

# Marcus Pereira's *Música Popular do Brasil*: beyond folklore?

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## Abstract

*If Brazilian and international audiences now have a far broader view of the range of the musical tradition in Brazil, and particularly the heterogeneous richness of the regional tradition of popular music in that country, it is largely due to the pioneering work of Marcus Pereira. Following the example of Cecil Sharp and Alan Lomax, the Brazilian collector of popular music and culture set out in the mid 1970s to independently produce a series of recordings of regional popular music entitled Música Popular do Brasil. This huge project is important for three main reasons. First, in a climate of uncompromising political and artistic censorship, Pereira attempted to bring to the fore elements of a cultural and political debate that had polarised Brazil in the early 1960s: a debate that was abruptly terminated by the military dictatorship that seized power in 1964. Second, Música Popular do Brasil demonstrates the beginning of an awareness of a new, more complex relationship between traditional, largely rural popular culture and the increasingly urbanised Brazilian society of the mid-1970s. Finally, at a time when popular music in Brazil was increasingly orientated towards influences emanating from abroad, Marcus Pereira dramatically bucked the trend and re-introduced the Brazilian public to aspects of the regional, rural tradition of popular music and culture that would have a huge influence in Brazilian popular music over the last three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

With the recent news that Bebel Gilberto's *Tanto Tempo* CD has become the biggest selling Brazilian recording of all time in the international market, it is clear that Brazilian popular music has attained new levels of recognition and acclaim abroad.<sup>2</sup> *Tanto Tempo*'s subtle (but to these ears, unremarkable) reworking of the bossa nova tradition is also a reminder of an earlier era, the heady period in the early 1960s when Brazilian music briefly ruled the world and international audiences became intoxicated with the 'new sound' emanating from that country. Yet the commercial success of *Tanto Tempo* and its re-creation/continuation of a well-established musical genre reflects perhaps only part of the complexity and vibrancy of Brazilian popular music that both Brazilians and an increasingly larger international audience have been enjoying over the last ten years or so. That period has been characterised by a growing awareness of the existence of a huge, largely untapped world of Brazilian music that lies outside the familiar, somewhat restrictive confines of bossa nova and Música Popular Brasileira (MPB). Genres such as contemporary Brazilian drum'n'bass, and soul and funk from the 1970s have all received hitherto unprecedented exposure, and have been utilised to liven up the dance floors of chic clubs worldwide, and also to spice up the soundtrack to Fernando Meirelles's hugely

successful (both nationally and internationally) film *Cidade de Deus* (2002). What has also been apparent over the last decade has been the existence of a vast reservoir of regionally inspired, popular Brazilian music that was most conspicuous in the ground-breaking *manguebeat* movement that arose in the Northeastern state of Pernambuco in the early 1990s, and which has also registered an impact abroad, following live performances by the likes of Nação Zumbi, Mestre Ambrósio, Otto and Lenine on the international circuit.

This regionally flavoured popular music, which often draws on traditional musical forms for its inspiration, owes a huge debt to the renaissance of regional popular music that followed in the wake of Marcus Pereira's *Música Popular do Brasil*. Pereira grasped the immensity and diversity of regional popular music in Brazil, and through his independent record label he was the first to present that musical panorama to his fellow Brazilians. Inspired by earlier smaller-scale attempts initiated by Mário de Andrade in the 1920s and 1930s, he and his team of researchers travelled extensively throughout Brazil gathering recordings of regional music designed to present a 'musical map' of the nation. The breadth and diversity of these recordings surprised both ordinary Brazilians and music critics at the time of their release, revealing as they did musical treasures unknown to the vast majority of urban dwellers, in a country the size of a continent. Pereira was the first in Latin America to undertake an enterprise of this scale. His work was motivated by a deeply felt desire to challenge the limited, stereotypical Rio/São Paulo-centred notion of what should be considered to be Brazilian popular music (typically, samba, bossa nova and MPB) by celebrating the sheer diversity of the innumerable strands of popular music that exist throughout Brazil. His self-appointed mission also reflected his concern that such music was in imminent danger of dying out through neglect or by being inundated by the influx of foreign popular music, a major preoccupation for many musical nationalists in Brazil at the time.

### The antecedents: Mário de Andrade and the Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas of 1938

You could say that Brazilian popular music is unknown, even among ourselves . . . We know some regions. Principally, around Rio de Janeiro because of the *maxixe* . . . We also know a little about the music from Bahia and the Northeast. Of the rest: practically nothing. (Andrade 1962[1928], p. 20)

Mário de Andrade (1893–1945), the multi-talented novelist, journalist, poet, literary and music critic, linguist, music educationalist, state cultural administrator, folklorist and musicologist, first came to prominence through his involvement as a poet in the famous Modern Art Week held in São Paulo in 1922 and gained further acclaim with the publication of his celebrated novel *Macunaíma* in 1928.<sup>3</sup> Mário was a major figurehead of the Brazilian Modernist movement of the 1920s and his prestige enabled him to straddle the seemingly diverse worlds of culture and politics. He was appointed as the director of São Paulo's Department of Cultural Expansion in 1935, and promptly threw himself headlong into a series of projects designed to facilitate access for ordinary people to artistic centres such as the city's showpiece Municipal Theatre and the creation of centres for study and research such as the Public Music Library. These projects were all concerned with the idea of the solidification and preservation of a concept of national culture, a major concern for both the Modernists and the ruling elites in Brazil at the time. Mário carried out several research trips to the

Northeast in the 1920s as part of a wider personal project in which he intended to publish the largest collection of Brazilian folk music and dance produced by a single researcher (Carlini 1994, p. 22).<sup>4</sup> He was particularly drawn to the North and Northeast of Brazil because these were areas that he considered to contain the richest concentration of traditional popular music (particularly in rural areas) that he felt had remained uncorrupted by the transmission of foreign influence through the increasingly powerful media of radio and cinema. Mário was not the first to scour Brazil searching for folk melodies and compositions (Villa Lobos had undertaken a similar mission in the very early twentieth century, and there had been other various folklorists who had been involved in collecting expeditions), but he was the first to attempt to capture these compositions for posterity with the benefit of recording equipment.

