

POPULAR VIRTUOSITY: THE ROLE OF THE FLUTE AND FLUTISTS IN BRAZILIAN  
*CHORO*

By

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*Para mis abuelos,  
Manuel y María Margarita García*

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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*Choro* is one of Brazil's most important musical developments and the backbone of the country's popular instrumental repertoire. Originating in Rio de Janeiro during the *belle époque* (1870-1920), *choro*, as a musical style, was the direct result of the infusion of Afro-Brazilian rhythmic syncopation—and an undeniable panache—into the Europeanized popular salon music of the Brazilian elite. With strong ties to Western art music, *choro* remains one of the few popular musical traditions that place value and emphasis on instrumental virtuosity.

Understanding what it means when we designate something as popular is critical for situating *choro*. We must keep in mind that whatever is characterized as popular implies particular social and historical contexts as well as perspectives that are never isolated in their realizations and interpretations. Popular music is defined by society, internally categorized by society, and analyzed in relation to the many diverse social functions and practices in which music is situated. Within Brazilian society, *choro* is considered a popular musical form due to its performance practices, instrumentation, types of venues where it is performed, its relationship to the recording and broadcasting industries, and the formal structure of *choro* compositions. I argue that historically, it was the earliest composers of *choro*-style music, the classically-trained

flutists that wrote both erudite and popular musical styles, who socially solidified *choro* as a popular musical genre with erudite tendencies. This categorization of *choro* remains today.

Outside of American jazz, which is credited as an important influence in the evolution of modern Brazilian *choro*, an emphasis on technical virtuosity—such as that found in erudite music—is rare in the performance of popular music, but it can be found in the performance of *choro*. The reasons for such are varied and in this paper, factors such as nationalism, race and class, and the fledgling cinematic, broadcasting, and recording industries of the early twentieth century are considered.

This thesis will demonstrate how *choro*'s roots can be found in colonial New World erudite music composed and performed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century. We will see how it evolved throughout the twentieth century as a primarily instrumental urban popular style often heard in nightclubs and ballrooms, how it continued to develop 'classical' formal structures, and how it ultimately underwent several revivals, including the romanticizing and commercialization of the music with support from the recording industry, to become the important genre we hear today.

I also describe how *choro* has returned full-circle, from European-influenced erudite musical compositions, which were later infused with popular rhythms and sensibilities, back to the virtuosic *choro* being composed and performed in contemporary Brazilian society. Indeed, *choro* is now being used to teach in the conservatory style to students of Western art music and is likewise considered a hallmark of instrumental virtuosity within the academy. Some of the best *choro* musicians teach at universities, perform internationally (often at jazz festivals), and produce numerous recordings, many of them award-winning performances.

This paper will also make evident that the preference for the flute as the primary melodic instrument in the *choro* ensemble played a major role in establishing virtuosity as a defining characteristic of the genre and for increasing its popularity throughout Brazil. I argue that the persistent connection to instrumental virtuosity can be directly linked to *choro*'s earliest flutist/composer progenitors, and to the flute, one of the first and most important solo melodic instruments within the *choro* ensemble.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of Purpose**

Life often takes us in directions we would never have imagined. In my case, it was the fall semester of 2000, and I was happily going about the business of researching the music of Cuba when my friend and colleague, Welson Tremura, asked me to participate in the Brazilian World Music Ensemble he was directing at the University of Florida. I agreed, thinking that because Welson knew that I was a flute player, that he would have me playing a little *bossa nova* or something like that. During the first rehearsal, Welson thrust an *agogô* (Brazilian metal bell instrument) into my hands and said “play!” The next thing I knew, we were playing Brazilian *samba*.... sort of. During subsequent rehearsals, I learned to play the *surdo* (large Brazilian drum), then a host of other Brazilian percussion instruments, including the *pandeiro* (Brazilian hand drum), for which I developed a strong affinity.

As the semesters went by, our ensemble learned to play not only *samba*, but music from the many regions of Brazil including the fife and drum traditions from Northeast Brazil (the *banda de pífanos*), and the urban popular genres such as *choro*. Year after year, we learned more musical styles and genres and had many fortunate opportunities to play with internationally recognized Brazilian musicians who had been invited to the university as artists-in-residence, artists who ultimately imparted to us in the best of ways, a knowledge and understanding of Brazil’s interestingly diverse and complex music. It was through this immersion in Brazilian music that I developed my love for the culture and people of Brazil.

Because I am a flute player, the Brazilian musical genre that captured my attention most keenly was *choro*, due to its harmonic and melodic sophistication as well as the virtuosity required to perform the music. It was also because the flute had historically been the melodic

instrument of choice within the *choro* ensemble. Hence, I began to diligently practice my flute in order to be able to play *choro* well. I also went to work reading about and listening to recordings of *choro*, learning as much about it as I could. This, in due course, led me to conduct fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro, the birthplace of *choro*, on three different occasions.

During 2003 and 2004, I traveled to Rio de Janeiro to experience first-hand the music that I had been performing for a number of years. While in Rio, I was able to attend concerts, interview *choro* musicians such as guitarist Marco Pereira, bandolim player Hamilton de Holanda, and the flutists Carlos Malta and Andrea Ernest Dias. I also conducted research on *choro* at the National Library of Brazil, the largest library in Latin America. The result of this research was a realization on my part that the flute played a major role in establishing the popular *choro* style of music, especially in terms of the level of virtuosity it required of the performers.

Throughout this thesis, I will show that the early instrumentation of the *choro* ensemble, often referred to as the *terno*, helped to establish the flute as the first melodic instrument to require virtuosic performance of its players in the *choro* style. I will also demonstrate that the earliest composers of *choro* music were, in fact, also flutists; musicians who through their unique playing styles and innate sense of what constituted a popular composition, helped to transform the fashionable style of *choro* performance into a sophisticated genre of music, replete with ties to Brazilian nationalist ideology and popular culture. I will further demonstrate, through musical analysis and a survey of flute techniques, how these flutist/composers helped to create one of the few popular musical traditions in modern history that place an emphasis on instrumental virtuosity in the performance of a popular style of music.

## Methodology

### Theoretical Framework

This thesis claims that *choro* is a popular music with art-music tendencies, more specifically, that the popular *choro* musical genre requires the skill of virtuosity in performance practice. In order to reconcile these seemingly polemical traits—popularity (replete with the pejorative implication that it is inferior and base) and virtuosity (with its links to high-brow, exclusive, elite, conservatory training)—a more explicit examination of what these characteristics imply, and how *choro* has developed historically within Brazilian society, is necessary for supporting the claim.

First, what makes popular music popular, and why, despite its predominantly depreciatory connotations from elite artistic sectors of society, is it such a potent cultural construct within most societies? Related, how is popular music different from art music or folk music and what do these categories—art, folk, and popular—say about how a society imagines and understands its music? The example of *choro* within Brazilian society provides apt substance for discourse on popular music.

According to Richard Middleton, what must remain foremost when researching the ‘popular,’ is that all definitions of the term popular, especially when referring to music, are socially and historically grounded. Understanding what it means when we designate something as popular implies particular contexts as well as perspectives that are never isolated in their realizations and interpretations (Middleton 1990). In designating *choro* as popular, certain social and historical contexts must be considered including: *choro*’s relationship to the early recording and broadcasting industry; the use of popular performance practices emanating from the underclass (such as improvisation and rhythmic syncopation); the social contexts within which *choro* was created, and how it evolved from stylistic musical interpretations into a musical genre,

and; *choro*'s link to 'the people' by nature of the term '*popular*' meaning 'of the people' in Romance languages.

This notion of categorizing something as popular through its association to 'the people' is best described, Middleton claims, in terms of social essentialism. "Here the 'essence' of the popular is constant, though whether this is seen as proffered from above [from those at the top of a society's hierarchy] or engendered from below [from the masses]... varies" (Middleton 1990: 5). The organizing principle for defining something as popular 'from above' is usually concerned with such things as the 'masses' or 'commercialized' culture, which often implies a somewhat pejorative connotation. When something is defined as popular 'from below,' references are made to concepts such as 'grass-roots,' 'authenticity,' and 'of the people,' and the connotation is that it is somehow noble, good, real, and honest. "This is because, in a class society [following a Marxist perspective], the society is internally contradictory. What the term 'popular music' tries to do is to put a finger on that space, that terrain, of contradiction - between 'imposed' and 'authentic,' 'elite' and 'common,' 'predominant' and 'subordinate,' then and now, theirs and ours, and so on - and to organize it in particular ways" (Middleton 1990: 7).

Another important thing to consider is that the notion of what is popular is always in constant temporal motion, never static, always evolving and changing and adjusting to the current moment. Hence, categorizing something as popular must also be historically located. This is especially important when considering *choro* because its popularity has fluctuated for almost one-hundred and forty years. There have been moments of massive social appeal interspersed with times of limited popularity, with revivals in popularity occurring approximately every twenty to thirty years.

Defining what is considered popular by use of the terms ‘above’ and ‘below’ to designate social strata within Brazilian society ventures into areas of analysis that must consider class *and* race—and by extension, national identity—as determining factors. Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia state that any analysis of Brazilian popular music must take into consideration the social situation present in nineteenth-century Brazil, especially in terms of the racial discourse before and after slavery.<sup>1</sup> “The formulation of a national identity based on concepts of racial blending, or miscegenation, was one of the most important and influential intellectual currents to develop in postcolonial Brazil.<sup>2</sup> By the 1930s, *choro* was up-held by intellectuals as the perfect example of musical miscegenation...” due to the blending of European harmonies and melodies with African and Afro-Brazilian rhythms (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 17).<sup>3</sup>

What this meant for the underclass of Brazil was validation of their expressive culture and for the predominately white elite class, as well as the underclass, a symbol of national identity. Previously marginalized and/or enslaved populations, ‘the people,’ gradually gained, if not social acceptance, at least social tolerance. Indeed, “the attitudes of the elite concerning race and class were most evident in their reactions to popular music” (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 22). The elite embraced this popular music. The musical melding of European harmonies and melodies with African rhythms represented for them the merging of races, making popular music the site for the negotiation of a Brazilian national identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Brazil was the last New World nation-state to abolish slavery in 1888.

<sup>2</sup> “The aspect that made miscegenation palatable to the otherwise racist and classist elites was the concept of *branqueamento*, or ‘whitening,’ which was based on the dubious theory that European blood would dilute and civilize the other races to produce a light-skinned Brazilian race” (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 37).

<sup>3</sup> In conjunction, another popular music created by Brazil’s urban lower and middle classes, *samba*, rose to the status of national icon in the 1920s and 1930s, a prime example of the racial harmony of miscegenation as touted by intellectuals and the elite class (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005).

This musical blending and merging, it can be argued, came about as a result of *choro* performance practice. Preferred popular European musical genres such as the waltz and polka were danced by the white Brazilian elite in ballrooms and salons throughout the country's urban centers. Gradually syncretized with European harmonies and melodies were African and Afro-Brazilian rhythmic structures incorporated into these popular genres by predominantly black and mulatto musicians. The result was the stylistic creation of popular music that reflected Brazil's identity as that of a mixture of cultures and races. These stylistic elements and performance practices in *choro*—such as improvisation and rhythmic syncopation, which added an essential rhythmic 'swing' to Brazil's now *Europeanized* popular musical forms—eventually helped to move *choro* from a style of playing popular music, to a unique genre, composed and created with distinctive formal musical characteristics. This evolutionary process was aided by musically-trained flutists/composers who gradually began to create popular songs clearly designated as *choros*, rather than polkas or waltzes performed using stylistic elements of *choro*.

Another aspect to consider in the situation of *choro* as popular is the role the nascent recording industry played in making it so. Indeed, this is perhaps *choro's* most important link to a designation of 'popular.' Before the advent of the mass marketing and commercialization of musical recordings on a grand scale in the 1920s, music remained locally situated. But even before the halcyon days of early musical recording, there was a growing commercial and philosophical process to create the ideology of 'popular' from 'above.' José Ramos Tinhorão maintains that:

*...nos últimos 100 anos, desde o surgimento da gravação de sons, em 1878, esse lento, silencioso, mas inexorável processo de controle do poder de criação e de necessidade de lazer do povo das cidades pela máquina industrial manipulada pela minoria dos que detêm os meios de produção.*

...in the last 100 years a process has evolved, since the emergence of the recording of sounds in 1878, this slow, silent but inexorable process of controlling the power of creation

and recreational needs of urban people by an industrial machine manipulated by the minority of those who have the means of production (Tinhorão 1978: 10). [My translation.]

What Tinhorão illustrates is that the gradual acceptance of the stylistic musical creations of the underclass by the elite was one of the aspects that helped to foster the creation of the recording and broadcasting industries in Brazil. Tinhorão makes the claim that as these industries were established, the elite moved into the position of appropriating popular musical production, determining what was to become popular and which musical styles and genres would fade into obscurity. For *choro*, this was a good thing. “The birth of the recording industry and the establishment of live radio shows in Brazil were the two most significant factors in the professionalization of *choro*” (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 87).

With the industrialization of music production, *choro* gained in popularity and recognition. This popularity evolved from the performance of musical genres played in the *choro* style—with its easily recognizable rhythmic swing—to the composition of songs labeled as *choro*, in essence, identifying *choro* as a popular musical genre. Substantiation of *choro*'s designation as a popular style and later genre is confirmed in *choro*'s adherence to, among other factors, the standards and criteria of the cultural theory of music put forth by Middleton. *Choro*, if viewed from ‘above,’ is certainly popular in that up until the 1920s and 1930s, it was considered ‘for the masses’ and not worthy of attention from the top rungs of Brazil’s social hierarchy. Likewise, if considered from ‘below,’ *choro* can still be classified as popular due to its ‘authenticity’ and ‘grass-roots’ links to ‘the people’ and its history as a popular style that originated in the poorer neighborhoods of Brazil’s urban centers that was later embraced by the elite and used to promote Brazil’s nascent recording and broadcasting industries. Further validation, when analyzed essentially from ‘above’ and ‘below,’ can be found in the way in which *choro* was used to help create Brazil’s national identity.

A theoretical claim for virtuosity in *choro* performance is also valid. Jim Samson states that the notion of virtuosity found its roots during the early nineteenth century—and particularly in the styles and tendencies of Romanticism and Romantic thought regarding ‘the individual’—precisely when *choro* was beginning to flourish. It is interesting to note that Paris was considered the ‘capital’ of musical virtuosity in the early nineteenth century, and according to Samson, no doubt due to the set of socio-political circumstances that fostered the recognition of the ‘public man.’ It could be argued, that because Brazil was so culturally oriented towards Europe during this time, especially towards France, that these same ideologies would have been part of the cosmopolitan milieu of Brazilian urban society and Brazilian political and intellectual thought.

Samson goes further to state that understanding the concept of virtuosity—and, by extension, theories on performance practice—provides the necessary basis for understanding the relationship of performance to the music and the individual (performer) to the audience.<sup>4</sup> Samson also states, however, that the concept of virtuosity has no single meaning and that the various manifestations of its meaning have existed over time. Indeed, most of the definitions and connotations of what it means to be virtuosic have always been subject to interpretation and transformation. This makes the concept of virtuosity difficult to analyze but not impossible, and Samson is able to put forth a number of tangential constructs.

Samson argues that as the concept of virtuosity merged with the Romantic aesthetic, it generated a dialectical relationship between the music, i.e. the musical work, and the performer, a relationship that juxtaposed taste (with all its inherent ambiguity of meaning) with ideology.

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<sup>4</sup> It could also be argued that the practice of virtuosity places the performer in a phase of liminality between self and composer, between the individual and society’s norms. Theories on performance practice are vast in scope and well beyond the scale of this thesis. This is why they are mentioned but not elaborated. For information on performance theory, see: (Turner 1988).

“The virtuosity of the first half of the nineteenth century is presumed to have made room for the affirmation of work character that typified its second half. Virtuosity, in short, gave way to interpretation” (Samson 2003:4-5). During this time, extremes of display and sentiment were perceived as violations of taste, itself an elusive attribute, no doubt, but one closely tied to the status of individuality. When kept within the confines of what a segment of society considers acceptable taste, individuality—and in this case, individuality as it pertains to virtuosic display—was highly valued. That same individuality, Samson claims, invoked censure when these boundaries were breeched, just as it did when individuality courted popularity. Regarding the concept of the individual, Samson writes:

And if the invention or reinvention of the individual was a potent enabling force in political and intellectual life, it was even more influential in the cultural domain; indeed it could almost be described as a primary motivation for the rise of aesthetics. Thus, virtuosity gained new power, status and dignity, and a new ideological underpinning (paradoxically resisting idealisation), through the offices of an ascendant individualism (Samson 2003:74).

The cause of this dialectic between censure and popularity was often the mechanical musical instrument, certainly one such as the flute. Indeed, “two subtexts of virtuosity are... suggested here: a surrender to mechanism, and the stigma of the gratuitous” (Samson 2003:4). And it could be argued that this ‘stigma of the gratuitous,’ according to Middleton’s theory of essentialism, was a reaction ‘from above’ to the notion of popularity and its relationship to the common man, including the connotation of tastelessness.

Another concept to consider is virtuosity and the performer’s quest for autonomy and individuality. Samson calls virtuosity the ‘magnet’ that draws the listener towards the qualities of the performer and somewhat away from the composed piece. In this case, technique is valued over substance and the symbiotic relationship between the audience and its need for spectacle and performative modifications (interpretations, improvisations) is strengthened. It is critical to

note here that Samson is defining these performative qualities as musical ‘technique,’ and not as substance. In the case of *choro* performance, this correlates to *choro*’s emphasis on virtuosic technique, especially for the solo melodic instruments such as the flute.

It is easier now to realize how *choro* developed into a virtuosic form given Samson’s theoretical observations. *Choro* came about during a time in European and Brazilian socio-political history when the concept of the individual was gaining currency. Many early *choro* performers sought to gain respectability and social standing by becoming unique in their interpretations of composed *choro* music.<sup>5</sup> It must also be noted that competition to perform as a virtuoso was keen between *choro* musicians. It was the primary way an individual *choro* musician could attain the goal of prestige and popularity. Adding to this is the fact that many African and African-American musical traditions also frequently value individual virtuosity, typically in the form of improvisation. These African performance practices, incorporated into popular musical styles and genres by Brazilian black and mulatto musicians, would have no doubt made their way into the performance of *choro*.

### **Literature Review**

It is not an understatement to say that finding literature on *choro* is easy. There have been countless books and articles—scholarly and journalistic—written in many languages about this popular Brazilian music. What is lacking is literature on *choro* as it pertains specifically to the flute.

