ENSAIO ESSAY

CULTURAL ACTIVISM, AVANTGARDE, AND POPULAR MUSIC IN BAHIA: THE EDUCATION OF TOM ZÉ

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Resumo: Este artigo considera a educação do músico brasileiro Tom Zé, que se tornou nacionalmente conhecido como membro do movimento Tropicália do final dos anos 60, juntamente com um grupo de jovens artistas baianos conhecido como grupo baiano. Focalizo o período entre 1960, quando se mudou da sua cidade natal, Irará, para a capital Salvador, e 1968, quando foi a São Paulo para participar do movimento tropicalista. Em Salvador, ele envolveu-se no ativismo cultural de esquerda, na vanguarda musical e numa vibrante cena musical popular inspirada principalmente pela bossa nova. Foi neste ambiente que Tom Zé desenvolveu a sua própria abordagem à música popular, inspirada pela cantoria do Nordeste e pelas técnicas experimentais que aprendeu na universidade.
Palavras-chave: Tom Zé; Tropicália; Salvador; vanguarda; CPC; Música popular.

Abstract: This article considers the education of Brazilian musician Tom Zé, who gained national visibility as a participant in the late sixties Tropicália movement along with a cohort of young artists from Bahia known as the *grupo baiano.* I focus on the period between 1960, when he relocated from his hometown, Irará, to the capital in Salvador, until his departure for São Paulo in 1968 to participate in the tropicalist movement. His formative experience in Salvador introduced him to left-wing cultural activism, the musical avantgarde, and a vibrant popular music scene inspired largely by bossa nova. Within this milieu, he developed his own approach to popular music inspired by the *cantoria* tradition of the rural Northeast together with experimental techniques he learned at the university.
Keywords: Tom Zé;Tropicália; Salvador; avantgarde; CPC; Popular music.

Brazilians who were born in the thirties and forties and reached maturity in the fifties and sixties witnessed a nation in transformation from a rural, agrarian to an urban, industrial society. For those, like Antonio José Martins Santana (b. 1936), later known as Tom Zé, the process of modernization was a startling existential experience. He grew up in Irará, a small town on the edge of the Bahian *sertão,* which he has described as a "pre-Gutenbergian" place of oral communication and circular time marked by agricultural seasons and annual religious festivals (Pimenta: 74). His father was born into poverty, but as a young man won a considerable sum from the federal lottery, which allowed him to marry the daughter of a wealthy landowner, Pompílio Sant'anna, and open a fabric store on the main street of Irará. While the young Tom Zé was exposed to the oral culture of the *sertão* at his father's store, he also had access to spaces of literacy, especially in his grandparent's home, which was at the center of the extended family. Tom Zé grew up between two distinct, yet interconnected worlds: one that was "traditional," reliant on oral communication, and mostly poor, and the other that was "modern," distinguished by literacy, access to new technologies, and the promise of upward mobility in the cities. Like many rural landowners, Seu Pompílio, was determined to send his children and grandchildren to the capital, Salvador, to pursue secondary and university studies (Risério, 2002: 48).

This article will consider Tom Zé's cultural and educational formation after he permanently left Irará to settle in Salvador at the end of 1960. I focus on three interconnected scenes that corresponded to what Charles Perrone usefully described as "imperatives" in relation to modern Brazilian poetry. In this scheme, a "social imperative" would attend to the revolutionary yearnings for redistributive justice of a generation inspired by the Cuban Revolution, but stymied by the ascension of a right-wing authoritarian regime. An "imperative of invention" would refer to a mid-century avantgarde that developed around *poesia concreta,* which eschewed traditional verse in favor of "verbivocovisual" experimentation with word, sound, and image. Finally, Perrone

speaks of an "orphic imperative," which centered on the rich poetic tradition of Brazilian popular song, which would gain renewed impetus in the late 1950s with the emergence of bossa nova. Adjacent to the "orphic imperative" was a desire among musicians to reach a popular audience through live performances and sound recordings. The productive tensions among these aesthetic, social, and professional concerns were central to the generation of Brazilian artists who reached adulthood in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

As an adolescent, Tom Zé took an interest in music, inspired by legendary artists from the Northeast, such as Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro, as well as by the local *cancionistas*, itinerant rural musicians who used the song form as a vehicle for commenting on current events. Tom Zé has described his music as a form of *imprensa cantada* or *jornalismo cantado* (sung journalism), often through a satiric lens on local personalities and events. Tom Zé's first opportunity to reach an audience beyond Irará came at the end of 1960, thanks largely to his cousin, Roberto Santana, who had contacts at TV Itapoan, Salvador's first television station, which began transmitting in November 1960. Roberto managed to book his cousin as a participant in a show called *Escada para o Sucesso* (Stairway to Success), a show for amateur musicians, known as a *programa de calouros,* a type of program that originated on the radio in the 1940s.