Although he did not disapprove of all Brazilian urban popular music, Mário was particularly concerned about the potentially destabilising influence of foreign popular music (such as North American foxtrot, French chanson and Argentinian tango) which was becoming ever more popular in Brazilian urban centres during the period. He felt that such external influences diluted the 'authenticity' of Brazilian music and might lead to it disappearing altogether (Contier 1995, pp. 109–10). Mário's position at the Department of Culture enabled him to pursue his folkloric studies and he organised a further field trip to the North and Northeast that was scheduled to commence in February 1938. This trip was intended to collect material for the Public Music Library that would be used for ethnographical study, and also to provide examples of popular music that would serve as a source of inspiration for composers who were seeking to develop a form of national art music based on Brazilian folk melodies (Carlini 1994, pp. 36–7). The urgency of the mission was made clear by the head of the Department of Culture, Paulo Duarte, who claimed that the majority of Brazilian rural songs and melodies were on the verge of extinction and that their preservation was of the utmost importance for both science and art (Carlini 1993, p. 25).

The Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas (MPF) left São Paulo in February 1938 but the political fallout from the establishment of the authoritarian *Estado Novo* (New State) by Getúlio Vargas in November 1937 meant that Mário was unable to accompany the team as originally planned. During the following months the MPF visited the states of Pernambuco, Paraíba, Maranhão and Pará, but in June 1938 the team was advised that a political crisis in São Paulo necessitated their immediate return. They finally arrived in São Paulo in July of that same year. The amount of material collected by the MPF was vast: 20 notebooks of songs, 168 78 rpm records containing 1,500 songs, 1,066 photographs, 9 black and white 16 mm films and 775 objects. It would take over twenty years for Mário's collaborator, Oneyda Alvarenga to curate this material at the Public Music Library (Toni [n.d.] p. 44).<sup>5</sup> The overall aim of the trip had been to study all aspects of folklore, with particular emphasis on popular music, dance and costume. The types of traditional music recorded for posterity by the MPF were those used by ordinary people to accompany work, play and prayer, and included *emboladas*, *cocos*, *rojões*, *martelos*, *desafios*, *cantigas de roda*, *repentes*, *sambas*, *valsas*, *solos de viola*, *cantigas*, *galopes*, *lundus*, *oitavas* and many more. In addition, valuable material was documented concerning religious ceremonies such as *xangôs*, *babaçuês* and *catimbós*, and popular dramatic dances such as *praiás*, *boi-bumbas*, *reis de congo*, *danças praieiras* and the like (Neto 2003). Unfortunately, the politically motivated sacking of Mário from the Department of Culture in May 1938 ensured that

he was never able to study the material collected by the project he instigated. Although the Public Music Library received a substantial amount of material for its archives, due to a lack of funding and political will the MPF's findings remained largely unknown until decades later.<sup>6</sup>

### Marcus Pereira: musically mapping the nation

A country with music like this should not have a foreign debt. (Marcus Pereira)

Marcus Pereira (1930–1981) was determined to build on the foundations laid down by Mário in the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> Born in São Paulo, he trained as a lawyer and subsequently worked as a journalist and writer, starting his own advertising agency in 1963. A visit to Recife's carnival that same year left Pereira with a love of the local *frevo* music and a passion for the music of the Northeast in general. In 1967 he began to give his clients a record featuring the music of little-known Brazilian artists, produced at his own expense, as an annual Christmas present. Pereira was also co-owner of a São Paulo nightclub at this time that specialised in presenting traditional Brazilian popular music – a style that the club's owners considered to be increasingly marginalised by the mass media. His long-held ambition to bring this music to a wider audience was realised in 1972 when he commissioned a team of researchers (including Hermilo Borba Filho and members of the group Quinteto Violado) to roam the Northeast recording aspects of popular music and culture.

### Música Popular do Nordeste (Popular Music of the Northeast), 1973

The expedition of 1972 produced a huge amount of material that was edited down to fill four albums, 1,500 copies of which were distributed to Pereira's clients at the end of the year. The critical approval given to these records (they received the prestigious Estácio de Sá and Noel Rosa prizes from Brazilian music critics in 1973) and the intense interest this generated within the general public (largely on a word-of-mouth basis) persuaded Pereira to leave his successful business and found his own record label in early 1974. Pereira subsequently released the records on a commercial basis to huge critical acclaim in the press and healthy sales ensued.<sup>8</sup> The series of four albums consisted of examples of various types of *frevo*, *trio elétrico*, *violeiros*, *cirandas*, *bumba-meu-boi*, *samba de roda*, *coco*, *bambelô*, *emboladas* and *banda de pífanos*. The records contained lengthy sleeve notes by various experts (including Pereira himself) that provided mini-essays on the historical development of the music contained within. In that sense they fulfilled a similar educational role to that provided by Alan Lomax's records in the United States and the MPB series produced in Brazil by the Abril publishing group in the early 1970s. The music itself is an eclectic mixture of rural folk styles (including large chunks of improvised poetry), urban *frevo*, and stylised re-creations of folkloric music such as *bumba-meu-boi*, recorded by Quinteto Violado. Despite his love for the purest, traditional forms of Northeastern music, Pereira was aware that he needed to win over the general public if these records were to achieve any form of commercial success. Consequently, he lightened the often uncompromising nature of much of the music by including more 'accessible' re-workings of traditional themes provided by Quinteto Violado, who had just started to enjoy considerable commercial success in their own right. The sleeve notes to these records

(and others in the series) frequently refer to Mário de Andrade's writings on music and the series as a whole is dedicated to the Brazilian people and Mário's memory.

