northeastern trios to play live for high school and university students. His goals were more related to socialization, education, and culture. He also had contact with the vet student promoters, and due to the success of their vet parties with Northeastern trios, Wagner also began to hire them. Yet another venue had arisen quite far from São Paulo: in Fortaleza city, Ceará state in the Northeast. This trajectory involved a recording company, *Somzoom*, that promoted a group called *Mastruz com Leite*, which performed Forró in a very spectacular way. Somzoom was a big enterprise that was trying to dominate the music media in the whole Northeast and North regions of Brazil. They were trying to embrace the Northeastern market, since it had been a steady consumer base throughout the last twenty years, but one that was somewhat neglected by other big recording companies. In my opinion, *Somzoom* was expanding Pedro Sertanejo's business idea but taking more risks and being more audacious and ambitious. The first two initiatives in São Paulo fostered what came to be called *Forró universitário* (university students Forró) by the media. Somzoom's initiative spurred what is now known as *Forró eletrônico* (electronic Forró). These three initiatives had a huge impact at a national level and gained the attention of the cultural industry by creating new fashions with Forró.

FORRÓ UNIVERSITÁRIO

According to Wagner (José Wagner de Souza, b. 1960), *Projeto Equilíbrio* began when he lived on the periphery of São Paulo in 1985. It was a social project with the goal of bringing sports and culture to the local youth: “a non-traditional means of communication with the youth” (Interview 2000-2001). In 1993, he moved and rented a place in the Pinheiros neighborhood, near São Paulo University campus and the high school where he worked, *Colégio Equipe*. In 1994, a birthday party gave him the idea to throw dance parties as an alternative venue for people in their mid-twenties and thirties to dance together in contrast to the “disco” scene. A veterinarian student (Mogi) was also there; he was part of the students’ academic center, which used to throw parties with live musical performances by Northeastern trios. The trio they used most often was *Trio Virgulino* (Enok Virgulino, a blind accordion player/singer/composer, Adelmo Nascimento, triangle player/singer/composer and Roberto Pinheiro zabumba player/singer). In the same year *Trio Virgulino* was hired to play on Fridays at *Projeto Equilíbrio’s* athletic facility, attracting mainly high school and university students. Hence, *Trio Virgulino*, a group of Northeastern migrant musicians, began playing in São Paulo for middle class, urban, university students; most of the time, there were no Northeasterners in the audience. However, the prejudices against, and dangerous reputation of, Forró needed to be mitigated; they decided to call the gatherings *Forró universitário* (university students Forró), to make it explicit that the participants were “polite, cool, educated, were well-dressed and well-behaved” (Interview 2000-2001). So, the fliers and posters advertised *Forró universitário*, and, for Wagner, the gatherings created an interesting community, breaking prejudices and taboos. *Projeto Equilíbrio*, in

his opinion, demonstrated to a privileged public (young, urban middle class) that they could dance and have fun in a setting usually associated with poor, working-class people.

In 1995, *Projeto Equilíbrio's* Friday Forrós were so crowded that they added dances on Thursdays and Saturdays, also with Forró music. Paulo Rosa and Magno from Dona Maria's parties were hired to promote these nights. Besides *Trio Virgulino*, a band called *Mafuá* also played Forró at *Projeto Equilíbrio*. *Mafuá* was initially an MPB band from São Paulo, with drumset, electric guitar and bass, flutes and other instruments. For the gigs at *Projeto Equilíbrio* *Mafuá* added a new member, Tião Carvalho from Maranhão state, and began to arrange and play Forró music and other Northeastern genres such as *maracatu*¹⁹ and *bumba-meu-boi*.²⁰ However, the MPB influence was present, as well as *samba* and other genres. With the success of this new fashion, the student youth not only danced to Forró but they also began to form their own Forró bands, such as *Boi de Lata*, *Trio Crispiniano*, *Forroçacana*, *Peixelétrico*, *Bicho de Pé*, *Banguela Banguela*, *Baião de 4*, *Forró Quentão*, *Gameleira*, *Rastapé*, *Falamansa*, and *Miltinho Edilberto* with viola Forró (Forró played on a 10-string guitar, an instrument characteristic of *caipira* music). Most of these groups were much like commercial Brazilian rock bands, formed by young urban musicians from the South, with electric guitars, bass and drumsets, who adopted a sort of Forró sound (mainly through the lyrics and rhythms played). They would dress in "tropical" clothes (colorful shirts, printed with flowers and fruits) and surf fashion, which connected with the image that Brazilians have

¹⁹ *Maracatu* is the name of a sort of carnival procession that was created by African slaves in Brazil. It has music, and stock characters, with somewhat of a religious meaning. It is practiced in the Northeast among lower class population, mainly.

²⁰ *Bumba-meu-boi* is considered by Alvarenga to be a dramatic dance, where a succession of scenes and characters relate the story of a bull that is killed and resurrected. There are many variants of it in Brazil, and music and dance is a required accompaniment for it.

of the Caribbean/Northeast region (the Caribbe and Brazilian Northeast are geographically close as well as their climates and tropical environment). In some of these bands, one of the musicians would learn how to play zabumba by taking lessons with Northeastern musicians (usually zabumba players in the Northeastern trios). The accordion was not an instrument that the musicians of these commercial bands were willing to learn, so, they would hire a Northeastern accordion player. This was the case with *Falamansa* band.

Towards the end of 1995, Paulo Rosa and Magno left *Projeto Equilíbrio* and went to work in another Forró house, *Remelexo*, in the same neighborhood, almost around the corner from *Projeto Equilíbrio*. *Remelexo* was strictly a commercial nightclub; there was no social consciousness involved as at *Equilíbrio*. The promoters recruited several new Forró groups away from *Equilíbrio*, as well as *Trio Sabiá*, with a new singer and triangle player, Aluizio, a Northeastern migrant.

When I did my fieldwork (2000-2001), university Forró was all the rage on the radio, and in TV programs, live concerts at famous concert halls, and festivals. *Remelexo* had become one of the main centers of Forró universitário in São Paulo. In the same neighborhood, other Forró houses opened, such as *Danado de Bom*, and nightclubs, such as K-VA, Enfarta Madalena, Galpão 16, began to offer Forró nights. The fashion spread all over the city and the country. Forró houses were opened in Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Paraná, and Goiás states, and new Forró houses became opened in the Northeast. I read in a newspaper that the reason for the creation of Forró universitário in São Paulo was the longing that middle class students had after returning from vacation in the Northeast, where they first experienced Forró houses (Cartacho, Folha da Tarde

27/Apr/1996). This explanation, although simple, calls attention to an important ingredient in the history of Forró: nostalgia. Forrós began to show up in the big cities as places for migrants to remember their origins, to “*matar saudade*” (kill the longing). Forró universitário was created, according to Cartacho, to “kill the longing” for a nice vacation. Therefore, in both cases, a trip, and fond memories of a place, is involved. I know from my informants that many of them went for vacation in Itaúnas beach, in Espírito Santo state, close to the border of the Bahia state in the Northeast. It was a destination preferred by surfers and young people looking for clean and undeveloped beaches. In the popular imagination, it was like going to the Caribbean islands where Forró, surf, virgin beaches, and close contact with nature all melded together into an idyllic vision. They found very secluded places, with no electricity, hard to access, surrounded by dunes, near the ocean, and inhabited mainly by fishermen. In these sites there were bars where live music was played at night and a Forró took place. People were relaxed, barefoot, and a fraternal environment was the context. Even the musicians that had worked there, such as *Trio Virgulino*, missed it, as Adelmo (*Trio Virgulino*’s triangle player) told me. The group *Rastapé* has a song called *Forró Universitário*, composed by members Jorge Filho and Tico (brother and child of Northeastern migrants), where they describe the Forró in Itaúnas, which began at sundown, attended by students during summer vacation (*Rastapé 2000, Fale Comigo*). It is this connection that explains the “surf” attire worn at Forró universitário events.

In my opinion, Forró universitário is the result of a complex of elements that came to play a role in its formation. First, there was a commercial aspect involved—the culture industry at work. Music agents were looking for a source of revenue. They found

a performance context already in place that was bringing together a young middle class audience with a certain amount of disposable income. These were the informal “vet parties.” It was simply a matter of marketing the phenomenon; hence, they opened nightclubs and promoted Forró universitário as a new fashion aimed directly at university students. Since they were targeting an urban public, the “modernity” discourse was also at work, because novelties are welcomed in an industrialized society. A second contributor to its creation, was the commemoration of Brazil’s “discovery.” The quincentennial celebrations prompted questions of national identity. “Who are we?” “What make us ‘Brazilians’?” Of course these questions were appearing in the media and in humanities classes in the schools and universities because of the highly publicized institutional commemorations. We were forced to look to our past; and the past, in Brazil, remains closely associated with the Northeast (Albuquerque Jr.’s naturalist paradigm, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter). The musical styles that originated in the region where Brazil was discovered—the Northeast—provided natural emblems of national identity. Further, this music fit well with urban youth in the big cities, because it was dance music, it was informal, they could dance together and meet new people all night long. It evoked fond memories of their travels and vacation sites by the coast in the Northeast, and so a sense of exoticism was experienced, because vacation and leisure time was involved, very different from their daily lives in a metropolitan area such as São Paulo.

An influential celebrity musician, Gilberto Gil, also played a part. Gil, who is very prestigious in the university environment, had a Forró hit in the 1970s, in which he mixed *xote* with Jamaican reggae, a Caribbean music. So, once more vacation imagery is

evoked, because the *Caribbe*, for Brazilians, is like a paradise, an eternal vacation. Reggae (and ska as well) was well known and appreciated among the youth, because Brazilian rock groups used reggae rhythms and feeling in their music (Paralamas do Sucesso and Skank, for example). Reggae was also an ingredient used by Olodum group in Salvador, Bahia, in what they called samba-reggae as recorded by Paul Simon in his “Rhythm of the Saints” CD. There were also reggae bands in Brazil. University students knew about reggae and the religion behind it, and knew Bob Marley, and also about Rastafarian rites that involved the smoking of marijuana without any social restrictions. Hence, when Forró music was presented to them as an entertainment option, all these elements came to influence their empathy with it, linking their urban identities with Brazil’s discovery through Northeastern music.

Forró universitário developed in two phases: in its beginnings, trios of Northeastern musicians (*Trio Sabiá*, *Trio Virgulino*, *Trio Chamego*) were hired, to play “old” hits of Luiz Gonzaga, Jackson do Pandeiro, Trio Nordestino, Marinês, Dominginhos. Older composers of Northeastern Forró music, such as Antonio Barros and Cecéu, João do Vale, Gordurinha, Nando Reis, José Marcolino, were also revered. Accordion players, too, enjoyed a newfound popularity, such as Sivuca, Hermeto Paschoal, Oswaldinho do Acordeon, and others.

However, by the end of the 1990s many Forró groups had been formed by university students. The first “star” was *Falamansa* (Smooth Talking), a group of three young guys from São Paulo—Tato (vocal and 6-string guitar), Dezinho (percussion and backing vocal) and Alemão (zabumba and backing vocal) and Valdir, an older Northeastern migrant, playing accordion. The arrangements for their 2000 CD, “*Deixa*

Entrar,” were made by Tato and Valdir do Acordeon and used bass, keyboards, and even trombone on one track. *Xote* is the main genre represented on the CD, influenced by reggae, followed by *forró*. Lyrics tend to have love and its possibilities/consequences as their main theme. There are two instrumental tracks, one by Tato and the other by Valdir. Tato is the composer of most of the tracks. In the same year, another CD by another group, *Rastapé*, was released.

Rastapé has a different sound, and I attribute this difference to their formation. The group is centered around a single family: the father, Jorge Lunguinho (Northeastern migrant, accordion player/singer/composer), Jorge Filho (the older son, raised in São Paulo/ singer/composer/percussion player) and Tico (the youngest son, also raised in São Paulo/composer/cavaquinho, guitar player). The other two members are young guys from São Paulo: Marquinhos (zabumba player/composer) and Jair (percussion/pandeiro/triangle player/composer). Their CD – *Fale Comigo* (Talk with me) is also comprised mainly of love songs played as *xote* with a reggae groove. They compose most of their music, and Jorge Filho is the primary songwriter. However, there are songs by other people, and songs that were composed by the group collectively, or by other members of the group. There is one instrumental song composed by Jorge Lunguinho (also called *Jorginho do Acordeon*), the oldest member. Although primarily concerned with themes of love, *Rastapé* also sings about migration (track number 5). This song is called “*Embalado do Forró*” (Flow of Forró) and the lyrics are:

Lá no sertão do Piauí

Tinha tudo de bom: umbuzeiro e oiti

Tinha um sanfoneiro que tocava a noite

There in Piauí state’s sertão

There was all of the good stuff: umbuzeiro
and oiti trees

There was an accordion player who played

<i>inteira</i>	all night long
<i>E a morena forrozeira para o povo sacudir</i>	And the brunette who liked Forró [danced], for people to shake
<i>Mas dança morena no embalo do Forró</i>	So dance brunette in the flow of Forró
<i>Todo mundo quer dançar</i>	Everybody wants to dance
<i>Ninguém passa a noite só</i>	No one spends the night alone
<i>Espero um dia chover de novo</i>	I hope that it is going to rain again
<i>E voltar para o meu povo que deixei longe</i>	And I can go back to my people that I left far away from here
<i>daqui</i>	
<i>Matar minha saudade num Forró gostoso</i>	To kill my longing in a nice Forró
<i>Que apesar do sofrimento todo mundo tá</i>	That despite of the suffering everybody is
<i>feliz</i>	happy

In another song they talk about religion:

I went to the church to pray
To see all the things that I missed
How God could give me your love...

In the other tracks there are recurrent themes and imagery relevant to young people: kisses, the moon, cheek-to-cheek and body-to-body dancing, making love, sweating. Lyrics evoking beaches, shores, sand, suntan, summer color, trips, barefoot, Forró parties and love are also present, and many of them are played in a *xote/reggae* style. These data confirm my analysis above. There is a connection between Forró, *xote*, vacation by the beach, reggae and the Caribbean. Reflecting the average age of their primary audience, there are a lot of lyrics about making love, kissing, touching, making out while dancing, “getting on fire.” The fact that Forró is a couples dance helps to underline sexuality, because dancers are having experiences with another body, but at the same time they are also feeling the reactions of their own body in an intimate activity.

Comparing *Falamansa* and *Rastapé*, the former sounds more commercial and artificial, despite their Northeastern accordion player. The later, *Rastapé*, more genuinely

represents what I consider Forró music. Its core is a trio formed by a Northeastern migrant and his two sons, who are also Northeasterners, but raised in São Paulo. The other two members of the group are urban middle class musicians from the South. Their sound recalls Forró music from the “old” times, clearly showing the influence of Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro, as well as other styles that the younger members are acquainted with. There is a balance in the lyrics between verses with Northeastern themes and others directed more to the urban youth of São Paulo. In 2005, they released a DVD and a CD, in which they are “telling the story” of Forró music through its songs; on the front cover of both products the singer, Jorge Filho, is wearing Lampião’s hat (www.rastape.com.br). Through *Rastapé* one can see the integration of two generations of Northeastern migrants in the urban complex and how this integration is accomplished through Forró music.

FORRÓ ELETRÔNICO OR KEYBOARD FORRÓ

Forró universitário can also be viewed as an “answer” to another style of Forró that began around the same time: *Forró Eletrônico* (electronic Forró), also called New Forró, Forrock, or *Oxente*²¹ Music. In contrast to Forró universitário, Forró eletrônico was created with the mass media in mind. It originated in the Ceará state, Fortaleza city, Northeast, far away from São Paulo, but was disseminated nationally through recordings and performances, live and on popular TV shows.

In the early 1990s, Emanuel Gurgel, the leader of a band called *Aquários*, which used to play all sorts of dance music at parties, ceremonies and balls in the Northeast,

²¹Oxente is a Northeastern way to say “Oh, gente!” with their regional accent/dialect, and it means “Oh folks!”

came up with the idea of a band that would play just Forró. Gurgel had noted that when *Aquários* played Forró tunes, people really liked it and the dance floor would be full of Forró dancers. According to the internet site (Somzoom), the group *Mastruz com Leite* (the name came from an energizing native drink) has as its goal to make a stylized and progressive Forró with the addition of new instruments to the basic trio of accordion, triangle and zabumba. However, in its first formation, *Mastruz com Leite* had two male singers, two drumset players (quite probably two complete sets of drums), electric bass and guitar, and piano accordion (the only remainder of the traditional trio). It was a much louder group than the traditional trio. As soon as they began to perform, Gurgel recognized the need for a female voice; instead of just hiring one, he set up a competition, advertising it through the public regional Education TV network (TVE).

The competition was to find “the best” female Forró singer in the area. I see this competition as a strong sign of Gurgel’s agenda, which was to release a music that would sell, using all the mass media marketing opportunities available. During the rehearsals, Gurgel really liked one singer, and he hired her, as well as the winner of the competition, making a female duet (now the group has two male and two female singers, expanding the different timbres in the band even more, and making it louder). *Mastruz com Leite* used to play during the intermissions of *Aquários* shows, but soon it began to perform on its own, and they began to travel throughout the Ceará state. Due to the success of these performances, they decided to expand their touring to the entire region, and began playing in the interior cities of Pernambuco state. They were popular there, too, and soon began performing nationally. At their first performance in São Paulo, however, not a single person paid to get in, only the waiters and staff were in the audience, but,

according to the site, they soon overcame this difficulty. I assume that their strategy to gain an audience in São Paulo included playing live in many places for free and investing in advertisement. There were many places in São Paulo where they could play for free (Pedro Sertanejo's model of business was followed by many other impresarios), including places that drew a lot of Northeastern migrants. They knew that São Paulo had a big Northeastern migrant community (the city was already called "the main capital of the Northeast") and insisted that they could succeed in that market. And they were right. They now boast that they play for audiences of ten thousand or more people (according to the website) in São Paulo.

Initially, their repertory included different, well-known songs and genres as well as pieces in the *forró* genre. They played country, brega, Forró hits of the time, romantic ballads, or international hits sung in the original language (with Northeastern/Portuguese accent) but with a *forró* rhythmic underpinning. Only later did they include some "hill's foot" Forró hits. As you can see, they combined signs recognized by Northeasterners in different ways, having as their goal a "progressive" sound, meaning a sound that was closer to urban, cosmopolitan music of the South, as was heard on radio and TV.

The international hits that they played were songs sung in English, which received a lot of airplay on Brazilian radio stations. The fact that *Mastruz com Leite*, a band from the Northeast, could perform a music in English was interpreted as a sign of social ascension. Only rich people could sing and understand English, the language of foreign tourists that spent a lot of money when visiting Brazil and its Northeastern beaches. On the beaches different social classes meet, poor people are there selling food and local

crafts to the middle class Brazilian tourists and international tourists. This is a context in which different social classes and people from different places interact quite closely.

Mastruz com Leite's sound was seen as very hip, “developed,” and “modern;” it was varied in timbre and used expensive electronic instruments, and the band could sing in English, so their music was seen as a kind of upper class music, and thus became an icon of the social ascension of Northeastern music. They called themselves the Biggest Forró Band of the Planet, and mounted lavish stage productions with costly visual effects, another sign of social ascension. And yet, even this emphasis on visual entertainment during their performances can be seen as a throwback to the comic stage shows Jackson do Pandeiro and Almira Castilho in the 1960s. In the case of *Mastruz com Leite*, beyond the colored lights and smoke, the singers also dance on stage, but highly choreographed dances, and the girls wear very suggestive clothing, giving sex appeal to the band, and appealing to the predominantly male audience. According to their website, “it is impossible to resist to such a contagious and aphrodisiacal rhythm of *Mastruz com Leite*.” Now, the band has drumsets, electric bass and guitar, accordion, sax, keyboards, backing vocals and four lead singers.

The link to tourism present in their music is also noteworthy; in Brazil, the saxophone is closely associated with North American jazz (music from the most developed country, hence “developed” music), and was really popularized in Brazil in the 1980s, through recordings and TV appearances by Kenny G. Thus, when *Mastruz com Leite* uses saxophone in its sound complex, advertises itself with a name that sounds exotic (an energizing drink made with a native plant), and say that their sound is

contagious and aphrodisiacal, they are also trying to appeal to international tourists by evoking the exoticism of a tropical country.

Listening to their first CD, *Arrocha o Nó* (Tight the Tie), released in 1992 by Continental Records, some characteristics can be outlined. The CD has a large variety of different songs arranged in medleys, even songs that were *sertanejo* hits are included, with a forró/rock beat and in a fast speed (103, 110 bpm); the singers perform it as a duet in parallel thirds. According to the booklet, the instruments used are drumset, guitar and bass, accordion, triangle and agogô, four singers and three backup singers. However, there is also a saxophone playing on many of the tracks. There is advertisement for the group in almost all tracks: “*É o Forró Mastruz com Leite*” (This is Mastruz com Leite Forró), says one of the singers. Even in an instrumental track (number 8) this sort of self-promotion is present. Breaks and drum fills are frequently present showing their excessive use of clichés. The most represented genre is *forró*, but with a steady rock beat (1960s style), usually faster than the traditional norm. *Xote* is also played, but faster (93–106 bpm) and drawing in influences from Portuguese *vira* and rock. The CD ends with a medley of *arrasta-pé* at 156 bpm. The singers have a nasal quality to their voices, and the female singers have an almost childlike interpretative style, reminiscent of recording by Xuxa.²² The backing vocals have a prominent role on the CD, sometimes commenting on the solo parts, other times performing in a Motown/romantic choral style. A few of their songs have sexual content, and one of them, “*Mulher não se aluga*” (Woman is not for rent), voices disapproval of an issue that was in the news at that time: women that loan their bodies as surrogate mothers for other couples, who were called “*barriga de aluguel*”

²² Xuxa is the name of the host of a children’s Globo TV program that was very successful during the 1980s. She recorded many discs, and her “childlike”, “pure” voice was exploited by the media. For further references see Simpson 1994.

(rented bellies), also the name of a *novela* at Globo Television (again, they often use themes and issues that are in vogue in the media). What is most apparent in this recording is its obvious commercial motivation and exploitation. The excessive stylistic variety represented by medleys (the CD would have a total of 27 tracks if each song was counted separately), the excessive self-promotion of the group on almost every track, and the emphatic use of drumsets all point to well-known and commercially accepted musical conventions; the disc seems purposely designed so that the listener has no option but to like at least one track. It sounds like a recipe comprised of pre-approved ingredients, such as Forró, Xuxa's style, 1960s rock, *sertaneja* music, and Kenny G's saxophone style.