I have discovered only five scholarly studies on the flute in Brazilian *choro* music. They are: Julie B. Koidin’s (2006) dissertation, *Benedicto Lacerda and the ‘Golden Age’ of Choro Flute Playing*; Kristen Lia Smith-Stoner’s (2000) dissertation, *The Influence of Folk and Popular*

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<sup>5</sup> Examples such as the musicians Catulo da Paixão Cearense and João Teixeira Guimaraes de Pernambuco will be mentioned in Chapter Three.

*Music on Twentieth-Century Flute Music of Brazil*; Eliane Corrêa Salek's (1999) thesis, *A Felxibilidade Rítmico-Melódica na Interpretação do Choro (The Rhythmic-Melodic Flexibility in the Interpretation of Choro)*; José Benedicto Viana Gomes' (1997) thesis, *Pixinguinha: Choro Presença e Aplicabilidade no Estudo da Flauta Transversal no Brasil (Pixinguinha: Choro Presence and Applicability in the Study of the Transverse Flute in Brazil)*, and; Andréa Ernest Dias' (1996) thesis, *A Expressão da Flauta Popular Brasileira: Uma Escola de Intrepretação (The Expression of Brazilian Popular Flute: A School of Interpretation)*.

Koidin's dissertation is primarily helpful for understanding the technical aspects of *choro* performance on the flute through her analysis of the performance practices of Benedicto Lacerda. Smith-Stoner's dissertation focuses on early *choro* flute history and how *choro* was an influential element in Brazilian erudite music. Salek transcribes the solo line of six *choros* in her work. Two are performed by flutists Altamiro Carrilho and Benedicto Lacerda. Gomes' thesis is a biography of Pixinguinha and a history of *choro*, with little emphasis given to the aspects of flute performance in *choro*. Dias presents a performance guide—including tips on articulation, rhythmic interpretation, tempo, improvisation, and tone—for fourteen choros. She also includes brief biographies of twenty of Brazil's most important flutists.

In addition to these works for flute, there are a number of canonical and well-respected works on *choro* in general. For the purposes of this thesis, the selection was limited primarily to the following.

Most useful was Tamara Elena Livingston-Isenhour's and Thomas George Caracas Garcia's work, *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music*. Created by combining the Ph.D. dissertations of each author, *Choro* provided information on race and class issues related to *choro*, it explained the rise, development, and professionalization of *choro*, and gave

accounts of *choro*'s revivals. Livingston-Isenhour's and Caracas Garcia's work also describes *choro*'s link to twentieth-century nationalist composers such Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), Radamés Gnattali (1906-1988), and Mozart Camargo Guarnieri (1907-1993).

Musicologist, Ary Vasconcelos, has written several books on *choro* and popular music in Brazil. Helpful for the completion of this thesis was his *Panorama da Música Popular Brasileira na 'Belle Epoque'* (*Panorama of Brazilian Popular Music in the 'Golden Age'*). In this work, Vasconcelos gives a brief history of *choro* and then gives a short biography and list of works for over four-hundred Brazilian musicians of popular music. Also informative was his *Raízes da Música Popular Brasileira (Roots of Brazilian Popular Music)*, and *Carinhoso Etc.: História e Inventário do Choro (Carinhoso Etc.: History and Inventory of Choro)*, which is a systematic account of *choro* since the 1920s.

Several books by José Ramos Tinhorão were also heavily employed. They are: *Pequena História da Música Popular: da Modinha, à Canção de Protesto (Brief History of Popular Music: The Modinha, the Song of Protest)*; *Música Popular: Do Gramofone ao Rádio e TV (Popular Music: From the Gramophone to the Radio and TV)*; *A Música Popular no Romance Brasileiro - Vol. I: Século XVIII-Século XIX*; *A Música Popular no Romance Brasileiro - Vol. II: Século XX (1a parte)*, and; *A Música Popular no Romance Brasileiro - Vol. III: Século XX (2a parte)*, (*The Popular Music of Brazilian Romance, Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Century, Vols. I-III*). All give well-constructed accounts of generally, the social history of Brazilian popular music from the eighteenth through the twentieth century.

No work on *choro* could be considered well-researched if it did not include references by Gerard Béhague. For the purposes of this thesis, the two following works (among his others)

were most useful: *Popular Musical Currents in the Art Music of the Early Nationalistic Period in Brazil, Circa 1870-1920*, and *The Beginnings of Musical Nationalism in Brazil*.

For researching theoretical issues pertaining to popular music, Richard Middleton's *Studying Popular Music* provided applicable theories, suitable for explaining why *choro* is considered a popular music as stated in the title of this thesis. For theoretical substantiation regarding the concept of virtuosity, Jim Samson's *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: The Transcendental Studies of Liszt* was consulted.

CHAPTER 2  
THE HISTORICAL AND MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHORO

**A Brief History of the Flute in Brazilian Erudite and Popular Music**

Beginning as early as the sixteenth century, there have been accounts—from the first Iberian colonists—of the presence of the European flute in Brazil.<sup>1</sup> These early flutes were held transversely, constructed primarily out of ebony or other hard woods, and were made with few, if any, keys.



Figure 2-1. Photo of one-key flutes marked FLORIO/LONDON (c.1795), G. ASTOR & Co./LONDON (c.1800), H. GRENSER/DRESDEN (c.1810), and GRIESSLING & SCHLOTT (c.1805). The last flute includes a *corps de rechange*. Photo courtesy of Richard M. Wilson. Used with permission. (Source: Last accessed March 13, 2009. <http://www.oldflutes.com/classical.htm>).

Flutes were played first and foremost for religious services and their role was to perform in orchestral ensembles as accompaniment for sacred choral works in cathedrals. This history and role of the flute in Brazilian erudite music remained relatively unchanged until the nineteenth century when the royal court of Dom Pedro II (1825-1891), the Emperor of Brazil from 1840-1889, began to hire musicians from Paris to entertain the royal family with popular compositions brought to Brazil from the *métropole*. Up until that time, erudite, Western art music

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<sup>1</sup> Jesuit priests began teaching flute to young colonists circa 1556. See: (Diniz 1979: 46).

predominated in Brazilian urban expressive culture and instrumental music played a secondary role to sacred vocal music.<sup>2</sup>

With the invention of the modern, Boehm-system, silver, keyed flute from Germany, flutists from Europe and the colonies were then able to perform more technically challenging erudite and early popular salon music with greater ease, in turn, increasing the popularity of the instrument and especially the salon genres they performed. Indeed, one of the musicians hired by Dom Pedro II in 1859 was the Belgian flutist Mathieu-André Reichert (1830-1880), and it was Reichert who has been credited with introducing the Boehm flute to Brazil.<sup>3</sup> While in Brazil, Reichert met Brazilian flutist, Joaquim Antônio da Silva Callado Júnior (1848-1880), ‘O Pai dos Chorões’ (‘The Father of Choros’), who was at that time, composing early *choro* music and performing on a five-keyed French ebony flute.



Figure 2-2. Photo of French ebony flute with silver keys. Photo courtesy of Berkel Muziek. Used with permission. (Source: <http://www.berkelmuziek.nl/img/html/oldflutes.htm>. Last accessed on March 13, 2009).

It was Reichert who was also credited with teaching contemporary European flute techniques to Callado, who later incorporated them into the *choro* compositions he was writing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See: (Smith-Stoner 2000: 2-20).

<sup>3</sup> See: (Ernest Dias 1990: 69-92).

<sup>4</sup> According to Andre Diniz, some scholars have written of a rivalry between Reichert and Callado, but in actuality, this rivalry did not exist. What did happen was that Reichert, perhaps because he was European and not Brazilian like Callado, caused Callado’s fans to develop an animosity towards him at first, but there is no historical evidence of a personal rivalry between the two flutists. Indeed, they were friends who were known to rival each other only as

This collaboration makes evident the ease with which nineteenth-century Brazilian composers and performers of the erudite and the popular juxtaposed these two worlds, often making no distinction between them. Indeed, Callado was classically trained, yet wrote all of his compositions in the *choro* style to exhibit his technical virtuosity on the flute. In addition, he composed all of his works with the *terno*<sup>5</sup> in mind.

In *choro*, it was the solo melodic instruments (primarily the flute) that made it possible to build this compositional bridge between the popular and art music worlds. Another important factor in the role of the flute in the development of *choro* was the fact that the first notable *choro* composers were also flutists (like Callado) who wrote melody lines that called for virtuosic performance techniques specific to the instrument. Equally important was the fact that it was often only the flute players who could read music and therefore instruct the other *choro* musicians in the performance of the song.

Other prominent erudite composers who also composed in the *choro* style were the classically-trained pianists Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847-1935) and Ernesto Nazareth (1863-1934). The fact that they played the piano is also of importance regarding *choro* due to the fact that the

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virtuosi. It was also true that the Boehm flute (which Reichert espoused) was not immediately embraced by many flute players in Brazil, but again, most professional flutists then switched to the new flute (as opposed to the ebony/wooden flute) within a relatively short time. It was perhaps in response to a famous ‘duel’ between Reichert and Callado regarding the relative merits of each type of flute (as well as that of themselves as artists) that may have started the rumor of a rivalry. Another fact to consider is that the first meeting between Reichert and Callado appeared to go well because Callado was only fourteen years old at the time and no real match for the well-established Belgian, although by most accounts, Callado did seem to hold his own against the elder master. There is also evidence that the two flutists performed in public together on a friendly basis. In 1873, a concert was organized and both Reichert and Callado played “Carnival of Venice” in duet. It is unclear, however, whether Reichert played the Boehm flute while Callado played an ebony/wooden flute, as he was often perceived of as preferring. See: (Diniz 2002: 45-52). Also see: (Ernest Dias 1990: 69-92).

<sup>5</sup> The *terno* is a specific *choro* instrumentation and is explained in detail later in this chapter under the section on the organology of *choro* ensembles. The *terno* consists of the *violão*, the *cavaquinho*, and the flute.

piano was another notable instrument, beside the flute, that performed both in popular and elite society.<sup>6</sup>

In 1847, the composer Francisco Manuel da Silva (1795-1865) founded the first school for music in Brazil, the Conservatório de Música do Rio de Janeiro. “The Conservatório de Música was an important resource for young musicians studying both classical and popular music. Many of the professors would perform both on classical stages and within popular idioms in cafés, theatres, and even on street corners. Flute was a popular instrument at the conservatory... (Smith-Stoner 2000: xiv).

There was also a history of individuals teaching music to slaves and it was common practice for slave masters to arrange musical performances by their slave musicians in order to increase the masters’ income. The musicians were trained in the salon genres—especially the *polca*, *lundú*, *modinha*, and *maxixe*—that were popular at the time. They were also trained to play European wind instruments—which would have included the flute—for participation in civic and military bands. Such instruction was important training for the later emergence of popular bands such as the Banda do Coro de Bombers do Rio de Janeiro, directed by Analects de Medeiros, one of the first musicians to incorporate *choro* music into his ensemble. It was this fusion of European instruments played by Afro-Brazilians and mulattoes—often musically non-literate musicians, but with irrefutable virtuosic musical flair—that gave rise to the popular styles of music so sought after by Brazil’s elite in the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century, the flute continued to play a major role in the instrumental genres of Brazilian music. Internationally recognized Brazilian flutist Odette Ernest Dias—along with Brazilian flutist, Tadeu Coelho, of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts—have

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<sup>6</sup> See: (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas García 2005: 59). Also, see Chapter Three for more information on these composers.

each made several recordings of *choro* music. Coelho has also published the complete works of the legendary Brazilian *choro* flutist, Patápio Silva.

In the late twentieth century, the flute has also been essential to promoting Brazilian jazz and experimental music such as that of Hereto Pascal's ensemble, O Grupo, of which the multi-instrumentalist, Carlos Malta, was the flute player for over two decades.



Figure 2-3. Photo of Carlos Malta. (Source: Guido Paterno. Used with permission).

In addition to recording as a soloist, Malta has recently formed two ensembles of his own, O Coreto Urbano and Pife Muderno, both of whom perform *choro* as a staple in their repertoire. In addition, Malta's performances and recordings—and those of his ensembles—are well known for the high level of virtuosity they exhibit. The members of Malta's ensembles are virtuosi in

their own rights, and their superb musicianship exceeds the highest standards of musical performance in both the popular and erudite music worlds.

Foremost of Malta's ensembles is Pife Muderno, a modern, urban *banda de pífanos* (band of fifes) that blends the Northeast tradition of the *zabumba* ensemble with improvisation and reinterpretation of traditional musical works, including *choro*. Together with Andréa Ernest Dias<sup>7</sup> on flute and *pífano*, Malta brings a twenty-first-century interpretation to *choro* as well as the long-standing *banda de pífanos* tradition.<sup>8</sup> Without a doubt, Malta has become one of Brazil's most celebrated and important solo flute virtuosos.



Figure 2-4. Photo of Pife Muderno with Carlos Malta and Andréa Ernest Dias on *pífano*. (Source: Gal Opido. Used with Permission).

<sup>7</sup> Andréa Ernest Dias is also a classically trained flutist and the daughter of legendary Brazilian flutist, Odette Ernest Dias. Andréa is a member of Roberto Gnattalli's Orquestra de Música Brasileira, and also performs at the Free Jazz Festival. She is a solo recording artist as well.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the traditional *banda de pífanos*, see: (Crook 2005: 70-91).

## Etymological and Musical Origins of Choro

### Origins of the Term Choro

In an apt description, Thomas Garcia writes that “*choro* is a general term with divergent meanings” (Garcia 1997:57). The term *choro* indeed, describes a number of related ideas. In each case, however, the term refers to instrumental music.<sup>9</sup> More to the point, *choro* refers to the instrumental ensemble that plays *choro* music or it may refer to any number of popular musical forms called *choro*. By extension, a *choro* musician or individual *choro* ensemble is called a *chorão* and the plural *chorões*, signifies groups of *choro* musicians, as well as the ensembles that play *choro* music.

The etymology of the word *choro* is less certain, but scholars have posited several plausible possibilities. David Appleby and José Ramos Tinhorão claim that the word *choro* comes from the Portuguese word *chorar*—to cry or weep—and that the music was called *choro* because of its melancholy nature. Appleby thus termed the *chorões*, the “weepers.” That would seem to make good sense—*choros* were originally instrumental laments (Appleby 1983: 70; Tinhorão 1974: 95). In addition, both Appleby and Tinhorão credit Batista Siqueira as the scholar who originally suggested that the term for *choro* music could have come from the phrases *chorar no pinho* (weeping sound of wood, referring to the *violão*, a guitar-like instrument in the *choro* ensemble) or *doce lundú chorada* (sweet, weeping *lundú*, referring to a popular musical style), further substantiating their hypothesis (Siqueira 1969:141). Siqueira also

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<sup>9</sup> Sung choro is known as *seresta* (serenade). Although *choro* remained throughout time primarily an instrumental genre, the popular vocalist Ademilde Fonseca (b. 1921) began singing *choro* in 1941 in Rio de Janeiro to a wide audience in clubs and over the radio, reviving the serenade tradition (Appleby 1983: 72; Squeff and Wisnik 1982: 161).

indicates that *choro* ensembles were popularly referred to as *orquestras de pau e cordas* (orchestras of woodwind and strings)<sup>10</sup> in *choro's* early period (Siqueira 1969: 138).



Figure 2-5. Illustration of *chorões* performing in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Public Domain).

<sup>10</sup> A similar ensemble in Pernambuco is also known by this name.

Gerard Béhague suggests that the term is a derivative of *xôlo*, an Afro-Brazilian word for the dance concerts that were performed on certain days of the year to honor saints (Béhague 1966, p.95). Following Béhague, Ary Vasconcelos asserts that the word *xôlo* does indeed appear in a verse of Jacques Raimundo's *O Negro Brasileiro* as the term for music performed at Afro-Brazilian festivals for São João (Vasconcelos 1977a: 14 and 1977b: 21).

Vasconcelos mildly refutes Tinhorão, however, claiming that while the tendency to link the *choro's* melancholy style of music to the word *chorar* is seductive, a more definitive source can be found in the word *chormeieiros*,<sup>11</sup> a term used to describe certain musical fraternities of Brazil's colonial period.<sup>12</sup> The *chormeieiros* played only instrumental music, and Vasconcelos claims that it stands to reason that popular usage of the term *chormeieiros* would then also refer to their musical compositions as well as their instrumental ensembles. Popular usage would have also shortened *chormeieiros* to '*choros*' for simplicity (Vasconcelos 1977a: 14 and 1977b: 21).

As stated, the difficulty in defining the term *choro* is further complicated by the fact that *choro* refers not only to the instrumental ensemble, but also to the broad repertoire of musical forms played by these ensembles. During this immediate post-colonial period,<sup>13</sup> European musical styles and forms continued to be performed in Brazil, albeit with certain uniquely Brazilian stylistic techniques. In fact, during the second half of the nineteenth century, certain segments of Brazilian society (primarily the cosmopolitan elites) tended to look increasingly to Europe, especially to France, for cultural orientation. Vasconcelos states that most often, when

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<sup>11</sup> *Chormeieiro* can also be translated as "sweet music," from the Greek words, *choros melos* (Garcia 1997: 58).

<sup>12</sup> There are various spellings associated with the term '*chormeieiro*.' J. Diniz uses the term '*chamaleiros*' to describe these religious brotherhoods (Diniz 1979: 107-108). Crook writes that the terms '*pretos charameleiros*' and '*charamelas*' were also used to describe these musicians as well as the shawm-like instrument played in their ensembles in colonial Pernambuco (Crook 2005: 31-33).