### **Música Popular do Centro-Oeste/Sudeste (Popular Music of the Centre-West/Southeast), 1974**

Following the success of *Música Popular do Nordeste*, Marcus Pereira was able to continue his exploration of regional music, and a further four-record set was released in 1974 that included *cururu*, *catira*, *congadas*, *jongo*, *moçambique*, *folias*, *calango* and many other types of music, including that designed to accompany religious ceremonies and dances. The symbolic link with Mário de Andrade was once again evident through the participation of Oneyda Alvarenga as consultant to the collection, and other consultant/researchers such as Martinho da Vila who were responsible for the selection of examples of various musical genres, thereby acting in the same way that Mário's regional advisors such as Luís da Câmara Cascudo had done in 1938. Yet again, Pereira mixed field recordings of potentially 'difficult' music with updated versions of regional compositions sung by well-known, commercially successful artists such as Nara Leão, Ivone Lara and Clementina de Jesus.

### **Música Popular do Sul (Popular Music of the South), 1975**

This four-LP set was perhaps the most varied to date, and included music by composers and performers from Rio Grande do Sul, religious songs, indigenous music, work songs, declamatory poetical forms, *fandangos* and the like. These albums vividly demonstrated the extraordinarily rich fusion of indigenous, Jesuit, African, Spanish and Portuguese influences that characterise the music of the south of Brazil, and they also exposed how music is integrally linked to a huge tradition of dramatic dance, religious ceremonies, popular drama and *folguedos* in the region. Pereira's increasingly high profile within the music industry enabled him to persuade singer Elis Regina – then at the height of her popularity – to contribute to the series, alongside 'unknown artists' such as the 100 year-old singer Miquelinha Antonia de Oliveira and relative novices such as the young group Os Tapes, who specialised in recreating music of the indigenous people of the area. The sleeve notes to this collection also revealed that it was the music critic and writer Sérgio Cabral who had coined the phrase 'musical map' with reference to Pereira's ongoing project.

### **Música Popular do Norte (Popular Music of the North), 1977**

The four albums which made up the final instalment of this project included music by composers and performers from the north of Brazil, compositions by Waldemar Henrique, rhythms and dances from Maranhão, traditional Brazilian versions of *polca* and *mazurka*, *carimbós*, music by the Kamayurá Indians and much more besides. By this stage, Pereira's recordings had adopted a more documentary style, and the albums include a couple of short interviews with singers, and ambient-like recordings of religious processions. Although this collection once again revealed a stunning diversity of music and popular culture, Pereira conceded that his efforts were, by necessity, limited: 'It was only possible to document that which appeared to us to be fundamental, and then only in a fragmentary way' (Pereira 1976A).



Marcus Pereira's *Música Popular do Brasil* was a massive undertaking, the first of its kind in Latin America, carried out largely at his own cost, leaving him with huge debts.<sup>9</sup> Although the series featured over ninety different types of music, it was not intended to be an intellectual or musicological study that would only provide interest for a limited number of academics. Pereira's wife, Carolina Andrade, who was heavily involved in the project, made that clear when she informed the press that she and her husband did not consider their approach as 'folkloric' or anthropological, rather that they had provided a huge 'musical report, in which the reporter filters their impressions through their feelings' (Autran 1977). Not surprisingly, Pereira's research followed lines of personal interest favoured by him and his team, and as his objective was to 'document, inform and entertain', he decided against producing purely folkloric records (Anon 1974). As I will explain shortly, his methods of acquiring material provoked much controversy, and harsh criticism in some quarters. Like Mário, Pereira was undoubtedly a musical nationalist who saw the various forms of regional music and culture that he catalogued as being endangered and, in some cases, on the verge of extinction. In his various roles as a journalist, publicist, and promoter of Brazilian culture in general, he was always extremely concerned about the defence of national interests and the effects of cultural and economic dependency on Brazil (Pereira 1980, p. 4). He considered that traditional forms of popular music in Brazil were marginalised and neglected at the expense of imported cultural material promoted by the multinational record companies that dominated the Brazilian music industry at the time. The choice of well-known artists such as Elis Regina and Nara Leão to feature in *Música Popular do Brasil* was not merely to boost sales; these were also performers sympathetic to Pereira's left-wing, nationalist views. They agreed that Brazilian popular music was under threat and that it was necessary to take a stand to defend their musical heritage (Vinícius 2003).