This commercial saavy of *Mastruz com Leite* is also evident in their fourth CD, *Rock do Sertão* (Sertão's Rock), probably released in 1993-94. However, certain changes, probably driven by audience preference, are also apparent. Instead of the vocal interjections advertising the group, the choir sings the name of the group during instrumental interludes. Some lyrics show a direct influence of *cordel* literature (narratives – tracks 4 and 6) and others are a sort of protest song (tracks 12 to 14). Hence, the comments of critic Celso Masson in *Veja* magazine that “the new Forró do not talk about the drought, misery or hungry. Joy and non-attachment set the tone” (*Veja* 22/june/1994) should be re-evaluated. There are no medleys on this CD, perhaps suggesting that the group had focused in more precisely on their audiences' preferences, and so did not need to cover all the bases. But they used a 10-string guitar on track number 4, which is strongly associated with country, or *caipira* music. There are more *arrasta-pés* in this recording than in their debut, which may symbolize a sort of “return to their roots,” since *arrasta-pé* is the oldest genre under the Forró umbrella and is

connected with Northeastern commemorations of Saint John's festivals. In 1994, *Mastruz com Leite* sold 400,000 discs and their music, which is also called "*Oxente Music*" came to be recognized and designated by the media as a genre unto itself. In that same year, for example, *Atual Radio* at the Center of Northeastern Traditions (CTN) produced a special program on Sunday nights: "*O Forró do Ravel: O Oxente Music*" (Ravel's Forró: The Oxente Music), hosted by a marginalized composer of the years of military dictatorship (from the duet Dom and Ravel—a *sertanejo* duet).

The development of Forró eletrônico is closely allied with the Somzoom recording company at Fortaleza, in the northeastern Ceará state. The label is owned by Emanuel Gurgel, and was founded in the 1990s, in conjunction with the formation of *Mastruz com Leite*. Somzoom not only controls music recordings in that state, but also has a satellite radio net (Rede Somzoom sat), a studio; a publishing company (Editora Passaré) where the music recorded by Somzoom is edited; a monthly magazine (*Revista Conexão Vaquejada*, or Cowboy Connection); a brand of amplifiers (called *Mastruz com Leite*); and a promotional agency (Zoom Promoções). It is a media conglomerate that pervades the music market in the country today. It reminds me of Pedro Sertanejo's business, but on a larger scale, because it is more "aggressive" commercially; it does not only want to profit from the national music market (from performances to copyrights) but it also has an international market tied to tourism. After *Mastruz com Leite*, many other groups were "discovered," or "created" by Somzoom, such as *Rabo de Saia*, *Cavalo de Pau*, *Calango Aceso*, *Mel com Terra*, *Som do Norte*, *Calcinha Preta*, *Catuaba com Amendoim*, as well "keyboard" soloists, such as Wesley dos Teclados, Lairton dos Teclados, Motorzinho dos Teclados, and Frank Aguiar. With these different groups, the

company was spreading its market, varying and diversifying their sources of profits in order to make more money.

I had the opportunity to interview Frank Aguiar (Francineto Luz de Aguiar, 1970, b. Itainópolis, Piauí state), and attend one of his performances during my fieldwork in São Paulo. He is a product of Somzoom recording company, playing Forró on keyboards. He migrated to São Paulo in 1993 and won his first golden disc in 1997 (100,000 copies sold); later, he earned a platinum disc (one million copies sold). He wears a white Panama style cowboy hat, and is known as “*O Cãozinho dos Teclados*” (the little dog of the keyboards), owing to his trademark vocal technique of interjecting puppy-like yelps while singing (advertisements in his recordings also use this nickname). According to Aguiar, he migrated to São Paulo because it was the city that would make his dreams realizable—to have his music well known and widely distributed, to be a star. But it was not easy to reach his goals. He told me about the prejudices that he faced, and the need to direct his work to the outskirts of the city, where he was allowed to perform.

The themes of his lyrics tend to be satiric, funny jokes because, as he freely admits, these are the songs that sell, and this is his objective. He told me that he composes some lyrics talking about the Northeast, but they do not sell. I interpret this assertion as his way of categorizing his music, it has a “new” style, instead of portraying songs that talk about the Northeast old-fashioned and somewhat out of favor. And yet, the last style of Northeastern Forró music to attain widespread popularity in the mass media was pornographic Forró, laden with humorous double entendre. So, Aguiar adapted that as a profitable element that appealed not only to Northeasterners but also to lower class audiences elsewhere, and combined it with a “modern” keyboard sound. While Aguiar

claimed Luiz Gonzaga as his number one idol, he maintains that he has “evolved” Forró and made it more “sophisticated” through his instrumentation. He did not see Forró universitário as a rival, but as an accretion to the Forró movement (Interview 2001). Frank Aguiar’s music can be seen much more as a commercial pop style than as regional Northeastern music. Northeastern signs are barely represented, aside from the fact that Aguiar is, himself, a Northeastern migrant, and performs with a synthesized accordion sound on his keyboard, accompanied by the high speed preset *baião/forró* rhythm. His wears a cowboy outfit on stage, his good looks and puppy-like cries endear him to his female audience. He is welcomed in the Forró houses because his music is classified and advertised as keyboard Forró and in my view, the audiences welcome him the same way that they welcomed “marginalized” singers in the 1960s and 70s. Another way of seeing Aguiar is as a young, good-looking musician from the Northeast who is trying to make a fast buck. Since São Paulo is a big market for Northeastern music, he created his image of the Northeastern musician playing “evolved” Forró music.

This particular interpretation is reinforced when analyzing another style of Forró music that arose in the 1990s, the orchestral Forró of the Brazilian Forró Orchestra, created by Raymundo Campos.

ORQUESTRA BRASILEIRA DE FORRÓ – OBF (RECIFE, NORTHEAST)

A cultural phenomenon in Recife’s music scene (Northeast) at the end of 1990s was the brief career of the *Orquestra Brasileira de Forró (OBF)*—Brazilian Forró Orchestra, created by Raymundo Campos, an impresario and the owner of *Cheiro do Povo Forró*, the first Forró house in the Northeast. The orchestra was created in 1998 to

record and commemorate 50 years of *Baião* (officially, the song *Baião* by Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira was released in 1946) in a recording project called *Baião: 50 anos de Poesia, Ritmo e Emoção* (Baião: Fifty Years of Poetry, Rhythm and Emotion) financed by Telpel/Telemar (a telecommunication company from Pernambuco). The company financed this project as a sort of tax break allowable under the culture incentive law. The culture secretary of the state holds a competition, selects the projects that can be financed; then, the agent who created and proposed the project to the secretary has to propose it again to potential corporate sponsors for support. The corporations, in turn, receive a tax break for supporting such projects. This is the way that many cultural projects have been surviving in Brazil nowadays; even at the Federal universities this law has been exploited in order to fund performances, buy materials for the orchestras or the library, and so on.

According to the project proposal, the OBF had as its objective “to rescue, restore, preserve and promote the cultural Northeastern identity, through research, studies and dissemination of traditional rhythms of our region” (1999 report of OBF activities, my translation). In another part of the proposal, Raymundo Campos claims that “the history of baião is not systematically recorded” and that is why the orchestra and the project was created. Besides the orchestra, the project also founded a *baião* academy, with dance and music programs and an archive where studies, research, publishing, and arrangements could be undertaken, in order to assemble a collection of Northeastern popular songs. Nevertheless, the OBF ensemble itself was the main product of the project.

Campos hired well-known musicians, such as the electric guitar player Heraldo do Monte, and arrangers from Recife, such as Edson Rodrigues. Campos invited all the

accordion players known in Brazil: Dominginhos, Hermeto Paschoal, Sivuca, Renato Borghetti, Oswaldinho do Acordeon, Waldonys, Camarão, Arlindo dos Oito Baixos, and Genaro to a sort of congress, and they spent a week recording, jamming, and arranging. The orchestra had as its nucleus the Forró trio. It was expanded to include electric guitar and bass, keyboards, drumsets and percussion. Further additions to the ensemble included three trumpets, two trombones, two tenor and two alto saxophones, transversal flute, six singers, two conductors (Edson Rodrigues and Duda), and the button accordion player Arlindo dos Oito Baixos. These musicians were all well paid. In 1999, the golden year for OBF, they presented 18 performances for a total of approximately eighty thousand people at Caruaru (called the capital of Forró) in the northeastern Pernambuco state, during the June festivals.

In 2000, I had the opportunity to attend probably the last performance of the OBF at Caruaru, where they also added violins and cellos to the ensemble. The June festival in Caruaru is a huge event that has turned into a tourist attraction, with thousands of people. This event in Caruaru is held in a huge square, the Forró square. Scattered all over the square were many stages with different attractions performing at the same time. There were also tents selling food and crafts, with tables and chairs inside the tents, as in a bar. During the OBF performance, people were dazzled; very few danced to the music, they were just observing the whole thing. Before the OBF performance began, I saw that at one of the stages around the square many more people were dancing, near a tent where a traditional trio was playing. This raised some questions about OBF's popularity. In informal interviews with Campos and Edson Rodrigues, the directors, they made clear their concerns about bringing dignity and recognition to Forró music, as if it did not have

a dignity on its own among poor people (but considering a middle class context, they were right, Forró did not have “dignity” or “recognition”). However, for the middle class in Recife, it seemed necessary to “dress up” Forró in order for it to be accepted and legitimized by them.

Raymundo Campos paid (with the money that he got from his project funding) for a frontpage article in *Folha de São Paulo* (an important newspaper in Brazil) in 1998, advertising the project and a CD with recordings of OBF and the accordion players. Tom Zé, one of the members of the *Tropicália* movement, denounced the CD (which I never had access to and it was not released), calling it a “perversion” in its “excessive refinement.” He went on to say, “Many times people think that what is naturally divine needs this cultured attire to be respectable.” This was exactly what Campos was trying to do among Northeastern middle and upper classes, not only in the northeast—the fact that Campos paid for the article in that newspaper, which circulates mainly in the Southeast, suggests that he was also seeking Southern middle class audiences. However, because he ran out of money, he did not release the CD and did not take the orchestra on tour; his project was never widely known and recognized by the national media. The OBF had a very localized impact, and for a very short period of time, but it shows that there is a Northeastern middle class who care about Forró. This will be evident in the next chapter, where I describe an elite Forró in São Paulo, among successful Northeastern migrants.

In listening to the few recordings that Campos made for me, as demos of the OBF, and drawing from what I heard at their rehearsals and the performance in Caruaru, I wondered if this was not unlike the sound of Camélia Alves’ Forró music in the 1950s (I could not find her recordings of that time). OBF sounds like a big band playing Forró

hits. Considering the trajectory of this music, as I have outlined, the OBF does fit into Forró structure, which is highly flexible, and thus available to cater to the tastes and needs of different social classes in different regions.

FINAL COMMENTS

As shown, in early 2001 Forró was adopted as an all-encompassing national movement through the media, and included many different styles and contexts, whether in a lower or middle class environment, in the Southeast or in the Northeast. And at the same time, these styles and elements were able to migrate from one social class to another, from one region to another, because of mass media dissemination. Wagner, from the *Projeto Equilíbrio* told me about an event called *Palco do Forró* (Forró Stage) at Largo da Batata in the Pinheiros neighborhood, São Paulo, at the end of 2000. According to Wagner, there were at least three Forró houses around Largo da Batata that used to play Forró eletrônico. However, on this occasion, the patrons of those houses went to see and dance Forró universitário at the Largo, demonstrating their flexibility of taste. Wagner pointed out that it was the Forró eletrônico audience that maintained Forró music over the years; hence they deserve respect.

In my fieldwork, I observed that, although among students there was a tendency to reject Forró eletrônico, there are musical/dance techniques common to the two sub-genres. *Mastruz com Leite* released recordings paying tribute to Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro, with their own interpretation of famous hits. Bands such as *Falamansa*, elected the best Forró group in 2003 (Forró universitário), began to use self-promotional vocal interjections of their group name in recordings. In the same year,

Frank Aguiar was elected the best Forró singer by the same prize committee (*Austregésilo de Athayde*). *Mastruz com Leite* performances have choreographed dance on stage, with steps drawn from the lambada and other dances. At a Forró universitário, participating couples dance choreographed steps drawn from ballroom dances. Groups of Forró universitário tend to adopt drumsets and other instruments in their band, highlighting their link with rock and reggae. Forró eletrônico also uses drumsets; and it is possible to hear in it a link with older genres of pop music such as 1960s rock, romantic music, and *sertaneja* music.

The year 2000 was a big year for “hill’s foot” Forró, and Forró in general, because of mass media investment that turned Forró universitário into a fad. There was a movie released nationally in August 18th called *Eu, Tu, Eles* (Me, You, Them) by Warner Music Brazil/Columbia TriStar. The director was Andrucha Waddington and the music direction was by Gilberto Gil (the Northeastern migrant musician responsible for the combination of *xote* and reggae). The movie was acclaimed the best movie at the Brazilian Cinema Festival (Grande Prêmio Cinema Brasil) and also won the Havana Festival. It is filmed in the Northeast sertão, in a very poor community, and it is about a poor, working-class woman and her three husbands (not like the movie “Gabriela and her two husbands”) trying to survive in a very hostile environment, while also trying to have some sort of balance in her emotional life. The music of the movie was mostly recorded by Gilberto Gil, with some “old” Luiz Gonzaga hits included (for example, *Asa Branca*, *Juazeiro*) as though they were being heard on a portable radio (the characters listened to radio, mainly the oldest husband). In the movie, there is also a bar where the main characters go to have fun and listen and dance to Forró music played live by a trio. At a

certain point, the whole family goes to a typical Saint John's party. It is during this scene that the famous hit song from the movie: "*Esperando na Janela*" (Waiting by the Window) is played by its composer²³ (Targino Gondim, a piano accordion player) and two other musicians, in a trio format. It is interesting that in the movie it is Targino Gondim who sings, but on the CD soundtrack Gilberto Gil sings. Also significant is the fact that, while in the movie the groups playing are always in the traditional trio format, on the CD soundtrack the instruments used include guitars (6- and 10-strings), piano accordions (at least two), electric bass, keyboards, theremin, pandeiro, and varied percussion. Hence, through the movie you hear the hill's foot style, but on the CD you hear a more "international" sound of Forró interpreted by Gilberto Gil, who is very much linked with the international pop music market.

One more style is added to all these layers of possibilities for Forró music. This movie brought national and international attention (it was screened at Cannes in 2000 and was also nominated for an Oscar in 2001) to Forró and to Northeast sertão. It worked as a great advertisement for Forró music, and *Esperando na Janela* was almost instantaneously absorbed into the repertoires of most Forró performers. It could be heard all over Brazil, and was popular among all classes. The movie was very well-received by the audiences worldwide; I saw it in Champaign, Illinois, USA, at the Art Theater in 2001, accompanied by North American friends, who enjoyed it. The movie was very well promoted and definitely opened the international market for this kind of music.

As noted throughout this chapter, since the early beginnings of Forró music in the mass media, the goal was to make money. However, the musicians pursuing this success

²³ The composers of *Esperando na Janela* are Targino Gondim, Manuca Almeida and Raimundinho do Acordeon. According to the Office of Copyrights (ECAD) this song was the most played song on radios and stages, during the year of 2004. Hence, it was a hit for at least four years straight.

were being transformed in the cities; they were migrants trying to fit in their new environment. So, they would select elements of their “traditional” music and also select from their new experiences in the city. It was not only a matter of making Northeastern music more palatable to the Southern audiences, the processes described were also about creating a music that could communicate new subjectivities of migrants in their new context. The choices made had to do with their ultimate desire, to ascend in socio-economic status (the main reason of migration), and so they fashioned signs that in some way would both represent and aid their social ascension.

They recognized in the Southern cities elements that they considered “better,” “new,” “modern,” and “advanced,” and they appropriated those elements as a way to “improve” their lives. They bought TVs and radios, they attended live programs, they took risks in order to be famous (trying to win prizes at radio programs), they made alliances (class and political alliances), and were willing to make concessions (for example, playing their music with *choro* ensembles) in order to adapt to, and be accepted by that new society. This whole process can be seen in the genres under the Forró umbrella, especially in their malleability. The fact that you can transform an *arrasta-pé* into a *xote* demonstrates their inherent flexibility, and this flexibility extends to its actors. The migrant musicians are creating musical signs of their new environment; this is how *samba* elements can be introduced into Forró, as well as reggae, rock, brega, country, and even western orchestras, depending on the era, the audiences, the current “fashions” in the mass media, social class, age and origin (rural or urban, Northeast or Southeast).

CHAPTER THREE - FORRÓ AS SOCIAL EVENT AND CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I offer ethnographic descriptions of Forró performances in a variety of contexts. I begin with Forrós among the lower class in three different environments: one in the Northeast, another one in an institution for Northeasterners in São Paulo, and a third in a Forró house that was reopened on the site of Pedro Sertanejo's Forró, in a working class neighborhood in São Paulo. Forró in a middle class context will then be presented in a discussion of a Forró for university students in São Paulo. The last context discussed is Forró in an exclusive restaurant that offers typical Northeast cuisine and music in an environment geared toward tourists. As I develop the analysis, comparisons are made in order to better understand the differences and common points among the different contexts. These data are drawn from fieldwork conducted between June 2000 and March 2001. The opening descriptions for each section are drawn directly from my field notes (which were written in English in order to make future writings easier) because I thought that this would be a good way to bring the reader closer to my fieldwork experience.

LOWER CLASS FORRÓ

1. DOIS UNIDOS (OUTSKIRTS OF RECIFE - NORTHEAST)

Sunday, July 02/2000. *Finally, it was supposed to stop raining today, and Forró do Arlindo (Arlindo's Forró) would happen. It was to begin around 4:00-5:00 PM. I prepared the equipment (photo and MD recording). Senhor Raymundo took me there. On our way to the Forró, located in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of the city a huge*

nail stuck in the tire. It was not a safe place to change a tire, but the nail was so big that it closed its own hole. Lucky us, we arrived safely at our destination. Seu Arlindo's house was very simple, and he took advantage of the sharp hillside and constructed a multilevel house, which was not finished yet. At the entrance, on the porch, they had set up a box office to sell tickets (R\$2.00 for men and R\$1.00 for women) and a warning: Weapons were not allowed. It was quite full of people and Raminho, seu Arlindo's son, welcomed us. Seu Raymundo was supposed to leave me there and go, but he did not. Maybe he was too worried about my safety, although Raminho offered to "take care of me"—call a cab and all that. Maybe he was jealous and wanted to watch over me closely. This bothered me a bit, but I had a job to do and I did not have time for that. I paid for the tickets and we got in.

To get to the backyard we had to step down a long, narrow, and irregular stairway. Little by little, I had an upper view of the backyard, which was all decorated with Saint John's flags hanging from strings stretched wall to wall. It also had trees, a stage, a place selling food and drinks, and it was illuminated. Seu Arlindo sat at the far end of the backyard, with another musician. We went to sit with him. Seu Arlindo was in his late 50s, and he lost his sight some years ago because of diabetes. He seemed happy with my presence there, but of course I called attention to him. I was new in the place, doing research (what is that supposed to mean?), and I had a camera and a little recorder with a mic.

It was really a backyard, partly cemented but with some fruit trees, a "tent" selling food and beer and tables and chairs spread along the sides, under the trees and near the walls. Simple people dancing, talking, all ages—from little girls and boys, to

young guys, to mature men and women. They were informally dressed, nothing fancy, just comfortable for a hot and humid afternoon (shorts, skirts, t-shirts, fresh blouses, sandals, and flip-flops). Women did not wear makeup or ornaments that could call attention to themselves. I could see that they were clean, smelling of soap most of the time, not perfume, so probably they had a bath just before going to the Forró, as is the habit in Brazil. Men also were clean, wearing clean clothes, and the older ones had their shirts tucked inside their pants, or shorts, which shows that they prepared themselves to go to the Forró. Some of them wore Panama style cowboy hats. Many people were drunk, men and women, not falling down drunk, but definitely high on alcohol. However, the general ambience was familiar, casual, and respectful; it seemed to me that everybody knew each other, and seu Arlindo told me that most of his public were neighbors. And actually while we were sitting with him people came to say hello and talk a little bit with the owner of the house. The food sold there was made by his wife and friends, and the “staff” were also relatives and friends: but there were no waiters or waitresses. There were nearly one hundred people there no more than that.

There was an all-male band playing when we arrived, a basic Forró trio of piano accordion, triangle and zabumba. The little stage, just a bit above the ground, had mics and a small sound control table with two big speakers, each one standing at the sides of the stage. The illumination was the same all over the backyard and I could not see any dark places. Soon after we arrived, Seu Arlindo and his sons and musicians began to play. His band had pandeiro, triangle, zabumba (played by Raminho), ganzá (a shaker) and electric bass. Seu Arlindo is a button accordion player. I recorded on MD part of Seu Arlindo’s presentation, after asking him and Raminho (his son) for permission. While I

was doing this, a young, short, drunk gentleman asked me to dance almost at my microphone, then, I moved the mic and told him that I was sorry, but I was working at that time. No one else asked me to dance that night.

The repertory played at Seu Arlindo's Forró was mainly the "old" hits of Forró music, from Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro to Trio Nordestino and Genival Lacerda. Also, instrumental music was performed, usually choro-like music played by the accordion players, where they could show off their skills, and even this music, which is typically not danced to, was danced to that night.

The dance style was Northeastern Forró dance, which is just three basic steps to which people can add their own style. It was at this Forró that I saw a woman dancing with a woman, as well as children dancing/imitating adults. They would dance the three basic steps, no fancy movements, just following the music, but tightly close together. I also saw something called "rela bucho" (belly rub). A couple with protuberant bellies danced rubbing each other's. It was very funny and they would do it sparingly and laugh a lot about it, as if mocking themselves.

An interesting thing happened when I had my camera and I was taking pictures. A man, who was dancing with a woman, covered his face and avoided my camera at all costs. I asked Seu Raymundo why he was doing that. Seu Raymundo told me that he probably was married to another woman and was there with his mistress, and of course he did not want proof of his disloyalty. As happened other times, people thought that I was a journalist.

Throughout the time that I was there, there were people talking, eating, little circles of friends telling jokes or just chatting, others that were sort of dating, talking at

the tables. The music went on all night. Seu Arlindo's group (button accordion band) and the other group that was playing when I arrived (piano accordion trio) took turns on stage, and sometimes, musicians from one group would perform also in the other group. During their breaks there was no recorded music playing and this allowed people to just talk, rest, eat, and drink. Musicians were all around when they were not playing; they would dance, and have fun with the rest of the audience.

We stayed there for a while, seu Raymundo would not leave me and when I thought that I was done, I told him that we could go. Arlindo's Forró began in the late afternoon and it did not last until late at night, because it was a family house and it was Sunday, so people had to work the next day. Before I left, I confirmed interviews with Raminho and seu Arlindo for the next day.