<sup>13</sup> In nineteenth-century Brazil there was an imperial period with a monarchy (independence from Portugal recognized in 1825) followed by a republic period (beginning 1889).

one refers to *choro*, one is referring to the repertoire of the *chorões*; the polkas, waltzes, mazurkas, *xotes* (schottisches), *tango brasileiros*, and *maxixes*. He goes further in claiming that all popular Brazilian instrumental music that contains at least some element of 'Brazilian' character, may be referred to as *choro* (Vasconcelos 1984: 10). And as the *choro* genre developed, so did the number of *choro* musical forms, each influenced by *choro*'s particular performance and compositional style. There were *choro canções*, *samba canções*, *samba choros*, *chorinhos*, *maxixes*, *chorinho maxixes*, *choro ligeiros*, *choro serenatas*, *choro seresteiros*, *choro melódicos*, *choro tristes*, *choro vivos*, *polca choros*, *choro estilizados*, *tango brasileiros*, *chorinhos brasileiros*, and *baiões*.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that many different musical forms, both erudite and popular, were all referred to as *choro* was not a unique situation in Latin America. For instance, in Cuba, ensembles and musical forms labeled *charanga* exhibit the same ambiguity. This indicates the dynamic and vibrant quality of these traditions; traditions that are long-standing as well as emergent and evolving even in contemporary times.<sup>15</sup>

In 1958, in an address to the Club de Trois Centres in Paris, Heitor Villa-Lobos stated that even European erudite forms could be pointed to as possessing imprecision of definition. He states:

One could ask of Chopin if he could explain for example, what is the form of a polonaise or a ballade. Is there a standard form for a Chopin ballade? No. Is there a form for a

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<sup>14</sup> The term *baião* would not have been common, however, until the 1940s.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Alejo Carpentier's *Music in Cuba* writes about the time in Caribbean colonial history (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) where people living in the colonies, who were also attuned to European cultural influences, did not disdain popular mass culture. In support, Carpentier wrote that popular music and classical music were, through theoretical analysis, both complicit and interdependent and secondly, that music should be analyzed for its social role and not purely by its commercial success. He also revealed popular music's African influences, thereby legitimizing both. According to Carpentier, it was the African-derived and Afro-Cuban cultural influences in Cuba that helped erode the distinction between elite and popular music. His innovative genius helped to pioneer the serious study of popular music in Cuba and lay the foundation for acceptance and respectability for all Cuban musical genres. See: (Carpentier 1946), or: (Carpentier 2001. *Edited by Timothy Brennan; in English*).

Chopin bolero? No. Chopin wrote, in his own manner, music according to his own taste, a music of his own understanding. He has given the title... scherzo... the style of the author. Something he thought of in a different way... What is a Choro? The Choro is popular music. The Choro of Brazil, as you could perhaps say about the samba or something else, but truly the Choro, is always of the musicians that play it, of good and bad musicians who play for their pleasure, often through the night, always improvising, where the musician exhibits his talent, his technique. And it is always very sentimental (Villa-Lobos 1976: Transcription located in the Liner Notes).

Agreeably, resolution of this issue at this point, seems insignificant. What is more important is to understand that over time, popular musical forms performed in Brazil, especially those with foundations in European genres, became stylistically less affected by their European antecedents and more influenced by diverse stylistic elements emanating from other South American<sup>16</sup> and African—and other Brazilian—musical forms.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the years 1870-1920 were the vanguard years for rapid development of popular musical forms and hence, the period of *choro's* greatest popularity. Immense social interchanges were occurring as rural populations of mixed races and socio-economic backgrounds moved into Brazil's urban centers. There is little doubt that *choro* was influenced by the different regional styles of music brought to the metropolises by the migrating masses. Vasconcelos goes further to state that during this time, *choro* “represented the urban sensibilities of the people of Rio” (1984: 13). Indeed, *choro* stood at the forefront of Brazil's transformation from a rural colonial society to a predominantly urban, modern nation. The *choro* became a truly urban phenomenon, a marker for the new way of life created by newly acquired independence and growing urbanization.

This diversity of Brazilian society in newly forming urban centers was manifested in all aspects of popular music composition and performance. In addition to stylistic variants, the

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<sup>16</sup> Most notable was the *tango brasileiro*. Brazilian musicians created a very popular Brazilian musical genre from this popular Argentinean dance form.

makeup of popular musical ensembles also underwent transformation. Melodic and harmonic instruments of primarily European origin fused with Afro-Brazilian and indigenous Amerindian percussion instruments in various ensembles all over Rio de Janeiro and elsewhere throughout Brazil. In addition, European-derived instrumental technique was also transformed via Afro-Brazilian performance aesthetics.

### **Musical Characteristics of Choro**

The first and foremost thing to be said about the musical characteristics of *choro* is that they were created at, and evolved from, the intersection of various musical and cultural traditions. Indeed, the fact that *choro* was fashioned through the confluence of European erudite harmonic and melodic structures, Brazilian popular musical forms, and Afro-Brazilian rhythmic sophistication cannot be understated. What these merging influences created was a musical style that grew to national prominence, musically defined the emerging Brazilian nation-state, and continued to be invented and reinvented as a legitimate Brazilian musical genre until today.

The principal musical characteristics of *choro* identify this genre as a popular *style* of music with erudite musical formal structures. Most *choros* are composed in five- or seven-part rondo form (ABACA form being the most common). Melodies are supported by sophisticated harmonies and syncopated rhythmic accompaniment that creates counterpoint against the melody line. In early *choro*, homophonic dance forms supported the melody by utilizing a simple, constant metric structure. As *choro* evolved, improvisation (primarily in the melody) took on a greater role and the harmonic/rhythmic structure grew in complexity.

Indeed, the most prominent of *choro* characteristics is its rhythmic *balanço*, or ‘swing.’ *Choro*’s swing has that intangible quality of remaining somewhat indefinable, certainly not easily notated, and yet knowledgeable performers and listeners of *choro* know exactly how *choro*’s swing should sound and feel. In early *choros*, this swing was accomplished by having

the chordophones play rhythmic counterpoint against each other.<sup>17</sup> The *violão* played the *baixaria* (bass line)<sup>18</sup> and steady, usually arpeggiated, rhythmic chords simultaneously, while the *cavaquinho* strummed *syncopated* rhythmic chords. Both instruments played a syncopated counter-rhythm against the melody line, which was often comprised of running sixteenth notes.

When the *pandeiro* was added to the ensemble circa the 1910s, this syncopated, characteristic swing in *choro*'s rhythmic structure was reinforced. While the basic rhythmic structure for the *pandeiro* is a constant sixteenth-note pattern in 2/4 meter, the swing in *choro* requires a good *pandeiro* player to emphasize the off-beats in a recognizable stylistic configuration. Typically, the second or third sixteenth note in each beat will be accented. Stops are another common feature for the *pandeiro*, whereby the player will suddenly stop the constant rhythm at the cadences, and then resume the forward rhythmic push after the break (usually at the beginning of the next section when the melody returns).

This *swing*, this interlocking performance technique among the instruments, is perhaps the most defining characteristic in playing the *choro* style. Further, what this particular relationship between the instruments in the ensemble provides is a means of musical interaction that allows the performers to engage in a “‘conversation between instruments’ that balances personal expression with social and musical unity. This ideal balance of musical and social forces is the driving force behind the choro” (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 9).

Regarding the first *choro* ensembles, Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia write:

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<sup>17</sup> *Choro* ensembles consist of a combination of European, and European-derived Brazilian instruments. Early European and European-derived instruments in the *choro* ensemble include only aerophones and chordophones, namely: the *violão* (a six-string, guitar-like instrument); the *violão de sete cordas* (a seven-string, guitar-like instrument); the *cavaquinho* (a *ukulele*-like instrument); the *bandolim* (a mandolin-like instrument); and a melody instrument, usually the flute. For more information on the instrumentation of *choro* ensembles, see the following section in this chapter.

<sup>18</sup> The *baixaria* in *choro* is an improvised bass line that plays an integral role in creating countermelodies.

Late-nineteenth-century *choro* ensembles typically featured a soloist (usually a flutist or other wind player) who played highly ornamented versions of familiar melodies. The other instruments improvised harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment and provided occasional melodic counterpoint. Bass lines and harmony were provided by the *cavaquinho* and *violão*... [And] although many flute and wind players were able to read music and write musical notation... [the other] early *choro* musicians were musically illiterate,” that is, the string players (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 3).

Indeed, most *choro* musicians were skilled amateurs who held day-jobs in industry or government service (which was also a characteristic of musicians who played other forms of popular music), and who spent their evenings socializing and engaging in spirited competitions—in gatherings called *rodas de choro* (*choro* circles)—to see who could improvise the most creative accompaniment or virtuosic melody line.

As a result, early *choro* style emphasized improvisation regardless of the presence of a musical score, a characteristic that has remained a hallmark of *choro* performance. And, while all of the instruments could be played to exhibit great virtuosity using tremendous technical skill, the flute was more often capable of the kind of flashy showmanship of virtuosic techniques employed in the art music world, techniques such as the use of a variety of tone colors, flutter tonguing, double and triple tonguing, glissandos, and vibrato.<sup>19</sup> Stylistically, virtuosic flute techniques were used to emphasize a lighter style of syncopation, to highlight sophisticated chord progressions, and to integrate instrumental improvisation and thematic variations into the composition, as they still do to this day. For further clarification, formal analysis (with musical examples) of the musical characteristics of *choro*—especially as they pertain to the flute—will be addressed in Chapter Four.

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<sup>19</sup> The *violão* had not yet been established as an art music instrument at this time.

## The Organology of Choro Ensembles

*Choro* ensembles consist of a combination of European, and European-derived Brazilian instruments. Early European and European-derived instruments in the *choro* ensemble include only aerophones and chordophones, namely: the *violão* (a six-string guitar); the *violão de sete cordas* (a seven-string guitar); the *cavaquinho* (a four-string, *ukulele*-like instrument); the *bandolim* (an 8 to 10-string mandolin-like instrument); and a melody instrument, usually the flute. As *choro* evolved, other instruments such as the *ophecleide* (a keyed brass instrument), the clarinet, the trombone, the tuba, the saxophone, and later, the accordion and piano were added. And, in the case of the piano, the instrument was also often employed as a solo instrument for performing *choro*, especially in venues such as the theatre. During the 1910s, a small Brazilian hand-drum, a membranophone called the *pandeiro* (a tambourine-like instrument), was included and it remains the only percussion instrument in the ensemble.



Figure 2-6. Photo (Left to right): *violão de sete cordas*; *violão de seis cordas*; *bandolim*; *flauta*; *cavaquinho*, and; *pandeiro*. Photo courtesy of José Augusto. Public Domain.

The *violão de seis o sete cordas*, the *bandolim*, the *cavaquinho*, the *pandeiro*, and the flute (or other melodic instrument), have been the primary *choro* instruments throughout the history of the ensemble. These instruments fulfill the four basic requirements for the performance of *choro*, which are: melody in the top line; harmony in a center voice; the bass line, and; the rhythmic structure.

In addition, there are historical and class considerations to observe regarding instrumentation. The modern silver (or ebony) flute is a European instrument, initially available only to the elite upper classes and played in salons and orchestra halls by literate musicians. The chordophones and the *pandeiro* have a long history of belonging to the more modest classes, and were usually played in rural settings or in the urban neighborhoods of the middle and lower classes. These associations: dichotomies of class structure; musical training (literate/oral-aural), and; European/New World attitudes, were all embedded into *choro* instrumentation.

### **The Terno: Violão, Cavaquinho, and Flute**

The earliest *choro* ensembles consisted of two *violões de seis cordas*, a *cavaquinho*, and a flute. These ensembles descended from small ensembles that played *música de barbeiros* (barber's music)<sup>20</sup> (Souza, et al. 1988:48). In early *choro* ensembles, the *violões* played the bass and harmony, the *cavaquinho* played the harmonic/rhythmic pattern, and the flute played the solo melody. These three instruments, collectively referred to as the *terno*, or *pau e corda* (wood and strings), constituted the core of the *choro* ensemble, even after other instruments were added to the ensemble over time.

One of the first *choro* ensembles, Choro Carioca, was established in 1870 by Joaquim Antônio da Silva Callado Júnior (1848-1880), a virtuoso flutist and teacher at the Imperial

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<sup>20</sup> *Música de barbeiros* was performed by small instrumental groups comprised of freed black slaves who worked in barber shops and were trained in music (Souza, et al. 1988: 48).

Conservatory of Music in Rio de Janeiro. The most popular *chorão* of the decade, Choro Carioca's<sup>21</sup> instrumentation consisted of flute, *cavaquinho*, and two *violões de seis cordas*. At the turn of the century, the addition of the *pandeiro*<sup>22</sup> to this fundamental instrumental lineup created a new standard in *chorão* instrumentation.

### **Conjuntos Regionais**

The rise of the popular ensembles called *conjuntos regionais* (regional groups) marked the beginning of the professionalization of *choro* in the second decade of the twentieth century. Also during this time, Brazilian artists and intellectuals were seeking to forge a distinct Brazilian national identity in reaction to the elite's heavy reliance upon European culture. "By the end of the 1910s, intellectuals had begun to locate the source of Brazilian musical identity in African-influenced popular music, a position that would have been untenable just a few years earlier" (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas García 2005: 80).

Around the 1920s, *choro* became part of this movement when these same artists and intellectuals declared it to be a uniquely Brazilian popular music. Indeed, the bricolage of popular culture created and recognized during the first half of the twentieth century would ultimately define modern Brazil, including the formulation of Brazil's first radio networks, which forged a truly nationalist popular culture. As a result, *choro* musicians were in high demand, not only for their musical skills, but for their symbolic value as representatives of a newly emergent national culture.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "The popularity of the Choro Carioca in the 1870s was of great importance to the beginnings of the movement later known as nationalism..." (Appleby 1983: 72).

<sup>22</sup> It has been suggested that the *pandeiro* was introduced into the *chorões* at the turn of the century by Jacó Palmieri, the *pandeiro* player for Pixinguinha's legendary *chorão*, Os Oito Batutas. Verification, however, is difficult due to limited evidence.

<sup>23</sup> One of the most important intellectuals in this process of national identity building was the sociologist Gilberto Freyre. Freyre writes about his first encounter with popular *samba* and *choro* musicians, during a night that also

By the 1930s, the instrumentation of the traditional *choro* ensemble, the *terno*, included the *pandeiro* and the *violão de sete cordas*, essentially forming a larger ensemble, the *conjunto regional*, which essentially served as the workhorse for the budding radio industry. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, professional *conjuntos regionais*— in effect, all-purpose musicians—were hired to accompany vocalists and to perform as studio musicians for live radio broadcasts. These *conjuntos regionais* codified popular musical styles and repertoires and through the media, carried the sound of *choro* to all corners of Brazil, where the regional musical styles of Rio de Janeiro became synonymous with a unified national and cultural identity.

One of the more popular and important *conjuntos* was the Regional de Lacerda, led by flutist Benedicto Lacerda.<sup>24</sup> Of all the *conjuntos regionais* employed during this time, Lacerda's ensemble distinguished itself by performing with a high level of virtuosity. Their sound was polished and perfectly suited to the professionalism required by radio and the recording industry. Lacerda, trained in flute and composition at the Instituto Nacional de Música, was the ideal ensemble leader, having formed several *conjuntos regionais* before leading the Regional de Lacerda. From 1947-1953, at the request of radio host Almirante, Regional de Lacerda—along

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included some of Brazil's best art music composers (Vila-Lobos and Gallet), in Rio in 1926. He writes: "*Invento com os meus amigos Bandeira, Prudente, Rodrigo, Sérgio, um grupo de personagens dos quais vamos fazer alguns colaboradores da Revista: J.J. Gomes Sampaio e Esmeraldino Olímpio, entre eles. Sérgio e Prudente conhecem de fato literatura inglesa moderna, além da francesa. Ótimos. Com eles já saí de noite boemianamente. Também com Vila-Lobos e Gallet. Fomos juntos a uma noitada de violão, com alguma cachaça e com os brasileiríssimos Pixinguinha, Patrício, Donga. I got together with my friends Bandeira, Prudente, Rodrigo, and Sérgio, a group of characters we are going to make collaborators for the Journal: J.J. Gomes Sampaio and Esmeraldino Olímpio, among them. Sérgio and Prudente really know modern English and French literature. They're tops. I went out for a night of bohemian fun with them. Vila-Lobos and Gallet came too. We went out for an evening of guitar music, with a little cachaça [cane liquor], and three true Brazilians [my emphasis], Pixinguinha, Patrício, and Donga"* (Freyre 1975: 189). [My translation.]. What this meeting of intellectuals and artists represented was the coming together of the best representatives of two very distinct social groups; Brazil's elite upper class and the underclass black and mulatto musicians who would help define musically what the elite were constructing intellectually as Brazilian identity. The above passage from Freyre's diary shows that these musicians, including the famous *choro* musician Pixinguinha, played a part in helping to establish Brazilian national identity (and to reinforce political ideology such as *mestiçagem*) through their direct interactions with Brazilian intellectuals. Also see: (Vianna 1999).

<sup>24</sup> For more information on Lacerda, see Chapter Three.

with Pixinguinha—performed a weekly radio program of their own titled, *Pessoal da Velha Guarda* (People of the Old Guard), where they performed the *choros* of Pixinguinha and other choro composers such as Chiquinha Gonzaga.<sup>25</sup>



Figure 2-7. Photo of Regional de Lacerda. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Public Domain).

### **Solo Guitar/Violão**

Perfect for accompanying, and capable as a solo instrument, the *violão* holds a unique role in the performance of *choro*. In the *choro* ensemble, the role of the *violão* is two-fold. It must function as harmonic accompaniment as well as play the improvised bass line (the *baixaria*) that creates countermelodies against the solo melodic lines of the flute. The *violão* can also perform the solo melodic function in the ensemble. As a solo instrument in *choro*, the *violão* omits the

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<sup>25</sup> See: (Koidin 2006)

*baixaria* in performance and rather, plays a more simple bass line that does not compete with the melodic line. In the early years of *choro*, solo *violão* performers also played the romantic *choro*-style compositions such as the *modinha*.

As *choro* continued to develop both in the dancehall environment and in the *rodas de choro* (choro circles)<sup>26</sup> as well as the elite salons of Rio, the popularity of the *violão* began to wane in favor of the piano. The *violão* was considered an appropriate instrument for the lower classes, but it had been practically abandoned by the elite. Most *violão* performers of *choro* in Rio were adept at accompanying in the *choro* ensemble, especially in the *rodas de choro*, but it was the solo *violão* performers that made their mark and rose out of the stigma of lower-class disfavor.

One of the most prominent early solo *violão* performers was João Teixeira Guimaraes de Pernambuco (1883-1947). Noted for his compositions (especially of the *modinha*), Pernambuco was also credited with being an excellent educator and masterful technician. The virtuosity he displayed when performing helped to push the limits of the sounds the *violão* could achieve in a performance setting. Another solo guitarist of note was Annibal Augusto ‘Garôto’ Sardinha (1915-1955). Adept with *violão*, banjo, *bandolim*, and *cavaquinho*, Garôto played with various *chorões* as a young man and became well-known for the challenging harmonies he created.<sup>27</sup>

[See page 49 for more information on João Pernambuco.]

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<sup>26</sup> *Rodas de choro* are informal gatherings of *choro* musicians, historically, in the poorer neighborhoods of Brazil’s urban centers. Musicians sit either in a circle or some other intimate setting, facing each other to facilitate musical communication, especially with the melodic soloist who would often improvise. In *rodas de choro*, *choro* musicians gather together to play for their own entertainment and enjoyment. *Rodas de choro* are now also performed on stage by professional *choro* musicians.