Although *Música Popular do Brasil* sold relatively well, Pereira was convinced that further commercial success was prevented by the lack of access to the all-powerful promotional power of television (largely controlled by TV-Globo) that was only interested in promoting its own soundtracks to Brazilian soap operas and imported North American culture. In his opinion, if this trend was allowed to continue unchecked it would result in the disappearance of Brazilian music from the marketplace, representing the 'complete destruction of our national personality, leaving us robots without a face or a soul [...] (Pereira 1980, p. 12).<sup>10</sup> Carolina Andrade also lamented what she considered to be the 'contamination' of the cultural traditions of northern Brazil, 'the real Brazil' in her opinion, by the corrupting influence of television, which had led to the situation where one of Brazil's oldest forms of folklore, the *bumba-meu-boi* in Maranhão, went under the title of 'Planet of the Apes' (Carvalho 1977). The similarities with Mário de Andrade's concerns about foreign domination of Brazilian popular music are striking, and Pereira was clear about where he saw his work in relation to that of his predecessor:

Mário was the first to carry out in-depth research into our folklore using scientific methods. When he died he left a huge legacy that was incomplete. It was with his contribution in mind that we carried out our work. (Anon 1974)<sup>11</sup>

## Political considerations

Like Mário before him, Marcus Pereira felt that his work was severely hampered because of political interference. Although he himself was never a politician, Pereira was a close friend of Miguel Arraes, and acted as the São Paulo representative of Arraes' left-wing administration in Pernambuco in the early 1960s (Anon 1981). Arraes was the first socialist to be elected governor of the state of Pernambuco in 1962. He was brought to power through the support of both urban and rural workers whose mass mobilisation was orchestrated by a broad alliance of communists, socialists and trade unions that built on the long-standing tradition of radical politics in Pernambuco, symbolised by the foundation of the Peasant League in 1956. During a period of national political polarisation, in which the Goulart government increasingly flirted with socialist ideas, the Arraes administration was committed to avowedly left-wing policies such as moves towards greater social inclusion of the poor masses, agrarian reform, and the radical literacy programmes of Paulo Freire. Consequently, the Arraes administration was seen as a flagship for the political left as a whole throughout Brazil. This political radicalisation was coupled with a cultural campaign in Pernambuco known as the Popular Culture Movement (MCP) that was established in Recife in 1961, bringing together left-wing artists from all spheres in an attempt to use culture as a tool for political consciousness-raising. One of the most celebrated examples of this was the establishment of Centres of Popular Culture (CPC) in Recife (and subsequently in other areas of Brazil) that sought to fuse forms of popular culture, including folklore, with an overtly political agenda.

Because of his links with Miguel Arraes and his unapologetically political outlook, Pereira found it extremely difficult to obtain distribution deals with record companies for the *Música Popular do Brasil* series and was effectively shunned by those in power, who did not take kindly to his criticisms of the Globo media organisation and the establishment (Vinícius 2001).<sup>12</sup> There was an underlying political content to *Música Popular do Brasil* that reflected Pereira's views on the social situation within Brazil at the time. Before recording *Música Popular do Nordeste* he re-read Euclides da Cunha's classic account of the 1893–1897 Canudos War, *Os Sertões* (Rebellion in the Backlands), which includes a damning critique of the consequences of the marginalisation of Brazil's rural poor: he also watched several little-known documentaries by Tomás Farkas about the contemporary social, cultural and economic conditions in the Northeast of Brazil (Rego 1972). This was a period when the military dictatorship was at its most repressive, a period also characterised by the regime's drive towards the concept of a 'Grand Brazil' symbolised by high profile nation-building projects, such as the construction of the Transamazônica Highway. At this moment traditional music was not only considered 'outdated' by the Brazilian media but was also deemed to be potentially politically 'subversive' by the military because of its historical links with the people (Vinícius 2003).

Pereira's cultural perspective was undoubtedly shaped by his own political convictions, and these were profoundly influenced by the experiments in popular culture and participation carried out in Pernambuco in the early 1960s.<sup>13</sup> Three of the founder members of the MCP in Recife (Hermilo Borba Filho, Ariano Suassuna and Aluizio Falcão) were close collaborators with Pereira on the *Música Popular do Nordeste* series, and all three contributed to the sleeve notes of those particular records. I would argue that *Música Popular do Brasil* can be viewed as an attempt by Pereira to continue the discussion about the marginalised role of ordinary people in Brazilian

society that was crucial to the social and political mobilisation of the early 1960s, and which was abruptly curtailed by the 1964 coup. By returning to the music of the Northeast (and Pernambuco in particular), Pereira and his fellow 'orphans of the revolution that never arrived'<sup>14</sup> were making the (by necessity, veiled) political point that those issues had not been forgotten by many Brazilians, and that despite the brutal prevailing climate of political and artistic censorship, alternative voices were still audible. Even the record sleeves to *Música Popular do Nordeste* all bore the same austere image of a Northeastern herdsman riding through a patch of thorny scrubland, highly reminiscent in style of Nelson Pereira dos Santos' Cinema Novo masterpiece, *Vidas Secas* (1963) which had starkly portrayed the condition of Brazil's marginalised rural poor. This was a period in Brazil when the notion of 'folklore' was still highly contentious, with many on the left preferring to use the term 'popular culture'. Pereira referred to his collection as 'popular music' rather than 'folklore', and through his focus on the music of Brazil's regional poor he attempted to draw attention to the plight of the nation's marginalised masses. In their own small way, Pereira's records offered a sublimated form of cultural resistance to the prevailing order, not only for him, but also perhaps for many of those who bought them, who were largely denied other legal forms of articulating a public display of political defiance to the military regime at that time.

Pereira was determined to provide a voice through his records for the 'other' Brazil, those sectors of society largely excluded from the official, triumphalist versions of Brazilian history of the era. *Música Popular do Brasil* deliberately set out to challenge the cultural hegemony of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and reversed the customary metropolitan-centred cultural bias by placing the normally culturally marginalised populace to the fore.<sup>15</sup> These records were intended, above all, to remind the public of the vast excluded Brazilian hinterland that possessed its own *living* cultural traditions. As such, Pereira was asserting that notions of the popular and the national must, by definition, include the whole of Brazilian society rather than merely representing the more 'refined' tastes of the metropolitan elites.