The preceding description portrays a Forró among lower class people on the outskirts of Recife, in the Northeast. Notable features of the context include: the informal atmosphere, how it is run by family members and attended by friends and acquaintances (even though there was an entry fee), and that live music was present, featuring the standard Forró trio of accordion, zabumba and triangle, with more instruments added, such as pandeiro, ganzá and bass. It made no difference to the participants whether the accordion being played was of the button or piano type; they kept dancing to both versions.

The physical environment where this Forró took place was the backyard of Seu Arlindo's house, with its trees and wide area where kids can play, and clothes can dry. In Brazil, this is an intimate place—the very heart of a person's house. At the same time it is

a work area; maids, gardeners, and other household staff often work there. Often, though not always, the only access to the backyard is through the interior of the house. In many houses, there is no separate entrance that takes you straight to the backyard. Therefore, having access to someone's backyard implies a certain degree of intimacy with the family. This is supported by other reports in which informants would say that a Forró has close associations with family ties. This can explain how important it was for Northeastern migrants to have Forró houses in the southern cities. It was a way to feel at home.

The informality of Seu Arlindo's Forró also has to be considered. The style of dress, the presence of children, adults and elders are all elements that contribute to the informal atmosphere (in addition to everyone's familiarity). A feeling of relaxation, pleasure, and leisure time is important to the event. And so, the behavior is very informal—they dance, drink, laugh, tell stories and jokes, get together with other people, mock other people's behavior (such as the belly rubbing), or dance in same-sex couples. The Northeastern style of dancing is also very relaxed, compared with the stiff "arm" style of ballroom-Forró dancing, for example, that will be discussed later in this chapter. Therefore, informality and the familiar environment set the tone for social interaction.

As described, there were little colored Saint John's day flags hanging all over Seu Arlindo's Forró. Thus, Forró in the Northeast is still strongly associated with Saint John's parties and hence, religion is still part of the event. On the other hand, although held in a backyard, which was not that large a space, there was still a sound system used to amplify the instruments and a cover charge; hence elements of the nightclub structure, probably modelled on Forró houses in the South, had been added.

This event's lower-class associations are clear in some of the indices of poverty known in Brazil: the Forró locale was very far from downtown, in a poor neighborhood, with unfinished houses that were constructed in somewhat unsafe places (that is why Seu Arlindo's house had so many levels, it was situated on a steep hill susceptible to land slides), streets are not always paved, and often they lack a sewer system, and waste runs in the streets. Just considering the backyard performance space itself, I could not really tell that it was a lower-class place. The Forró was attended by lower-class people, who lived in that neighborhood, most likely because they could not afford to live near downtown.

2. A FORRÓ DAY AT CTN

Wednesday, November 15, 2000. *This is an official holiday in Brazil, and I planned to go to the headquarters of Rádio Atual (Updated Radio), which is also the Centro de Tradições Nordestinas—CTN (Center of Northeasterner Traditions). The CTN is in the Limão neighborhood, in the North zone of São Paulo, a working-class area. I had to take the subway, and a bus that would leave me about three big blocks away, a distance that I had to cover on foot. During this last part of the trip I did not feel comfortable or safe. I had to walk through big storage and distribution centers (on a regular business day there were a lot of men loading and unloading products, and they would slow down or even stop their work to see me passing by, even though I would wear loose pants, T-shirt, sunglasses, and look down), little bars and tents selling Brazilian snacks (pastel, salgadinho), sodas, beer and pinga (sugar cane distilled drink). The streets were very dirty. Where this street ended, meeting another street (almost*

perpendicular), I was in front of CTN—a big building, with some paintings on the walls. There was a gate, which was open, and inside it there was a sort of garden fountain and a little chapel on my left. On the right side the last supper was painted on the wall and in front of it there was the image of Padre Cícero (Father Cícero, a legendary saint from the Northeast). There is a restaurant a little further on the same side. The first entrance is to access the radio, entering the building. There is a plate on the wall:

Centro de Tradições Nordestinas

A Comunidade Nordestina radicada nesta cidade agradece ao Exmo. Prefeito de São Paulo, Dr. Paulo Salim Maluf que nesta data, “in loco,” assina o decreto municipal que declara o C.T.N—Centro de Tradições Nordestinas entidade de utilidade pública municipal. São Paulo, 21 de dezembro de 1996. Deputado federal José de Abreu—presidente.

Center of Northeastern Traditions

The Northeastern community settled in this city thanks the city mayor, Doctor Paulo Salim Maluf who in this date, “in loco”, signed the municipal decree which declares the C.T.N.—Center of Northeastern Traditions an organ of municipal public utility. São Paulo, December 21, 1996. Federal Deputy José de Abreu—president.

Continuing to walk towards the left, I found two images representing Lampião and Maria Bonita on my right, and a bust of Luiz Gonzaga and Frei Damião (another famous priest in the Northeast) on the upper exterior side of the chapel on my left. A bit further there was a big open area, a sort of covered sport gymnasium, with a stage at the back, equipped with spotlights and a sound control table elevated from the floor on the opposite side of the stage. Little bars and tents, (approximately 30 of them) that would sell beverages and typical food from the Northeast surrounded this gymnasium. There were tables and chairs for the attendants. Behind the stage there was a two-story

building with paintings on it of flowers and bricks, giving a look of an old house. If I were to continue walking towards the right now, I would go behind the radio building, where there was a little amusement park for children.

As I was informed before, on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays there were activities during the whole day at CTN, such as a late morning mass; lunch served in almost all the tents with regional food; the amusement park would be open to the children quite early and performances would really take off around mid-afternoon. I arrived there around 4:00 PM with my little photo camera and my note pad. People looked at me with curiosity. It was a hot holiday day, transportation service was slower and the heat did not encourage fast moves. There were around 500 to 1000 people there at this time— all dispersed, some standing in front of the stage, some seated at the tables in front of the bar tents, others taking care of children in the park. There were many families, some middle age people, but also teens and youngsters. People were dressed informally, but clean and I could note an effort to dress and look nice (perfumes and make up were used). There was a singer performing on stage (which was about two meters above the floor, far from the public)— Mara Maravilha. She was singing religious songs with pop rhythms:

*Vamos louvar a Cristo
Vamos louvar
Vamos louvar ao Senhor*

*Let's praise Christ
Let's praise
Let's praise The Lord*

This song was sung as an American cowboy song and actually she had a recording accompanying her and she was just dubbing herself. She was wearing a “cowgirl” outfit: yellow coat with long sleeves (and today was 23 degrees Celsius!), a black skirt with a considerable slit that would reach the middle of her thighs, and long

boots. She would tell her history on stage between the songs. She was from Bahia (Brazilian Northeast). She introduced another female singer: Tina Ramos. They were both romantic singers before turning into religious singers. The husband of Mara is sort of her manager and sound technician, she just mentioned and pointed to him but I could not find the guy in that direction on stage. Mara Maravilha also mentioned other people in the public who came in a caravan from a farm—Fazenda do Carmo (hence from the countryside), as well as from Santos (São Paulo's state coast city). The attitude of the public who was standing in front of the stage was of prayers, as if they were in a religious cult singing and sometimes waving their arms in the air or clapping their hands. No one was dancing. Most of them were older people. The great majority was distant, seated on the chairs around the bars and just observing the performance. Mara Maravilha also made a sort of inquiry about the origins of the audience, asking who was from Bahia, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Piauí, Maranhão and so on. Most of people there were from the Northeastern states, and hence they had a Northeastern phenotype which is mixed because of mixed origins.

After Mara Maravilha came Tico dos Oito Baixos (Tico's Button Accordion). He is a black guy and he was with two other guys in a trio formation: triangle, zabumba and button accordion. They were introduced as a "Forró de pé-de-serra" group (hill's foot Forró) and were dressed casually - nothing special or fancy - just pants and shirts. Tico's accordion had engraved on it "Tico dos 8 baixos." They were playing live—in contrast to Mara Maravilha - and this was not well handled by the sound technician. The overall sound was very unbalanced and it was difficult to listen to what they were playing. Still, couples danced to it, most of them were older, there were many female/female couples,

but all of them would dance the Northeast style. The first two songs were vocal arrasta-pé. The third song was instrumental. The fourth was a sung arrasta-pé composed by Abdias (the husband of Marinês, both of them famous Northeastern musicians of Forró music) and when Tico announced it people cheered. Tico also sang an arrasta-pé that had as its refrain “Puxa o fole Januário,” a clear reference to Luiz Gonzaga’s father. Tico talked quite a bit about Pedro Sertanejo, summarizing the history of Forró in São Paulo and reminding people to thank Pedro Sertanejo for “hosting” Forró there. During his presentation, which was quite short, I saw some staff trying to solve the sound problem, without results. Tico’s presentation was also harmed by the size and disposition of the stage—it was too big and made for visual effects that could be seen from far away, which was not the case with Tico’s group. The trio almost disappeared in the middle of all that paraphernalia.

At 5:00 PM there were around two thousand people there. At this time Elza, the master of ceremonies, sang, along with five children “Vou te matar de cheiro” (1989—I will kill you with sniffs)—one of the last songs recorded by Luiz Gonzaga. Elza was making suggestive gestures while dancing. Meanwhile Malu and other staff of CTN tried to cross the public space with a net of balloons in order to hang them. This was not a very good idea. Although Elza from the stage at the microphone asked people to help, what happened was predictable. People destroyed all the balloons happily and frenetically.

Then, the next performer was Wesley dos Teclados (Keyboards Wesley). He is a man in his early 20’s, long black hair, moreno (suntanish skin), wearing a golden cross in a golden chain, dubbing his own playing on two Korg keyboards and singing. There

was a child about 12 years old playing piano accordion, while another man, also in his 20's, playing saxophone. There were two young girls (late teens early 20s), a blond and a brunette, as backup vocalists and dancers. Their repertory was sang with lyrics such as: "The blond and the brunette love me"; "the woman that I touch sighs of pleasure." The female audience went crazy for Wesley and the majority was near the stage in front of him. There was a bigger concentration of men near the stage in front of the girls, who were at the left side of the stage (as seen by the public). In general, people did not dance to Wesley's music; they watched, listened and some of them danced alone. Wesley also sang "Cenário de Amor" by Flávio José, which is a xote, but he played it quite fast. The accompanying drumming was the "baião" preset that comes, in general, in a commercial keyboard.

Wesley announced one instrumental song where the accordion player would take a solo. He did not impress the public but they cheered him on anyway. Otherwise I caught the following lyric excerpts, the last one with a very explicit double entendre meaning:

<i>Eu vou deixar a casa e morar num</i>	<i>I will leave my house to live in a cabaret</i>
<i>cabaré</i>	
<i>Pra viver a vida inteira</i>	<i>To spend the rest of my life</i>
<i>Rodeado de mulher</i>	<i>Surrounded by women</i>

Pra mim só serve se for uma mulher para cada dia do ano
I will just be pleased if I have one woman for each day of the year.

<i>Rala Rala mandioca</i>	<i>Grind grind yuca root</i>
<i>Parece que esta garota está com fogo no</i>	<i>It seems that this girl has fire on her tail</i>
<i>rabo</i>	

At 6:00 PM came Aílton dos Teclados (Keyboards Aílton) with the same scheme: Aílton dubbing his playing on two Korg keyboards; two girls, a blond and a brunette; a male musician playing sax. It was at this time that I thought of a typical Sunday TV program in Brazil (such as the defunct Buzina do Chacrinha or the current Programa do Sílvio Santos and Domingão do Faustão). These are variety talk shows with a series of different numbers, including the presentation of famous singers as well as a parade of unknown singers (most of them are not singers at all) who will be judged and the winner will have a little money awarded. The whole program at CTN could be compared to one of these Brazilian television-talking shows.

The girls of Aílton dos Teclados' band are more active— they “sing” solos, they literally flirt with the guys in the public, and this drew more men nearer to the stage now. While Aílton was performing, Wesley came to the public to distribute autographs and socialize with his fans, but, of course this disturbed Aílton's presentation. A lot of women ran in Wesley's direction.

More people danced to this band, probably because it attracted more people. They performed Gilberto Gil's hit “Esperando na Janela” as a fast xote. They also sang the following double entendre lyrics to another melody:

*Põe o carro, tira o carro
Que garagem apertadinha
...tô até trocando o óleo
na garagem da vizinha*

*Get the car in, get the car out
What a tight garage
...I am even changing oil
On my neighbor's (her) garage*

And another:

*Ou tem outra na rua
Ou não tá dando no couro*

*Or he has another woman on the street
Or he is not accomplishing his male role*

Following this group came “Batida Pesada” (Heavy Beat). A chubby guy played/dubbed two Korg Keyboards, but he did not sing. A guy and a girl sang. They mainly played hits that Wesley had already performed, such as Cenário de Amor, the one talking about the yuca root and the other about sighs of pleasure.

The next group came around 7:00 PM. There were approximately 2500 people there at this time. The group, called “Só a Nata” (Just the Topcream), is a pagode group: bass, guitar, ganzá, a small surdo with just one head, pratinelas,¹ and a singer. No women were in this group. They used recorded back-up music, which had a drum set, as well as a brass section. They sang an old romantic hit, “Gostava tanto de você” (I loved you so much), which was recorded by a well-known Brazilian “soul” music singer and composer: Tim Maia. Many people sang along with the group on this particular song. Otherwise their repertory was for dance. There was a woman in a wheelchair dancing with a non-handicapped man and they were quite good at dancing in the arm style,² not the Northeast style. At 7:30 PM the number of young people in their 20s and 30s was increasing. They were dressed more fashionably, mainly the women. They wore low waisted skirts and pants, and short, tight blouses. Piercings and tatoos were not common (as they were among middle class students). I did not see anyone wearing sapatilha (slippers). The men wore jeans and T-shirts, sometimes tanks.

At 7:40 PM came Tião and Tiãozinho (this kind of name for a band in Brazil is typical for country music, usually sung in duos). They looked like cowboys, but they were performing something between a “country” song and a Forró song. They did have a

¹ Pratinelas are a sort of pandeiro, but without the leather cover, just the round frame with the metal jingles.

² “Arms style” is what I am calling the university students’ Forró dance style. It is more acrobatic and has a lot of steps involving arm work: twists, whirls, pushes and pulls. Also related with this dance style is that women usually wear a sort of ballerina shoes called *sapatilha chinesa* (Chinese slippers).

piano accordion in their band, as well as bass, guitar, keyboards, drum set, and three oiled and shining dance girls (2 blond and 1 brunette). The girls had “engraved” Tião on one thigh and Tiãozinho on the other. They were all using pre-recorded back-up music, but the accordion player did perform some solos live. Around 8:00 PM came Banda Carrapicho (Stickseed Band): two girls (blond and brunette) and one guy with dyed blond hair. They only sang/dubbed with recordings. Their music is “axé” pop, maybe some sort of rap. While they were performing two women from the audience passed by me, coming from the front and commenting: “Nóis qué é Forró!” (What we want is Forró).³

After this band Cristina Abreu—wife of José de Abreu, the president of CTN and Rádio Atual—came to the stage to pay tribute to the family, to Rádio Atual and to Frei Damião. She thanked the saint for everything. Her acknowledgements were short. The radio station was celebrating an anniversary today—15 years old.

Following Cristina Abreu’s talk, a sequence of performers followed one after another in a faster pace than up to now. Part of Banda Mel (Honey Band) was the first one of this sequence. Just three guys: singer, bass player and guitar player performing/dubbing with a back-up recording. Their music was a sort of pagode/axé-pop. Following them came a former member of Dominó - a Brazilian version of Menudos - Afonso Nigro playing and singing alone live (without playback). Accompanied by his amplified acoustic guitar, he performed old hits of the 1980s by Paralamas do Sucesso (a rock-reggae group), Pepeu Gomes (a rock/pop singer/composer), Ivete Sangalo, a star of the late 1990s linked with axé/pop music. His performance was observed by most of the

³ Axé music was a commercial dance music genre very popular in the 1980s and had to do with Olodum sound and their dancing style, also related with Northeastern carnival music.

public with curiosity. Many of the songs that he played were well known to the audience, who sang along with him. The group Requebra (Shake) was the next. Five guys, including a Japanese with dyed blond hair, and the leader, who was a black guy, all danced and sang/dubbed pagode music. There were no instruments in their performance, but they did know how to shake their pelvises in a way that drove the female public especially crazy. Boquinha da Garrafa (The little mouth of the bottle) also performed at CTN. A group of four guys and one girl performed using recorded backing, blending rap with pagode . They played one song live, using amplified cavaquinho (small four strings guitar), tamborim and pandeiro. The girl just danced. Ângela Nascimento was the next performer. She came on alone singing/dubbing old Forró hits, such as “Forró Pesado” (n/r) and “Forró no Escuro” (1958), as well as pop music with forró rhythm (the preset type found on keyboards). She was the last one of this fast parade of performers. After her there was a break to distribute CDs and T-shirts among the public. Accompanying this distribution some little fights arose between drunken people – these were more loud and threatening discussions than physical fights.

At 10:10 PM, José de Abreu (the president of CTN and the Radio) with his wife, Cristina Abreu came to the stage accompanied by fireworks. José (nickname Zé) de Abreu was wearing all white,⁴ and his face was clean-shaven. His wife was also wearing white but with a “golden” and shiny blouse. Pedro de Lara was also there— a legendary comic figure on TV, specially on Sunday’s programs—wearing a white suit,

⁴ To wear all white in Brazil is a sign of upper class in the sense of someone who does not have to work and hence is not going to get his clothes dirty, and so is privileged to wear all white. It is also related with medical work, a Doctor, someone who knows things. This meaning of “white” is extended to white shoes too (usually they wear white shoes, belt and hat) and it is more common among older men and also farmers.

red shirt and a bunch of plastic flowers in his hands. The staff of the radio and of CTN, as well as Abreu's children, were all there together—it was a family reunion.

Cristina Abreu reminded people that November 15th is the Republic proclamation day and she asked everybody to sing along with the National Anthem, thanking God for our democracy. Then, a recording of the Brazilian National Anthem played by an accordion in forró genre (!) began. At the end, Cristina Abreu asked for an ovation to Anastácia, Dominginhos, and Oswaldinho do Acordeon - live stars of Forró who could not come to commemorate with them.

She used phrases like this in her speech:

*Façam desta rádio um palanque de reivindicações
Make this radio a podium for your complaints*

*Se a Martha não der certo eu não perdi porque eu votei no Zé de Abreu
If Martha does not work well I did not lose because my vote was to Zé de Abreu⁵*

*A Rádio Atual faz o que vocês gostam
The Rádio Atual does what you like*

After this, Frances Lopes came to sing/dub in tribute to Rádio Atual, accompanied by keyboard and a girl for vocal back-up. Two other girls, a blond and a brunette, came to dance. He was singing the “all day” hit—the Gemidinho (n/r) and an “old” hit “Morango do Nordeste” (1998 - Strawberry from the Northeast). Meanwhile, Cristina Abreu proposed a dance competition for the best Forró dance couple. The public was euphoric: the youngest ones got up on the stage to dance. They shook their butts a lot, as if they were dancing some sort of samba, and the couple who shook the most won.

⁵This was a reference to the elections for mayor in São Paulo that had just happened and Zé de Abreu was candidate. Martha Suplicy was the candidate for the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) and won the election.

When the competition was over everybody sang “Happy Birthday” and there was a cake to cut and distribute to the public. Frances Lopes sang “Ana Júlia,” a Brazilian rock song, which was sung to a disco rhythm. The ceremony ended at 11:05 PM. Another band came in: Limão com Mel (Lemon with Honey)—a guy in his 40s and two couples (two blonds and two brunettes) danced a choreography, not a Forró dance. They also performed with a recording that had a guitar solo (but the guitar player was not on stage). The rhythm was the baião keyboard preset at a very fast speed, sounding like disco, reminding me of “dancing days.”

After this I was exhausted, and got a cab to go home. On my way home I was thinking that in some way I was singled out from, and by, the crowd; maybe because I had my bag with me, and I used my camera to take pictures, and I took notes in my note pad. But no one asked me what I was doing, no invitations to dance, even though they did not really dance, but watched, as if they were in front of a huge television. They were curious, observing me, I could see that. I did not have a band on my wrist as did other radio staff. I was approached only by women for information and someone asked me to help her with her camera. There was a young woman who, at a certain point at night stood by me and began to talk. She was a maid and she was supposed to meet her friends there, but she could not find them, so, she was alone. She left before 11:00 PM.

It is important to emphasize the common characteristics between this report and the first, since they are related with lower-class Forró, but the first one was in the Northeast and this one was in São Paulo, among Northeastern migrants. The informality was still present; everybody was at ease, although that they were more concerned about

being clean and well dressed, and the women had makeup on their faces. The lack of an entry fee is in part attributable to government funding that supports the center.

A familial, domestic atmosphere was present, as in the first report. Note the painting behind the stage, of flowers and bricks, “evoking an old house,” although it was insignificant in the middle of everything that was on stage. I could see, among the general public, families or parts of families that attended this Forró, and definitely at the amusement park there were mothers with their kids all around. However, this public changed throughout the day, and at night there were more singles than families present. The most important family there was Zé de Abreu’s, on stage for the commemorations - perhaps an effort to re-create the family party of the Northeast. Unlike Arlindo’s Forró, the audience members here were not all acquainted with one another. In that case, Arlindo himself was the central person, and the people who would attend were his acquaintances. At CTN there was much more of an institutional character. In both contexts, the venues were far from downtown and situated in poor neighborhoods.

The institutional character of CTN needs to be explored. It is not a Forró house or a Forró place. CTN was created by a Northeastern politician, Zé de Abreu, who was a Federal Deputy with political aspirations, supported by right wing politicians (Paulo Maluf). This is the meaning of the plaque on the entrance wall. Zé de Abreu transformed the space into a radio station, where he could air his ideas (following Getúlio Vargas’ model), and a Center to gather his electorate, which he makes explicit on the plate: the “Northeastern community settled in this city,” in other words, the migrants. The creation of a Center offering free entertainment to the Northeastern community has populist characteristics probably modeled on Vargas’s style of governing. It is a sort of

manipulation of the masses. Forró enters this realm because it is linked with Northeastern “tradition,” and also because it is the main style of music played by the CTN radio station, *Actual Radio* (meaning “updated,” again, highlighting the Northeastern migrants’ concern about being “modern”). Northeasterners attend CTN because it is their Center, founded by one of their own, who succeeded in the migration process and was elected a Federal Deputy. So, to attend CTN’s meetings is a way of feeling at home, among compatriots, but in an urban context amidst signs of modernity and cosmopolitanism. Unlike the Forró house, the main goal at the CTN, apart from getting together and having fun, seemed more focused on evoking a nostalgia for the Northeast. CTN is a Center of “tradition,” but it is actually a new “tradition” being constructed among Northeastern migrants in São Paulo. The institutional character of CTN changes the way people participate in its activities and affects their goals in attending.