<sup>27</sup> For more information on the solo *violão* see: (Caracas Garcia 1997: 268-273), and; (Swanson 2004).

## Variations in Instrumentation

Eventually, the popularity of the *choro* style of playing allowed it to be incorporated into larger, more established instrumental ensembles such as the civic and military bands that were beginning to play these new *choro* musical forms in public squares. These ensembles included brass and woodwind reed instruments such as the *ophecleide*, the clarinet, the trombone, the tuba, and the saxophone in their instrumentation.

Tinhorão writes that ensembles such as the Corpo de Marinheiros (Sailor's Band), Corpo Policial da Província do Rio de Janeiro (Police Band of the Province of Rio de Janeiro), Guarda Nacional (National Guard), and Banda do Corpo de Bombeiros do Rio de Janeiro (Firemen's Band of Rio de Janeiro) were all playing *choro* music during the late nineteenth century (Tinhorão 1974: 98). In addition, these bands were an integral part of Brazil's Carnival celebrations and combined *choro* styles and sensibilities with the popular Carnival *sambas* of the day to create *maxixes*, *choro-sambas*, etc.

*Choro's* link to these emerging civic and military bands is logical given the prominent role of the flute in both ensembles. This link also reinforces the popular nature of the music being performed. In addition, these ensembles could be characterized as "poor man's orchestras" and the musicians who performed *choro* would most likely be the same as those participating in these bands.

The Banda do Corpo de Bombeiros do Rio de Janeiro was directed by Anacleto de Medeiros (1886-1907), one of the first musicians to incorporate this new *choro* style into his ensemble and repertoire and the first musician to notate arrangements for these civic and military bands. Anacleto was the son of a freed slave and began his formal musical training in 1884 when he enrolled at the Conservatório de Música, where he studied flute. He also performed in the Companhia de Menores do Arsenal de Guerra (Company of Children's Arsenal of War)

ensemble. In addition to his work with the military bands, Anacleto was also performed with his neighborhood's local *roda de choro* (Livingston-Isehour and Caracas García 2005: 69-72).

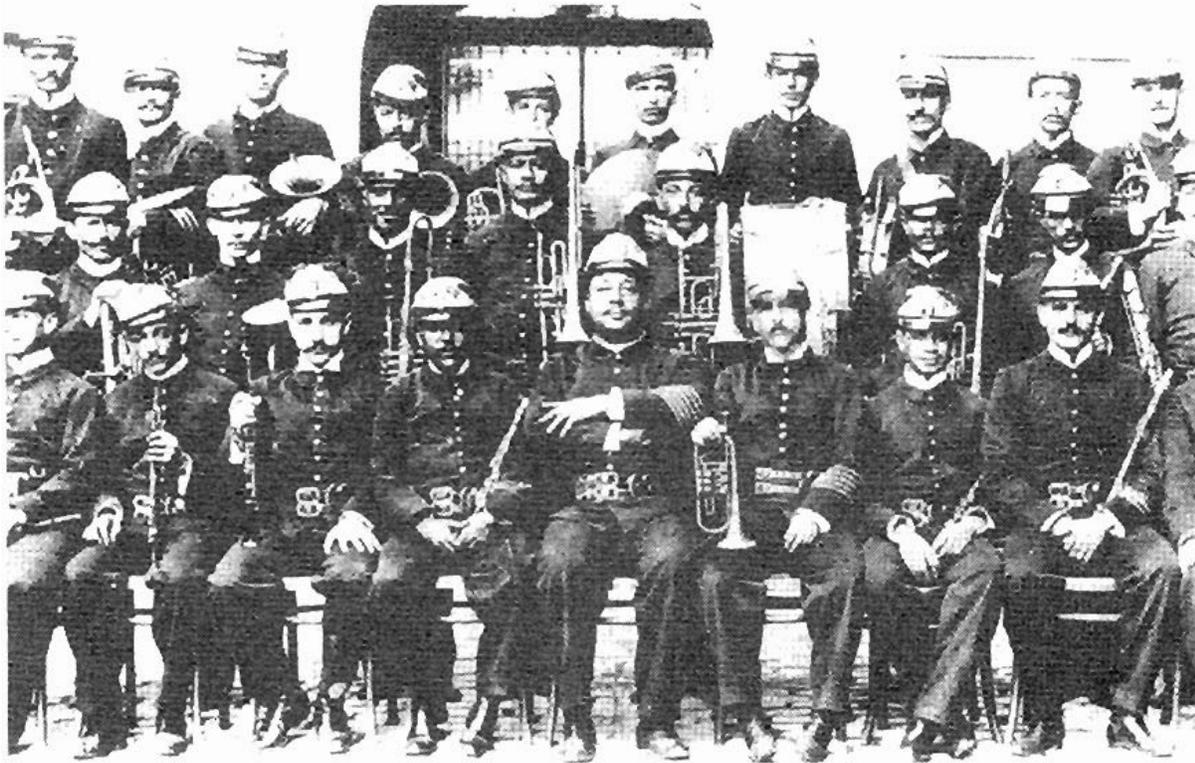


Figure 2-8. Photo of the Banda do Corpo de Bombeiros do Rio de Janeiro. Anacleto de Medeiros is seated in the middle. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Public Domain).

In this chapter, evidence has shown that early flutists/composers were instrumental in helping to establish *choro* as a prominent Brazilian musical style and for increasing its popularity through flute performance practices within the *choro* ensemble. Examination of the musical characteristics of *choro*—such as syncopation and improvisation—identified *choro* as a popular style of music with erudite tendencies and musical formal structures. Analysis of the role of the *conjuntos regionais* and other important ensembles and instrumentations showed their importance in the history and evolution of *choro*. In the next chapter, I will explore how Brazilian musical forms such as the *lundú*, *modinha*, and *maxixe*, as well as the principal

flutists/composers of *choro*, helped to move *choro* from a stylistic variant of popular musical genres into a distinct genre.

CHAPTER 3  
THE PROGRESSION OF CHORO REPERTORY: FROM STYLE TO FORMAL GENRE

**Popular Brazilian Music and the Antecedents of Choro**

The historical trajectory of *choro* went from a style of playing various genres of popular music by amateur musicians from the underclass to a unique genre of music in its own right. How *choro* moved historically from a style to the genre of music we can identify today as distinctly *choro* owes much of the credit for this evolution to its popularity and the virtuosity required to perform the music. Through historical analysis, we can chart how performance practices of urban popular salon genres such as the *polca*, *lundú*, *modinha*, *maxixe*, waltzes, mazurkas, and *xotes* (schottisches) moved composers and performers towards codifying the *choro* style of performance practice into a formal musical genre.

In 1847, the composer Francisco Manuel da Silva (1795-1865) founded the Music Conservatory of Rio de Janeiro and in 1855, the conservatory was annexed to the newly created Academy of Fine Arts. In 1857, the Imperial Academy of Music and National Opera was established and succeeded by the Opera Lírica Nacional in 1860. These centers were instituted to "promote the cultivation of art" in music (Béhague 1979: 111). Through professional association with these centers, composers began to create works that were increasingly influenced by local musical styles and literary themes of a nationalist nature.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, they also learned to develop a "gradual liberation from an exaggerated reverence for things European" (Appleby 1983: 60). Antônio Carlos Gomez (1836-1896), the most successful opera composer in Brazil in the nineteenth century, composed his famous opera, *Il Guarany*, in 1871. The final version of his overture to *Il Guarany*, with its Amerindian heroes and romantic

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the establishing of cultural centers that represent the nation-state is a typical characteristic of nationalism and nation building.

stylization of indigenous dances, became a virtual national anthem for Brazil.<sup>2</sup> Through works like *Il Guarany*, treatment of Brazilian subjects maintained “a symbolic value of social significance in the form of national and racial ideas” (Béhague 1979: 115).

Equally significant during this period were the folk and popular musical forms that were being performed in the urban areas and rural towns throughout Brazil. Composers such as Joaquim Antonio Callado Júnior (1848-1880), Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847-1935), Ernesto Nazareth (1863-1934), and later, Radamés Gnattali (1906-1988), “all composed music on the boundary between sounds of the streets and those of the concert halls... [They] had already built solid bridges between ethnic and social differences in their music, before those who were referred to as highbrow artists” (Araújo 2000: 118). These composers were also important in shaping the historical trajectory of *choro*.

The popular urban genres in which they composed—especially the European salon genres such as the polka, waltz, mazurka, schottische, and quadrille—were critical to the process of nationalizing Brazilian music through the modification of these forms with local stylistic elements. Two new forms of uniquely Brazilian popular music, in particular—evolutions of African and Portuguese forms—“provided a mirror for the formation of national elements and eventually provided a musical language with readily distinguishable national elements...”

(Appleby 1983: 60). They were the *lundú*, and the *modinha*, the precursors of *choro*.

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting note that the libretto for *Il Guarani* was written in Italian, a good indication that the cultural appeal of European expressive culture—and in this case, Italian opera and European exoticism—was very strong in Brazil during this time of nation-state building. Related, the Indianist literary, intellectual, and artistic movement in Brazil was also a factor in the creation of this opera. Indeed, from the late 1700s until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Brazilian intellectuals and artists celebrated the Amerindian in the most coherent cultural nationalist movement before Modernism. Brazil’s most famous novelist, Machado de Assis, the father of Brazilian Romanticism, helped to make Indianism the dominant expression of Romanticism in Brazil following independence. “More than this, under the direct patronage of the Emperor, Dom Pedro II, Indianism was a major pillar of the Empire’s project of state-building, the single most important object of artistic and political reflection to exercise the minds of its intellectual elite for more than half a century” (Treet 2000:5). The persistence of the Romantic image of the Indian into the bourgeois culture of the belle époque, helped to create the most famous imaginary hero of all, the Guarani Indian, Peri.

## Lundú

The *lundú* is recognized by many scholars as the first truly Brazilian musical form and has now become—with the *modinha*—the musical symbol of the emergence of a Brazilian national identity in the nineteenth century. The *lundú* was first practiced in the early 1700s as an Afro-Brazilian dance popular among blacks and mulattoes, and was brought to Brazil by the Bantu from Angola. The dance was immediately condemned by the Catholic Church because of its often sexual connotations, especially its use of the *umbigada*, a dance movement that simulates intercourse by having dancers ‘touch navels.’<sup>3</sup> The *umbigada* is a choreographic element of most Afro-Brazilian dances and the use of the *umbigada* distinguishes these dances as African-derived (Béhague 1966).

At the end of the eighteenth century, a dance salon style of the *lundú* emerged and was characterized by a lively tempo, syncopated rhythms, and comical or satirical themes, products of its African heritage. The dance salon *lundú* was then replaced around the 1860s by the *lundú* song style.<sup>4</sup> At this time, both the *lundú* and the *modinha* were being refined as verse forms by Brazilian poets of the nineteenth century.

Mário de Andrade wrote that the *lundú* was the first form of African-derived Brazilian music whose Europeanization is defined by complete acceptance of European harmonic tonality. He claimed the *lundú* (rather than the *modinha*) as the first uniquely Brazilian music due to the *lundú*’s acceptance by white elite society, the transformation it made from African folk dance to urban song, and the social significance that came with that transformation (Andrade 1944).

Béhague claims that this transformation and recognition of an African art form by the white elite

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<sup>3</sup> Despite this condemnation by the Catholic Church, the *lundú* remained a popular and often-practiced dance genre, both in Brazil as well as in Portugal.

<sup>4</sup> The *lundú*’s popularity as an African-derived dance form, however, remained strong—especially among the rural population in Bahia, Brazil—until the early twentieth century.

was not so much a matter of acceptance on behalf of the white population as it was a matter of acculturation and the result of miscegenation during a time when incorporation of African cultural retentions was rapidly and easily being assimilated into urban life. “The assimilation of these traditions came about as a social process of accommodation. This social accommodation had its musical counterpart in the hybrid forms that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century” (Béhague 1966: 46).

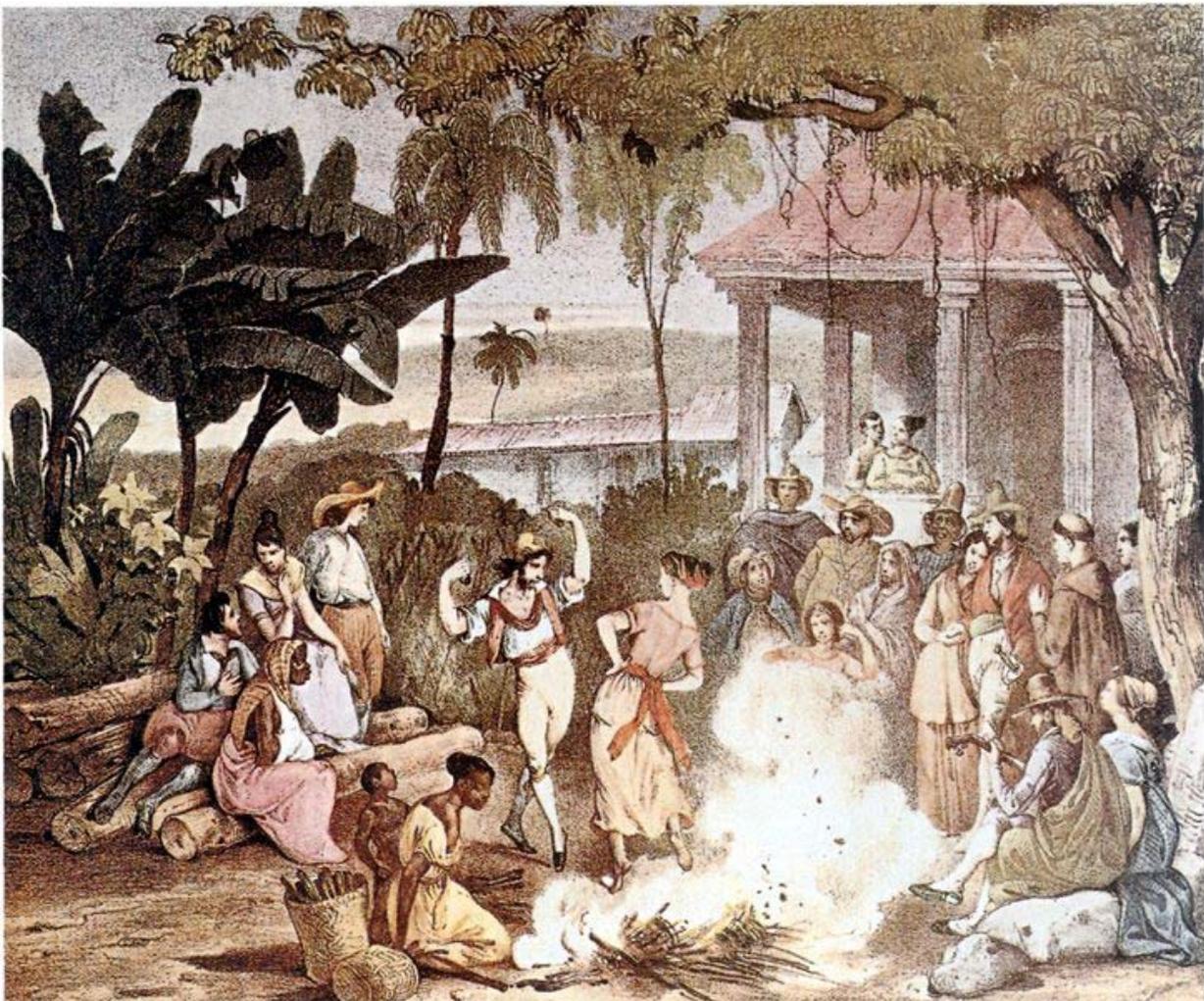


Figure 3-1. 1835 illustration of the *lundú* by Johann Moritz Rugendas. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Public Domain).

The *lundú* was the first of these hybrid styles to reach national significance. Also during this time, important erudite music composers such as Ernesto Nazareth were composing popular

songs with European and African-derived musical elements to great success. Indeed, Nazareth is credited with nationalizing the polka in Brazil through his *polca-lundú* compositions.

The *lundú* then progressed from a dance and song form to the parent form for urban popular music forms such as the *maxixe* and the *samba*. Musically, the urbanization of the *lundú* transformed it from an African-derived folk tradition to a style that began to incorporate primarily the harmonic and melodic notions of the Romantic erudite music composers of Brazil. Harmonically, modulations became more characteristic. The melodic line of the *lundú*, with ascending and descending phrases of repeated notes, remained stable in the composed, urban *lundú*. Importantly, the *lundú* had become the first step toward integrating the stylistic elements of black Afro-Brazilian music, such as improvisation and syncopation, into popular genres, a technique *choro* musicians were soon to follow.

### **Modinha**

Emerging simultaneously in Portugal and Brazil beginning in the late eighteenth century, the *modinha* is important as the precursor of Brazilian art songs in the vernacular. The product of a number of influences—such as European art music and the *moda*, a Portuguese folk genre—the *modinha* is important for the way it influenced Brazilian and Portuguese erudite music composers of note during the late eighteenth and entire nineteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> The *modinha* is also important in that it experienced a ‘reverse’ transformation, from that of an art song genre, into an urban popular genre. Indeed, the *modinha* can be categorized as having undergone a ‘transmigration’ of styles. The European waltz influenced the *modinha*, and then the *modinha* influenced the popular salon waltz in Brazil, which then became a sentimental song form that

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<sup>5</sup> Additionally, “[in] the case of Brazil the *modinha* introduced European characteristic elements which became associated with the national traits of popular music” (Béhague 1966: 48).

evolved into the *valsa-chôro*, which in turn, influenced and was cultivated by art music composers such as Camargo Guarnieri and Osvaldo Lacerda.

The *modinha* first emerged as a sentimental art song with an *aria cantabile* character in the salons and concert halls of Portugal's and Brazil's elite classes during Brazil's Second Empire (1840-1889). The *modinha* eventually evolved in and around the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador Bahia at the beginning of the *belle époque* of Brazilian popular music—from about 1870 until 1920—when the 1888 abolition of slavery led to mass migrations from rural areas to the cities and towns.<sup>6</sup>

In the early 1870s, the *modinha*—with its melodic nature, its romantic spirit, and influences from Italian opera—began appearing in public settings, often sung as serenades. Composers of art music began writing *modinhas* and nascent *choro* groups began playing these popular 'art songs' with greater frequency. The popularity of the *modinha* then rapidly spread throughout Brazil via oral/aural transmission as well as through the publication of sheet music.