Pereira's overriding concern was that Brazil's regional musical heritage should be charted and made available to the public. In an age when many were again concerned that international influences were increasingly penetrating Brazilian popular music, he considered it essential to preserve and protect those artists associated with folklore and tradition, many of whom found it impossible to obtain a recording contract or who were elderly.<sup>16</sup> Pereira's role was to enable the public to re-evaluate the contribution of these artists, who had been largely omitted from the widely held conception of what constituted Brazilian popular music, and to simultaneously introduce new artists working within the tradition of 'music of quality'. He also made a direct attack on the hegemonic position of samba within Brazilian popular music – the influence of which he considered to be unhealthily exclusive – by opening up alternative musical avenues for exploration (Azevedo 1974). The often expressed opinion amongst Brazilians that theirs is a 'country without a memory' inspired Pereira to seriously document numerous aspects of Brazilian folk culture that not only included popular music, but also oral poetry, dance, and religious ceremonies in the *Música Popular do Brasil* series. He was well aware that many aspects of popular culture within Brazil had already disappeared because they had not been registered, due to the absence of adequate technology and lack of funding, and *Música Popular do Brasil* was a direct attempt to redress that failure using the latest developments in the area of sound recording technology. Pereira tapped into an underlying curiosity



about national and cultural identity that is particularly evident in Brazil (and the rest of Latin America), and his efforts were an attempt to allow Brazilians to 're-discover Brazil' in much the same way that Mário de Andrade had attempted thirty years previously (Vinícius 2003).

## Critical reception

Perhaps because of his oppositional stance, the fact that he was not a member of the establishment, and his determination to fight his corner despite overwhelming odds, Marcus Pereira was seen by many in the press as pursuing a quixotic mission to open the ears of those living in the dominant south of the country to the wonders of Brazilian regional music.<sup>17</sup> The press reception for *Música Popular do Brasil* was overwhelmingly positive, ecstatic even, and all sixteen of the records in the series featured in the annual 'best of' polls conducted by the critics of the major Brazilian newspapers. The review of *Música Popular do Nordeste* in the *Estado de São Paulo* was typical:

I think that this is the first time in the history of the Brazilian recordings that an album has appeared that is so well realised, so well recorded, and that has such importance for the popular music and folklore of our country. (Vergueiro 1973)

Sílvia Lancellotti summed up this unanimity of critical opinion in the following manner: 'Nobody should search for possible faults and omissions in such a pioneering and wide-ranging work. They would run the risk of committing a cultural indignity' (Lancellotti 1977, p. 44).

*Música Popular do Brasil* seems to have come as a breath of fresh air to music critics, many of whom considered that Brazilian popular music was going through one of its periodic 'crises of quality' in the early to mid-1970s. Pereira's desire to valorise the musical traditions of Brazil echoed many of their concerns about what they saw as the ongoing dilution of Brazil's musical heritage and the increasing domination of the airwaves and sales charts by imported pop, rock and disco. Nevertheless, the regular criteria employed by music critics in the press were inadequate to review *Música Popular do Brasil* – these were not, after all, normal 'popular music' records, as they had far more in keeping with folklore recordings. Consequently, many reviews failed to provide any in-depth analysis of the music itself, and often merely re-hashed large sections of the sleeve notes to the records. Pereira found himself in the curious position of being universally lauded in the press, but unable to adequately distribute his records to the public because of opposition from the record industry. In addition, he was denied the radio and television exposure that was crucial to further commercial success.

Marcus Pereira's *Música Popular do Brasil* demonstrated the existence of traditional, national, cultural forms that many in the media and the general public perceived to be more aesthetically pleasing than contemporary popular culture – which they considered saturated with foreign influences – and his work was a key factor in resuscitating that cultural heritage. However, rather than merely being an exercise in nostalgia, *Música Popular do Brasil* (in the attention paid to the music of Os Tapes, for example) attempted to demonstrate new paths for Brazilian popular music to follow: paths that would rely on a firm grounding in the traditions of the past. By 1977, it was apparent that a rising tide of interest in all matters 'folk' had overtaken Brazil, prompting *Veja* magazine to devote a four-page article to the phenomenon.

Pereira's recordings were hailed as the symbol of this movement, which was characterised by huge attendances at folk festivals, rising numbers of seminars on the issue, and state governments increasingly publicising the folklore to be found in their areas. The article concluded that it seemed that the *zeitgeist* appeared to reflect a desire to turn away from technological progress and mass-produced culture in favour of less sophisticated alternatives (Anon 1977, p. 50).

This wave of interest in all cultural manifestations of folklore had been also been assisted by the growth of internal tourism within Brazil during the 1970s and the foundation by the government in 1975 of the National Art Foundation (FUNARTE), which included a section specifically dedicated to the promotion and preservation of folklore. The influence of *Música Popular do Brasil* can be detected in the comments of the head of FUNARTE's newly created National Institute of Music, who declared in 1976 that his objective was to combat the 'denationalisation' of Brazilian culture by valorising rural forms of music such as *maracatú* and *frevo* (Garcia 1976, p. 27). Pereira's success in helping to generate such interest in regional culture should also be considered in the light of the fact that between 1970 and 1980, Brazil's urban population increased from 55 per cent to 67 per cent of the total population (Becker and Egler 1992, p. 126), a percentage of urban against rural that was almost the reverse of the picture when Mário de Andrade carried out the MPF in 1938. This rapid rate of state-planned urbanisation and industrialisation, accompanied by the economic crisis that followed the 'economic miracle' of 1968–1972, seems to have provoked a desire in some Brazilians to return to a slightly nostalgic view of the rural past, and may be one of the reasons why Pereira's records found such a sympathetic urban audience when they were released.<sup>18</sup> Large-scale internal migration from the countryside to urban areas may have also made it easier for city dwellers to encounter examples of rural folk music in the major Brazilian cities by the end of the 1970s.