In discussing the distinguishing elements of the two contexts, I will analyze the music genres, dance styles, religious images, and performance practices. In the case of Forró music, for instance, it is interesting that most of the performances at CTN used keyboards, not the accordion, as their main instruments. Also, the use of recorded back-up tracks, unheard of in the earlier context, was common at CTN. Nevertheless, there was one live performance of an acoustic Forró with Tico dos 8 Baixos playing button accordion, accompanied by zabumba and triangle. The poorly amplified sound jeopardized Tico’s performance, and showed the inability of the venue to deal with acoustic music, suggesting that the staff at CTN were more used to electronic instruments. However, among the attendants, this detail was not so important, and they danced to Tico’s performance more than to the keyboard style of the Forró that followed.

Based on my observations, Forró played by keyboards, with dancers on stage, was appreciated more through watching than through actual dancing. This shows a shift from participatory to presentational performances, which again relates with the adaptation to “modern” contexts. However, the audience clearly was still interested in the participatory tradition indexed by the trio. That is why they danced so much more enthusiastically to Tico’s trio performance than to keyboard Forró. This can be seen as part of the Northeastern migrants contrasting social goals. On the one hand they want to maintain their links with their Northeastern roots (here embodied by participatory performance). On the other hand, they want to embrace modernity (here embodied by presentational performance). Both ideals are useful, for different reasons, and they can easily shift between them. In the keyboard Forró, dancing is done more on stage and it has an aspect of titillation, because of the way the dancers are barely dressed and the types of movements they perform. Most of the lyrics were also suggestive.

Dance was not widely practiced, throughout the day; when the audience did dance, I noted that Northeast style and the stiff-arm ballroom influenced style were both evident. Actually, the arm style made it possible for a handicapped woman to dance to Forró. Nonetheless, for the most part, dancing at CTN was relegated to the stage, rather than among the audience. This imparts a very different meaning to the Forró situation, where, traditionally, dancing among the audience is one of the most important characteristics. And, when there was a dance competition, the couple that won as the best dance couple was not actually dancing in a Forró dance style, they were just shaking their butts suggestively. It is not only Forró music that is in a process of transformation

through the use of keyboards and dubbing devices, but also the dance, the entire mode of performance, and what is aesthetically valued.

In regard to the visual imagery present at CTN, it was curious to see depictions of the last supper, a chapel, busts of saints, and other overtly religious images, alongside images of bandits and a musician. This display of sacred and secular icons together suggests that they are of equal importance in evoking a sense of identity for the community of Northeastern migrants. Considering that they are displayed in a Center of Northeastern “Traditions,” these icons are surely emblematic. The most curious of these, to me, is the inclusion of the bandit, Lampião, and his wife, Maria Bonita, among the icons. And yet, Lampião was a bandit with religious habits as well as important religious and political status. In fact, a priest, Father Cicero, gave him a medal and a military commission, following orders of the Federal Government to fight a communist movement (*Coluna Prestes*). In addition, after his death, a myth akin to that of Robin Hood characterized him as a bandit who stole from the rich and gave to the poor (which was not true). Lampião made mistakes but he and his band were remembered for their “good deeds.” Bandits seized power through their own means, rising above “the system” that was oppressing all poor people; this made them popular figures. The fact that a bust of Luiz Gonzaga is also there indicates his importance among Northeasterners living in a big city such as São Paulo. Luiz Gonzaga was also known as a religious man and remembered as the musician who played for the Pope in the 1980s. Hence, in the final analysis, the varied imagery decorating the entrance of CTN are all, in some sense, “religious,” but, more importantly, they all represent Northeastern history, “tradition.”

Another interesting allusion to religion in this event was the afternoon performances of religious singers. This singing of religious lyrics over pop rhythms by a sexy singer attired in cowgirl garb raises the concept of popular religion discussed earlier. The ambiguity and controversial juxtapositions inherent in Brazilian popular religion were evident throughout the CTN context.

In addition to the more overt inclusion of religious imagery and sentiment in the CTN context, there were other factors that, to me, diluted the “traditional” appeal of the Forró. The TV talk show structure added diversity and a parade of genres that only tangentially connected with the Northeastern community (although for them this seemed completely normal). Pagode,⁶ romantic music, axé, pop, MPB, rap, Brazilian rock, disco, and country music are some of the genres played over the course of the event. It was as if there were no limits to what could be presented and a way of valuing diversity itself. The link that I see between this structure and the Northeastern migrant community has to do with their new habits in the big city and the kinds of jobs that they often hold. TVs (and radios) are frequent companions for construction workers, maids, taxi drivers, janitors, street vendors, etc. (jobs mostly dominated by Northeasterners in São Paulo). Owning a television is still a big deal in Brazil among poor people. It is a sign of social ascension. It is not uncommon to go to the *favelas* (slums) and observe inhabitants who do not actually have a house to live in, but still own a TV. Hence, when poor Northeasterners migrate to the big cities, one of their goals is to own a TV. Watching TV at night and keeping up on all of the drama series (*novelas*) and the new fashions in music, dance, clothing, shoes, and makeup, as well as the latest national and international news, is a cheap and socially

⁶ *Pagode* is a dance music related to *samba*, performed by groups of people who also dance to it while playing and singing. It is very commercial.

necessary pastime. Most people in Brazil follow the drama series (from low to middle class, for sure), especially the ones on the Globo Network, as well as their Sunday talk shows. Northeastern migrants, rather than watching TV at home on Sunday afternoons, instead go to CTN, meet people and have the chance to experience a “variety TV show” live, and to be part of it. This is one possible explanation for the presence of a TV show structure at CTN. The familiarity of the format is probably appealing to the audiences.

This kind of entertainment offers as a chance for an unknown everyman to attain stardom, just as Luiz Gonzaga did. Thus, the artists that perform at CTN, following Gonzaga’s model, are looking for better opportunities in the mass media, and since they are actually performing at the headquarters of a radio station that champions Northeastern music, their chances of success are enhanced still further. They are trying to break into the mass media. The fact that CTN is “owned” by another successful Northeastern migrant, and that he used to go there regularly, can also be interpreted as an another inducement; people go to CTN to get closer to success. By attending, they might connect with influential people and possibly get help from a successful Northeastern migrant. Also, recall that Pedro Sertanejo’s Forró, which lasted for so many years in São Paulo, had a similar structure, and hence this kind of entertainment environment is familiar to Northeastern migrants in the city. It is certainly not the only contextual model, as will be seen in the next report.

At CTN, the concept of Forró has to be expanded to satisfy the tastes and needs of an urban audience of Northeastern migrants. Here, Forró is not just a place where live music and dance happens among lower class people from the Brazilian Northeast. Varied instruments and genres are introduced—a reflection of the variety of musical styles

available to the migrants through the ubiquitous and socially estimable radios and televisions. Here, Forró is a variety show performed on stage for a more passive audience, and presenting a variety of pop genres, including keyboard Forró accompanied by choreographed Female dancing. Live music performance is often replaced by recorded back-up tracks (which make use of desirably “modern” technology). Dancing among the audience is not as common, and when they do dance, a combination of traditional Forró style dancing and other, urban styles is evident. An event at CTN is now a very explicit hybrid product where style boundaries are broad as well as vague. Limits between flexible genres are blurred even further, and the audience’s role has become more passive and less participatory.

However, hybridity, as Canclini defines it, had been present in Forró since Luiz Gonzaga’s time, although with a different profile. In the 1950s, there was a different public, from different social classes, enjoying Forró music and dance in different ways in different places, and because of this varied demographic, the music had different instrumentation and styles occurring in parallel. Now, in this contemporary context, we see a largely homogeneous public hearing Forró mixed, intertwined and alternated with other genres, with electric instruments and recorded back-up tracks. While the earlier type diversity maintained distinction across different contexts, now all variations are blended together in a continuum within the same context. This may contribute to yet a new redefinition of the sound of migrant Forró.

3. A FORRÓ NIGHT AT FORRÓ DA CATUMBI (SÃO PAULO)

Carnival, 23-24 February 2001. *I called earlier to get directions from the nearest subway stop, and also to learn the price of admission. Frank Aguiar was playing there tonight. I left home around 11:00 PM to get one of the last trains. I got off at Belenzinho station and looked for a cab. I wore my usual jeans and t-shirt and had my bag with me. When I sat in the cab and told the driver where I wanted to go, he said in a very ironic mood: “gosta d’um forrozinho!?” (do you like a forrozinho!?).” I had to cut short the conversation in a nice way, so I answered: “ahhh, é trabalho! (well, it’s work!). This was enough to change his attitude toward me and he got serious. He left me in front of a nightclub façade, many people on the street. I paid my ticket and went in. There were stairs on both sides of the hall, so I had to go up. There was a woman dressed in a black suit who took my ticket, searched me and my purse and allowed me to go in. When I got upstairs it was almost midnight. There were a lot of people, around 300, but it was not full yet. There were many security guards scattered in the room. The space was wide and had a mezzanine with tables, chairs and waiters. On the opposite side of the entrance there was a stage about one and a half meters above the floor. There were many women over 30 and couples in their 50s and up. At the mezzanine there were more youngsters. The variety of people was also something that caught my attention: blacks, whites, mulatos, “mestizos,” some well dressed and others more casually attired. The walls on the right side of the audience had paintings: naked women, jangadas (a native boat from the Northeastern coast), Brasília with its planned cathedral in the middle, the symbol of the Latin American Memorial (a sort of museum in São Paulo), and a landscape of “Rancho Fundo” (Deep ranch—an old nostalgic country song hit).*

On the left side there was a brick wall with windows. There were people selling Frank Aguiar's promotional material: a little stuffed dog playing keyboard, white hats, t-shirts, CDs, autographed photos. One of these guys told me that he could make R\$1,000 a month with this work (approximately U\$ 500.00). From time to time a male worker would come by, picking up trash off the floor. Also, periodic flashes (acesão) turned on the lights and lasted at least a minute, focusing on different parts of the Forró house.

There was a group playing: a guy on the keyboard and another one singing. I could not understand what they were singing or playing, but the preset rhythm was much louder than the other sounds and played very fast.



There was a man, maybe the owner, dressed in white linen pants and a black linen shirt, wearing a cell phone and porchetti (a leather bag attached to the belt used as a wallet). He took the stage after this group and announced events, lost and found items, and also the star of the night: O Cãozinho dos Teclados (The little dog of the keyboards)—Frank Aguiar. After he finished we could hear a recording by the Rastapé group: “Amor de Rastapé: ...no remelexo deste xote suingado...” and “Colo de Menina.”

There were many people dancing, too, in the Northeast style: men with women, old with young, women with women, women and men by themselves. They danced with the live band and with the recorded music as well.

The next band to perform was Edson José and Zezinho e seus Teclados (Edson José and Zezinho and his keyboards). The Yamaha keyboard player used a notebook as his score and sometimes he employed the accordion preset timbre. They performed

something close to a xote, but very fast. I could understand and hear better what they were performing:

<i>Eu vou querer fazer amor com voce</i>	<i>I will want to make love to you</i>
<i>na luz do teu olhar eu vou me apaixonar...</i>	<i>in the light of your eyes I will fall in love...</i>

They also performed a song to “kill the longing” (matar a saudade): “Até mais ver: ...se eu morasse aqui pertinho nega todo dia eu vinha te vê...”(if I lived near by baby everyday I would come to see you...)

They just performed for half an hour. While they were singing, a specific couple on the dance floor caught my attention—the guy was in his 30s, the woman was in her 60s and she was leading him. There were many more people now, around 400, and the dance floor was full of dancers. The dance floor had a petroleum-derived covering called paviflex, which was not very slippery.

While one band was performing, there was a worker loading in equipment for the next group, which was the Irmãos Quéops (Quéops Brothers). They had two Korg keyboards played by a hairy guy, a piano accordion player, two girls: one dancing almost naked, and the other singing (sometimes dancing too) wearing a very short dress. When they got to stage the public stopped and screamed. The light was on for a little bit. They played two of Falamansa’s hits in a row “Rindo à Toa” and ‘Xote dos Milagres,” but speeding up these xotes. The accordion player performed “Esperando na Janela” the hit from the soundtrack of “Me, You, Them,” but leaving out the introduction and the interludes. The girls made gestures as if they were “translating” the lyrics. The dance floor was full now with dancers. After these hits they played double entendre lyric song types, but it was clear they were worried about the sequence of the repertory presented,

so they intermixed double entendre songs with old hits. At the end, the accordion player performed two virtuosic tunes: Milonga das Missões (by Renato Borghetti) and Brasileirinho (a choro by Waldir Azevedo). The accordion player even laid down on his back on the stage floor while playing, to show off his skills.

Meanwhile, a woman in her 40s came to my side and began to talk. She told me that she only came to Forró when there was a good singer such as Frank Aguiar or Amado Batista (the next week's attraction, though he is a country singer). She was separated from her husband and worked as a maid. She said that she came to Forró to have fun, to dance; she did not come to flirt because the guys would go straight to making out and she did not like that. Another guy, on my other side, in his late 20s also began to talk. He was well dressed and also separated from his wife. He told me that this was the first time that he came to the Forró but he was enjoying it.

The next band to perform was Banda Saborear (Savour Band): two Korg keyboards, piano accordion and electric guitar. A guy and a girl sang and danced, always to the same fast preset rhythm. They sang mainly Brazilian versions of North American disco hits that were popular on the radio, over the omnipresent forró preset rhythm. They performed for approximately one hour. Meanwhile Frank Aguiar and his band arrived at 1:50 AM in a sort of fancy black van. I saw him through the window and he waved at us. There was another break after this band, filled in with recorded Rastapé songs. Frank Aguiar's performance was probably next.

In the meantime, another woman near me began to talk. She was in her 60s, and told me that she always came to this Forró because she likes to dance. She had high blood pressure and, according to her, dancing helps to control it. She told me that she

likes “keyboard Forró.” The guy who was selling promotional material told me that he has a band with nine members called “Nações Unidas do Forró” (United Nations of Forró) and sometimes they open for Frank Aguiar.

Finally, Frank Aguiar came to the stage—it was 2:30 AM! He had a tenor sax, two keyboards (Korg and Technics), and an accordion player. Frank Aguiar usually plays the keyboards and sings. There were two girls, both brunettes, younger than 18 years old, dancing and singing backup. They performed “Chorando se foi,” a lambada hit, right in the beginning. After the first selection, came “Esperando na Janela” (the hit of the night) and then Frank Aguiar’s hits:

*Mulher madura é o bicho,
Lavou, enxugou, tá nova*

*A mature woman is great,
After you wash, dry, she is new/young*

And another one:

*Loira não é burra
Tem preguiça de pensar*

*A blond girl is not dumb
She is too lazy to think*

They also performed “O Xote das Meninas,” (Luiz Gonzaga’s hit) in a very fast tempo. There was another woman near me now, in her 60s or 70s, and she told me that she likes to have fun and she loves Frank Aguiar. She had a photo album just with his pictures, and she used to play accordion, but is now learning keyboards because, she said, “we have to modernize.” Frank Aguiar also performed “Pequenina: ...tem dó pequinininha, tem dó pequinininha...,” “Morango do Nordeste,” as well as old English disco hits in Portuguese Forró versions. The group were visibly tired, the guy selling promotional items told me that Frank Aguiar had already had a performance tonight in Mairiporã (a city nearby). Their style followed this sequence: slow introductions, without

percussion or preset rhythm, then a break or a suspension, and then the preset forró rhythm at a fast speed. The accordion played fills, sometimes I heard a sax solo.

People close to the stage watched the show and looked like big fans, either of Frank Aguiar or the girls. They performed a song supposedly for belly dance,⁷ but the girls just made simple movements. They were tired.

Frank Aguiar's performance lasted about one hour. I would say that by the end of the performance the house held approximately one thousand people. The general environment of the whole night was great, very simple and nice people. Many women approached me, some did not want to dance, others just wanted to dance by themselves, another one came to me for protection, I think—there was a drunk guy being mean to her. I suppose it was because I was taking notes and I had a camera with me. As happened before, people thought that I was a journalist.

One of the guys asked me if I did not dance, because for him, I did not look like someone who would enjoy that dance. I asked why he thought that, but he just shook his shoulders. In general the guys were very nice to me, they offered drinks more than once. I saw other women accepting and even drinking from the same bottle or glass with them. I also noted the way guys got close to the girls. Guys pass by girls and smell their hairs or softly blow it or blow on their necks, and some of the girls pretended that they did not notice. It happened twice to me and I just looked at them and smiled. As I had more than two guys willing to dance with me I decided not to dance in order to keep things under control, so I just said that next time I would accept, but that night I was working.

⁷There was a drama series showing on the main TV broadcasting whose theme was based in Morocco. The plot was about a Muslim-raised woman in love with a non-Muslim Brazilian guy. The whole imagery of "A Thousand-and-One Nights" was at play.

There are some striking differences, and similarities, between this performance context and the previous two. The informal, family atmosphere that was so emphasized at Arlindo's Forró, present to a lesser extent at CTN, is here almost nonexistent. This is late night entertainment, for adults. The audience is not limited to Northeastern migrants, instead including anyone from São Paulo's working class. There were no children present, and I could not see any families together. However, as at CTN, the space was adorned with icons evoking the Northeast and a typically rural worldview. Representations of the Brasília⁸ cathedral (religion), a jangada (typical boat of the Northeast), the "*rancho fundo*" painting (representing the title of old country music), are all well-known signs for Northeasterners. The naked woman painted in a graffiti style is a city sign. São Paulo is full of such paintings on the walls lining its streets. The audience was a diverse mix of races and ages; blacks, whites, mulatos, mestizos, and people in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and older were in attendance. This audience was drawn mostly from São Paulo's working class, and included people from many different ethnic and regional backgrounds, including Northeastern migrants. They were well dressed, as at CTN, and there were no obvious personal ties among the group. They were not neighbors, and although the people did not know one another, they did know the reputation of the Forró house. This was the same place where Pedro Sertanejo hosted his Forró for many years. As at Arlindo's Forró, at Catumbi they charged an entry fee, but unlike Arlindo's backyard, the Catumbi had security, with guards searching patrons at the entrance, and monitoring the ballroom (recall that Arlindo's "security" consisted of a sign prohibiting weapons). This added precaution would suggest the potential for violence, although this

⁸ Brasília is the actual capital of the country, and common people maintain that it was built by Northeasterners, which is true considering that they were the main labor force.

same type of security can be seen at any rock show or any big event that draws a lot of people. Hence, the violent, slightly dangerous aura associated with Forró for many years no longer distinguishes it from any other urban event that brings together a lot of people.

With regard to the music performed that evening, keyboards were the primary instruments, often playing with an accordion timbre (thus, maintaining a necessary link with “old-time” Forró music that featured the accordion). Even when the groups performing did have a piano accordion player, it was not the featured instrument. Note the telling comment from one woman, who told me that she switched from accordion to keyboards because, “we have to modernize.” Thus, the keyboard is here a very recognizable sign of “modernity.” I would add that, since keyboard Forró is strongly associated with the urban, industrialized South, keyboards are also indices of the urban environment, as opposed to accordion’s signification of the country or hinterland. Northeastern migrants living in São Paulo need to accrete signs of the modern and urban to Forró, because these are signs of their new environment, and they need to incorporate them into their lives. Combining signs of their regional identity with signs of their new city existence is a means of coping with all of the changes taking place in their lives.

As far as I could tell, all of the music at the Catumbi was performed live, without recorded back-up tracks. But, recorded music was heard throughout the evening, between sets; this was always songs by *Rastapé* or *Falamansa* songs, which were currently popular on the radio, or *Esperando na Janela*, the theme song of the Warner/Columbia movie “Me, You, Them,” which was also getting a lot of airplay at the time.

As at CTN, the repertory represented a variety of genres. Keyboard Forró was prominent, as was the music of *Falamansa* and *Rastapé* —bands that can be classified as

Forró universitário, but which were being played on the radios. “Classic” songs by Luiz Gonzaga were intermixed with double entendre lyrics. North American disco hits (played in a Forró version), lambadas, instrumental music, and even belly dance music were all heard at the Catumbi, reflecting the wide range of musical styles available to city dwellers with a simple twist of the radio dial. Although not heard that night, I am sure that country music is played at the Catumbi sometimes, because the star attraction for the following week was to be Amado Batista (1951-), a very well known interpreter of country/romantic music. Also, the presence of the “rancho fundo” painting on the wall—a symbolic representation of a famous country song with nostalgic lyrics evoking a bucolic image of rural village life—further alludes to the popularity of country music in the club.

The songs performed by Frank Aguiar tended to follow a strict structure: a slow introduction consisting only of an unaccompanied melody sung or played on the keyboard, a dramatic pause or suspension, and then the onset of the preset electronic rhythmic pattern at a fast tempo (around 120 bpm or faster) over which the remainder of the song was performed. Saxophone and accordion played a secondary role, adding effects and fills. Two young girls, under 18 years of age, provided backing vocals and choreographed dance steps. As he told me in his interview, Aguiar arranges his performances so that they will earn him as much money as possible. His primarily commercial goals explain the large number of people selling his merchandise at the show.

Participatory dancing at the *Forró da Catumbi* was a much more prominent feature than at CTN. People went there specifically to dance; in my opinion, this can be attributed to the fact that Catumbi is a Forró house, not a “Center of Tradition.” It is a

“nightclub,” open to working-class people from all over the city, not only Northeastern migrants. The patrons danced to the live performances, as well as to the recorded music between acts. Most of the time, I observed a Northeastern style of dancing; very few people tried the more demanding steps from the “arm” style. There were people who watched the dancers on stage too, usually people who were closer to the stage, but these were in the minority. Dancers showed little prejudice in their choice of partners. You could see an older woman with a young guy and vice-versa, as well as blacks and whites, mulattos and whites or blacks, and so on. In the dancing, the role of leader was not gender exclusive, both men and women could lead. Their behavior towards me was similarly warm and open; I had a lot of social interaction during that night and I did not feel isolated, as at the CTN. I attribute this behavior to the variety of people there, it was a working-class place, not a Northeastern migrant place. Also, they did not single me out because I was there working, since Frank Aguiar’s vendors were a common sight as well.

Many of these characteristics resulted from the typical urban nightclub environment at the Catumbi, as opposed to the atmosphere at CTN, or at Arlindo’s Forró. *Forró da Catumbi* started late on a Saturday night (a leisure night for the working-class). It was a scheduled, advertised and promoted performance. The paid entry fees, security guards likewise are common to a nightclub scene. People were dressed up to meet other people. The fact that a woman told me that she wanted to dance alone because the guys just wanted to make out, suggests that the Catumbi had an active singles scene. The way that the guys would flirt with women by smelling and blowing their hair bolsters this impression, but I will address to this sensuality in the next chapter. As at the other places,

this was a respectful environment; inside these lower-class Forrós, I never felt as if I was at risk of violence or harassment.