The nineteenth-century *modinhas* in Brazil then developed along two basic trends. One trend—elaborate, aria-like *modinhas*—reflected their Portuguese origins and Italian *aria cantabile* influences. A second trend produced sentimental ballads of a romantic character. These ballads were suitable for serenades—or *serestas* as they were called—and serenading quickly became a performance context and style that appealed to *choro* musicians.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This period also witnessed the emergence of *choro* in its earliest forms.

<sup>7</sup> According to Béhague, the exact instrumentation for the performance of these early *modinhas* is difficult to ascertain, primarily because *modinhas* were typically written without accompaniment. Anecdotal accounts claim the *violão* was the instrument of choice, but Béhague believes that the piano, due to its prominent role in the households and salons of the elite, was perhaps the most popular instrument, especially given that most *modinha* performers and accompanists knew the basic harmonies and rhythmic structures of each piece simply from realizing the melodic line. Indeed, the *modinha* was that formulaic (Béhague 1966).

During the 1910s, Catulo da Paixão Cearense (1866-1946),<sup>8</sup> a composer and *violão* player from the Northeastern interior (the *sertão*), introduced stylized rural variants of the *modinha* to the salons of elite society in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>9</sup> Although the social and racial lines were still clearly delineated at this time, Catulo, known to be a superb musician, was able to overcome these obstacles by nature of his musical talents and was therefore often invited to perform *modinhas* in the homes of the *carioca*<sup>10</sup> elite. Catulo introduced the *violão* as a socially respectable native instrument and initiated a trend towards the increasing popularity of Brazilian pastoral songs and poetry performed in elite settings.<sup>11</sup> Vasconcelos credits Catulo with bringing the *modinha* to its full splendor through his innovative compositional techniques and claims that “*Catulo produzira algumas das mais belas canções populares brasileiras de todos os tempos* (Catulo produces some of the most beautiful Brazilian popular songs of all time)” (Vasconcelos 1977a: 23). [My translation.]

Perhaps the most important guitarist and composer of popular *modinhas* during this time was João Teixeira Guimaraes de Pernambuco (1883-1947). Also residing in Rio de Janeiro after migrating from the Northeast, João de Pernambuco—being musically non-literate—used to give his compositions to other musicians to transcribe and consequently, many of his compositions were stolen from him as unscrupulous musicians penned their own names to Pernambuco’s songs. A notable example is the song “Luar do Sertão,” written in 1911 in partnership with Catulo. The composition became extremely popular and important as the unofficial Brazilian

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<sup>8</sup> See: (Severiano e Homen de Mello 1997) and (Vasconcelos 1977a).

<sup>9</sup> Although he had moved to Rio much earlier, it was not until the 1910s that Catulo had begun to make his influence.

<sup>10</sup> *Carioca* is a term used to characterize people who were born and live in Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>11</sup> During the colonial period, most composers of art music also composed *modinhas* and other popular forms—usually on commission—in the prevailing popular Brazilian styles.

anthem, and during that time, Catulo claimed sole credit for the composition. Only in recent years has Pernambuco been given the credit he deserved as co-composer. Pernambuco's association with Catulo, nonetheless, provided him with access to the salons and theatres of Rio's elite at whose soirées Pernambuco was also often invited to play.

In 1914, Pernambuco formed the hugely successful *choro* ensemble, O Grupo de Caxangá, which counted Pixinguinha among its members. The ensemble introduced northeastern percussion and culture into the southeast of Brazil and remained extremely popular until 1919 (Crook 2005). Pernambuco also performed with Pixinguinha's famous *choro* ensemble, Os Oito Batutas, and Os Turunas Pernambucanos, for a number of years. With Pixinguinha, Pernambuco toured Brazil collecting Brazilian folkloric music. He also began recording for the first Brazilian recording label, Casa Edison.<sup>12</sup>

### **Maxixe**

In urban centers such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo between approximately 1914 and 1922, Brazil experienced the rise of another form of popular music and dance, the *maxixe*. The *maxixe* is a provocative song and dance style that originated in the dancehalls in Rio de Janeiro as early as the 1880s. A combination of folk and popular dance styles, the *maxixe* was first performed primarily by middle- and lower- class Afro-Brazilians in private party settings and much like the *lundú* of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the *maxixe* dance was frequently considered erotic (Béhague 1966).

Wildly controversial, the *maxixe* dance became a mainstay in the Carnival celebrations in Rio and gradually evolved into the modern urban *samba* (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005). Béhague states that, in fact, the choreographic element of the *maxixe* is one of its

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<sup>12</sup> See: (Crook 2005: 235-251).

most important aspects. “Not only does it provide the best example of an authentic Brazilian urban dance, but it also offers the best illustration of the acculturation process” (Béhague 1966: 68). Various international influences—Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazil, and European dance styles—went into creating the *maxixe*. Elements of folk dances such as the *batuque*, *cateretê*, and *lundú*, combined with the *polca* and the *habanera* to come together in the *maxixe*.

In its early phase, the title *maxixe* seems to have been more an indication of tempo rather than a distinct style probably because Afro-Brazilian aesthetics required that *polca-maxixes* and *tango-maxixes* were to be danced to faster tempos than regular *polcas* and *tangos*.

Regarding its musical components, the *maxixe* offered pleasing melodic lines, but they were heavily overpowered by the rhythmic vitality in the accompanying lines. Indeed, rhythmic complexity dominates the style. The Afro-Cuban *habanera* rhythm is a characteristic feature of the *maxixe*, a characteristic it shares with other Latin American popular dance forms, such as the *tango*, of the nineteenth century. The Afro-Brazilian rhythm [See Figure 3-2] was also an important stylistic element. Tinhorão states that it was the Afro-Brazilian rhythm that was adopted and adapted to the immensely popular polka that created the *maxixe*.



Figure 3-2. Syncopated rhythmic pattern characteristic of Afro-Brazilian genres.

A somewhat ‘tamed’ version of the *maxixe* eventually evolved and began appearing in the elite salons in the early twentieth century. Due to its previously pejorative connotation, the style was then referred to as a *tango* or a *tango brasileiro*. Nazareth was famous for composing *maxixes* that he then renamed *tango-brasileiros*. These compositions were little more than highly stylized and slightly more harmonically sophisticated versions of the *maxixe*, but the connotation stuck and the works remained identified as *tangos*. So pervasive was the popularity

of the *maxixe* and its subsequent styles that Tinhorão claims that the *maxixe* was, without question, the first important contribution to Brazilian popular music by the underclass of Rio de Janeiro (Tinhorão 1974: 59).

### **Important Contributors to the Genre: The Chorões**

Instrumental *choro* developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century as somewhat of a modified successor to the *modinha*, the *lundú*, and the *maxixe*. The composers of these popular forms utilized sixteenth-century western European musical sensibilities and introduced these harmonic and melodic structures into the salon genres such as the waltz, polka, tango, fox-trot, schottische, quadrille, etc. Composers in Rio de Janeiro then infused these popular forms with an African rhythmic vitality, i.e. a unique ‘swing’ that stemmed from the influence of African rhythms brought to the New World by enslaved Africans.

At this point in history, it is interesting to note that Brazilian composers were making no real clear distinction between popular and art music. Many of them, such as Ernesto Nazareth, spent their days composing art music in the conservatories and spent their evenings playing popular musical forms on the piano in movie theatres and bars.

Ernesto Nazareth was one of Brazil’s most important and prolific composers of erudite and popular music. Influenced by the nineteenth-century virtuoso performer and composer Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849), as well as by the American pianist Louis Moreau Gottshalk (1829-1869), Nazareth spent much of his career playing piano in theatres as accompaniment for silent films. It was while performing in the famous Teatro Odeon—the site of Rio de Janeiro’s first showing of silent films—that Nazareth composed his homage to the famous landmark, the *choro* “Odeon.” It was also at the Odeon that Nazareth met the erudite composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), who was a cellist in the orchestra, and who later based some of his own compositions on Nazareth’s *choros*.



Figure 3-3. Photo of Ernesto Nazareth. (Source: All Brazilian Music. Public Domain. [http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com/en/artists/Artists.asp?Status=ARTISTA&Nu\\_Artista=214](http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com/en/artists/Artists.asp?Status=ARTISTA&Nu_Artista=214). Last accessed March 2, 2009).

While many *choro* composers spent their lives composing and performing for the lower classes, Nazareth took great pains to distance himself from other *choro* musicians and members of the common classes. He chose instead to compose and perform for the elite, often avoiding the use of popular terminology, such as *maxixe* and *choro*, in the naming of his compositions. For Nazareth, a *choro* was named a *polca* and a *maxixe* was named a *tango brasileiro*. The piece, “Odeon,” was labeled a ‘*tango*’ by Nazareth.



Figure 3-4. Photo of the Teatro Odeon. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Public Domain).

In analyzing the music of “Odeon,” it is evident that the ornamentation of the melodic line includes the wide leaps, the use of grace notes, and chromaticism typical of the instrumental works, including the popular style called *polca*. In “Odeon,” we also find appoggiaturas in the

bass and the raising of the third of the tonic when in the minor key. Harmonically, the piece shifts from minor to major in a seven-part rondo form, compositional techniques that had become by this time in Brazil, a national trait. Indeed, Nazareth was, and is still, considered an important nationalist composer.

Another important *choro* composer of note was Francisca Edwiges Neves “Chiquinha” Gonzaga (1847-1935). Gonzaga is noteworthy not only because she was a woman in the male-dominated world of music composition, but she gave *choro* “proof of existence” according to Tinhorão, with her 1889 composition, “Só no Choro” (“Only in Choro”) (Tinhorão 1974, p.96).



Figure 3-5. Photo of Chiquinha Gonzaga. (Source: All Brazilian Music. Public Domain. [http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com/en/artists/Artists.asp?Status=ARTISTA&Nu\\_Artista=134](http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com/en/artists/Artists.asp?Status=ARTISTA&Nu_Artista=134). Last accessed March 2, 2009).

Gonzaga, the daughter of a high-ranking military official and a socialite mother, was privileged and well educated. Her family married her to a military official at thirteen but the marriage failed. Gonzaga found herself cut off from family funds after the failure of a second relationship so she turned to teaching piano and composing as a way to earn a living. Due to her extensive musical education in art music, Gonzaga quickly developed a keen interest in composing dramatic and operatic music. She also began to develop stylistic links to Callado as well as ideological connections to “the new trends of composition with national subjects and musical style” (Appleby 1983, p.76).

In 1899, Gonzaga was commissioned to write a song for the Cordão Rosa de Ouro for their Carnival parade. Gonzaga composed “Ô Abre Alas” (Make Way), the first registered *marcha* as well as the first song ever written specifically for Carnival. The composition of all subsequent *marchas* (or *marchinhas*) has been based on this song form developed by Gonzaga. Gonzaga was also the first woman in Brazil to conduct a military band.

Not only was Gonzaga a social and musical groundbreaker, she was prolific as a composer as well. Throughout her life, Gonzaga’s production of popular Brazilian dances such as the *lundú*, *modinha*, and *maxixe*—along with her compositions of tangos and polkas—is said to number at almost two thousand. While undoubtedly an exaggeration, none-the-less, Gonzaga’s contribution to popular Brazilian music is profound.

In 1877, Gonzaga wrote one of her first *choro* works, “Atraente,” a polka in the improvisational style of the *chorões*. The piece included stylistic elements reminiscent of Callado, with chromaticism, octave leaps, repeated notes in the melodic line, and alternating melodic elements between the flute, clarinet, and *cavaquinho*.

It is worth noting that Brazilian composers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were likewise influenced by American composers and performers of jazz and specifically, ragtime. Because the piano played such a pivotal role in the composition and performances of these jazz and ragtime pieces, Brazilian composers also used the instrument as a tool for composing popular songs, as well as employing it as the instrument of choice when performing from written scores. These written scores were then assimilated aurally by the musically non-literate string and percussion *choro* musicians who learned the tunes and then added their own improvisations.

This relationship between oral/aural traditions versus notated music went both ways. The influence of the oral/aural traditions of folk and popular forms on the newly notated compositions of these versatile composers came about through changes in critical socio-cultural circumstances between 1890 and 1920. During this time, there was a large movement of populations from the rural to the urban areas in Brazil, primarily as a result of the abolition of slavery in 1888, when large numbers of newly freed slaves, added to the influx of Europeans fleeing Napoleon's invasions, settled in the colonial centers of the New World. This shift in demographics gave rise to socio-cultural interactions between diverse populations which in turn led to the eventual acceptance of Afro-Brazilian and rural folk traditions by the elite, which again in turn facilitated the push to establish a national identity, a major concern of the government at the time. These combined circumstances manifested themselves in the transformation of European salon genres and African rhythms into uniquely Brazilian compositions.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the solo melodic instruments, primarily the flute, were the instruments that made it possible to build this compositional bridge between the popular and erudite music worlds. In addition, the first notable *choro* composers were also flutists who wrote

melody lines that called for virtuosic performance techniques specific to the instrument. Equally important was the fact that it was often only the flute players who could read music and therefore instruct the other *choro* musicians in the performance of the song.

For example, the famous *samba-choro*, “Tico-Tico no Fubá,” (“The Tico Bird in the Cornmeal”) was composed by the famous flutist and prolific composer of Brazilian popular music, Zequinha de Abreu (1880-1935). “Tico-Tico no Fubá” placed tremendous technical demands on its performers, and was also immensely popular. A canon in the literature of popular Brazilian music, “Tico-Tico” is one of the most recorded Brazilian songs of all time.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1940s, Carmen Miranda, the ‘Brazilian Bombshell,’ brought Brazilian popular music to the rest of the world through her interpretations of popular *sambas* and *choros*.<sup>14</sup> Somewhat sanitized, according to Brazilian sources, to appeal to a white North American and European audience, Miranda made “Tico-Tico” a standard in her repertoire. A darling of Hollywood, Miranda sang “Tico-Tico” in the 1947 Marx Brothers’ film “Copacabana” dressed in a highly stylized and ‘exotic’ costume made to bear a resemblance to the clothing worn by women from the state of Bahia, complete with large hoop earrings, and a basket of fruit on her head. “Tico-Tico” also appeared in Disney’s animated film “Saludos Amigos” featuring Donald Duck. It was sung by a parrot by the name of José, or Zé Carioca, with a silhouette of Carmen Miranda dancing in the background. In the case of “Tico-Tico,” what was considered one of most technically demanding virtuosic pieces to perform ultimately became popular nationalist music.

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<sup>13</sup> The confirmation of this fact proven by checking just one CD website (allbrazilianmusic.com), where it showed over 50 different recordings of “Tico-Tico” by various groups and solo performers. Indeed, there is hardly a compilation of Brazilian music that does not include this well-known song.

<sup>14</sup> In Brazil, Miranda was often the singer for the *conjunto regional*, Banda da Lua.

## Flutists/Composers

### Joaquim Antônio da Silva Callado Júnior (1848-1880)

*Foram convidar um lacedônio  
a ir ouvir um homem que imitava  
com a boca o canto do rouxinol.  
'Eu já ouvi o rouxinol,' respondeu ele.  
A mim, quando me falaram de um homem  
que tocava flauta com as mãos,  
respondi: 'Eu já ouvi o Callado.'*

They invited a Lacedonian  
to go hear a man who imitated  
with his mouth the song of the nightingale.  
'I have heard the nightingale,' he replied.  
When they spoke to me of this man  
who played the flute with his hands,  
I replied: 'I have heard Callado.' (Assis 1986: 338-339).  
[My translation.]

The most important flutist/composer in the creation of the *choro* style was Joaquim Antônio da Silva Callado Júnior, also known as the Father of *Choros*. Callado was a contemporary and friend of Chiquinha Gonzaga and it was her company that he first experienced popular musical forms. The son of a prominent classical musician, Callado was trained in the academy as a child and established his solo flute virtuoso career by performing for the Imperial Court in 1866, when he was just eighteen years of age. His first major success as a composer came one year later with the publishing of his quadrille, "Carnaval de 1867."

Sometime around 1870, Callado formed the group Choro Carioca, using conventional *terno* instrumentation. By this time, the flute had become the preferred melodic instrument for the *terno*<sup>15</sup> due to its superior range and capacity for dynamic contrast. It was also not uncommon for the flute player in the *terno* to assume a leadership position due to the fact that oft

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<sup>15</sup> The flute replaced the *charamela*, which was gradually disappearing into obscurity. See: (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 61).

times, it was only the flutist who could read music and compose harmonic arrangements for the ensemble.



Figure 3-6. Illustration of Joaquim Antônio da Silva Callado. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Public Domain).

What is also important about Callado is that he is credited with using the term *choro* for the first time to describe his ensemble. While Callado's *terno* was not a new instrumentation—indeed, the *terno* had already become the core of instrumental ensembles played by the black *choromeleiro* and *barbeiros* groups located in the underclass neighborhoods of Rio—what was unique about Grupo Carioca was the fact that Callado was one of the first composers to require that his *violão* player provide a *baixaria* when the group performed.<sup>16</sup> This essentially changed not only the roles of the instrumentation, but it affected both the style of the music and the manner in which the instruments related to one another. In addition, “Callado was one of the first well-known musicians to play polkas in the new *choro* style, over which he exerted considerable influence” (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 67). Besides requiring the *violão* player to provide a *baixaria*, Callado also wrote out the harmonic progressions for the pieces Grupo Carioca performed, one of the first composers to do so.

By 1871, Callado was considered the best flute player in Brazil and was appointed to the Conservatório de Música, a perfect example of how easily and expertly early *choro* composers and performers straddled the art and popular music worlds. Callado earned his living by performing and composing erudite music, but it was his participation in the *rodas de choro* and as leader of Grupo Carioca where he found his calling. He performed *choro* with all of the most important performers and composers of popular music in Brazil and he especially enjoyed performing with solo guitar virtuoso, Saturnino (ca. 1845-1905).<sup>17</sup>

In 1867, at the age of nineteen, Callado composed his most famous *choro*, a *polca-choro*, titled “Flôr Amorosa.” “Flôr Amorosa” is unique in that it foreshadowed the main melodic

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<sup>16</sup> See: (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 66-68).

<sup>17</sup> See: (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 66-68).

characteristics of the mature *choro* by over thirty years, characteristics such as octave leaps, a lively and embellished melody, chromaticism, and a fast tempo. “The most notable difference between other early choros and Callado’s music as exemplified in ‘Flôr Amorosa’ is the rhythmic component. The melody is dominated by sixteenth-note runs and the accompaniment is dominated by the Afro-Brazilian rhythm and variants on that pattern” (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005: 68). [See Figure 3-2 for an example of the Afro-Brazilian rhythm.]



Figure 3-7. Musical excerpt from “Flôr Amorosa.” Public Domain.