In one of the most thoughtful analyses of Pereira's *Música Popular do Brasil*, written in 1975, José Miguel Wisnik touched on some of the dilemmas raised by the series of records. Bastions of endangered rural popular culture situated on the margins of industrialised society 'discovered' by Pereira's team of researchers had two options; either to disappear, or to be transformed into picturesque, exotic, 'folklore' by urban society. Those cultural forms that survived would often only do so by adopting aspects of the very same modern culture that threatened their existence. Wisnik pointed out that much popular rural music was associated with a pre-industrial age in which the music itself was intrinsically linked to agricultural and religious ceremonies – once that connection was removed the music lost much, if not all, of its relevance (Wisnik 1975, p. 20).

One of the criticisms that can be levelled at *Música Popular do Brasil* is that it failed to provide an adequate explanation of the social context and uses of the music that it documented. Despite the copious sleeve notes to the records, the listener is generally not advised how these examples are representative of their genre: it is not made clear why *these* particular tracks were selected. More importantly, little insight into the opinions of the people who made this music is given and consequently the audience is excluded from any true sense of the role that this music plays in the lives of its creators and performers. It is difficult to ascertain why these *particular* traditions have survived rather than others, and to what extent the religious aspects of many of the ceremonies that are recorded are crucial to their continuation.

## Issues of authenticity and controversy

*Música Popular do Brasil* reflected a rather ambiguous view of 'authenticity' through the music that it documented, due to the fact that it trod a fine line between popular music (i.e. music aimed at a commercial mass market, the tracks featuring Elis Regina, Martinho da Vila and Nara Leão, for example) and raw, field recordings of 'folk' music such as the several recordings of music that accompanied religious processions in the series. As I have previously stated, Pereira's records were first and foremost aimed at a commercial, rather than an academic market, and he was aware of the risk of alienating potential record buyers by including too much 'difficult' material. But he was also aware that it was *how* the material was presented that was of utmost importance, as he made clear in a press interview:

... For example, the voice of an old singer that might appear as incoherent and inaudible to many listeners, gains a new interest if it is placed next to an interpretation (of the same song) by Elis Regina. (Wisnik 1975, p 20)

It seems as if Pereira was attempting to present Brazilian folk music as a musical 'other' to contrast favourably with contemporary 'contaminated' popular music, but that he simultaneously wished to indicate that 'authentic' folk values still existed within popular music in the work of *sambistas* such as Clementina de Jesus and Martinho da Vila. *Música Popular do Brasil* juxtaposed traditional rural performers with their modern, urban counterparts, and within that juxtaposition perhaps it is possible to glimpse the sense of a growing understanding that the rural, popular tradition does not necessarily exist completely outside the experience of modernity and the sphere of mass culture, but rather that it co-exists within that modernity, influencing it in a two-way process. These ideas of a more complex relationship between modernity and tradition have been elaborated at length in García Canclini's (1995) influential study, in which he argues that so called 'traditional', pre-commercial culture in Latin America is not simply negated by the experience of modernity but that it frequently becomes incorporated or welded to modern capitalist mass-produced culture, in often complex and subtle ways.<sup>19</sup> Although Pereira's musical map largely focuses on marginalised forms of rural music, at the same time it dedicates a whole record to urban *frevo*, including a 'hybrid' performance of *frevo* by a Bahian *trio eléctrico*. Pereira's recordings are non-doctrinaire: they are not afraid to include *repentistas* (responding improvisers) who refer to the Beatles in their lyrics, and they give particular prominence to Os Tapes, a community-based group from Rio Grande do Sul, dedicated to finding new ways to articulate the Guarani musical traditions of their area without resorting to mere imitation. Pereira seems to be making the point that these are living, breathing forms of music and culture that form an integral part of people's everyday life, continually in dialogue with the surrounding environment, rather than a world apart.

A high profile debate about 'authenticity' developed in connection with Pereira's use of the group Quinteto Violado in *Música Popular do Nordeste*, the sleeve notes to which claimed (rather ironically as it turned out) that 'Quinteto Violado's sound is not their own. It is a sound that comes directly from the people – 'the greatest Brazilian composer of all time' (Falcão 1973). These sleeve notes also referred to Quinteto Violado's re-workings of traditional music such as *bumba-meu-boi* as being a necessary means by which the 'musical message' could reach an urban audience, and concluded that the group's work should not be construed as an 'adulteration' but rather a work of 'preservation' (*ibid.*). Quinteto Violado were exploring a type of

re-working of popular culture similar to that which had already been developed by Ariano Suassuna's *Movimento Armorial* of the early 1970s. Suassuna's movement was conceived as 'a standard bearer against the process of de-characterisation and vulgarisation of Brazilian culture' (Suassuna 2002, p. 19) and attempted to draw on aspects of popular Northeastern culture (including music) to create the foundations of a truly national, erudite culture, rather than merely churning out a poor imitation of foreign culture.<sup>20</sup> Marcus Pereira and Suassuna shared a similar desire to promote national, rather than imported culture and Suassuna wrote some of the sleeve notes to *Música Popular do Nordeste*. However, the *Movimento Armorial* was not without its critics, some of whom pointed out that although it claimed to be based on popular roots, it was essentially a middle-class movement aimed squarely at a middle-class audience.<sup>21</sup>