The structure of the performances was similar to CTN, but not identical. There was a succession of opening bands before the main attraction (Frank Aguiar), but the TV talk show structure was not evident. For Northeastern migrants in São Paulo, both CTN and the Catumbi are part of their subjective experience now. They go to CTN to assert their regional identity—it is their space, dedicated specifically to maintaining their traditions. Thus, it provides a sort of sanctuary, an oasis of communal ties and nostalgic hominess amidst their daily lives in the impersonal metropolis. Ironically, the performance at CTN was the least “traditional” of the three, because of the TV structure. CTN represents their new traditions and habits, and highlights the ways in which “traditions” are continually deconstructed and reconstructed by the actors. CTN also includes signs of their new identities, as sophisticated city dwellers who embrace “modernity.” This would explain the emphasis on presentational performance, as opposed to participatory performance, at CTN; the sort of specialization of roles implied in the presentational paradigm is itself a sign of modernity. Northeastern migrants also attend the Catumbi, because it is a Forró house, where a Forró event takes place, and so is reminiscent of their homeland. So, they go there to feel at home, to dance and listen to music as they did in the Northeast, to participate in a Forró event and have fun. There is again a mixture signs connoting “home and tradition” and others connoting “city and modernity.” The nightclub elements (promotional materials, more formal dress, security, etc.), as well as the variety of musical styles represented, are clearly signs of their modern, urban environment. The use of the preset “forró” rhythm (though faster) and the

accordion timbres on the modern keyboards clearly evoke Northeastern tradition, as do the pictures on the walls and the participatory dancing. This conflation of tradition and modernity, regionalism and cosmopolitanism seems quite natural and unremarkable to the participants (the older woman's comment about trading in her accordion for a keyboard to "modernize" was direct articulation of the dynamic). At *Forró da Catumbi*, the Forró structure is at work; at CTN, Forró was just one, particularly "regional" and "traditional," element of a broader, more modern structure.

MIDDLE CLASS FORRÓ

A FORRÓ NIGHT IN PINHEIROS (SÃO PAULO) AMONG STUDENTS

Sunday, September 10, 2000. *My first Forró night in São Paulo happened on a Sunday night, following a busy day. I went to see Mestre Ambrósio⁹ perform at Centro Cultural São Paulo for the second day in a row. After the performance, I had a meeting with the rabeca (native violin) player, Siba, who was taking me to a repente (improvisation) at UCRAN, the Union of Improvisers. It was there that my opportunity arose. I was accompanied by two musicians—Nilton and Júnior, from Chão e Chinelo group. A friend of theirs, Rosângela, passed by to pick them up on the way to Remelexo, a Forró house in Pinheiros, Trio Virgulino was to play that night. I was introduced to her briefly and I asked her for a ride. This was the beginning of my relationship with my main informant in São Paulo, and the first of many rides. I confess that I was a little tense and the whole scene was a bit too adventurous for my tastes, but it was fieldwork. Rosângela's driving did not make me feel better. She was an incessant talker, and we*

⁹ This is the name of a new group that performs a new genre of Northeastern music related with a movement of late 1980s called *mangue* beat. For further references see Galinsky 2002

listened to her all the way there, talking about Forró and boyfriends and how lost she was! Júnior was sitting in the front seat and helped her to find her way. Finally, we got to a narrow dark street. I could not see anything going on any place around. She said that it was the only place where she would find a parking space. It was around midnight. She parked the car, and we got out and began to walk towards the corner. When we turned right, the Forró house was visible at the next corner. The street was full of people on both sides, there was a bar just in front of Remelexo, and street vendors too, taking advantage of the crowd. There was a big line outside Remelexo, most of them people in their late teens and twenties. Rosângela left us in line and went to the front to talk with some people. We waited a bit. She got three invitations, gave them to us and paid for herself. So, we did not have to wait our turn in line. However, it was crowded and difficult to move in order to get in. After getting in, there were security guards inside searching only the males. When we were all in together finally, Rosângela told me that we could leave our purses and coats in a special safe place called chapelaria (hats place) and we just had to pay about 50 cents for this. When we bought the tickets and got there I asked Rosângela how much she paid and I gave her the money (she did not want it initially but she accepted—around \$3.00).

The place was nice, divided into three areas, delimited by columns. There was a long hall where we came in and a cashier and bar towards the back. The central room was wider and had a little stage to my left, about 50 centimeters above the floor, with sound equipment, instruments, microphones, and hanging lights; in front of it there was a large area for dancing. Lighting was dim, but not completely dark. There was another long hall on the opposite side, a little darker, where there were a few tables and chairs,

and the restrooms. (These were labeled “Lampião” —for men, and “Maria Bonita” —for women, an interesting “tribute” to the famous Northeastern cangaceiros). The columns between the first hall and the dance area had short walls where people would sit too (like birds hanging on a line!).

The public was young, with very few people over 40, and many in their 20s. They were comfortably dressed, not even casual, but a sort of teenagers’, “neo-hippy” style: low-waisted skirts and tight pants (some with bell bottoms), short-cropped blouses/T-shirts, many times baring part of the belly, which was often adorned with a piercing and or tattoo, for the girls. Boys wore pants (many times low-waisted and loose) and T-shirts or also a fashion called surf wear—loose and below-the-knee shorts, T-shirts or tanks. Clothes had to be cool and comfortable because the inside was very hot and when the music and dancing really took off it was like a sauna. I saw some of the guys wearing knit caps, Bob Marley’s cap style, and this caught my attention because wearing hats of any sort is not that common in Brazil, especially in the cities. The shoes were interesting. I saw many girls wearing a sort of slipper (in Brazil they are called sapatilha chinesa - Chinese slippers) while the guys wore a type of leather sandal (called chinela de rabicho in the Northeast), flip-flops or even no shoes at all to dance.

When we arrived no band was playing and not many people were inside. We heard just recorded music—Luiz Gonzaga, Jackson do Pandeiro, Gilberto Gil singing the hit “Esperando na Janela” from the movie “Eu, Tu, Eles” (Me, You, Them). When Gil’s song played everybody danced, it was crazy! Curiously, they would dance in a particular way. They had a more acrobatic style of dancing, as if they had rehearsed steps. There was a lot of pulling and pushing, far and near, and difficult movements of arms crossing,

turning, and whirling, as if it was a mixture of ballroom dances (tango, salsa, two steps) and Cajun dance. I stayed with my group of companions most of the time. I invited Nilton to dance during some songs but, since he was from Recife we would dance in the Recife style, which was familiar to me. It was around 12:30 AM when the band came in, introduced by one of the house owners. It was not Trio Virgulino because, according to the host, they were in Belo Horizonte, but he promised it would be a band just as good. The band that would play was called Banda Mafuá—and they were very good indeed. The players were mostly in their 30s or older: guitar, bass, piano accordion, percussion (two sets of them for two players), drum set. The piano accordion player was a very tall, very white guy, with a Southern look, and the singer was an older black man. The band had charisma and captivated the audience: they looked at the public, smiled, and stared at some dancers. The physical distance between them and the audience was not great and this helped create a feeling of proximity and intimacy. Rosângela told me that, usually, the people who dance well are near the stage, and towards the back and further away the dance skills decrease (later I found out that this was not exactly so; there was no such division). The band did not play one song, stop, play another, stop, as many do in the US. It played a series of songs in a row, with many repeated, and then stopped. This format gave the dancers at least 10 minutes to dance with a single partner—sometimes this is good and sometimes it is not, but there is nothing stopping you from finishing the dance before the ending of the medley.

I got some drinks for us—water and beer. There was a well-dressed, drunk black guy dancing with a cute white girl near the stage, and many people were watching them, probably because they were dancing well, but a little too sensually, and because they

were a mixed couple, and maybe because he was obviously drunk. The black guy was one of very few blacks in the audience. Likewise, probably the only Northeasterners present were Nilton and Júnior, who were with me. After the dance, this couple was really making out, still near the stage, but it seemed that he was a little aggressive. The girl was sort of pushing and trying to get rid of him. Anyway, after a long French kiss she left him. Then he stood by me, and I grew uncomfortable, thinking about what I would do if he invited me to dance, but he didn't. Instead, he invited Rosângela, but she managed to get rid of him after the dance. The band had a break and I saw the accordion player out among the audience, dancing with an older woman. When the band came back to play, to my surprise, a guy shorter than me, a very good dancer that I had seen earlier, invited me to dance. He really danced well, but at a certain point he threw me away to do the "arms" dance and I began to laugh and I told him that I did not know how to dance like that. He pushed me back to him and soon after this, the music was over. I thanked him and told him that I was not used to dancing like that because in Recife they danced differently. Then, he asked me if I was from Recife and I said no but I was doing research about Forró and he was my first partner from São Paulo. He laughed and then left my side, maybe a little too quickly. I was wondering if I scared him off with the research or my confession about my lack of skills in that style of dance. A little bit later another guy invited me to dance. He was very, very cute and smelled great. He did not dance that well, and twice he tried to hold me tighter and closer, but my left hand pushing on his shoulder was enough to stop him. He also tried to dance cheek to cheek, but I managed to avoid that, too. We did not talk. When the song was over I just thanked him and he left. I was impressed with myself. I am very used to dancing by myself, and I do not remember

the last time that I was in Brazil inside this sort of dance house, in a completely strange environment, when a stranger invited me to dance—actually two strangers! It made me feel good, the invitation (it is flattering) and the emotion of dancing, the willingness to partner with someone, whom you've never met, just for a dance.

Soon after that we left. On our way to the car, Rosângela was demonstrating how a guy should hold the girl—too tight in my opinion. Junior disagreed with her, and said that he preferred to let the girl be more free to move and I agreed with him. Nilton was complaining to Júnior that he should learn how to dance like the guys from São Paulo - he did not know the “arms” dance. They were attributing that style to an adaptation of the original Forró dance to salsa dance and ballroom dances, but sometimes they went overboard, making it too difficult and complex in their opinion.

This middle-class Forró context shared some characteristics with working-class Forró. A noticeable informality of dress and manner was reminiscent of Arlindo's Forró. People were comfortably dressed in age-appropriate styles (jeans, cropped shirts, surfwear, sandals, bare feet, slippers). As at CTN and Catumbi, there was a host—someone introducing the night's performers and explaining any changes to the program. The entry fee is another element in common with Seu Arlindo's and Catumbi's Forró.

In contrast to the working-class contexts, religious and familial characteristics were not present at all. There were no parents or children around, no paintings or icons on the walls. Even though it is a clearly Forró house, the old associations with family and homey, backyard entertainment were not in evidence. These associations are more overtly related with Forró's origins in the Northeast, and so would have little meaning for

this young, southeastern, student public. There were icons of tradition, most notably the bathrooms being named after the king and queen of *Cangaço*; but this almost seems to be a tongue-in-cheek reference to the “rustic” hinterlands. But I found this practice in other lower-class, Northeasterner migrants’ Forró houses too, and I am sure that there are many layers of interpretation for it. However, in this middle-class, southeast urban context, *cangaço* is basically just a historical fact. There is, in general, no connection between these young attendants and the *cangaço* lifestyle, as might be the case among Northeasterners. Hence, their relation with *cangaço* is further removed; it is something that they have read about or seen on TV, but that they have never directly experienced.

The use of recorded music as an accompaniment for dancing is present here among middle-class students, with Luiz Gonzaga, Jackson do Pandeiro’s recordings played alongside the latest hit on the radios: *Esperando na Janela*, sung by Gilberto Gil, who is seen as an authority on Brazilian popular music, especially among the middle-class and intellectuals. Hence, it is not so much that it is hit on the radio, but that it is sung by Gilberto Gil. At Catumbi’s Forró the recorded music included not only *Esperando na Janela*, but also other current radio hits by *Falamansa* and *Rastapé*. Oddly enough, a greater variety of musical styles and genres were heard among the working-class urban Forró contexts that were much more likely to be patronized by Northeastern migrants, while the middle-class, student audience listened more exclusively to “traditional” Forró music. For the middle-class urban audience, the old-time Forró, with standard piano accordion featured, may be seen as more exotic, and more “authentic.” The music, for them, is not bound up with nostalgia and regional identity, so much as novelty and age-group identity.

The middle-class audiences do not have the need and desire to embrace signs of modernity, as does the working-class and migrant population; they are secure in their social position in the “modern” world, and thus free to indulge in a bit of “authentic rusticism.” The middle-class student audience is creating a somewhat romanticized image of a past they never directly experienced; the working-class Northeastern migrants are negotiating their still new urban identities by combining signs of their regional, rural, and “traditional” origins with signs of the urban modernity they seek to embrace. In this familiar urban, nightclub-style environment, young students are experiencing an “exotic” form of entertainment that is far removed from their daily life, the Northeastern Forró. They have read about the region and lifestyle in books, but they have not experienced it in the same way that Northeastern migrants, or even their children born in the cities, have. But now, they are experiencing Forró through attendance and participation contextualized in their own way. It is a different way to experience another way of life, but a very effective one, since the music and dance provide such a physical, visceral, sensual, and participatory experience. I am sure that these young students have a different view of Northeasterners after attending these Forró houses, and yet their view of Forró and the Northeast remains distinct from that of the migrants’ experience. Students need to emphasize “traditional” Forró music to have this experience (it happens through rhematic reasoning), while for Northeasterners the experiences and associations are imprinted in their body memories (as dicents), and can be evoked whenever they want. At the same time, in the same city but in a different class context, Northeastern migrants who attend Forró houses where keyboards, recordings, varied music genres, and choreographed dance are evident, experience Forró in a new way, since familiar signs of their regional

identity are mixed with indices of the city. This commingling tends to smooth their transition into their new urban environment, since they offer a very blatant example of the successful adaptation of “Northeastern-ness” to the modern, cosmopolitan world of the southern cities.

In both contexts, the attendants are experiencing these signs and meaning through their bodies—they go to a particular space, listen to music, dance, watch, and participate in defining the performance context. However, the students are creating memories of a historical past; they are too young, too urban, and too middle-class to have experienced this past, and for them it provides another method in the crucial process of distinguishing their generations from that of their parents. Northeastern migrants, in contrast, are re-creating a past they lived, because they are accreting new signs and meaning to it, signs from the city where they live now, as opposed to the place that they left behind. Thus, each of the two audiences embrace and experience “northeastern-ness” from different subjective experiences through different experiential lenses, and motivated by different psycho-social needs.

The band that night, for this middle-class student event, performed live, without recorded back-up tracks. There was no standard trio, despite the presence of the piano accordion. Drums, percussion, bass, and electric guitars were also used. So, after listening to recordings of Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro’s that preceded the band, the middle-class youth then embraced a Forró music with a different timbral combination; and the accordion sound was the lone holdout of the “old tradition.” As mentioned, Mafuá was originally an MPB band, formed by urban musicians who began to play Forró music because the singer, a black guy from Maranhão, entered the group. However, recall

that this was a replacement band, called in when a standard accordion trio could not appear. In fact, sound combinations based on the standard trio are typically more likely to be heard at a university Forró house. When Trio Virgulino or Trio Xamego performed at university students' Forró houses, the trio formation was the main timbre, and all its members were from the Northeast. When students began to form their own Forró bands, they based them on the trios, too (as is the case with *Falamansa*, *Rastapé* and others). Hence, in live performances, there was a tendency to have mainly trios playing Forró music for São Paulo middle class students, with other instruments occasionally added.

However, this discussion about instrumentation, and the supposed prejudice that students had against electronic Forrós because of keyboards, is not evident when considering the recordings of *Forró universitário*. The recordings labeled by the culture industry as “*Forró universitário*,” are more likely to use varied timbres and instrumentation, exploiting whatever instrumentation is currently fashionable in the mainstream music marketplace. *Forró universitário* recordings are not restricted to the trio sound. They use of a variety of instruments, including keyboards. Even the self-promotional vocal interjections of the name of the group, which are so ubiquitous in electronic Forró music, are also occasionally present on *Forró universitário* recordings. Further, the *Forró universitário* movement also embraced country music, as “roots” Forró music. The singer and composer Milton Edilberto, who is a 10-string guitar player involved in *caipira* country music, began to record what he called *Forró de viola* (guitar Forró), and he was accepted among fans of *Forró universitário*. Hence, in the music industry, *Forró universitário* and electronic Forró are little more than marketing

terms. The industry can reach more social classes by using these labels, but in fact, the sounds of the various groups, in both genres, is often very similar.

The most striking difference in this context from the others was evident in the style of dancing. The student style was completely different from the traditional Northeastern style. The purposes of dancing are also slightly different. While in a lower-class context dancing is much more related with fun, togetherness, and bodily contact, here, among the students dance was more about showing off, displaying dance skills, abilities, knowledge, and having bodily contact in a more sexually explicit way (the conversation at the end of the evening, about how tight the woman should be embraced while dancing, had to do with this). Students are being themselves, but also playing at being Northeasterners, since they are in a Forró house, dancing to “traditional” Forró music. Through my participative observation, dancing in the lower-class context was a fun, relaxing pastime; people were simply being themselves. Among middle-class students, however, beyond fun and relaxation, dance tended to be an “intellectual” exercise; it had to do with knowing varied dance steps, knowing about “old” Brazilian dance music, knowing about Brazilian history, and showing one’s appreciation of it through the attendance at these houses. They were enacting an “Other.”

In 2000, Brazil was commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of its discovery by Europeans. In São Paulo, a huge art exposition was taking place, as well as other cultural activities to commemorate the discovery. I heard an informal comment among students at one of their Forró houses, to the effect that Brazilians had to think about all those years and learn how to value “our culture” more. This comment suggests that their involvement with Forró music and dance is a sort of intellectual activity, a

cultural connoisseurship. But, in practice, things work a bit differently from theory. This explains their distinct style of dancing to Forró. They have internalized other habits that have to do with their life in the city and with their class position, thus their Forró is different from Northeasterners' Forró.

Some Northeasterners view the student's flashier "arm" style of dancing in much the same way as the choreographed dancing seen on stage at electronic Forrós. Northeasterners do not interpret this choreography as Forró dancing; rather, it is another sign of the "city" attached to their music (influenced by video clips of Madonna, Britney Spears, and Michael Jackson) and it is there to be observed, not imitated. The same interpretation can be applied to the arm dance style practiced by middle-class students. I think that this was also how the young men from the Northeast who were with me that night felt about it, saying that the style was difficult and complex, but that they were willing to learn it. A Zabumba player from the Northeast, Dió de Araujo, told me, with a bemused tone, "it looks like a ballet"¹⁰ (Interviews, 2001). What I can infer from this discussion is that Northeasterners like the newer style, and approve of it because they feel it enhances the modernity and social status of their "traditional" music, and it recognizes and legitimates it for other social classes.

However, considering the purely physical pleasure of dancing, I would say that in both contexts, dancers would enjoy themselves. Other women I spoke to shared my feelings of flattery and self-satisfaction when they danced well. Actually, the older woman at Catumbi's Forró said that dancing was good for her high blood pressure— a good indication of the benefits that physical dancing imparts. Among the men I spoke to,

¹⁰ Ballet here meaning "classical" training ballet and it is really linked with upper classes, an elite sign.

although not as prone to articulate their feelings about dancing, the experience was also seen as pleasurable. For some, it focused on the nice feeling of warmth between the two bodies, for others, it was the sensual experience of having a woman in his arms, holding and touching.¹¹ I believe that these positive effects of participatory dancing are enhanced when it is accompanied by live music, as opposed to recordings. The sense of community was enhanced by minimizing the distance between the performers and audience—the distance of the stage from the dance floor was fairly close in that students Forró house, in particular. So, the live performances and a relative lack of separation between performer and audience enhances the communal intimacy of the students Forró. It is not a familial intimacy, as in the lower-class Forrós, but some sort of closeness is attained.

An increased sense of intimacy could also be attributed to the lack of bright illumination of the Forró house. Students' Forrós tended to be as dark as nightclubs, and, in this particular house, there was a large section that was really quite dark. In lower-class Forró contexts, the only house that was dimly lit inside was Forró da Catumbi, and even there, there were those flashes of intense light that would illuminate portions of the house, discouraging any sort of sexual activity. At the students' Forró, a mostly dark area was part of the space, and it was there to be used, without the threat of sudden illumination. Hence, I can conclude from this data that among students in a Forró situation, sexual activity was more common and permissible, again showing the lack of the respectful family atmosphere of lower-class Forrós. Another contributing factor in developing this sort of intimacy was practice of playing songs in blocks without pause, allowing dancers to be in contact for all that time.

¹¹ In an interview with a dancer from the middle-class context, I was told that, in certain ways, to dance to Forró was a sort of acceptable masturbation in public. I think that he was just trying to shock me. I did not get this interpretation from my other informants and I could not observe it on the dance floor.

The presence and role of Northeasterners at students' Forró houses is interesting to note. It was not very common to see Northeasterners there, except on stage, working. Most of the attendants were young and white; blacks and Northeasterners were not common in the audience. Racial and regional diversity among the patrons was found mainly at Catumbi's Forró, not in the others. I observed some signs of prejudice at a students Forró. There were some signs of disapproval shown towards the well-dressed but visibly drunk black man. Also, on another night, I observed one man, in his forties, casually dressed, clean, but Northeastern in appearance. He invited all young female students that were around me to dance, and they all refused; he invited me, and I danced with him more than once that night. Of course, the students' behavior and attitudes could be more a reflection of the obvious drunkenness, in the case of the black man, or the obvious age difference, in the case of the Northeastern man. On another occasion, I saw Adelmo, Trio Virgulino's triangle player, who is from the Northeast and also in his forties, dancing with many young women at a students' Forró house. It appears that his success in finding dance partners had to do with his status as a musician.

The fact that few Northeasterners attended the students' Forrós intrigued me. I asked several Northeasterners, in informal conversation, about this and they told me that a students' Forró was not for them. They had their own Forró houses where they were comfortable, and were content to leave the students' Forró for students themselves. However, despite their reluctance to attend the students' Forrós, Northeasterners often listened to *Forró universitário* recordings, while at the same time remaining dedicated attendants of electronic Forrós and also claiming keyboard Forró as their own. Hence, both soundscapes were part of their subjectivities, and they could choose among them

depending on the circumstances and their desire to fit in to a particular context. This was most evident during the outdoor performance near Largo do Batata, in Pinheiros neighborhood in São Paulo described in the final comments of the preceding chapter; the audience of nearby electronic Forró houses abandoned that more presentational performance, instead preferring to dance to *Forró universitário* that was being played on a stage built on the street. In this case, the stage was on the street, hence public, in the Pinheiros neighborhood, a working-class area. When the class distinction inherent in the private environment of the students' Forró was no longer an issue, Northeasterners felt free to join in dancing and participating in a *Forró universitário*.