### **Patápio Silva (1880-1907)**

Patápio Silva is considered one of the major flute virtuosos in the history of Brazilian popular music and was one of the pioneers of the early recording industry in Brazil. He was classically trained at the Instituto Nacional de Música in Rio de Janeiro by Duque Estrada Meyer (1848-1905), a student of Callado, and the result of this extensive conservatory training is evident in the recordings he made for the Odeon recording label.



Figure 3-8. Photo of Patápio Silva. (Source: All Brazilian Music. Public Domain. . [http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com/en/artists/Artists.asp?Status=ARTISTA&Nu\\_Artista=455](http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com/en/artists/Artists.asp?Status=ARTISTA&Nu_Artista=455). Last Accessed: March 14, 2009).

For example, ‘Primeiro Amor’ a *waltz-choro* recorded in 1906, is accompanied by piano rather than the full *choro* ensemble.<sup>18</sup> This was a common practice in the salons of the elite, for indeed, Silva’s audience was the elite of the federal capital. It was as well, a reflection of the way in which the protocols of art music performance—specifically the use of piano to accompany solo instrumentalists, as in the *sonata*—bridged over into the performance of popular styles. The use of piano as accompaniment also speaks to inherent class distinctions, as the elite were able to

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<sup>18</sup> A recent release of historic recordings by the Biscoito Fino label, *Memórias Musicais*, features several performances by Patápio Silva. See: (*Memórias Musicais*, BF 601-1--BF 601-15).

afford expensive instruments such as a piano, yet the working class relied more on the *violão*, *cavaquinho*, and *pandeiro* in the performance of *choro*.

What is heard in this recording is an excellent example of some of the most difficult and demanding virtuosic flute techniques, including rapid sixteenth-note phrases, double tonguing, two-octave arpeggios, and slurred octave leaps. What is also particularly challenging to wind instrumentalists in performing *choro* is finding places to breathe (and to swallow) between phrases. It is certainly more difficult than it would seem and Silva plays the piece seamlessly. Another notable virtuosic quality is Silva's fast, deep, and consistent vibrato, another product of his conservatory training.

### **Pixinguinha – Alfredo da Rocha Vianna Júnior (1898-1973)**

To say that Pixinguinha was a monument in popular Brazilian music is an understatement. His reputation in the world of conservatory-trained musicians as a virtuoso flutist, as well as a composer of sophisticated popular music, can also be described through another quote by contemporary *choro* flutist, Daniel Dalarossa. He writes, "I perfectly recall the first day of my flute class with the late Professor João Dias Carrasqueira. Right after introducing myself, I was immediately asked: "Why would you like to learn to play the flute?" [I answered,] "Because I want to learn to play Pixinguinha, Bach and Vivaldi" (Dalarossa 2009).

Pixinguinha was born Alfredo da Rocha Vianna Filho on April 23, 1898 in Piedade, in northern Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He was born into a musical family and learned to play the flute from his father Alfredo, after whom he was named. As a child, he also learned to play the *cavaquinho*. In 1911, at the age of twelve, Alfredo bought Pixinguinha an expensive Italian flute and contracted Irineu de Alameida to teach his son flute and music theory.



Figure 3-9. Photo of Pixinguinha. (Source: All Brazilian Music. Public Domain. . [http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com/en/Artists/Artists.asp?Status=ARTISTA&Nu\\_Artista=477](http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com/en/Artists/Artists.asp?Status=ARTISTA&Nu_Artista=477). Last Accessed: March 14, 2009).

Pixinguinha grew to become a founding father of *samba* and is often considered the greatest *choro* musician of all time. Through his work as an arranger, virtuoso instrumentalist, conductor, and composer, Pixinguinha revolutionized popular music in Brazil in the twentieth century. In *The Mystery of Samba*, Hermano Vianna cites an important episode in the transformation of *samba* into a "national" music involving an encounter between Pixinguinha, anthropologist Gilberto Freyre, and their respective friends (1999).<sup>19</sup> Freyre had become

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<sup>19</sup> Vianna refers to Pixinguinha throughout the book as a *sambista* (Vianna 1999).

interested in Pixinguinha via his role as maestro<sup>20</sup> of the Companhia Negra de Revistas (The Black Revue Company), Brazil's first all-black theatre group from Rio, one of many of Pixinguinha's landmark achievements.

Pixinguinha was a virtuoso flutist, saxophonist, pianist, and percussionist, and was an expert improviser on all of these instruments. As a composer, he wrote in almost every style of popular Brazilian music played during his lifetime: *choros*, *polcas*, *valsas*, *sambas*, *samba canções*, *choro canções*, *maxixes*, *shottishes*, *marcha ranchos*, *choro ligeiros*, *choro serenatas*, *choro seresteiros*, *choro melódicos*, *choro tristes*, *choro vivos*, and *baiões* (Carrasqueira 1997). All in all, Pixinguinha is credited with over 600 compositions.

In 1910, as an eleven-year-old child, Pixinguinha founded Grupo do Pixinguinha. In 1911, Pixinguinha began to play with the carnival group Grêmio Filhas da Jardineira. Also during that year, he composed his first *choro*, “Lata de Leite” (Can of Milk). Downey lists Pixinguinha's first recording—unnamed in his article—as occurring sometime in 1910-1911 with the group Pessoal de Bloco for the Casa de Faulhaber label (Downey 2002). Pixinguinha made his first recording—an interpretation of Irineu de Alameda's *tango brasileiro*, “São João debaixo d'água” (“St. John under the Water”)—in 1915 with the group Choro Carioca (McGowan and Pessanha 1998).

By 1914 Pixinguinha had become a band member and the principal composer of the Carnival bloco, Grupo do Caxangá. Most importantly, in 1917, Pixinguinha founded the Choro Pixinguinha, which two years later became Os Oito Batutas (The Eight Masters). Os Oito

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<sup>20</sup> Throughout his career, Pixinguinha led a number of important ensembles, among them: Os Oito Batutas; the Orquestra Típica Pixinguinha-Donga; the Diabos do Céu; the Guarda Velha; and the Orquestra Columbia de Pixinguinha.

Batutas—made up of Pixinguinha and his most talented colleagues from Grupo do Caxangá<sup>21</sup>—was very important in the history of Brazilian music.<sup>22</sup> Its members all stood at the vanguard of Brazilian popular music and helped transfer Brazilian popular music into elite musical settings (Downey 2002).

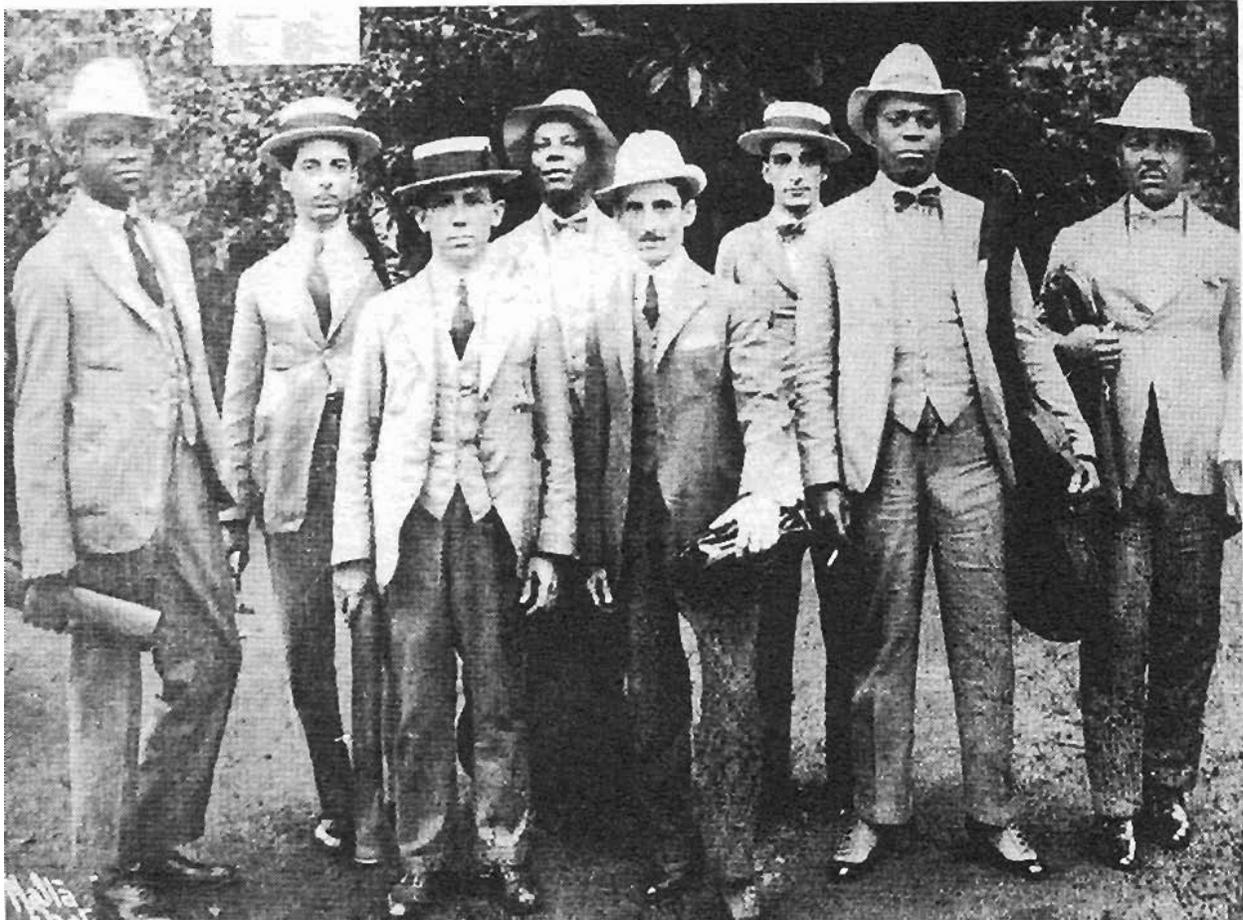


Figure 3-10. Photo of Os Oito Batutas. Pixinguinha is the first on the left. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Public Domain).

Os Oito Batutas played its first engagement at the Cinema Palais movie theatre in Rio in 1919. At the request of the theatre manager, Isaac Prankel, they played *choros*, *maxixes*,

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<sup>21</sup> Pixinguinha's fellow bandmate Donga (Ernesto Joaquim Maria dos Santos, 1889-1974) is credited with composing the first *samba carnavalesco*, "Pelo Telefone" in 1916. The piano score was written by Pixinguinha (Downey 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Os Oito Batutas was the first ensemble of its kind to include the *pandeiro*, *ganzá*, and *reco-reco* with their usual instrumentation of *cavaquinho*, mandolin, guitar, piano, and vocals (McGowan and Pessanha 1998).

*modinhas*, and *lundús* in the foyer of the theatre, something black musicians had never before been allowed to do. Sometimes they were asked to accompany the action on the screen; however, they were not allowed to play on stage, as the stage was reserved for white musicians. Os Oito Batutas became so popular that some patrons paid just to hear Pixinguinha and did not attend the movie. It has been written many times that Ernesto Nazareth, pianist at the Odeon Theatre, was one of Os Oito Batutas's biggest fans.

Beginning in 1922, Os Oito Batutas took a legendary tour through Europe promoting Brazilian music. They were taken to Europe by promoter Arnaldo Guinle to accompany Duque and Gaby, a famous pair of *maxixe* dancers. Initially, some Brazilian elite were outraged as they did not want “primitive and barbaric” music representing Brazil.<sup>23</sup> Pixinguinha and Os Oito Batutas, however, were enthusiastically received in Europe, especially in Paris, where they were so well accepted that they remained in the city and were therefore unable to complete the rest of their itinerary. On their return trip to Brazil, they made a recording for RCA Victor in Buenos Aires to much acclaim (Gilman 1996).

While in Europe, Os Oito Batutas became influenced by the European foxtrot orchestras and jazz bands that were on tour from the United States. As a result, Os Oito Batutas began to add foxtrots, shimmies, and ragtime to their repertory, as well as adding the clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, and trombone to the instrumentation needed to play them (McGowan and Pessanha 1998; Perrone and Dunn 2001). And although Pixinguinha is remembered primarily as a flutist, he actually recorded more pieces on the tenor sax, an instrument he adopted in the 1920s in an effort to gain the louder sound and greater sonority needed to play the large halls in Paris. After

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<sup>23</sup> Os Oito Batutas's most outspoken critic was Gilberto Amado, a writer and member of the Brazilian House of Representatives (Gilman 1996).

1946, however, Pixinguinha played the saxophone exclusively because he feared that old age was dulling his “legendary virtuosity” on the flute (Downey 2002).

In 1928, Pixinguinha recorded one of his most famous works, the *choro canção* entitled “Carinhoso” (“Tenderly”). With this piece, Pixinguinha changed the structure of the *choro* from a three-part form to a two-part form with an introduction (Carrasqueira 1997). This rondo-like structure became the standard for *choro* composition and is found in the vast majority of *choro* pieces to this day. Despite its simple structure, the harmonies of “Carinhoso” were very sophisticated and at first were met with uncertainty and resistance. However, when the piece was re-recorded almost ten years later by Orlando Silva, no one found the form or harmonic structure the least bit strange, a testament to Pixinguinha's importance and influence in the creation of contemporary Brazilian popular music forms and styles.

In 1929, Pixinguinha was hired by the RCA Victor label in Rio de Janeiro to lead the company's studio orchestra and to arrange popular musical compositions. This was perhaps the most influential time in Pixinguinha's career. The music he wrote during this time was being shaped by African, European, North American and other international influences and he began to integrate these influences into his music and incorporate their hybridity as Brazilian stylistic elements. For example, Pixinguinha had musicians improvise over popular musical forms such as the *lundú*, *choro*, *samba de roda*, and *maxixe*. He also incorporated other popular European musical trends into his instrumentation and harmonies. Two of Pixinguinha's earliest recordings (from 1917), “Rosa” (“Rosa”) and “Sofres Porque Queres” (“You Suffer Because You Want To”), are good examples of the complexity of his composing and arranging style. During this time, Pixinguinha began forming the principles of modern Brazilian harmony, rhythm, counterpoint—and also importantly, nationalistic identity—in popular music.

As an instrumentalist in the 1930s-1940s, Pixinguinha recorded many works that became the foundation of the *choro* repertoire including “Segura Ele,” “Ainda Me Recordo,” “Um a Zero,” “Proezas de Solon,” “Naquele Tempo,” “Abraçando Jacaré,” “Os Oito Batutas,” “As Proezas de Nolasco,” and “Sofres Porque Queres.” “Carinhoso,” however, is still considered to be his most famous song. The decade of the 1930s is considered the Golden Era of Brazilian popular music and it was widely agreed that Pixinguinha was its principal figure.

In 1933, Pixinguinha enrolled in the Instituto Nacional de Música in Rio de Janeiro in an effort to improve his composing, arranging, and instrument performance skills. He left after one semester when his professors admitted that there was nothing more that they could teach him.

In 1940, Pixinguinha was hired by Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), who had in turn been hired to select popular Brazilian musicians for an historic recording on the Columbia label, under the baton of maestro Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977). The recording was to be presented to a Pan-American congress on folklore. As he had previously recorded many popular arrangements of *frevos*, *choros*, and *maracatus*, Pixinguinha chose to once more perform his arrangements of these popular genres, making this new recording, *Native Brazilian Music*, a similar and grand success.

In 1940, Pixinguinha joined flutist Benedicto Lacerda's *regional*, presumably for financial reasons, yet both sides were to gain from the collaboration. Thus began one of the most fertile periods of popular Brazilian musical composition, bringing with it a perfection of virtuosic execution previously unknown in Brazilian popular music. Pixinguinha improvised stellar counterpoint on tenor saxophone beneath Lacerda's flute solos and together they revived the waning *choro* tradition by once again catapulting it to the top of Brazilian popular music recordings. During this period, Pixinguinha, with Lacerda as co-composer, wrote the trendy and

innovative “Segura-ele” (“Hold Him”), and “Ingênuo” (“Naïve”). Pixinguinha's work was part of a *choro* revival during the 1940s that subsided by the early 1950s and *choro* was not to experience another surge in popularity again until the 1970s (Roberts 1998). And although Benedicto Lacerda appears as co-author of these compositions, they were in fact, written by Pixinguinha alone, who graciously gave partnership to Lacerda because of their collaborative relationship.

In 1954 Pixinguinha returned to prominence, after four years of inactivity, when he played in the I Festival da Velha Guarda (First Festival of the Old Guard), an event showcasing the finest musicians of Pixinguinha's generation and organized for Rádio Record in São Paulo. During this time, from 1952 to 1966, Pixinguinha was also a teacher of music and choral song at the Serviço da Educação Musical e Artística.

Pixinguinha began to slow down in the late 1960s and early 1970s, primarily because of health reasons, but he still found time to influence a number of important Brazilian musicians. For instance, Pixinguinha mentored guitarist and composer Baden Powell who was his protégé. He also collaborated with Clementina de Jesus in the late 1960s. In 1968, on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was honored by the Legislative Assembly, the Munciple Theater of Rio de Janeiro, and the Museum of Images and Sound for his contributions to Brazilian popular music.

On February 17, 1973, Pixinguinha died in his son's arms in the sacristy of the Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Paz (Our Lady of Peace Church) in Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, while awaiting the baptism of his godson. There was great mourning at his passing and to this day, Pixinguinha is still beloved by all Brazilians who continue to hold him up as their national hero.

### **Benedicto Lacerda (1903-1958)**

Benedicto Lacerda<sup>24</sup> is another monument in Brazilian *choro* flute playing. Born to a wealthy father, Lacerda began to play the flute when he was eight years old, without formal instruction. At the age of seventeen, Lacerda moved to Rio de Janeiro and began studying flute with Belarmino de Sousa. He studied flute and composition at the Instituto Nacional de Música and began performing with local civic bands. In 1925 he enrolled in the Escola Militar do Realengo (Military School of Realengo) where he played in the military band and became a ‘musician first class.’ In 1927, Lacerda began performing in theatres for silent cinema. By 1929, the year he formed his first *conjunto regional*, Lacerda had already had musical training from the academy, and performance experience playing with civic and military bands. He had also acquired experience playing popular music in entertainment venues. All of this training and experience combined to make Lacerda one of the most important early *choro* musicians and a good example of how these musicians used their training, experience, and expertise to create *choro*.