The same kinds of allegations of elitism were levelled at Quinteto Violado in a series of articles published in 1976 in the left-wing magazines *Opinião* and *Movimento*. These articles argued that the group had appropriated various pieces of folk music (in their role as researchers for Marcus Pereira) from impoverished popular composers and either passed them off as their own or failed to credit the true authors of the pieces (Cirano *et al.* 1976; Sobreira and Kehl 1976; Fonseca 1976). The general tone of these articles was that Quinteto Violado's music was a pale imitation of the real thing, served up for an elite, university-educated Rio/São Paulo audience, as far removed from the people as it was possible to get. Pereira himself became embroiled in a continuation of this press debate the following year when *Istoé* magazine published an article that accused him of being part of a general trend of 'researchers' who were merely concerned with exploiting popular Northeastern artists by appropriating their art and failing to recompense them adequately (Japiassu and Leite 1977). In his defence, Pereira pointed out that his representatives had done all that they could to pay those who had participated in *Música Popular do Nordeste* and that it was grossly unfair to hold him personally responsible for the economic conditions in the Northeast that led poor musicians and composers to sell their art to those from outside (Pereira 1977). One senses that Pereira was particularly piqued that he, of all people, should be accused of cultural and economic exploitation, when he had accumulated a vast personal debt in releasing *Música Popular do Brasil*, his records were denied radio and television exposure by the media, and above all, the fact that he was an independent record producer, one of the very few fighting for '... the valorisation of authentically Brazilian music at a time when foreign music has absolute domination of the market' (Pereira 1977A). It is ironic that Pereira's 'protectionism' was construed by some as exploitation, but the general press debate on this issue raised several important (and generally unanswered) issues such as: the role of rural, popular culture in urban, middle class society; the reasons why *repentistas* and the like were still popular in rural areas despite the all-powerful influence of radio and television; whether this culture loses its essential cultural significance when it is taken out of its natural context; and the consequences for rural areas when their local culture is marketed as 'folklore for tourists'.<sup>22</sup>

When discussing *Música Popular do Brasil* it is essential to bear in mind the background of deep social division that exists in Brazil. There is an obvious paradox, for example, in the fact that although Pereira's records overwhelmingly featured music originating from the rural poor, they were targeted at a middle-class audience (by far and away the major record-buying sector of society at that time). Not surprisingly, the urban, middle-class purchaser of *Música Popular do Brasil* would have

enjoyed a completely different experience listening to the recordings compared to those for whom the music formed an integral part of their daily lives.

## Conclusion

*Música Popular do Brasil* was the first case in which much of the enormous range of regional music within Brazil had been documented, and more importantly, brought to the public at large. Even a seasoned music critic such as Sérgio Cabral was moved to write in 1975, 'So Brazil had all this and wasn't aware of it?' (Cabral 1975, p. 21). Hailed by many at the time as a major contribution to Brazilian culture, Pereira's achievement was all the more impressive because it was conducted by a private individual, at his own expense, rather than by the state.<sup>23</sup> By 1976, even some of those who feared that *Música Popular do Brasil* might represent a dilution or of the essence of regional culture and folklore were convinced of the historical significance of the recordings and the crucial factor that they had been made available to the public (Danusia 1975). The collection went beyond the customary treatment of folklore in two ways. First, its interpretation of rural music transcended the traditional approach to this genre through its re-workings of such music. The juxtaposition *on the same record* of MPB artists and performers of traditional folk music invited the general listener to make fresh connections between folklore and popular music. Second, the socio-political subtext to the material, although relatively subtle, was designed to reactivate the debate about the position of rural folk music in relation to the field of Brazilian popular culture as a whole.

*Música Popular do Brasil* was not merely a 'musical map' of Brazil; it radically changed the Brazilian record-buying public's attitudes towards its own regional music. This was particularly true of the music from the South, which had traditionally been considered a poor relation of music emanating from the Northeast. *Música Popular do Brasil* was not the first time that MPB and traditional regional music had been brought together: for example, compositions such as *Arrastão* and *Disparada* (that were heavily influenced by Northeastern music) had been extremely successful in the mid 1960s due to their appearance in televised song festivals. The use of regional elements in popular music also surfaced in the music of artists from Bahia (Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa) and Minas Gerais (Milton Nascimento, Lô Borges). Nevertheless, *Música Popular do Brasil* gave a major boost to the awareness of regional diversity, and encouraged many artists working in the field of popular music to experiment with regional styles in their own compositions. It also helped to remove some of the stigma previously attached to regional culture at a time when cultural forms such as *maracatu* were on the verge of extinction. It was a key factor in the inspiration of movements such as *manguebeat* in Pernambuco in the 1990s and the proliferation of genre-transcending groups that exist in Brazil to this day. Pereira's *Música Popular do Brasil* also provided the template for Abril Entretenimento's massive *Música do Brasil* project of the late 1990s (coordinated by Hermano Vianna and Beto Villares) that, albeit from a different perspective, musically mapped those areas of the country that Pereira had been unable to document due to financial constraints. If Mário de Andrade had laid the foundations for the cultural bridge between the regions and the metropolis, then Marcus Pereira went ahead and built the bridge – a musical bridge that was designed to enable Brazilians to discover the 'forgotten part of the country, that doesn't appear on television and that you never hear on the radio' (Kubrusly 1981, p. 98).