One can observe various types of prejudice—with regard to social class, age, and ethnic background—at work together in this phenomenon. Even though Northeasterners are allowed to go to a students' Forró house, they chose not to, because they had internalized class structure values, and they did not want to cause problems or feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. Even though the music at the students' Forró was closely associated with their Northeastern identities, they felt more comfortable (not sorted out) among people of similar socio-economic standing. There is prejudice, too, among the students; they typically would not go to a Northeastern migrant Forró house, for much the same reasons. It is not an environment created for and by members of their social class, the working class contexts are of a different cultural formation, guided by different aesthetics. Perhaps this is why I was singled out at CTN. I had stepped out of my socio-economic place. On the other hand, despite being in my late thirties, I never lacked invitations to dance by younger, as well as older, guys in any of these Forró houses (except at CTN, where participatory dance was not really featured).

Finally, it is worth noting the indices of reggae in evidence at the students' Forró I observed, such as Bob Marley-style knit caps, as well as dreadlocks. This is common at students' Forrós and is tied with the whole "surfwear" fashion preferred by many of the young men. The performers (who were sometimes older, Northeastern men) all wore colorful printed shirts when playing, evoking, for Brazilians, a Caribbean, beach image. This reveals an affinity between the students' Forró environment and reggae, beaches, vacations, and hippies of the 1960s. As noted in earlier chapters, the reggae connection is a musical one, through Forró's frequent stress of the upbeat, as influenced by Gilberto Gil's music of the 1970s. This music appeals to Bob Marley fans, hence the common presence of dreadlocks, and the characteristic caps. The students' Forró is a place for young people to gather, listen and dance to music, make sexual connections, and smoke illegal drugs, similar social environment, in fact, to a beach vacation. This social freedom is also a link with the hippy movement of the 1960s. Therefore, when talking about the middle-class students' Forró, it is apparent that there is a very different collection of signs and meanings at work, and that these are more closely linked with their habits, and youth culture in general, in a cosmopolitan city such as São Paulo. I would suggest Forró itself is just one more element among a broad choice of exotic "others." However, Forró is a particularly powerful sign, because of nationalist sentiment and because of the pervading presence of Northeasterners throughout the city.

UPPER CLASS FORRÓ

A FORRÓ NIGHT AMONG WEALTHY NORTHEASTERNS

Saturday, October 21, 2000. *My informant, Rosângela, invited Maurício (a dark-skinned man who is a percussionist in Mestre Ambrósio's group) to go with us to Restaurante do Andrade (Andrade's Restaurant) in the Pinheiros district. This is an old meeting place for Northeasterners in São Paulo, and is owned by a Northeasterner; however, it is also a tourist place, and hence, expensive. After Rosângela's typical delays and wrong turns, we arrived there around 10:30 PM. On our way to the restaurant we talked about zabumba lessons with Maurício. He would charge about 10.00 USD per student for a one-hour class. Rosângela got excited and wanted to learn how to play zabumba too. When we arrived, we left the car with a valet parking attendant. The restaurant was not fancy outside—on the contrary, it was quite simple. We entered and saw that the place was full. There was no place to sit near the musicians or the dance floor. Then, a gentleman—maybe a manager, or even the owner—told us to come in and that he would get us a table near the musicians as soon as possible. He was very nice and treated us with courtesy. Initially, we sat at a table almost hidden from everything. The space had a irregular shape as if it had branches and suffered many additions throughout the years, divided by columns, many tables, a lot of people: adults, mature people, the majority in their 30s and up. The house had decorations hanging all over the walls. Ornaments that recalled the Northeast, but also Mexican hats (sombros)! The people were well-dressed, fashionably but restrained. Women wore their hair nicely arranged and makeup, earrings and necklaces, rings and bracelets, polished and painted nails. Men wore pants, shirts and leather shoes, no sandals. Before we could ask for drinks, the*

manager/owner came and directed us to another table, a bit nearer the dance space and the musicians.

Considering the size of the place, the space for dancing was quite small. People danced, ate, drank and talked. The menu was quite expensive by Brazilian standards. The traditional caipirinha (pinga with a little sugar, squeezed limes, and ice) was R\$6.00 (about 3.00 USD). The dinner plate that Maurício ordered (carne de sol - sun meat) was R\$35.00 (about 17.50 USD), although the portion was large, and he had leftovers to take home in a box. An important detail: the whole restaurant was very well illuminated, not even the little stage or dance area was dark. There were no special spotlights for the stage or the dance area, and actually the stage was just one step higher than the dance floor.

The group playing used zabumba, triangle, piano accordion and amplified violão (acoustic guitar). The musicians were not young men, they were mature and looked like Northeasterners. I tried to contact them but they could not hear me; when one finally heard me, he told me that the group had no name. They took a break and quickly left the stage. For approximately twenty minutes there was no music, no recorded music at all! Then people talked even more. There were around 250 to 300 people there. After the break the same group came back but with another piano accordion player, dressed almost like Luiz Gonzaga—actually he looks a lot like him too, and he sang mainly Luiz Gonzaga's hits.

While he was singing, Maurício invited me to dance. He was a very good dancer. He danced with Rosângela a little bit, too. The style of dance in the whole house was the same: the Northeastern style, no fancy or choreographed movements, just simple steps

following the male partner or the partner with that role (there were few female-female couples). The most distinctive step was one in which the woman shook her hips very fast as if trembling, which is also part of what I am calling the Northeastern style. Something interesting happened tonight. Rosângela could not dance with the older men. She was invited to dance at least twice by seniors (they were in their 60s) and she couldn't follow them. This fact just made her more nervous than she was. I called this to her attention. I told her that now she knew in practice what I told her about the Northeastern style of dance, which was very different from the "São Paulo students" style.

Actually this night was a little stressful. When we were seated at our second table, Rosângela and Maurício had a long discussion about her idea of writing a Forró dance manual. Given her problem dancing with the older men in this place, the discussion heated up. I just observed the whole thing, I did not talk or give my opinion. I was more interested in observing the audience and taking pictures. Rosângela did not take the discussion kindly. Maurício was asking her about her starting point, her sources, why she thought that she was "qualified" to write such a manual, about her experience, about what she was taking into consideration to write it, etc. I thought his comments were appropriate, coming from a dancer, who is also a musician and composer from the Northeast. But Rosângela took his questions as a threat to her credentials to write such a thing, and then she brought up something nasty. She asked him if he was questioning her "qualificatons" because she was a white girl from the South (Maurício had strong black features). I was astonished, but Maurício handled it. He really confronted her and put her in her place. At the end, the mood at our table was not good. Rosângela was very upset at this point.

The group that was playing took a break. The accordion player, who was an imitator of Luiz Gonzaga began to pass by the tables to sell his CD. He came to our table and I tried to talk to him, telling him that he had a great voice, very similar to Luiz Gonzaga's, and I bought his CD. He was a little shy when I praised his qualities. His name on the CD was Pajeú do Sertão.

When the music was playing, people would all dance and it was difficult to move among so many couples. Many of them seemed to be husband and wife, or engaged couples—some of them were, apparently, with their illicit lovers and would avoid my camera at all costs (I know this because this same thing happened in Recife, and my informant there told me why).

After this I told Rosângela that I was done and when she wanted to leave it was okay with me. She said that she wanted to leave right then. I said “ok” and asked for the bill. On our way to the car Maurício thanked me for the dinner and told me that I was a good dancer (probably to tease Rosângela a bit more). I told him that it was because of my partner. When we got to the car, Maurício asked us to leave him at a friend's party. We could not find the house and Rosângela left him at his home after kisses and hugs. I told her that I could grab a cab if she wanted to stay (I was very confused at this point), but she refused. When she was driving me home she tried to get my opinion about the whole discussion. I told her that we could talk later about that. It was quite late.

In contrast to the other contexts discussed, the participants at this restaurant were wealthy Northeasterners living in São Paulo. Some of these are people who had succeeded through the process of migration and had ascended socially. Others were

probably originally wealthy Northeasterners who had migrated, but it is different to be rich in the Northeast and to be rich in São Paulo. In an economically depressed area, such as the Northeast, less money is required to enjoy a privileged lifestyle. The parameters of classification are different in the different contexts.

Also, this was a restaurant and not a space primarily designed for Forró. Live music and dance seems secondary to the business of dining, although from the interview that I had with the owner, who was a lower class Northeastern migrant when he came to São Paulo, I gathered that music and dance was offered in the restaurant from its beginnings in the 1970s. Dance and live music typically characterize Northeastern restaurants for tourists and upper class Northeasterners.

The atmosphere was much more formal here than in previous contexts. The valet parking and maitre'd were signs of a classy place. The expensive menu was also a very powerful indicator of socio-economic status; if you were there you should be able to pay the bill. Also, the restaurant accepted credit cards (another sign of wealth in Brazil). The fashionable attire, as well as all the jewelry that women and some men wore also displayed socio-economic status. But the fact that the restaurant was full suggests that it is a very popular place among Northeasterners who can afford it.

It was a respectful, familial environment. The average age of the attendants suggests that it is a more serious place, where mature people go to drink, eat, talk and dance. It is a meeting place for successful Northeasterners, even though tourists are frequent attendants too. The decor evoked Northeastern artifacts and Northeastern imagery, but there were no religious symbols. However, the use of Mexican wide-wing hats in the décor had more to do, in my opinion, with the relation between Northeastern

music and dance and country music in Brazil. Brazilian *caipira* country music was not influenced by North American country music (although *sertaneja* was), draws a lot of elements from Mexican mariachis, and also from early 20th century performances of country music duets dressed in a sort of Mexican outfit (Jararaca and Ratinho for instance, as I mentioned in the second chapter). This is why Mexican hats might be seen in a typical Northeastern restaurant. It is already part of their identity in the big city. Northeasterners are close to *caipira* music and the associated lifestyle (because they all come from the hinterland), and through it with Mexicans and Mexican music.

Another contributing factor to the overall “respectability” of the place was the illumination. In contrast to the middle-class Forró and Catumbi’s Forró, the whole place was brightly lit, and there was no special lighting for the band or dance area. There were few singles in the restaurant. There were married and unmarried couples, although they sat together with other couples around large tables. It was a place where many of the “regulars” seemed to know each other well, just as at Arlindo’s Forró. It was a family place and they were close to each other.

This proximity was also apparent in the positioning of the band, which was barely higher than the dance floor. So, as in the middle-class context, the musicians were quite close to the audience, bringing a little bit of informality to the place. Adding to the informality, the simplicity of the restaurant gave it a charming, cozy hospitable environment. And yet, these little touches of informality did not make me comfortable enough to, for example, take off my shoes while dancing. That would not be appropriate behavior in such a place.

The bands playing had Northeastern musicians in a trio format with the addition of an acoustic guitar. They were playing “classic” Forró, such as Luiz Gonzaga’s music. The fact that the second group that came to play was a sort of cover band of Luiz Gonzaga reveals that he remains the most influential reference point for Forró among Northeasterners migrants of the upper classes. But, as I said before, it was a restaurant and the fact that the dance space was small and there was no recorded music played during band breaks shows that music and dance were just a secondary attraction for the restaurant.

The fact that I found among upper class Northeastern migrants the most “traditional” Forró music—to the point of using a Luiz Gonzaga “impersonator”—must be analyzed. I explain this phenomenon through the powerful and lasting success of Luiz Gonzaga, and to his links with the government, rich farmers, and the elite; although he represented the poor’s music he also elevated it to a national popular music form. Gonzaga’s music has been appreciated by the upper classes since the 1940s, through his own performances, recordings, and the musicians related to him, probably because of his national acceptance through the mass media. For example, Carmélia Alves told me that she sang *baião* for the upper classes and for tourists. *Cheiro do Povo Forró* house in Olinda, Northeast, had mainly middle and upper class attendants, and it was conceived as a respectable house where just “foot’s hill” Forró (Gonzaga’s style) would be played. Dominginhos, Gonzaga’s main follower, told me in a formal interview that it is much better to play for the right-wing politicians and rich people (usually aligned with the right-wing parties), because they treat the musicians very well and they pay very well. Dominginhos said that every time that he had to play for the worker’s party or left-wing

related people, they would not be willing to pay him, since he should not charge his fellow workers. Therefore, the Northeastern elite has welcomed musicians associated with Gonzaga's style since he gained national prestige through mass media and hence could be seen as a sign of their regional identity, but without eliciting the negative stereotypes. When this elite migrated to São Paulo, Gonzaga's style of Forró remained a safe way to relate to "home." This helps to explain why the most "sophisticated" and successfully integrated class of Northeastern migrants embraced the most old-fashioned and "traditional" sound. One can also see this as an illustration of the dynamics of class structure as Karl Marx explained it. Towards the peak of the social pyramid, cultural formations tend to be more conservative, fixed and rigid. It is towards the base where the freedom to combine styles, signs, and genres can be more commonly found. In the lower classes, flexibility is a defining feature of cultural formations. That is why "folkloric," "nationalist," "revivalist" movements tend to start among the elite. The upper classes go in search of "emblems," and "models" among the lower classes (often their forebears), bringing them into their cultural milieu, with the necessary adaptations. Elites tend to change at a very slow pace, while cultural identity formation among the lower classes is a more dynamic and malleable process. In 2001, I was able to observe Gonzaga's "traditional" Forró style (from the 1940s) being practiced in São Paulo among the elite of Northeastern migrants, while I found the most hybridized Forró styles at the Center of Northeastern Tradition (CTN), among lower class Northeastern migrants.

The dancing among this upper-class clientele also illustrated this sort of conservatism. The fact that my middle-class student informant could not follow the older guys that invited her to dance was very telling. Her older, upper-class dance partners

were dancing in a more “traditional,” “refined” style, with which she was most unfamiliar. She felt uncomfortable and out of place there (this is probably why she lashed out at our companion in defense of her “qualifications” to write a dance manual). She felt threatened, on unfamiliar turf, and when her knowledge about and experience with Forró was questioned, she raised issues of sexism and racism as a defense mechanism.

This incident shows that class prejudices remain strong in the city, and are often conflated with racism and sexism. It also reveals the differences in experiential knowledge of Forró between middle-class students and Northeastern migrants. The students’ interest in Northeastern Forró is a conscious decision, but tends to remain in the intellectual realm. What they are experiencing through their bodies is not Northeastern Forró, but rather Forró as practiced by Southern middle-class, educated, youth in São Paulo. This experience is not significantly changing the way university students of São Paulo see Northeasterners in general, because they are creating their own version of Forró, despite their intellectual desire to embrace “authentic” Northeastern “tradition.” The popularity of Forró among the middle class may have an effect, but this process is a gradual one, and it is going to take time before Northeasterners are readily accepted by the upper classes in southern cities.

Nevertheless, in some ways, it was still a surprise for me that wealthy Northeasterners would appreciate “traditional” Forró, and practice it in their leisure time in São Paulo. It would seem that Forró is now part and parcel of a Northeastern migrant identity in the southern cities, at all socio-economic levels. The presence of Forró in a “typical” Northeastern restaurant means that Forró is considered a “typical” Northeastern

event. Forró has become an index of Northeastern culture that transcends class distinctions.

FINAL COMMENTS

Throughout this work my main goal has been to show that Forró is a very important survival mechanism for Northeastern migrants in São Paulo. The fact that Luiz Gonzaga was a migrant who succeeded in Rio de Janeiro and became a wealthy man was a stimulus for others to pursue the dream of a better life in a big city. The overwhelming growth of Northeastern populations in southern cities allowed the varied styles and contexts of Forró to co-exist. At this point, Forró means much more than a lower-class dance party of the Northeast. It is no longer associated only with poor people, or even to Northeasterners. Furthermore, greater variety, development, and dynamism exist in the Forró of the urban lower- and middle-classes. It is here that the signs of “tradition” and Northeastern regionality most freely commingle with signs of modernity and cosmopolitanism. Even in the upper class, although generally more attached to the “traditional” form of Forró that gained acceptance in the mainstream media during the 1940s and 50s, there have been attempts to transform it in a way to make it to fit with the elite’s aesthetics. The orchestral versions of Forró are a good example. In this case, in order to legitimize Forró, it was “dressed up” with western orchestral instruments, including violins, in a curious effort to bestow “dignity” on a music that had never lost its dignity.

However, Gonzaga’s success was bound up with his attitude about his Northeastern culture, and the political context of populist nationalism. Gonzaga was

clever enough to discern what was lacking in the music scene of the 1940s, and his “creation” of a genre of dance music, *baião*, that, little by little, brought popularity to other Northeastern genres, such as *xote*, *arrasta-pé* and *xaxado*, was timed perfectly to exploit the burgeoning nationalism of the period. The elite class was looking for emblems of “Brazilian-ness,” and Luiz Gonzaga’s music served their needs admirably, since it had associations with the rural common folk, who were the majority in the country and a rapidly growing market following migration. Gonzaga not only brought Northeastern dance music to the mass media, he also created an image for it, a standard sound (the accordion trio), and a performance style that had a lot to do with his origins. Sixty years later, we find middle-class Brazilian youth living in the southern cities adopting this music as “their roots,” a part of their ethnicity. Forró has indeed turned into a national emblem, but with many variations.

However, this process of forging Forró into a national emblem was a gradual one, carried out largely by migrants. Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro’s successful careers came to be seen as models of successful migration, and migration came to be seen as a means of improving living conditions with good odds for success. However, the realities and difficulties of the typical migrant’s new life in the cities demanded constant adaptation and fostered a flexible, dynamic worldview. The way things worked in the city was very different from what they were used to. They had to recast their thinking every day, in face of very distinct circumstances. They had to be as flexible as the genres that comprise Forró music. They had to be able to easily move from one genre to another, from one lifestyle to another. Added to this challenge, they faced extreme prejudice in their new homes. Forró houses came to be seen as “safe places,” where they could feel

comfortable, be themselves, and meet other migrants who were facing the same situation; and, of course, they could listen and dance to “their” music. This experience in the big city would offer some comfort and security to them as individuals, and bind them together as a community. The confidence gained from this security would keep them going, working hard until they realized their goals. They were politically and economically marginalized most of the time, and with them, their music, too. This marginalization itself provided a link with other marginalized groups, and musics. This is evident in the associations between Forró and country music.

On the other hand, Northeasterners presence in the city was so strong, powerful and long lasting, that urban populations began to co-opt their signs for their own uses. Forró houses became popular entertainment in different parts of the city, at first attracting mainly working-class people but, later, tourists and middle-class students as well. And while this dynamic process continued, the fate and fortune of Forró in the mass media would wax and wane. Despite the vicissitudes of fashion, a small but reliable market ensured the survival of commercial Forró, while at the same time further contributing to its hybridization. The music and culture of the rural Northeast would fall in and out of favor with the mainstream mass media, but it always seems to return, either in the music, film, or on television.

In 2005, there was a drama series on Globo TV network called “*Senhora do Destino*” (The Lady of Destiny), about a Northeastern migrant woman and her children. As with most primetime drama series, it enjoyed immense popularity. The problems faced by migrants, including prejudice, were approached, and in certain ways the media helped to combat the problems by humanizing the migrants in the dramas. Earlier,

through the canonization of Gonzaga as a national celebrity, the media also helped foster acceptance of Northeasterners on the national scene. Nowadays, it is much more common to see mixed-race couples than it was before. The fact that middle-class youth in São Paulo have embraced Forró is also a sign that prejudice may be diminishing.

Hence, little by little, Forró is helping Northeasterners, not only in negotiating and asserting their own identities in the Northeast and in a migrant context, but also in helping to represent them to outsiders and overcome some prejudices. Through Forró music and dance, Northeasterners are penetrating various social strata and changing other people's view of who they are. In the meantime, the meaning of Forró is changing, and multiplying, among the various socio-economic classes in which it is practiced. The coexistence of different kinds of Forró nowadays, each with its own distinctive characteristics, illustrates how fluid the signs and meanings of "tradition" and "modernity" can be, and demonstrates the ability of such signs to transcend class boundaries.

CHAPTER FOUR - THE DANCE

INTRODUCTION

Forró dance involves close contact between two partners, usually a male/female couple. There are two different styles of Forró dancing: one that is practiced mainly in the Northeast and by Northeastern migrants in the southern cities, and a second, newer style that is practiced mainly by university students in São Paulo. In both styles, the couples dance involves a relatively loose embrace, with the male partner's right arm around the female's waist, and her left arm around his shoulder. The free arms are extended, with the hands clasped as in a waltz posture. Couples position their bodies slightly to the side, rather than directly in front, of one another, interlocking their legs, probably to avoid the impropriety of joining the pelvic areas.

Most Forró dances are not "traveling dances," and couples usually move within a relatively small area; there are exceptions, such as *arrasta-pé*. Forró dance centers around three basic steps, although the direction of these steps varies between the Northeastern style and the university students' style. Spins and twirls are more common in the university students' style than in the Northeastern style, but they can be seen in both styles at times. Forró dancing does require attentive listening to the music, in order to perform the correct "swing" movement, which is cued by the zabumba. Both partners need to recognize the timbral variations of the drum and feel its rhythm.

The distance maintained between the couples depends on their level of intimacy. Friends and lovers dance closer together, touching most of their upper bodies and sometimes even touching their thighs together. People who don't know each other well

dance instead with a “respectful” distance between them; they do not touch each other beyond the requisite hand, shoulder, and waist contact. However, depending on their interest in each other and how well the dancing goes, by the end of a musical selection, formerly distant couples can end dancing very close together.

One important characteristic of Forró dancing concerns the grouping of pieces. During a Forró, many songs or instrumental pieces are typically played one after the other, without pause—the musicians segue smoothly between them. Sometimes a single dance “set” can include five or six separate pieces and provide about 15 minutes of non-stop music. Usually, the dance does not end until the conclusion of such a medley, unless one of the partners is feeling uncomfortable or dissatisfied with the other.

Note that there are a lot of variations in the general characteristics of Forró dancing as described above. The same flexibility that characterizes the various musical genres of Forró is also evident in the dance. Thus, there are different styles of dance, depending of where it is being practiced and by whom. This chapter is concerned with these variations—how dance is seen and felt by different practitioners—with an analysis of the relations between music and dance.

NORTHEASTERN DANCE STYLES

During my fieldwork I observed at least two different styles of Forró dancing. I will label one the “Northeast” style, and call the other “arm” style. I observed both of them in practice among various social classes, and in various places. However, as shown in the previous chapter, the former is most closely associated with “traditional” dancing

by Northeasterners or Northeastern migrants in the South, while the latter is more typically associated with younger, middle-class university students in the southern cities.