Lacerda created a number of *conjuntos regionais*. [See: Figure 2-7 and Chapter Two, Conjuntos Regionais.] The first was Os Boêmios da Cidade (The Bohemians of the City), and with them, he accompanied international stars such as Josephine Baker. His second ensemble, O Gente do Morro (The People from the Hill), founded in 1930, was created with the goal of performing popular Brazilian music using newly emerging Brazilian musical styles and rhythms (as a response to the nationalism movement). Through the popularity of O Gente do Morro, much of the *choro* music played during that time began to be performed by *conjuntos regionais*.

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<sup>24</sup> It is also common to find Lacerda’s first name spelled as Benedito.

In 1934, Lacerda modified the personnel of O Gente do Morro and from an elite group of hand-selected musicians, created the famous Regional de Benedicto Lacerda. The group went through various personnel changes throughout its history, but none was more important to the historical significance of the ensemble than when Pixinguinha joined Lacerda's *regional*.<sup>25</sup>



Figure 3-11. Photo of Benedicto Lacerda on flute and Pixinguinha on saxophone. (Source: Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. Public Domain).

Lacerda, besides being the flute player for his ensemble, was also the composer (as we have seen was common for other *choro* flutists). During the late 1930s and early 1940s, the popularity of *choro* was already in decline and musicians such as Pixinguinha were having difficulty finding work. The goal of including Pixinguinha into Lacerda's *regional* was primarily to generate income and to revive the waning popularity of *choro*. Lacerda and

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<sup>25</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, Lacerda's popularity grew with assistance from the expanding radio and recording industry.

Pixinguinha decided that the best way to do this was to re-record, on the RCA Victor label, many of their earlier hits. Most of the compositions were originally Pixinguinha's, but the deal with Lacerda found the two musicians sharing the credit as composer. They ultimately recorded thirty-four *choros* on a series of eighteen 78 RPM discs.

During the late 1940s, Lacerda continued on as flutist and bandleader for his *regional* and performing on the radio and in popular venues such as the Cassino da Urca and the Cassino Copacabana. In 1949, Lacerda was elected president of the Sociedade Brasileira de Autores, Compositores, e Escritores de Música (Brazilian Society of Music Authors, Composers, and Writers). According to Lacerda's son Oduvaldo Lacerda, his father remained active in all his musical pursuits right up until his death in 1958.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Altamiro Aquino Carrilho (b. 1924)**

Altamiro Carrilho is another of the most important *choro* flutists and prolific composers of *choro* of the twentieth century. In close to sixty years as a professional artist, Carrilho has maintained his astounding virtuosity and an ease for improvisation that has brought him praise from both the erudite and popular music worlds.

Born in 1924, Carrilho was a young man during the first revival of *choro*'s popularity in the late 1940s. During this time, he performed with *choro* greats, Pixinguinha and Benedicto Lacerda and succeeded Lacerda in the Conjunto Regional de Benedicto Lacerda after Lacerda retired due to health reasons. As a solo artist, Carrilho has worked with many renowned Brazilian musicians such as Orlando Silva, Francisco Alves, Caetano Veloso, and Chico Buarque, among many others.

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<sup>26</sup> The bulk of the information gathered on Benedicto Lacerda came from Julie Koidin's Doctoral dissertation on Lacerda. See: (Koidin 2006: 30-40).

Carrilho began playing a bamboo flute at age five, and by age eleven, he was playing the transverse Boehm flute in local ensembles. At age twelve, he began to study flute formally, and by the time he was fifteen, he had recorded his first album.



Figure 3-12. Photo of Altamiro Carrilho, courtesy of Leonardo Aversa. (Source: <http://www.factoriacomunicacao.com/imprensa2.aspx>. Last accessed March 15, 2009. Used with Permission).

In 1956, Carrilho's *maxixe* "Rio Antigo" sold nearly a million copies, bringing him national fame. By 2001, Carrilho had made over one-hundred and ten recordings and had

penned over two-hundred compositions. Carrilho was also the host of the highly successful television program, *Em Tempo de Música*. His album *Clássicos em Choro* was awarded the Villa-Lobos prize as Best Instrumental Album and his *Clássicos em Choro No. 2* went gold with over one million copies sold. In 1993, he was awarded the Sharp prize for Best Arranger of Instrumental Music for his work on the album *Altamiro Carrilho: 50 Anos de Choro*. In 1997, Carrilho won again for Best Instrumental Album, *Flauta Maravilhosa*.<sup>27</sup>

According to Koidin, Carrilho states that he was “most influenced by flutists Dante Santoro and Benedicto Lacerda, but his style emerged from listening to a variety of music, including American and European jazz, Dixieland, Scott Joplin, and classical, which he combined into one style he calls his own”(Coelho and Koidin 2005: 38-39). Indeed, Carrilho’s playing style can best be described as *brincando* (playing), i.e., performing in a playful manner. Carrilho often uses this term to describe his performance philosophy. He states that musicians must have fun when they play music. Carrilho is perhaps best known for his trademark insertion of excerpts from art music compositions into his *choro* performances, and vice versa.

In addition to being a world-class performer and composer, Carrilho is also an educator. Besides training private students, in 1996, Carrilho published *Chorinhos Didáticos para Flauta*, a compilation of twelve of his *choro* compositions in an etude book, with a play-along recording, for flutists. He also holds workshops on *choro* flute playing.

### **Contemporary Professional Chorões: The Next Generation**

Approximately every twenty to thirty years, *choro* undergoes a revival.<sup>28</sup> Livingston posits that this is because a *choro* revival fills “a void in the expressive culture of sectors of the middle

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<sup>27</sup> See: (*Altamiro Carrilho & sua flauta maravilhosa*. Official Website. 2009)

<sup>28</sup> For more information on *choro* revivals, see: (Livingston 1999a), (Livingston 1999b), and (Livingston-Isenhour and Caracas Garcia 2005).

class, serving as a basis for reestablishing their Brazilian identity.... As a musical movement, [the revival] reinvigorate[s] choro as a musical style by attracting and educating new dedicated players who continue to explore its musical potential” (Livingston 1999a: iv).

By the end of the 1920s, *choro*'s popularity had begun to wane. No longer in style, and increasingly eclipsed by the emergent popular form called *samba*, the *choro* tradition was vanishing from the mainstream popular music movement. Perhaps not so surprising though, *choro* was still being kept alive throughout the 1930s by musicians such as Pixinguinha and the guitarist Annibal Augusto ‘Garôto’ Sardinha (1915-1955).

During the 1930s and 1940s, the great *choro* musicians continued to live within an exclusive sub-culture they created to preserve—and in so doing, resuscitate—their art. The old-guard *chorões* would often meet at private, all-night *saraus*<sup>29</sup> or *rodas de choro* to play their *choros*. Membership in these *choro* brotherhoods was restricted to those of superior musicianship and inclusion was tightly controlled (Gilman 1996).

In the late 1940s, a brief *choro* revival occurred in the music of flutist Benedicto Lacerda (with Pixinguinha). Other *chorões* such as flutist Altamiro Carrilho, *bandolim* virtuoso Jacó do Bandolim, and bandleader Severino Araújo also contributed to this renaissance. But, by the end of the 1940s, the *choro* tradition again, was all but over.

Another small *choro* revival would occur in the mid-1970s, thanks to the efforts of Jacó do Bandolim, one of the greatest *bandolim* players in Brazil. In 1975, the Week of Jacó do Bandolim brought the greatest musicians of the genre to Rio de Janeiro’s Museum of Image and Sound for concerts. Musicians such as Paulo Moura (b. 1933), Hermeto Pascoal (b. 1936), and Paulinho da Viola (b. 1942) subsequently began including *choros* on their recordings and

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<sup>29</sup> *Saraus* became a form of resistance to the encroaching new styles.

incorporating *choro* into a variety of other popular styles. Under the leadership of Radamés Gnattali, this new generation of *choro* aficionados formed the Escola Camerata Carioca. The music they produced was erudite and sophisticated and it helped to revive *choro*'s virtuoso tradition once again. Maurício Carrilho and Raphael Rabello were just two of the virtuosos of the genre involved in the Escola Camerata Carioca.

One of the best *choro* recordings to be released as a result of the 1970s revival was the 1988 album, *Noites Cariocas*. The album—named after the famous song by Jacó do Bandolim—featured Altamiro Carrilho on flute, Chiquinha on accordion, Joel Nascimento on *bandolim*, Paulinho da Viola on *cavaquinho*, Paulo Moura on clarinet, and Paulo Sérgio Santos on clarinet and saxophone. The recording covered seven *choro* standards and was, and is still, considered a monument of the genre.

*Choro*'s popularity surged once again in the 1990s when U.S. mandolin player David Grisman released two volumes of Jacó do Bandolim's *choro* music on his Acoustic Disc label. In 2002, the current grand masters of *choro*, Conjunto Época de Ouro, and New York *choro* groups such as The Choro Ensemble began to play in club venues here and abroad, resuscitating *choro*'s popularity once again. In addition, there was even a full-scale *choro* revival occurring in Rio de Janeiro in 2002. Michelle Mercer of *The Village Voice* writes that even “pubescent Cariocas with navel rings and tribal tattoos are reportedly bumping and grinding to Brazil's golden oldies” (Mercer 2002).

Websites such as *Agenda do Samba & Choro: O boteco virtual do samba e do choro*, [www.samba-choro.com.br](http://www.samba-choro.com.br), and periodicals such as *Revista Roda de Choro* now easily inform (literally) the world about current information on *choro*, information such as new CD releases and up-coming performance dates for many *choro* ensembles in Brazil and around the globe.

*Radio Nacional de Brasília* regularly airs their radio program *Choro Livre* to an appreciative audience.

By personal account, *choro* has been undergoing this resurgence in popularity for over the last ten years. *Choro* ensembles perform regularly to full houses in popular venues throughout Rio de Janeiro, even on weeknights. The best *choro* musicians enjoy international acclaim and travel throughout Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the North America performing for a wide audience. Sales of *choro* recordings appear to be on the rise—given the number of recordings that have either been re-mastered or newly recorded—and as evident by the increase in recordings for sale on websites such as All Brazilian Music ([www.allbrazilianmusic.com](http://www.allbrazilianmusic.com)), Kuarup Discos ([www.kuarup.com.br](http://www.kuarup.com.br)), Acari Records ([www.acari.com.br](http://www.acari.com.br)), and Revivendo Música ([www.revivendomusicas.com.br](http://www.revivendomusicas.com.br)).

Today, *choro* is taught in the conservatory style to students of Western art music and is likewise considered a hallmark of instrumental virtuosity within the Brazilian music academies. The best *choro* musicians teach at universities, perform internationally, and produce numerous recordings. Musicians such as Marco Pereira (guitar) play *choro* (and other musical genres) professionally, and likewise teach in the academy. In addition to performing, arranging, and composing—not to mention a rigorous touring and recording schedule—Pereira also teaches functional harmony and holds the position of professor at Universidade Federal no Rio de Janeiro (The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). When not teaching, Marco can be found performing with other *choro* greats such as Hamilton de Holanda (*bandolim*) and Toninho Carrasqueira (flute).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See: (Swanson 2004).

One of the most popular and successful institutions for instructing young performers in *choro* is the Escola Portátil de Música. Organized and operated by three of *choro*'s top musicians—*violão* virtuoso, Mauricio Carrilho (the son of Altamiro Carrilho), *violão* virtuoso, Pedro Aragão, and *cavaquinho* virtuoso, Luciana Rabello—the institute offers workshops and one- to four-month courses in *choro* performance, composition, and arranging. Distinguished *choro* faculty include: Oscar Bolão, *percussão* (percussion); Pedro Amorim, *bandolim*, and; Álvaro Carrilho (another son of Altamiro Carrilho), flute. The school is administrated by the Instituto Casa do Choro (House of Choro Institute).

One of Brazil's most important and well-respected contemporary musicians, the multi-instrumentalist Carlos Malta, performs *choro* regularly, imbuing *choro* performances with his unique perspective on improvisation (from years as a soloist with Hermeto Pascoal), as well as instilling in younger players the traditions of the genre. In fact, one of the most distinguishing characteristics about Malta is his willingness and enthusiasm for training young players and offering them opportunities to practice and perform with him and his ensembles. In an interview on *choro*, Malta told me:

Brazilian music has a lot to do with the Brazilian way of life, and because *choro* comes from Rio de Janeiro, it is a *carioca* music that typifies the *carioca* lifestyle that spread out to the rest of the country. I consider *choro* a symbol of popular culture, like the *bandas de pífanos*, *escola de sambas*, and *capoeira*, etc.

And, I think *choro* is more a way to interpret music than one distinct style, just like jazz. The way you play means more than what you are playing. There is an accent, a *sotaque* (accent) which makes the whole difference.

When I play *choro*, I always leave places for improvising, and I also like to change many things in terms of structure and form. But, I must always know the tune very well. Then I can make the changes.

*Choro* requires great virtuosity because the composers in *choro* were themselves great instrumentalists. Their performances have influenced many generations to be as great as they were. *Choro* melodies are very tricky and they require a lot of practice.

In closing, the flute is one of the most traditional instruments in *choro*. I think this is because it is a light and cheap instrument, and because of this, flutists have free spirits, like bohemians who play at the night clubs, dancing clubs and *gafieiras* (dives), exactly the same places where people played this kind of music in times past. Then, and now, the flute is the main melodic voice in *choro*.

(Carlos Malta, personal communication, March 6, 2009). [My edits and translation of some words.]

In conclusion, analysis of early popular Brazilian music and the role of *choro* musicians from both the popular and art music worlds shows that the historical trajectory of *choro* was such that it did indeed move from a style of playing various genres of popular music by amateur musicians from the underclass to a unique genre of music in its own right. How *choro* moved historically from a style to the genre of music we can identify today as distinctly *choro* owes much of the credit for this evolution to its popularity and the virtuosity required to perform the music. Analysis of performance practices of urban popular salon genres such as the *polca*, *lundú*, *modinha*, *maxixe*, and *valsas*, shows that Brazilian composers and performers moved towards codifying the *choro* style of performance practice into a formal musical genre through an emphasis on virtuosity and through the compositions of the primary progenitors of the genre, the flutists/composers. How these flutist/composers used the technical capabilities of the flute and the codification of compositional and performance practices to establish *choro* as a genre is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4  
STRUCTURAL COMPOSITION, PERFORMANCE PRACTICES, AND MUSICAL  
ANALYSIS

**Formal Structure of Choro**

By the turn of the twentieth century, *choro* had become more than a style of playing; it had evolved into an independent musical genre. Although *choros* were often written, and labeled stylistically according to the dance rhythms that provided their underlying rhythmic structure—polka, waltz, mazurka, schottische, *tango brasileiro*, *maxixe*, etc.—stylistic variants were easily later identified as *choro* (the genre) by their unique characteristics. They included: improvisation by the melodic instrument<sup>1</sup>; counterpoint in the supporting instruments; rapid, unexpected modulations; chromaticism; extreme melodic leaps; repeated notes in the melodic line; rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic syncopation; and often, high-speed tempos. Stylistically, *choro* music was often equated with American ragtime or Dixieland jazz.

Most *choros* are written in a basic rondo structure, ABACA, with the three parts (ABC) each in different tonalities. The ‘A’ section is composed in tonic; the ‘B’ section is composed in the dominant, tonic, or a closely related key such as the relative or parallel minor (or major, if the choro was in a minor key); and the ‘C’ section is typically in the sub-dominant or dominant.

Harmonically, early *choro* was not very complex. Composers used similar harmonic language to that of the *lundú* and *modinha*; a very basic I-IV-V<sup>7</sup>-I major progression, and a i-III-VI-ii-V<sup>7</sup>-i progression in a minor key. Contemporary *choros* are now being written with much more intricate harmonic structures with extended harmonies such as 7th, 9th, and 13th chords. Arrangements of traditional *choros* also exhibit elements of this move towards more harmonic

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<sup>1</sup> While often compared to American jazz in terms of improvisation, *choro* differed in that *typically*, only the solo melody instrument improvised, and not the other instruments. Of course, the role of the *violão* performing the *baixaria* is the exception, and in contemporary *choro* both the *pandeiro* and the *cavaquinho* will improvise.

complexity. Extended chords, chord substitutions, and chromaticism have become part of the *choro* harmonic language in the twentieth century. Much of this stylistic and formal evolution can be attributed to American jazz, a musical form with which *choro* hold many similarities. Another influence is the harmonic complexity found in *bossa nova*.

Stylistic harmonic fusion is also now more common. Blues riffs and elements of funk and rock-and-roll have found their way into the modern *choro* repertory. The addition of non-traditional instruments such as electric instruments (guitars and keyboards), and Brazilian folkloric, Amerindian, or Afro-Brazilian instruments (such as the *berimbau*) is also becoming more prevalent.

Regarding melodic structure, the vast majority of *choros* begin with pick-up notes. Typically, these pick-ups consist of an eighth note, and eighth note and sixteenth note, or three sixteenth notes, in the last beat of the first measure. Caracas Garcia posits that this is done in order to prepare the accompanying instruments to enter the piece together and to give an indication of the tempo set by the soloist (Caracas Garcia 1997: 105). My own personal experience in performing *choro* confirms that this is indeed the case.

It is also not uncommon to find the melody line supporting the *baixaria* by creating counterpoint or by adding an additional element to the rhythmic accompaniment. “In general, melodies are outlines of the harmonic accompaniment, with chromatic and diatonic scales as passing-tones” (Coelho and Koidin 2005: 39).

One of the most important defining elements of *choro* throughout its history has been its rhythmic structure. The sixteenth-note / eighth-note / sixteenth-note Afro-Brazilian rhythm,

followed by two eighth-notes (or four sixteenth-notes)—a characteristic syncopation pattern in the melody and/or the bass line—is evident in almost all *choros*.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 4-1. Characteristic syncopation pattern in *choro*.

This syncopation is “one of the most characteristic elements in the rhythmic formations of Brazilian urban popular music” and is given its distinguishing quality by two factors: “the tension between the basic duple meter and the disturbance of the pulse occasioned by the three-plus-three-plus-two organization; and the careful control of the length of pauses, which produces a highly sensuous quality” (Appleby 1983: 80).

Appleby defines this control of rhythmic pauses in Brazilian popular music as a “delay factor” (Appleby 1983, pg.80). In addition to the three-plus-three-plus-two syncopation, the “delay factor”—a technique similar to playing *rubato*—gives each *choro* style its specific individual quality, an attribute often transmitted only by oral/aural tradition and not denoted on scores. Lopes-Cançado further defines five characteristics of this ‘delay factor.’

1. There occurs “irregularity and unstableness [in] the performance of the Brazilian popular rhythms... [and this characteristic] comes from Brazilian blacks” (Lopes-Cançado 1999: 58).