## Endnotes

1. I would like to acknowledge the helpful comments of Professor David Treece regarding this article. I am also grateful for financial assistance provided by the School of Humanities, King's College, University of London, and the University of London Central Research Fund that enabled me to carry out research in Brazil.
2. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/world/awards2004/profile\\_cibelle.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/world/awards2004/profile_cibelle.shtml) (4 May 2004).
3. For a fuller account of Mário's writings on music and how his work fits into the wider context of nationalism in Brazil, see Reily (1997).
4. The collection was to be entitled *Na Pancada do Ganzá*, but was not completed in Mário's lifetime and was posthumously published in a piecemeal fashion.
5. This material is available for study at the Coleção Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas, Centro Cultural de São Paulo. A CD containing twenty songs collected by the MPF is commercially available (*Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas*, The Discoteca Collection, RCD 10403, 1997). A fascinating re-working of several of the compositions collected by Mário during his travels to the North and Northeast (including some collected by the MPF of 1938) can be found on the CD, *Turista Aprendiz* by the group A Barca (CPC-UMES, CP519, 2000).
6. An incomplete series of books and records based on the work of MPF (1938) was published by the Prefeitura of São Paulo between 1948 and 1955. The archive then fell into neglect and was only rediscovered in the 1980s by researchers such as Flávia Camargo Toni and Álvaro Carlini, who have been largely responsible for its re-classification and preservation (Sandroni 1999, p. 62).
7. In the early 1940s there was an attempt by the Brazilian composer and professor of music Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo (1905–1992) to continue the musical mapping work started by Mário. Azevedo carried out a series of field recordings in the states of Goiás (1942), Ceará (1943), Minas Gerais (1944) and Rio Grande do Sul (1945) that formed part of a collaboration between the National Institute of Music in Rio de Janeiro and the Library of Congress in the United States. These recordings were never made available to the Brazilian public.
8. *Música Popular do Nordeste* was one of the biggest sellers of the year and sold in excess of 40,000 copies (Lopes 1974).
9. Pereira received a large loan from a government agency once the series was under way but was dogged by financial problems until his death in 1981 (Carmo 1977).
10. See also Maranhão's (1979) interview with Pereira.
11. There is a further link between the MPF of 1938 and Pereira's musical mapping. Pereira often referred to the inspiration he derived from Paulo Duarte (head of the Department of Culture in São Paulo in 1938 and one of those responsible for the MPF) to whom he was related by birth (Vinícius 2001).
12. Pereira committed suicide in 1981, just before the start of the process of re-democratisation in Brazil. By 1982, many of his friends occupied positions of political power in São Paulo and Marcus Vinícius (artistic director for discos Marcus Pereira 1976–1981 and a former close friend of Pereira) considers that those friends may well have been able to provide support for his initiatives if he had lived.
13. Pereira's former close friend and colleague Marcus Vinícius has attempted to carry on aspects of Pereira's work through his record label, which is significantly entitled CPC-UMES (Centro Popular de Cultura da União Municipal dos Estudantes Secundaristas de São Paulo).
14. The phrase is from Teles (2000, p. 78).
15. The *Cancão de Protesto* (Protest song) movement of the mid-1960s was a similar attempt to combine politics with regional aspects of popular music that was cut short by the imposition of severe political and artistic censorship by the military government in 1968. For a detailed analysis of *Cancão de Protesto*, see Treece (1997) and Napolitano (2001).
16. Between 1974 and Pereira's death in 1981, his record label released more than one hundred albums, including the first LPs by veteran *sambistas*, Cartola and Donga.
17. Moura (1981, p. 20) provides a typical example. Pereira also had plans (unfortunately never realised) to carry out an exercise similar to *Música Popular do Brasil* for the whole of Latin America (Pereira 1976, p. 61).
18. I do not wish to suggest that this reasoning formed part of Pereira's original plan for the project, but that it may well have been an unintentionally potent factor in determining sales for *Música Popular do Brasil*. The Brazilian music critic and writer Ana Maria Bahiana remembers being astounded at the sheer variety of the music contained in the *Música Popular do Brasil* records at the time of release, and recalls that for her and her circle of friends it was a great source of pride that this was above all *Brazilian* music (Bahiana 2003).
19. See also Rowe and Schelling (1991).
20. Dineen (1996) provides an excellent analysis of the *Movimento Armorial*.
21. See, for example, Brito (2002, p. 17).
22. Maria Rita Kehl recounts an amusing anecdote that illustrates the potential for cultural misunderstanding in this respect. To mark the premiere of Tânia Quaresma's film *Nordeste, Cordel, Repente, Cancão* in São Paulo in 1976, various Northeastern *repentistas* and popular singers who featured in the film were invited to perform at a theatre in São Paulo. The audience were overwhelmingly middle-class (predominantly students and journalists) and the time allotted for each act was only a few minutes.

When the performers over-ran this limited time, they refused to leave the stage and continued singing while the next act followed them, resulting in a number of acts performing at the same time. The audience started whistling and booing at this perceived lack of etiquette, which resulted from a desire to enforce limits on the

improvising skills of the performers (Kehl 1976, p. 17).

23. FUNARTE and the Campaign for the Defence of Brazilian Folklore were jointly responsible for the release of several 45 rpm recordings of regional folk music such as *congada* in the mid-1970s, but the series received little publicity.

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