The Northeast style is the way most older Northeasterners dance to Forró music. It is about dancing with someone, and the emphasis is on the close partnership between the partners, rather than the display of individual dancing skills. For the Northeasterners that I consulted, Forró dancing was so “natural” that it required little conscious thought. One simply had to listen to and follow the music. Children learn how to dance Forró from very early, observing and imitating the adults around them, just like I mentioned when describing Seu Arlindo’s Forró. The men, as the leading partners of the couples, were also concerned about guiding their partners in their movements. The steps revolved around a central starting point, moving back and forth and to the sides, but always returning to this starting position. Both partners danced with flat feet, rather than on the balls of the feet or on the toes, and dancers typically sort of drag their feet while dancing, so that they do not lift from the ground much.

When dancing *xote* in the Northeastern style, the steps tend to be to the sides, and there is a swing of the leg on the second half of the second beat. The legs are apart on the second beat, with body weight on one of them. The free leg, which will support the weight on the next beat (beat one) makes a sort of dragging movement of the foot, towards the other leg, but suddenly, just before joining the another leg, it reverses direction, while the dancers shift their weight to this foot on the downbeat.

As the name suggests, in the Northeastern style of *arrasta-pé* (dragging the foot, also known as the June march), the partners “march” together, dragging their feet and stepping on each beat. It is a traveling dance that can cover the whole dance floor and

requires little exertion. Thus, it is good for resting the body and catching one's breath between other, more demanding Forró genres.

Baião and *forró* genres are danced with the same steps, the difference between them is in the speed of the movements—*baião* music tends to be slower than *forró*. The couples stick to the three basic steps and can go back and forth or to the sides. Twirls can be inserted, but they are brief (rotating just 180 or 360 degrees) and couples spin while embraced, following the speed of the music.

I observed personal variations to these basic steps. Some couples shook their whole bodies in a very fast and subtle way while doing the steps; others swung their lower waists a lot. Still others embraced each other very tightly and raised their extended, joined hands very high or very low in the air. Others danced the basic steps in a more straightforward way, but developed a very swinging style in which they moved their hips, legs and upper bodies together. The basic aesthetic, though, was consistent. There was a concern for the music and for one's partner more than for one's own virtuosity. As a woman, I sensed a somewhat formal attitude of respect, concern, and protection while dancing in the Northeast style, but not in a condescendingly "macho," or sexist way. I did not feel as if my partners were trying to control me, or take advantage of me, or act with any sort of impropriety. I experienced it as a sharing occasion, where the partners moved in harmony. As a woman, when I accept a Forró dance invitation I allow my male partner to lead, and agreed to follow him unreservedly. This customary pact is not made explicit in words; instead, it is made implicitly, through the music and body movements. This innocuous surrendering of the will to classic gender roles is an uncommon situation in our daily lives in the 21st century, or at least in mine. I do not follow a man because he is

a man, or because someone told me to do so. I am sure that most middle class women in Brazil today would agree, even the older ones.

THE “ARM” STYLE

The other main style of Forró dancing is the “arm” style. It is practiced mainly by younger people, in their twenties, and it originated in school parties in São Paulo, during the 1990s. The lambada fad of the 1980s was over, and there were no couples dances currently in vogue. In contrast to the Northeastern style, this style is taught in organized Forró dance classes. Of course, some people learn just by watching, but many others took classes. Classes were often held at the Forró houses, such as *Remelexo*. The house would open for dancing at 11:00 PM, but people could show up earlier and take a Forró class at 9:00 PM.

The “arm” style of dancing had three basic steps, moving back–center-forward; there is no side-to-side stepping, and these basic steps are danced for all of the Forró genres without differentiation. After teaching the basic step, classes move on to teach the spins and the characteristic arm movements, somewhat akin to North-American two-step dancing, but also incorporating moves from the lambada and salsa, and from Argentinean tango. The girls usually wear some sort of soft-soled ballet-style slippers, and stay mostly on the toes when dancing the “arm” style of Forró (perhaps explaining one Northeasterner’s comment that it looks more like ballet than Forró).

The most widely played and danced Forró genre among university students was the *xote*, followed by the *forró* and *baião*. *Arrasta-pé* was rare in this context. Most of the time, partners danced very close to one another, and if they were romantic partners off

the dance floor (or potentially so), they danced even closer. It seemed to me that the close physical contact was more important among the student dancers. As in the Northeastern style, the male partner had a leading role, although in both contexts I saw a few women that could lead, and occasionally danced with other women. The formal, respectful atmosphere that characterized my experiences with the Northeastern style was not apparent in arm style dancing. Even when dancing with a total stranger, there was an informality and at times somewhat presumptuous closeness.

In addition to the pre-dance instruction sessions, the arm style was actually popularized and disseminated through television programs advertising new Forró groups that began appearing by the end of 1990s. A part of what the media labeled *Forró universitário* (university students's Forró), groups such as *Falamansa*, *Bicho de Pé*, *Forróçacana*, and *Rastapé* appeared on numerous TV programs, with the support of their record companies, as part of their marketing campaigns. These televised performances were pure advertising—the bands did not sing nor play, instead lip-syncing to recorded back-up tracks. Usually, two or three couples danced around them in the arm style. This undoubtedly contributed to the fact that arm style Forró dancing places more emphasis on showing off, displaying one's dance skills, and drawing attention to oneself. It is as much to be seen as it is to be danced, and actually some people were hesitant to try it, fearing it was too difficult.

A third type of Forró dancing was the choreographed stage dancing that often accompanied electronic Forró coming from the Ceará state in the Northeast. These “hi-tech” groups included professional dancers on stage dancing precisely choreographed steps (showing the influence of Michael Jackson, Madonna, Britney Spears and other

contemporary music video idols). The choreography performed by the stage dancers in electronic Forró was rehearsed and taught by professionals. It is part of the stage show, to be watched, not danced, by the audience. When I went to a place where electronic Forró music was played, either in live performance or on recordings, many attendants would just watch, while those who did dance to it would dance in the Northeast style.

The choreographies performed on stage had a lot to do with disco performances of the 1980s, and for sure, Michael Jackson's and Madona's video-clips were a big influence for those choreographies since they were shown on TV all over the country. Among the lower and middle-classes, most of Brazilian youth were trying to imitate their dance, clothes, and visual styles. I remember going to parties and rehearsing the movements and steps seen in their videos so that we might dance as a group. This precision of their gestures made these choreographies closer to "classic" ballet, as one of my informants mentions in the last chapter. Therefore, this type of dancing was seen as a sign of modernity, refinement: the mechanization of the dance through its systematization, the control of sensuality through machine-like gestures. Probably the use of these choreographic movements on stage in the electronic Forró was an attempt to bring modernity to Forró dance, altering the stereotypes of femininity/masculinity: instead of men leading women, women following men, now they dance as an equalitarian group displaying their individual sexualities. This involves a change in gender codes and class-consciousness emulating upper classes' values of gender and class.

A FORRÓ DANCE CLASS IN THE “ARM” STYLE

For university students new to the scene, Forró dance classes were necessary in order to enjoy a Forró, because there is no Forró without dancing. I went to *Forró universitário* dance classes, with Evandro Rodrigues, to learn the arm style. I later interviewed Rodrigues; he was the son of Northeastern migrants, but raised in São Paulo, and was a dance student.

The class was held in a bar called Enfarta Madalena, at Vila Madalena in São Paulo, a quirky, hip little neighborhood in São Paulo, close to the Pinheiros district. There were about ten couples, mostly in their twenties, some in their thirties, and one woman in her forties. The class, which lasted one hour, began with lessons on the basic posture and the three basic steps, with no music. There were tips on how to begin the dance, embrace, and hold hands. The classes drew my attention to the relative formality of beginning the dance, which I had not perceived previously; this convention does not exist in the Northeast style. The couples faced each other in a stopped position, listening to the music. They then embrace and, in time with the music, they split apart, letting go of their hands, but still clasping each other at waist and shoulder. They quickly return to the starting position, holding hands again, and begin the basic steps. During the class, Rodrigues and his female partner taught us about the spins, the arm movements (which was the most difficult part), signaling new steps or changes of direction to your partner, the posture of the head and the upper body, etc. Rodrigues's partner was wearing the soft-soled Chinese slippers and dancing on her toes. After fifteen minutes of explanations, questions and answers, recorded music was played and the rest of the class was spent practicing to music by Luiz Gonzaga, Jackson do Pandeiro, Trio Nordestino and other

“classics” of Forró music. It is interesting to note that, despite the ballroom style rigor and intricacies of arm style dancing, in *Forró universitário* the various Forró genres (mainly *xote* and *farró*) were danced with exactly the same steps, which was not the case in the Northeast style.

A basic difference between the Northeast style of dance and the arm style has to do with influences. The Northeast style was developed in rural areas, related to the June festivals for popular patron saints, and was practiced by working-class people. The arm style was developed in an urban context, among university students, who could afford dance lessons and had been exposed to other dance styles, such as salsa, tango and two-step.

RULES OF BEHAVIOR ON THE FORRÓ UNIVERSITÁRIO DANCE FLOOR

On one of websites, www.forrozeiros.com.br, I found a *Manual do Bom Comportamento nos Forrós* (Manual of Good Comportment [or Proper Behavior] at Forró), by Ivan Dias, written in a very informal and ironic manner. The manual is a sort of “list of rules to live by” when you are in a university Forró house, emphasizing social skills, and teaching the students the most basic social behavior when in a couple dance situation. A couple of the 20 “rules” are worth quoting, not only to highlight the students’ presumed lack of familiarity with a Forró situation, but also to glimpse their moral and ethical principles:

- If you don’t know how to dance it is ok, no one was born knowing, but be humble, dance at the corners and don’t get in the way of others.

- Do not drink or smoke on the dance floor, you can burn someone and spill liquid on the floor making it unsuitable for dancing.
- Avoid talking while dancing
- Avoid bumping into other couples (which is the male's job, as leader) and stepping on other people's feet.
- Girls should avoid high heels and lipstick, unless they want to "brand" the guy (through kissing and leaving a lipstick mark); if this is the goal, the neck is the easiest place to reach.

There are also recommendations about the best clothes and shoes to wear (comfortable and fresh ones), the alcoholic beverages to drink (along with warnings about their next day effects and about how inconvenient a drunken dancer can be for others). The last requirement in the manual is an admonition to pass along the information to ten other people, in this way: recommend Forró dancing to five girls and tell five guys to skip it altogether (in order to keep the proportion of women to men optimal) because "a cat without nails don't fight, a Forró without women is no good." The manual is obviously written by a male, but I can see certain class values at work, such as if you don't know what you're doing, stay out of the way, do not trespass across boundaries. Also, the social network that supports Forró is made explicit—pass the word, it is through word-of-mouth that Forró is made popular (although trying to manipulate the male-female proportion is good, too). Dias makes explicit that Forró is a place to dance, not to party, and it is dancing for the sake of the dance, as a physical workout, and an intellectual-artistic challenge, not so much a leisurely pastime. Dias also gives some specific tips about dance movements: do not shake your butt too much as you did in your

“lambada” days. “Butt movement in Forró dancing is more subtle.” “Don’t try any weird movements with your arms, you might hurt someone.” He also had warnings such as “Do not think of your partner (the girl) as a doll; she is the “fragile sex,” you can break her, “although a bad vase does not break easily.” Dias also says that you can dance better if you listen attentively, but do not go out to the dance floor alone and stand there listening—Forró is a couples dance and the best way to improve is by practicing. And finally, he delineates a few moral principles: A woman can invite a guy to dance, and this does not mean that she is hitting on him. Likewise, she can dance with a lot of guys during the night and it does not mean that she is promiscuous—she is just improving her dance skills. According to Dias, there is no monogamy on the Forró dance floor. As for the men, Dias says that they should not insist that a girl is a fool if she does not want to dance with them. But, depending on how interested you are in her, you should ask her to dance again later, just to make sure.

This manual offers a very explicit discourse about the values that university students associate with Forró. The focus is on social skills, its consideration for (or at least awareness of) other people. Throughout the manual there is an emphasis on respecting others; the whole context will work better if participants respect the space, the music, the dance partner, other couples, and so on. Of course, not everybody follows these rules, but their articulation implies a certain concern with them. On the other hand, it presents a very male perspective of the whole context. Girls can ruin a Forró night just by refusing to dance, which according to Forró attendants, in the Northeast and in São Paulo, is unforgivable behavior. If you go to a Forró, you go to dance, and dance only happens with the consent of the woman. Therefore, it is not as male-dominated as Dias

describes it, because women ultimately decide with whom they will dance; although, if she is there, she should pretty much dance with everybody that invites her. This is a rule valid for all Forró situations that I observed.

ABOUT MUSIC AND DANCE – WHAT ARE THEY ABOUT? (university dance scene)

I barely knew this guy. He was young, a little bit taller than me. He did not catch my attention particularly, he wasn't "my type." Although shy and sort of embarrassed, he wanted me to teach him how to dance Forró. Trio Virgulino was playing a xote. I told him what he should do from a male position, demonstrating, at the same time, what I, as his female partner, would do, since we accompanied each other. I taught him the basic steps from a distance, dancing by myself, with my left arm on my belly and my right arm half raised and bent: "See, you step back on your right foot, return to the starting position, then step forward with your left foot and back to starting position. While you do the steps with one leg, you swing a little bit with the other leg, making a subtle step in place, in order to give impulse to the return." He watched me for few seconds, and I thought that he had not had time to understand it, but I was wrong.

He came to me and, with a little hesitancy, he held me by my waist. I could feel that his hand was very confident on my back. At first, he did not pull me towards him—he was just in parallel with my body. He held my raised hand tenderly, not too hard, not too softly, and already in just the right way, without intertwining fingers. I felt good about his willingness to learn, and at the same time secure, as if he already knew what he was doing. We began dancing together, and I thought him so flexible, so easy to dance with,

that before I knew it he had the steps down, and the swing subtleties. He even got the slight hip movement. We danced like this for a while and, when he seemed comfortable, I moved my left arm, which was resting over his right shoulder, in order to draw closer and follow him better. With this cue, he also pulled me towards him, and then we were at the right distance, i.e., touching each other's body. I noticed how he was not afraid to have his pelvis next to mine, which was to be the case with other partners. As we touched there, I could feel that he was not hard. He was not making a pass at me or trying to grind against me inappropriately or anything. His actions just seemed natural.

At that point I felt a thrill, I could feel the heat of his body, and I began to feel warm myself. The touch of his hands on my body felt even better, comfortable, as if he was carrying me. He was not wearing any kind of cologne or aftershave, but his natural smell was pleasant and warm. Sometimes, I could feel his ear lobes slightly rubbing mine, and that reminded me of a Forró song that talks about "ear kisses." His breath on my neck was warm too, and gave me goosebumps. The sight of his neck, and the movement of his hair—its color and sheen were hypnotic. I felt as if I was diving inside his body, merging, melting . . . I spaced out.

When I came back to myself, the song had finished and we were still embraced, but we had stopped dancing. We slowly split apart and looked at each other, and I could see, in his eyes, that he felt the same. It was unforgettable. I still can feel it.

—as reported by a middle-class university student female informant,

March, 2001.

Forró dance is about the senses. Even a learning/teaching experience such as the one described above is about feeling, touching, and reaching a relaxed mood where the

senses heightened. Although this description can be read merely as a sexually charged situation, it is not. In many western societies anything related with senses is immediately connected with sex, but this is just one way of interpreting it. A situation such as this is likely to be seen as explicitly sexual by a majority of westerners, and Brazil's sexualized world image—with the prominently publicized carnival season, where naked women and men parade on streets—would certainly contribute to this stereotypical interpretation. However, this would be an oversimplification of my informant's report. There is a common experience of sensuality between a sexual liaison and a dance such as described, but the dancing did not involve the sexual organs directly. (The only reference my informant made to her partner's sex organ was to note that she could not feel it as their pelvises touched, indicating that he was not sexually aroused to the point of erection). By articulating this explicitly, she also suggests that sometimes this is not the case and hence, Forró dance can also be interpreted as overtly sexual.

I will focus on the sensual aspect dancing here, because I think that this has more things to tell us about dance itself, and the relations between the dancers, the music, and their bodies. I will dissect the report of my informant to better understand the dynamic of the event, to scrutinize its component portions. My goals are to explain what happened to my informant and how I should I interpret it—what it has to say about music, dance, and people.

Our dancer's experience can be divided into four stages: 1) teaching and learning the steps; 2) dancing together; 3) attaining a euphoric, trance-like state; d) the return to conscious awareness, mutual acknowledgement of the experience, and end. These stages, in turn, can be grouped in phases of consciousness: the first two phases are conscious and

self-aware; the third is a sub- (or perhaps super-) conscious state; the final stage returns to consciousness, this time with a sort of shared self-awareness between the participants. The dictionary definition of “consciousness,” is the “state or condition of being conscious” or “capable of thought, will, or perception. Having an awareness of one’s environment and one’s own existence, sensations, and thoughts, [the word] emphasizes the recognition of something sensed or felt.”

When my informant reports that she “spaced out,” I assume that her sensory perception was somewhat altered (not entirely shut off, as in a catatonic state) and hence she was not conscious (according to dictionary’s definition), although still awake, listening and dancing to the music.

The first stage establishes context that gives rise to this sub/super-conscious experience. The informant was specific in asserting that she did not know her dance partner, nor did she find him particularly sexually attractive. She noted how shy and awkward he was at first. She clearly recalls what group, genre and style were playing at the time. She also draws attention to how quickly he was able learn the basic dance steps. I thought, at first, that perhaps he already knew how to dance Forró, and was only asking for her instruction in order to get close to her. I asked her about this, and she told me that she was sure that he did not know how to dance, because at the beginning he was very flexible and just went along with her. His confidence came later, when she embraced him closer. In the second stage (still conscious), when they were dancing together, she provides detailed sensory information about senses. Their bodies were touching, specifically through their hands and ear lobes; the temperature was warm and pleasant, as well as bodily smells and breath. Sight stimulated through visual aspects and repetitive

movement (which she described as “hypnotic”). An awareness of the music, and dancing in time with it, is directly implied, when she embraces him closer because they were dancing “well,” and she wanted to “follow him better.” However, details of the music and the dance movements were no longer mentioned explicitly, as in her description of the first stage, because it became “natural” for the couple (I would add “automatic,” since the steps follow a repetitive pattern). The music ending heralded the end of the sub/super-conscious stage and the return to conscious self-awareness in the last stage.

In the first two stages, she was receiving all of the information through her senses and processing it through her analytic mind, and so she was obviously “conscious.” During the third stage, however, data is scarce. Words were insufficient to express what she felt. She can only describe the sensation in vague simile (“as if I was melting, merging,” etc.), finally just giving up and claiming to have “spaced out.” More information about this stage is given in the following, conscious stage. When she says “I came back to myself,” she suggests that during the preceding stage she was not herself, or that she could not remember being herself, and thus, according to dictionary definition, she was not fully “conscious.”

My informant was changed by the experience of this unconscious state. It also changed her knowledge about her partner, she felt closer to him in many ways. She likewise changed her experiential knowledge of music and dance as a consequence of her new sensory (and extra-sensory) perceptions. Thus it would seem that dancing could potentially change one’s knowledge about both dance and music, and also about oneself and one’s partner. But this is true to all sensory phenomena and experience—they provide information to our brains through specific signs. Some of this information is

useful to the analytic mind, and can be articulated (as in her report to me), while some of information remains apart from the analytic mind, perhaps lingering as a sensory memory, or an intuitive knowledge.

The role of the body in this report is also notable. When my informant “spaces out,” during the sub/super-conscious stage, there is no report of sensory impression, thoughts, self-awareness, or analytic knowledge. And yet, the dancing continued and, since they were dancing in time to music, so too did the perception of rhythm. The tactile sensation of heat is another role of the body in heightening the perceptions of this experience. She talks about his heat, how warm his breath was. She describes his smell as “warm.” Other words related to temperature used on her description include rubbing and melting. Rubbing produces heat and melting is a result of heat. Heat is a sign of life in warm-blooded mammals, and coldness a sign of death. Bodies dancing and moving produce heat and raise the temperature of an enclosed room. Our bodies react to heat, whatever the source. We have fevers, we sweat, our sexual organs provide special protection (lubrication for example.) from the heat generated by friction, we use heat (as well as cold) to treat injuries and illnesses. On a very primal level, warmth represents life and health and comfort for us all. In my view, this explains why my informant thinks of “warm” as being “pleasant.” It also explains how bodily movement—dance, in this case, can be a sensual, transformative, and life-affirming experience, quite apart from sexual connotations.

Another aspect of my informant’s report is emotional. The overall experience was a pleasant one, and it branded her senses; she can still “feel it,” hence, she can recall it through her sensory memory. The emotion my informant reports is an overwhelmingly

positive one. Music and dance are widely recognized for their affective qualities and ability “speak to our emotions” (Sparshott, Blacking). Although this assertion comes from a diachronic view of the person (mind/body, soul/body, reason/emotion, verbal/non-verbal communication, etc.), it is true that music and dance cannot be thoroughly explained in words. There is an intuitive, experiential knowledge for which we simply lack an adequate vocabulary to explain, and this knowledge comes to us through other channels of communication, which are not yet completely understood. This is where music and dance can have a very powerful role in people’s life: it allows us to perceive and process other types of experience and knowledge.

The “unforgettability” of my informant’s experience is important. Her brain, and body, can recall through memory the sensations that she experienced: “I still can feel it.” A communication process took place, seemingly on an unconscious level. However, she was not catatonic; she continued listening and dancing to the music being played. Despite her detailed report, it remains impossible to know if and when my informant was conscious or unconscious, or to define the qualities of these various states; whether or not she was listening, and whether hearing with the ears and mind or with the body; how she continued dancing while in this spaced out state; whether and how her brain was working and so on and so forth—all these questions as yet remain unanswerable. Thus, I am calling my informant’s experience “Ana’s Paradox,”¹ and I remained concerned with exploring the phenomenon, in order to advance our knowledge of music and dance, and their effects on people.

¹ I wish to thank Robson Camargo for this terminology; it was his suggestion to call it this. The name Ana was chosen because it is a common female name that can be read in any way.

A NEUROLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In an attempt to explain Ana's Paradox, I read through a lot of work in the areas of dance and music literature, physiognomy, and ethnomusicology, but I was not satisfied. I found similar descriptions of the phenomenon in the work of Paul Nettl (1947) "the movements of the dance alone had the power to produce a state of ecstasy in the performer, to make him single-minded, or even absolutely unconscious of reality" (p. 8). This is a recurrent observation in dance scholarship, but one not clearly comprehended. Gertrude Kurath (1979) calls this state of ecstasy "the effect" of recorded or live performances (she was working from a very broad perspective of artistic experiences in general) and said that poetry and dance could enhance the outcome of these experiences. During the 1960s and 1970s, explanation for this 'ecstatic' experience was sought through communication sciences and communication systems. Alan Lomax, Alan Merriam and Charles Seeger were following this tack, considering the information gathered by senses.