It must be stated here that perhaps the words ‘irregular and unstable’ might not be the best adjectives for characterizing this particular stylistic rhythmic expression. In fact, the rhythmic

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<sup>2</sup> This rhythmic pattern was found primarily in the *polcas* and *polca-maxixes* being composed during the height of their popularity in Brazil. This classic rhythmic pattern can also be found in the *lundú*.

pulse of *choro* is indeed regular and very stable. It is the consistent rhythmic foundation upon which the melodic instruments depend, and it provides them the necessary rhythmic stability to perform in a virtuosic and often improvisatory manner. What Lopes-Cançado is actually trying to describe here is the characteristic stylistic *balanço*, the ‘swing’ with which *choro* musicians play; a performance practice of rhythmic fluidity based upon a slight syncopation that serves as the hallmark of the *choro* style. This ‘swing’ is achieved by placing various accents and/or emphasis on certain notes within the rhythmic pattern (usually beat two and four). Also, performers will often place a rubato at the ends of phrases causing a feeling of rhythmic fluctuation, but here again, the rhythmic foundation holds steady while the stylistic ‘swing’ is employed.

2. Syncopated rhythms in Brazilian popular music have two different functions. “When the characteristic syncopation [of the Afro-Brazilian] rhythmic pattern appears followed by two eighth-notes... they function as accompaniment.” When they appear [as just the Afro-Brazilian rhythmic pattern], “they function as melodic rhythm... in the bass line or in the top line, always following the melody” (Lopes-Cançado 1999:59).



Figure 4-2. Afro-Brazilian rhythmic pattern functions in melody and bass. (Source: Excerpt from “Vitorioso” by Ernesto Nazareth. Public Domain).

3. “The sequence of the [Afro-Brazilian] rhythm and the characteristic syncopation... normally... includes a tie between the fourth sixteenth-note of the [Afro-Brazilian]

rhythm (first beat) and the sixteenth-note of the characteristic syncopation (second beat) or a rest in the first sixteenth-note of the characteristic syncopation. This tie or rest results in a natural suspension of this rhythmic cell, creating another delay factor” (Lopes-Cançado 1999: 60).



Figure 4-3. Characteristic syncopation with tie pattern in *choro*.

4. These syncopated rhythms are repeated in sequence but do not appear in the accompaniment line.
5. “A strong rhythmic disturbance appears when the characteristic syncopation occurs after a long sequence of the [Afro-Brazilian] rhythm.” (Lopes-Cançado 1999: 61)

Since this characteristic ‘delay factor’ was not notated in scores, performers of Brazilian popular musical forms—particularly *choro* musicians—would have had to have performance knowledge of these five factors in order to accurately perform Brazilian popular music rhythms. *Choro*’s goal of virtuosity in performance required the acquisition of this knowledge.

Another unique formal aspect to *choro* was the *derrubada* (drop). Virtuoso *choro* musicians would often improvise so expertly in the *rodas de choro*, that they would purposely cause a *derrubada*—a breakdown in performance—when the accompanying musicians could no longer follow the soloist’s unpredictable melodic sequences. This was considered the mark of a true solo virtuoso. The ability to cause a *derrubada* was held in high esteem by all *choro* musicians (Lopes-Cançado 1999).

## Choro Flute Performance Practices

It is difficult to determine precise performance practices for early *choro* flutists such as Joaquim Callado and Patápio Silva due to the scarcity of extant recordings. There are, however, some generalizations that can be made from the recordings that do exist.<sup>3</sup> These generalizations, along with more specific performance techniques recorded by later *choro* flutists such as Pixinguinha, Benedicto Lacerda, and Altamiro Carrilho, still hold true in *choro* flute performance practice today. Listening to recordings, rather than relying on notated music, is critical in analyzing *choro* due to the fact that so much of what gets played in *choro* is improvisatory, interpreted, and never written down. [See the discography for resources on recordings.]

By listening to recordings of early artists, we can hear that chromaticism is evident, especially when embellishing, and syncopation is carried throughout. The stylistic tendencies of rhythmic vitality and improvisation play out for the flute just as they do for the other instruments in the ensemble. There are, however, performance practices unique to the flute such as articulations and tone color that should be mentioned.

In terms of articulations, long notes are rarely sustained in most *choros* and flutists tend to play fast, virtuosic passages. This still holds true today. *Choro* flutists will almost always vary their articulations and tend to use soft tonguing and slurs. Their preferred articulation appears to be *legato*; a good choice given *choro*'s sweeping melodic lines and wide octave-plus leaps.

*Legato* is a preferred articulation because leaps often include *portamento*, a technique similar to a glissando whereby there is continuous jump from one pitch to another without the

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<sup>3</sup> See: (Joaquim Callado: *O Pai dos Chorões* CNPJ 03.060.166/0001-91).

inner notes sounding discretely. *Portamento* is a very common performance practice in *choro* flute playing due to its brilliance of sound and the exhibition of virtuosic technique it provides.

Articulation is also highly variable and subject to the style of the player. Generally, note lengths vary, depending on the mood of the piece. A dry, staccato articulation is appropriate for faster *choros* such as “Tico-Tico no Fubá,” but slower, more romantic *choros* such as “Carinhoso” are often articulated with more of a legato triplet feel.

Coelho and Koidin note that *choro* articulations are similar to baroque flute articulations. As was the practice in the baroque period, articulations were not notated on the music. Performers were expected to play in the proper style based on their knowledge and expertise. The same is true for *choro*. What are also similar are the actual articulations. Sweeping slurs are almost never used. In both *choro* and baroque flute performance practices, running sixteenth-note passages are typical. Slurring all four notes in each beat or slurring three and tonguing one is common practice. Changing the articulations on repeated passages is also standard (Coelho and Koidin 2005: 38). In *choro*, the slurring of two notes and then tonguing two notes, as was common in flute articulations of the Classical period are also commonly used. Double-tonguing has been added to the list of acceptable articulations in contemporary *choro*. This allows the performer to play even faster while maintaining that characteristic *choro* ‘swing.’

In addition, solo *choro* flute performers are also not all that concerned with keeping a strict tempo, and this practice of rhythmic fluidity is certainly in keeping with the general romantic, emotive nature of *choro* and its inherent ‘swing.’ It could be argued that this is because of the value placed on interpretation and the participatory value placed on the *rodas de choro*.

Related, “the focus on tone quality is not of utmost importance within *choro* flute playing, as it is in “classically” trained circles. Instead, the swing and improvisatory inventiveness of the

flutist are held in much higher esteem” (Coelho and Koidin 2005: 38). Tone color *is* used, however, to affect certain passages in *choro*, usually in the dominant-key sections of slower *choros*. A wide vibrato is then used to give these slower passages depth and a contrasting tonal color.

Other idiomatic tendencies of the flute are also called upon when performing *choro*. Many performers will use *acciaccaturas* in conjunction with the anticipation of the downbeat. *Acciaccaturas* are also used to mimic the sounds of birds. In Figure 4-4 below, the *acciaccaturas* create the sound of the canary in Pixinguinha’s *choro*, “O Gato e o Canário.”



Figure 4-4. Excerpt from “O Gato e o Canário” (“The Cat and the Canary”) by Pixinguinha. Public Domain.

Mordents, tremolos, and trills are also idiomatic techniques often used in performing *choro* on the flute. Mordents, typically played before the beat, can be used to emphasize a beat. Trills and tremolos are performed quickly to give a passage a shimmering, brilliant quality. A good example can be seen in Zequinha de Abreu’s “Tico-Tico no Fubá.”



Figure 4-5. Excerpt from “Tico-Tico no Fubá” by Zequinha de Abreu. The mordents are written in as examples of performance practice. Public Domain.

Depending on the type of flute used to perform *choro*, these above mentioned techniques and performance practices will vary. Certainly, if a performer is playing *choro* on a five-key

French flute, their ability to execute certain techniques will be limited when compared to performing on the modern Boehm flute. Nonetheless, what is important to bear in mind about *choro* flute performance practices is that all treatments must stay within stylistic boundaries in order to perform *choro* correctly. While improvisation, interpretation, and artistic license are certainly encouraged, the basic stylistic tendencies must remain true for all instruments in the ensemble no matter their function. The flute, as a solo instrument, is responsible for leading the ensemble in maintaining the characteristic swing critical for the performance of well-played *choro*.

CHAPTER 5  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

*O Choro*

*Conjunto de flautas maviosas,  
Chorões de cavaquinhos e violões !  
Tereis neste livro as vossas rosas  
E do antigo tempo: as tradições.  
Pistonistas soberbos; Clarinetistas  
Ides todos ter aqui vossas acções;  
Descreverei com amor os bons artistas  
E tudo o mais que nos traz recordações.  
Grandes astros fulgentes se sumiram,  
Rebrilharam nos antigos ambientes,  
E as alegrias comnosco repartiram  
Evocando melodias refulgentes.  
Em cada chorão, findou-se um baluarte,  
Que deixou em nosso peito uma saudade,  
Que a germinar, corróe por toda a parte  
Desde o momento que subiram a eternidade.  
Música, costumes, em fim todo o prazer  
Que floresceu na passada geração,  
Nas páginas deste livro não de ter  
Toda a altivez da grande inspiração.  
Vou tentar reviver celebridades,  
Fazer dos bons artistas alusões,  
Distinguindo em cada um a qualidade  
E demonstrando o perfil dos bons chorões.*

Ensemble of sweet flutes,  
*Choro* groups of *cavaquinhos* and guitars!  
You shall have your roses in this book  
And from olden times: the traditions.  
Prideful trumpeters; Clarinetists  
You will all have here your actions;  
I will describe the good artists with love  
And everything else that brings us memories.  
Big brilliant stars are gone,  
They shined anew in the ambiance of old,  
And they shared joy with us  
Evoking melodies gleaming.  
In each player, ended a bastion  
Who left longing in our hearts,  
That germinating, erodes throughout  
From the moment they rose to eternity.  
Music, customs, after all, all pleasures  
That flourished in the generation past,  
In the pages of this book will be  
All the heights of great inspiration.  
I will try to relive celebrities,  
Making allusions to good artists,  
Distinguishing the quality in each  
And displaying the profile of good  
*choro* musicians.

~Alexandre Gonçalves Pinto<sup>4</sup>

[My translation. Consultant: Charles Perrone.]

The measure of true worth demands that the marks of longevity, recognition, and significance be met. Clearly, *choro* has proven that over the course of more than one-hundred years, that it can still achieve those marks. And yet for those who know *choro*, appreciating its true genius remains a constant and expanding aspiration. Intellectually comprehending the social, cultural, and historical significance of *choro* is only one step toward understanding its

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<sup>4</sup> See: (Gonçalves Pinto 1978: 8).

beauty, its genius. To really know *choro*, one must hear *choro* with the heart. It was with this intention—to follow *choro* from the heart—that this thesis was written.

Throughout the sequences of this thesis, we have seen that *choro* remains one of the few popular musical traditions that place an emphasis on instrumental virtuosity. It was demonstrated how *choro*'s roots could be traced back to colonial New World erudite music composed and performed in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and how it evolved throughout the twentieth century as a primarily instrumental urban popular style often heard in nightclubs and ballrooms. This thesis explained the role the nascent cinematic, broadcasting, and recording industries of the early twentieth century had in the evolution of *choro*, and how *choro* continued to develop classical formal structures, and ultimately underwent several revivals.

It was also shown how *choro* had evolved full-circle, from European-influenced erudite musical compositions, which were later infused with popular rhythms and sensibilities, back to the virtuosic *choro* composed and performed today. The hallmark of this evolution is the fact that *choro* is now being used to teach in the conservatory style to students of Western art music and is considered a distinguished example of instrumental virtuosity.

This thesis also made evident that the preference for the flute as the primary melodic instrument in the *choro* ensemble played a major role in establishing virtuosity as a defining characteristic of the genre. The flute can also be credited with increasing the popularity of *choro* throughout Brazil, and it was shown that this inherent connection to virtuosity was directly linked to *choro*'s earliest flutist/composer progenitors.

*Choro*'s tenacity as a genre has been proven time and again over the decades through its various resurgences of popularity. No doubt, *choro* has received another boost in popularity

lately from the rise in interest in World Music and its commercial appeal. And, it is probably safe to assume that an interest in *choro* will continue as long as there are those musicians and composers—and audiences—who recognize and value *choro*'s role in the development of the popular music styles of Brazil. For *choro* was, and still is, an important cultural element of Brazil, manifest in the sophisticated, virtuosic sensibilities of her instrumental musicians and composers, and their ever-popular music.

APPENDIX A  
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b><i>Baixaria</i></b>	(From <i>baixo</i> , meaning: bass). The improvised bass line that creates countermelodies against the solo melodic instrument, usually the flute, in early <i>choro</i> performance practice. The <i>baixaria</i> is created by utilizing a number of improvisatory techniques such as scalar runs, walking bass, and pedal points.
<b><i>Balanço</i></b>	Rhythmic ‘swing.’
<b><i>Bandolim</i></b>	The Brazilian mandolin, made with an oval body as resonator, a flat back, and four double strings. It is played with a pick and is exclusively associated with <i>choro</i> .
<b><i>Barbeiros</i></b>	Slave or black freemen barbers of the nineteenth century who, in addition to cutting hair, organized the first professional popular music ensembles in Brazil. Their repertory included <i>choro</i> .
<b><i>Berimbau</i></b>	A musical bow of African origin played primarily in <i>capoeira</i> . The single string is struck with a small stick attached to small rattles ( <i>caxixi</i> ) and the pitch is altered by applying a stone or coin to the string. A resonator gourd is attached to the bow.
<b><i>Bossa nova</i></b>	Literally: new way. A genre of popular music that developed on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro in the late 1950s. It is characterized by understated vocals, syncopated samba-inspired rhythms, and sophisticated harmonies influenced by American jazz.
<b><i>Carioca</i></b>	A person native to Rio de Janeiro.
<b><i>Carnaval</i></b>	The pre-Lenten festival celebrated in Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro it is characterized by the organization of <i>escolas de samba</i> ( <i>samba</i> schools) that hold parades and compete for recognition as the best <i>samba</i> school.
<b><i>Cavaquinho</i></b>	A small, four-string guitar-like instrument (similar to the Hawaiian ukulele) played in <i>choro</i> ensembles.
<b><i>Charamela</i></b>	A folk, shawm-like instrument originally from the Iberian peninsula and common in civic and military bands in Brazil in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.
<b><i>Chorão</i></b>	A <i>choro</i> musician or <i>choro</i> ensemble.
<b><i>Choromeleiro</i></b>	An ensemble of <i>charamelas</i> and <i>violões</i> (guitars) and an antecedent of early <i>choro</i> ensembles.

<b><i>Corpo de bombeiros</i></b>	An early <i>choro</i> ensemble. Literally, the firemen's corp. Usually referring to the Corpo de Bombeiros of Anacleto de Medeiros, one of the first <i>choro</i> ensembles to make <i>choro</i> recordings in 1902.
<b><i>Derrubada</i></b>	Literally: drop. An intentional breakdown in <i>choro</i> performance, when the accompanying musicians can no longer follow the soloist's unpredictable melodic sequences. This was considered the mark of a true virtuoso. The ability to cause a <i>derrubada</i> was held in high esteem by all <i>choro</i> musicians.
<b><i>Lundú</i></b>	A song and dance genre brought to Brazil by Bantu slaves from Angola in the late seventeenth century. It is credited with being the first Brazilian popular music to combine European harmonies and melodies with Afro-Brazilian rhythms.
<b><i>Modinha</i></b>	The lyrical, sentimental popular salon song genre of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Brazil. It is a musical antecedent of <i>choro</i> .
<b><i>MPB</i></b>	Música Popular Brasileira (Popular Brazilian Music). A generic term for almost all types of popular music in Brazil created after the 1960s.
<b><i>Ophicleide</i></b>	An obsolete brass instrument with keys that played the bass line. It was eventually replaced by the tuba.
<b><i>Pandeiro</i></b>	A small hand drum, similar to the tambourine, played in the <i>choro</i> ensemble. It is also used to play many other types of popular Brazilian music such as <i>samba</i> and <i>MPB</i> .
<b><i>Regional</i></b>	Plural: <i>regionais</i> . A professional <i>choro</i> ensemble known for being the most important ensemble in the early days of radio and the recording industry. The ensemble included the <i>terno</i> plus the <i>cavaquinho</i> and the <i>pandeiro</i> .
<b><i>Rodo de choro</i></b>	Informal gatherings of <i>choro</i> musicians, historically in the poorer neighborhoods of Brazil's urban centers. Musicians would sit either in a circle or some other intimate setting, facing each other to facilitate musical communication, especially with the melodic soloist who would often improvise. <i>Choro</i> musicians would gather together to play in <i>rodas de choro</i> for their own entertainment and enjoyment.
<b><i>Seresta</i></b>	A serenade or any type of music performed out of doors.
<b><i>Tango-brasileiro</i></b>	The term given to early <i>choros</i> and <i>maxixes</i> due to the pejorative, lower-class connotations these styles engendered in the elite.
<b><i>Violão</i></b>	The six-string guitar used in both classical and popular music genres, including <i>choro</i> .

***Violão de sete cordas*** The seven-string guitar used in the *choro* ensemble. The extra bass string is used to play the *baixaria*.

APPENDIX B  
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*Pixinguinha*. Paulo Moura. Blue Jacket Entertainment BJAC 5019-2.

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*Radamés interpreta Radamés*. Radamés Gnattali et al. RGE 6100 2.

*Raízes do Samba: Pixinguinha*. Pixinguinha, João da Baiana, Clementina de Jesus. EMI 5226582

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*Retratos: Jacob e seu Bandolim*. Radamés Gnattali e Orquestra. Columbia 866.028/2

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*Sempre Pixinguinha*. Various Artists. Kuarup KCD076

*Som Pixinguinha*. Pixinguinha. EMI 855290.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ruth M. “Sunni” Witmer received her Bachelor of Music in Flute Performance from the University of Florida and her Master of Music in Flute Performance from Louisiana State University. She returned to the University of Florida to pursue a Ph.D. in Music with a concentration in Ethnomusicology. Ms. Witmer is concurrently completing a Master of Arts degree in Latin American Studies at the University of Florida Center for Latin American Studies. Her area of focus is the music of the Caribbean and Brazil, primarily early twentieth-century urban popular genres with an emphasis on Brazilian *choro* and Cuban *charanga*.



Choro Regional de Florida. May 22 2008. (Left to Right) Sunni Witmer, flute; Charles Perrone, *cavaquinho*; Aaron Croft, *pandeiro*, and; Welson Tremura, *violão*.