

BRAZILIAN MUSIC GLOSSARY

II. Genres

Bossa Nova

Originating in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1950s, bossa is a sophisticated form of popular music that shares rhythmic elements with samba and the harmonic richness of jazz. It uses a syncopated style of guitar and subdued singing, presenting a soft, romantic sound and lyrics that evoke images of the sea and the beaches of Rio where it started. "Chega de Saudade" ("No More Blues") is considered the first bossa song. It was composed by Antônio Carlos Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes and made famous by João Gilberto. Other bossa standards include, "Garota de Ipanema" (Jobim/de Moraes), "Desafinado" (Jobim/Milton Mendonça) and "Samba de Verão" (Marcos Valle/Paulo Sérgio Valle). Bossa nova reached a world audience in 1959 with the premiere of the film *Orfeu Negro* (Black Orpheus) that featured songs by Jobim, de Moraes and guitarist Luiz Bonfá along with the hit song "Mônica de Carnaval" written by Bonfá with lyrics by Antonio Maria.

Choro

Instrumental music developed in the late 19th century. Structurally, it is related to European classical music and a polka-*maxixe* rhythm. Choro is usually played at a fast tempo with melodic and octave leaps, unexpected modulations and improvisation. A variety of instrumentation can be used such as flute, cavaquinho and guitar, pandeiro, mandolin and brass and woodwinds. One of the most important choro musicians and composers is Pixinguinha who contributed such standards as "Carinhoso", "Um a Zero" and "Sugura Ele". Because of its improvisational nature, Choro is sometimes compared to jazz although it is thought to predate even ragtime, a form of early American jazz.

Escolas de Samba

Urban groups that plan and organize the elaborate parades during carnival in Rio de Janeiro. The entire year is spent in preparation and rehearsal for the event. Colorful floats, elaborate costumes and thousands of dancers and drummers parade down the sambadrome (stadium) for each escolas eighty-minute performance. Elements of the escolas include the bateria (percussionists), the *mestre-sala* or master of ceremonies, the *canavalesco* or art director, dancers and the *enredo* or theme song. The escolas also have a social function, serving as community centers in *favelas* which are some of the poorest neighborhoods in Rio.

Samba

Samba is the national music of Brazil and arguably the most important form of Brazilian music. Originating in Rio de Janeiro in the early 20th century, samba is a combination of African and European rhythms that evolved out of the *marchas* and *maxixes* (similar to tango and polka) popular in the late 1800s. Unlike the strict beat of the latter genres, samba has a loose, syncopated rhythm in 2/4 time with the emphasis on the second beat. The bass drum defines the beat while other instruments play syncopated eighth and sixteenth note patterns on top. The subtle transition from the rhythm of the *maxixe* to samba can be heard in what music historians call the first samba song, "Pelo Telefone" written by Donga. Some of the influential composers in the early era of samba are: Pixinguinha, Ismael Silva, Nilton Bastos, Ataulfo Alves, Noel Rosa and Cartola. Samba is also the music that drives the escolas de samba, and although these *samba-enredos* are associated with carnival parades, there are also many sub-genres such as *samba-canção*, *samba-reggae*, *samba pagoda*, *samba de roda* and others.

II. Instruments

Agogo

Double or multiple coned-shaped bells struck with a wooden stick. The bells produce high and low tones.

Bateria

The percussion section of the escolas de samba that are led by a *maestre* (director) who uses a whistle, hand signals and the repinique drum (see below) to signal transitions in the rhythmic pattern.

Berimbau

Used extensively in capoeira, a Brazilian form of martial arts, the berimbau produces a dry, metallic sound. It is constructed from a long wooden bow strung with a wire. A hollow gourd resonator is attached at the bottom. A *dobrão* (coin) or small stone is held between the index finger and thumb and is pressed against the wire to change the pitch. At the same time, the wire is struck with a thin stick while the hand that holds the stick also controls a wicker shaker called a caxixi.

Caixa

Caixa is the Brazilian name for snare drum. In samba, unlike the traditional snare, the drum is played with the snares or wires facing up. Some players hold the drum against the shoulder without the use of a strap. The caixa beats out a consistent rhythm in the bateria.

Chocalho and Ganzá

The chocalho or “shaker” in Portuguese is an instrument fitted with multiple levels of steel jingles and plays a role similar to the hi-hat on a drum set. The ganzá is a smaller shaker with less volume and is made of a metal tube filled with beads.

Cuica

A hollow friction drum with a bamboo stick attached to the center. The sound is produced by moving a damp piece of cloth along the stick while applying pressure to the head of the drum to change the pitch. The cuica makes a unique squeaking sound that can resemble a bird or a high-pitched voice.

Pandeiro

The pandeiro looks similar to a tamborine but is fundamentally different in its sound and playing technique. It is ringed with double sets of small inverted cymbals. The head of the pandeiro is made of either animal skin or synthetic material. It is the all-purpose percussive instrument. In the hands of a skilled player it can come close to replicating the sounds of full drum kit. The pandeiro is heard in all types of Brazilian music.

Repinique

A metal, tenor drum that is played with a stick in one hand while the other hand alternately hits the head of the drum to dampen and create different tones. The repinique is the lead and soloing drum of the samba bateria and signals the calls and breaks for the other percussionists.

Surdo

The large bass drum and the most important instrument in marking time for the bateria. It is played with a wooden mallet which has a head covered with soft material. There are three sizes of surdos. *surdo de primeira* (first), the largest drum that plays on the second beat of the 2/4 rhythm. *surdo de segunda*

(second) plays on the alternate or first beat. The smallest drum with the highest pitch is the *surdo de terceira* (third). It is also called the *surdo cortador* because it plays variations on the rhythm that “cuts” through the beats held down by the first and second surdos.

Tamborim

A small round handheld drum, 6” in diameter, that is played with a wooden stick or plastic beater (and sometimes the hands). In carnival parades, tamborim players will use a virado or turning technique where the drum is rapidly twisted back and forth and struck at the same time to produce the samba rhythm pattern at a fast tempo.