Anya Royce published the *Anthropology of Dance* in 1977, a landmark in the literature about dance, where she drew attention to "kinesthetic" as well as "senses" or "percepts" involved in dancing. The kinesthetic aspect could affect not only the dancer but also the audience, and then the communication process could take place. John Blacking (1995) was more focused on the body as a mediator of arts, and Judith Hanna (1988, 1992) brings together dance, social contexts, sexuality and gender. She calls Nettl's "ecstasy" an "altered state of consciousness." Hanna considered common points between dance and music, mainly temporality and the ability of both to alter time, thus leading to altered states of consciousness. Embracing Hanna's ideas and extending them,

Jane Cowan (1990) conceived of dance as an event where the interaction of space, time, and senses takes place in a celebratory context. According to her, these are “occasions of conviviality, pleasures and release” (p. 5).

Despite all this research, I am not satisfied that we can fully understand Ana’s Paradox. The theories seem too intellectual, and too distant from the actual phenomenon. I see clues that might point to a more comprehensive understanding, and I am inclined to go further with Blacking in the investigation of the body, where the senses are sheltered, and from there to understand other components such as time, space, social context, and more. This is where neurology comes in to play but also the concept of signs from Charles Sanders Peirce’s theories.

Looking for answers to Ana’s Paradox, I was drawn to a book that had caught my attention in a bookstore: *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (2000) by Antonio Damasio. Reading this led me to others by the same author: *O Erro de Descartes*, 1996, and *Em Busca de Spinoza*, 2004. Damasio calls consciousness a relationship between organism and object; whatever this relationship comes to be it is about the object—it is not the object itself. The organism is our body, and the object is anything that enters our awareness through our perceptive devices (no matter concrete or abstract, actual or remembered). Therefore, for Damasio, there is no brain, nor mind without an organism—a body, and his research on patients with neurological diseases bolsters this premise. This is important to emphasize, because there is some resistance to this idea. Some people tend to separate body and brain (as well as emotion and reason), as if it is possible to know without a body. From my point of view, this constructed dichotomy has more to do with socially and religiously patterned

behavior, and prejudices as well. However, in the investigation of dance and music, this integral relationship between a body, which shelters a brain and a mind is welcome and logical. When Hanna describes “altered states of consciousness” she is following this dichotomy between body and brain; however, that state of consciousness is only attained through bodily experience, and I suggest calling it “altered states of the body,” considering that consciousness is itself sheltered in a holistic body.

Damasio also discusses the processing of objects in the brain. For him, thought is a flow of images, which are processed through neural patterns or maps. Images are mental patterns in any of the sensory modalities (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and somatosensory, which includes many sense forms: touch, muscular, temperature, pain, visceral, and vestibular). Therefore, all the information that our body takes in is transformed into mental patterns that he calls images (Damasio 2000, p. 317-18). As soon as our body receives information through the senses, it is being modified by this very act. Therefore, music and dance, as objects being sensed by our bodies, create new mental patterns and change the previous state of that body so that a new state is reached. This is called homeostasis, “the coordinated and largely automated physiological reactions required to maintain steady internal states in a living organism” (Damasio 2000, p.39). Damasio believes that homeostasis is key for understanding consciousness, and I think that it plays a big role in understanding Ana’s Paradox.

In thinking further about homeostasis, music and dance, I came to the concept of time. Time is a common denominator between these two stimuli (Hanna, Cowan). When we dance to music the first priority is to synchronize our body movements to musical movement (rhythm, speed, phrasing, dynamics, groove, etc.). Repetition of musical and

bodily movements helps in the synchronization process, since it allows a sort of extension of time for learning and acclimation. Space is already synchronized because we are where the music is being played. We are about to dance, music is filling the space with waves of energy, and we are about to add more energy through our bodily movements in that same space. Note that, although we cannot see them, sound waves excite us through all the surface of our skin, and provide another stimulus for our body. Therefore, in the final analysis, dance is about attaining a homeostatic state with music, balanced between inner states and environment, which is already filled with sound waves (in the case of Forró dance houses, there is also the energy from other couples dancing). Considering that music creates its own dimension of time (beats are its measure), which is out of our quotidian time line, the action of dancing to it tends to enter into that time dimension, since our primary goal is to synchronize our movements to the music. I could hypothesize that this synchronization does not happen only on a consciously controlled level; because of homeostasis, our reflexive body movements (blood flow, heart beats, cellular processes, organ functioning, etc.) are also trying to synchronize with these stimuli. The fluids in our bodies also vibrate in sympathy with sound waves. Seventy percent of the body is made of water, and sound waves travel through water quickly and easily. Our brain is immersed in water like fluid. These stimuli alter brain waves: repetitive movements contribute to this alteration and it seems to be the gateway. Therefore, music affects our entire body very quickly, and a balance is needed. If this state of balance is reached (which does not happen always when we dance), we have a completely new experience—our entire body has been altered, and consequently we have altered our biological time too. We reach a new dimension of time and space (space is altered by

time). Since this equilibrium is completely new and unknown to our quotidian selves, we reason that we “spaced out,” but I think that we experience another possibility of self, another type of body (the stimuli are felt in different ways), another form of consciousness. Therefore, during the third stage of Ana’s Paradox, she is not unconscious, she is conscious, but in a type of consciousness that she is not used to it, it is not part of her quotidian experience. The proof of this is that, after music was over, the dancing stopped and the experience ended. Her brain was interpreting music and dance stimuli in a different way, because it was working “under the influence” of the changes that it had to make in order to reach homeostasis. I venture to say that if more research is done in the neurological analysis of such experiences, more details of this organic process will be observed and, maybe, Ana’s Paradox will not seem so alien to our analytical minds. There are, it seems, people who are more aware of this phenomenon, and have attained some sort of control over it and take advantage this control in their own survival.

As if all this was not enough, a semantic pitfall in the English words “consciousness” and “conscience” also comes into play. These two words in English caught my attention because they are merged into one in Portuguese. “Conscience,” according to the dictionary, is “the awareness of a moral or ethical aspect of one’s conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong. A source of moral or ethical judgment or pronouncement.” Considering what happens in Ana’s Paradox, this phenomenon, which attains a homeostatic equilibrium, is completely new territory—a foreign land; there is no conscience at work, because it pertains to the quotidian, social and cultural life. That’s why she says she “spaced out,” hence, she was free of everyday rules, which is a relief. In the aftermath, the feeling of pleasure and of self arise. That is

why the experience is unforgettable, it is in complete contrast with quotidian life. The experience was sensed by the whole body, but it was interpreted in a completely different manner because the body was altered by music and dance, and free of ethics and morality.

Returning to Damasio, we read that consciousness is created by the relationship between an organism and an object, it is the content of the knowledge of that relationship. In the act of knowing, the brain also engenders a sense of self-awareness; consciousness brings together the object and the self in a unified mental pattern. “The presence of you is the feeling of what happens when your being is modified by the acts of apprehending something” (Damasio 2000, p. 8-11). However, when in the process of knowing, your whole mechanism of processing the information is altered, your sense of self is altered “you are the music [and dance] while [they last]” (T. S. Elliot quoted by Damasio). This process of knowledge is very powerful because it is different from anything you have tried before. You get information that you otherwise wouldn’t. It is a form of communication wherein music and dance feed each other; it is a complementary schismogenesis,² to use Bateson’s words.

Thinking along these lines, this phenomenon can be put in a relative perspective, which provides for a variety of responses to it. Considering that people have different ways of perceiving and receiving inputs from their senses; there are different levels of perception developed in different ways in each person; there are different occasions and

² “Classes of regenerative or vicious circles...such that A’s acts [are] stimuli for B’s acts, which in turn [become] stimuli for more intense action on the part of A, and so on.” Complementary schismogenesis: “where the mutually promoting actions are essentially dissimilar but mutually appropriate...In the complementary mode the progressive differentiation involves a mutually escalating reactivity whose continuance leads to a closer symbiotic interdependence of the parties” (Bateson in Keil and Feld 1994, p. 265).

manners wherein music and dance can be appreciated. The contexts change, each person's humor and dispositions change; but, all humans with a body where senses and brain work together are able to have the experience reported in Ana's Paradox, and all of us have different ways of dealing with it. From my perspective, this explanation of Ana's Paradox also explains what happens in a participatory event (the communion of people playing, dancing, and watching) as well as a solitary listening in your home, or the supposed passivity and quietness during a concert, where you are "just" sitting and listening and watching. Your senses are being bombarded in all of these circumstances; there are waves of energy exciting your entire skin surface and getting inside you. Your body is working hard, and you are refining your capacity for feeling and reasoning through the information you are getting.

A LITTLE BIT OF PHILOSOPHY

Discussing music, dance, and their effects on people is not an easy task. Thus far, many fields of knowledge were called upon to help in this job. Some consideration of philosophy will be helpful in providing a foundation for my findings. Antonio Damasio cited Spinoza in his research, a rationalist thinker of the 17th century. One of Spinoza's main contributions to philosophy is the idea of a unity between mind and body, or soul and body, instead of a duality promulgated by Cartesianism.

Marilena Chauí (1995) lectured on Spinoza's contributions to human thought and understanding. The main ideas that she summarized from his five books of Ethics have to do with a different understanding of body and soul, where both have a very dependent relation with the other, and with other bodies. According to Spinoza, a body is a

structured unity in dynamic motion, not a stable collection of organs and parts. “It is defined not only by its internal balance relations but also by harmonic relations with other bodies, being fed, revitalized by them and doing the same with them” (p. 123). The “soul” of that body is only its thinking faculty, it is not a distinct “substance,” as Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes thought. Body and “soul” are isonomic; in fact they are different manifestations or expressions of the same thing. As we have organs to breathe, others to digest and so on, we also have a part of the body that is committed to thinking. That is all that a “soul” is supposed to do, think, while the entire body perceives. To think is to know something through imagination, desire and reflection. To think is to be conscious of something, and this is done through the body. Therefore, the soul is internally connected to its body, because it is through it [the body] that it [the soul] “exists” (I exist, then I think – Damasio 1996).

The body, for its part, has to perceive; it exists to be affected by itself and other bodies. Hence, the body is the actual object of the “soul” and this is how they are internally connected. The ideas that the “soul” has are given by the affections felt by the body. Nevertheless these affections create images in the living body, flashes of that particular body’s life experience. Images, for Spinoza, are mediators between the external world and thinking, hence thinking is based on volatile images, not on concrete, “out in the world” things (note that the word “image” here has a distinct meaning in contrast to contemporary usage). This leads us to the inadequacy of thoughts and ideas, because they are based on particular impressions, not on objects in and of themselves. Images are abstract, prints of our body’s perceptions, records of dynamic relations that are filed in our bodies in some way. These files, and we do not need to be aware of them, can be

responsible for what we call “intuition,” but in reality these “intuitions” are links made in different levels of consciousness among those files. Given their mnemonic ability, images can call and recall things that are not actually happening; hence, they can create their own time. Therefore, what the body perceives as time is not necessarily so. Spinoza himself asks, how can a “soul” really know? His answer takes us to bio-mechanisms for the conservation of life, which include affection, feelings, and emotions. Conservation of life is a positive, affirmative power and it needs support and reinforcement from body experiences to accomplish its goal. Positive feelings and emotions fit like a glove in this objective—they charge the body’s life energy positively, they increase life rate. Therefore, we, as humans with bodies, which have survival as our primary goal, instinctively look for experiences that can enhance our chances of survival. That is where music and dance come in (and, I believe, other art forms as well), because music and dance are powerful stimuli that tend to be positive inputs. They reach us through multiple channels at the same time, which explains their strong affective power. However, although having strong affective power, music and dance are not always positive inputs. We do not “get better” every time we make or listen to music, and/or dance. This final result depends on many variables, such as our current bodily living state (physical, psychic), but the tendency of its affects is to be positive, and it tends to have a positive impact on some level (since it is on many levels at the same time). How do I know that music and dance have positive impact? Because ethnomusicology demonstrates that humans tend to make and listen to music, and dance, no matter where, when, or how they live. There are exceptions, but people who experience music and dance outnumber those who do not by a vast margin. Therefore, it can be assumed that, in this case, the majority

is right; music and dance are viable survival mechanisms, because they have a positive impact on human bodies.

According to Spinoza, it is through the empowerment of affections that we can attain deeper knowledge. It is when the thought ideas differ from the body images, because affections change the body, they change how it works in order to better survive. These body changes for better survival are interpreted by the “soul” as emotions. If our thought processes can be linked with these emotions as the body is linked, through body memory, to its perceptions, “there is no affection in the body for which we cannot form a clear and distinct concept” (Spinoza V, P4 in Chau, p. 124, my translation). Since music and dance have a direct impact on emotions, humans seek out the experience of them, because they can enhance their chances of survival, and because they can gain more accurate knowledge of their body, other people’s bodies, and Nature through their experience of music and dance.

Therefore, Ana’s Paradox is solved. My informant was conscious and thinking in a way that she was not used to. She was in the Forró groove, flowing into repetition and synchronized to the music, dance, and to her partner. She was making new connections with the emotions raised during the experience of dancing to music. These emotions altered her perception of time, because her body was in a process of reaching homeostasis with all the inputs it was receiving (dance movements, music, waves, sight, smells, touching), hence operating in an altered state, which then altered her biological time. Her body was synchronizing with the time created by the music as it reached her body fluids. Therefore, her sense of self was altered but not vanished. She was absorbed by the feeling of what was happening—she was the music and the dance. The emotions that arose

during the experience (especially during the third stage, when she “spaced out”) brought her different types of knowledge, the awareness of the changes that were taking place in her living body. She could not come away from this experience without being changed. The first, obvious consequence was the pleasurable feeling of well-being. I believe that further consequences have to do with her subjectivity, her knowledge of the world and of herself. Therefore, music and dance experiences can help human beings to assert themselves in life and society, and to survive.

FURTHER SUPPORT FROM FIELDWORK

There are other observations that support my solution to Ana’s Paradox. One of them comes directly from Forró lyrics. There is a *baião* by Luiz Gonzaga that in my opinion illuminates the sensory aspect that I am discussing here.

Vem Morena (Come Morena) - 1949 (Luiz Gonzaga & Zé Dantas)

Refrão

*Vem Morena pros meus braços
Vem Morena vem dançá
Quero vê tu requebrando
Quero vê tu requebrá
Quero vê tu remexê no resfolego da
sanfona até que o sol raiá*

Refrain:

Come, Morena, to my arms
Come, Morena, come to dance
I want to see you shaking
I want to see you shake
‘Til the sunrise, I want to see you moving
when the accordion takes breath

Estrofe 1

*Esse teu fungado quente
Bem no pé do meu pescoço
Arrepiá o corpo da gente
Faz o véio ficá moço
E o coração de repente
Bota o sangue em arvorço*

Strophe 1

This your hot breath
Just on the bottom of my neck
Goosebumps on our body
Turns the old man into a young man
And the heart suddenly
Makes the blood boil

Refrão

Refrain

Estrofe 2

Esse teu suó sargado

Strophe 2

This, your salty sweat

<i>É gostoso e tem sabô</i>	Is tasteful and it has flavor
<i>Pois o teu corpo suado</i>	Because your sweaty body
<i>Cum esse chero de fulô</i>	With this smell of flowers
<i>Tem um gosto temperado dos tempero do amô</i>	(It) has a seasoned taste of love seasonings

<i>Refrão (fade out)</i>	Refrain (fade out)
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Note the sensuality of these lyrics: body movement, breath, heat, taste, smell, sight, goosebumps, blood, old and young bodies, sweat, heartbeats. In this lyric we have a poetic version of the description given by my informant in the former section, and once again, the emphasis entirely on sensory stimulation.

The sensual nature of dance has been also noted by Tomie Hahn (1996), in her discussion of the process of transmission of *nihon buyo*, a Japanese female dance. Hahn explains how much the pedagogical practices in Japan are embedded in Zen Buddhist philosophy, which “stresses the values of direct transmission (transmission without words) which takes form through the body and action” (p. 66). She also translates a Zen expression saying “cultivation can be understood only by personally experiencing with the whole mind-body; it cannot be grasped by the intellectual understanding of books” (p. 67). Hahn emphasizes the importance of practical experience, through one’s body, and how senses are an essential element in this process.

To put it simply, true knowledge cannot be obtained simply by means of theoretical thinking, but only through “bodily recognition of realization” (*tainin* or *taikoku*), that is through the utilization of one’s total mind and body. Simply stated this is to “learn with the body,” not the brain. Cultivation is a practice that attempts, so to speak, to achieve true knowledge by means of one’s total mind and body. (Yasuo Yuasa, 1987 quoted by Hahn, p. 69)

Hahn gives details about the learning process of dancing *nihon buyo* and how much sight and kinesthesia are the main initial tools used by the student. Later on, teacher

and student are like puppeteer and puppet. Through touch the teacher guides the student, who experiences the teacher's dance through her own body (p. 154). A bonding connection among dancers happens because of the synchronization of their movements; it heightens their awareness and their knowledge about the dance, their relationship to it, to themselves, and to others present in the place.

Once more, senses are the bridge to cross the boundary lines and transform a participatory occasion into a bonding occasion, where sensorial experience links all of the actors involved.

WHY NORTHEASTERNS CREATED FORRÓ HOUSES IN THE BIG CITY

From this philosophical position it becomes clear why, for Northeastern migrants, the presence of Forró music and dance in their new environment is so crucial. Northeastern migrants need Forró music and dance, because it is a way of re-living past experiences. When dancing to their music in their way, they are bringing back to their body the emotions, the knowledge, the worldview that they had when living at home. It is a kind of time machine. Through dance and music, memories are activated—body memories; hence, it is cultivated by migrants (and all humans for that matter), because it allows to them to re-live those memories, reinforcing those links, even over distances of time and space. It is a survival mechanism whereby they “meet” their former selves, creating an awareness of the old and the new one, and a balance between both.

the body has, besides imagination, memory, making our soul to take as present images that are absent and, with them, to represent time, that is, associative and generalized sequences of instantaneous images recorded on our flesh. (Chauí, p. 117)

Therefore, when listening to music and dancing to it, we are allowing our past experiences to come forth, because we are opening up those channels (body senses). We are thinking about who we are and we know more about ourselves when the dance and music ends. Therefore, it is not an altered state of mind, it is an altered state of the body that is trying to reach homeostasis with the music/dance environment, and, while doing so, it evokes earlier experiences and tries to balance them with this new experience in such a way that when the music ends, the body has a new awareness of itself. When you dance to music, you are negotiating your sense of self, who you are, in light of the new experience that you are having. I do think that this is the main draw for the young students in São Paulo. They are at a point in life in which they are trying new things and discovering who they are, they are constructing their identities. I see it as positive that they are doing this in a Forró environment, because it is a collective experience, and at the same time, a couple's and an individual experience. They are "learning" from their elders in an informal environment. Their lessons do not come from books and language, but in a shared sensorial experience.

Why music? Because through music and dance we enhance and refine our capacity for feeling and emotions, because they work as an overwhelming crush on our senses, invading the body as a whole. We do not listen only with our ears, we do not dance only with our feet, and we do not think only with our brain. Music and dance are important allies of reason in making decisions for survival, because they work on our senses and awareness, and because we learn through various types of communication that are as important as language for devising better strategies in the life process, for better quality of life. Therefore, a Northeastern migrant in a big city, looking for better life and

social ascension, needs to negotiate his identity on a regular basis, because he is living with too many new experiences in the new environment, and he needs to balance his perception of those experiences with the “old” experiences—those that are already part of him, are organic in his being. Hence, he dances to music, because it is a way of bringing forth those feelings and sensations, putting them together with the new experiences, and balancing them in order to reach homeostasis.

Forró places are necessary for Northeastern migrants because they have to do with who they are and who they are becoming. The creation of Forró places in the big city did not only provide a geographic safe space, where they could be at ease, meet old friends, exchange news, and taste their food. They could have all this in a restaurant, a bar, or an open market (*feira*). Nevertheless, they created a place where they could also listen and dance to their music and alter that music and dance to fit their new selves. Since they were in the big city, the Forró was reformulated in an “urban” way, with a nightclub structure and other trappings of modernity. It was a requirement of their survival instincts. Before the opening of Pedro Sertanejo’s business, there are records of many Forró held in individual’s houses, as parties thrown to meet friends. That is why we, humans, have parties—in order to survive. Music and dance are necessary tools for the body to comprehend ever-changing realities, and to deal with them, because the process is experienced through the body, through our senses, which are the channels that connect us with nature, with others, and with reality.

Therefore, as the more our bodies feel and sense, the better our chances of variation, diversity, and flexibility, which are at the heart of existence and endurance. It is

not a coincidence that this music has endured through time. The more Northeasterners practice Forró, the more equipped they are to survive.

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Jaci (Remelexo) – São Paulo, Nov. 01, 2000 (2x60 min. cassettes)

Joca (Trio Sabiá) – São Paulo, Oct. 10, 2000 (1x60 min. cassette)

Mano Novo (Mano Vêio e Mano Novo Music Store) – São Paulo, Mar. 01, 2001 (2x60 min. cassettes)

Oswaldinho do Acordeon – São Paulo, Sept. 13, 2000 (1x60 min. cassette)

Prof. Vagner (Projeto Equilíbrio) – São Paulo, Dec. 12, 2000 and Jan. 30, 2001 (3x60 min. cassettes)

Rastapé – São Paulo, Nov. 02, 2000 (2x60 min. cassettes)

Raymundo Campos (OBF) – Recife, June 30 and July 04, 2000 (3x60 min. cassettes)

Renato Phaelante (Fundação Joaquim Nabuco) – Recife, June 28, 2000 (1x60 min. cassette)

Rosângela Mátua – São Paulo, Sept. 14, 2000 (2x60 min. cassettes)

Sebastião Marinho (UCRAN) – São Paulo, Jan. 24, 2001 (2x60 min. cassettes)

Sérgio Cassiano (Mestre Ambrósio) – São Paulo, Sept. 20, 2000 (2x60 min. cassettes)

Sr. Andrade (Restaurante do Andrade) – São Paulo, Feb. 09, 2001 (2x60 min. cassettes)

Sr. Piu-Piu (Mano Véio e Mano Novo Music Store) – São Paulo, Mar. 05, 2001 (1x60 min. cassette)

Téo Azevedo – São Paulo, Oct. 24, 2000 (2x60 min. cassettes)

Tico dos Oito Baixos – São Paulo, Feb. 24, 2001 (1x60 min. cassette)

Zé Lagoa (Patativa) – São Paulo, Apr. 06, 2001 (1x60 min. cassette)

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