Tom Zé devised the perfect song for a program called *Escada de Sucesso,* presenting "Rampa para o fracasso" (Ramp to Failure), an irresistible satire that delighted the audience. Although Brasília was a monumental symbol of national optimism and modernization, the crowning achievement of the Juscelino Kubitschek presidency, the foibles of Brazilian politicians, especially presidents, were always ripe for satire. While Tom Zé no longer remembers the song, which was never recorded or written down, he recalls that it lampooned various aspects of Brazilian politics during that time (Pimenta: 69). "Rampa para o Fracasso" turned out to be prescient; the exuberant developmentalism of the Kubitschek years ushered in a period of high inflation, bloated foreign debt, and political instability. Kubitschek's successor, Jânio Quadros, resigned after eight months in a failed gambit to increase his own powers, setting the stage for his vice president, João Goulart, to assume the presidency. As a moderately left-wing populist, Goulart was sympathetic to the demands of labor and increasingly courted unions and student groups for support, creating

a pretext for reactionary elements within the military, allied with conservative civilians and with backing from the US government, to launch a coup on April 1, 1964. Inaugurated as a symbol of Brazil's democratic modernity, Brasília became the nerve center of a right-wing authoritarian regime. Although Tom Zé had no way of knowing this in 1960, the new federal capital would indeed become a symbol for the failure of Brazil's brief experiment with democracy.

"Rampa para o fracasso" succeeded in launching his career in Salvador, where he gained a small measure of fame as a satiric chronicler of the city. Soon after, family ties led to a job as the director of music with the local branch of the Centros Populares de Cultura (Peoples' Centers of Culture, or CPC), the cultural wing of the União Nacional dos Estudantes (National Students Union, or UNE). He also began to received formal training in music at the University of Bahia, which at the time was investing heavily in arts education by recruiting innovative artists and intellectuals from throughout Brazil and Europe to join the faculty. While pursuing a formal education in music, he also performed around the city as a singer-songwriter rooted in the *cantoria* tradition infused with social and political satire. He soon made connections with other young musicians in Salvador, most of whom were deeply inspired by the bossa nova, a new style of playing samba with muted vocals and jazz-inflected harmonies, which conveyed the modern, cosmopolitan sensibility of the Kubitschek era. He joined a young cohort of musicians that would come be known as the *grupo baiano* when they migrated south to Rio de Janeiro and eventually to São Paulo where they later spearheaded Tropicália, a multidisciplinary cultural movement that erupted in 1968. This article explores his engagement with several interconnected scenes related to left-wing cultural activism, formal aesthetic experimentation, and the development of new forms of popular music in the wake of bossa nova.

1 CPC da Bahia

Although Tom Zé came from a landed family in Irará, he had relatives who were committed to political projects oriented toward land reform, social equality, and popular

mobilization for democratic rights. Starting in the 1940s, several of his uncles became active in the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), which was the largest communist party in Latin America. Although outlawed except for a brief period between 1945 and 1947, the PCB organized openly and established a robust presence throughout the country (Bethell, 203). His uncle Fernando Sant'anna was an early leader of the UNE, an organization closely allied with the PCB, which organized the student resistance to the Vargas's authoritarian *Estado Novo.*

Despite its illegality, the PCB, known as the *partidão* (ie. "big party") was a major force in left-wing politics in Brazil. Following the gradualist directives from Moscow, the PCB promoted what it called a "nationalist bourgeois revolution," involving an alliance of urban and rural workers, intellectuals, and progressive, nationalist industrialists against the traditional *latifúndio* and elite agents of foreign capital. Roberto Schwarz has noted that the party was simultaneously combative and conciliatory, advocating for struggle against foreign capital and in favor of agrarian reform, while serving as a moderating force within the urban labor movement. The PCB was, as he notes, "far more anti-imperialist than it was anti-capitalist" leading to alliances that would prove to be illusory following the military coup of 1964 (Schwarz: 128-30).

At that time, Salvador was a major center of communist organizing, involving moderates such as Fernando Sant'anna as well as those who would later abandon the PCB and take up arms against the military regime, including the historian Jacob Gorender and the legendary guerilla leader, Carlos Marighella. In 1958, Sant'anna joined the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB), a left-leaning labor party loosely allied with the PCB, so that he could run for office (Risério, 2002: 225). He was elected federal deputy to the national congress in 1959, coinciding with the Cuban Revolution, which was profoundly inspirational to progressive activists, artists, intellectuals, and workers throughout Latin America. When Tom Zé relocated to Salvador, there was still a widespread sense of heady optimism among the Brazilian left, especially among university students.

Tom Zé's move to Salvador coincided with the emergence of the CPC, a national network of left-wing cultural organizations, which was founded in Rio de Janeiro under the aegis of UNE and closely aligned with the PCB. The founders of the CPC included

playwright Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, filmmaker Leon Hirszman, and essayist Carlos Estevam Martins, who were all members of the PCB. The CPC leadership fashioned itself as a political vanguard tasked with "raising consciousness" among dispossessed and exploited masses. In their efforts to propagate "revolutionary popular art," CPC-affiliated artists and intellectuals were limited by paternalistic attitudes toward their target audience and conservative aesthetic values that privileged communication over formal innovation (Dunn, 41-42). Despite these limitations, the CPC represented a bold experiment in culture-based activism with laudable social and political objectives. The Bahian chapter of the CPC flourished under the direction of Chico de Assis, a director, songwriter, and playwright from São Paulo, who was best known as the composer (with Carlos Lyra) of "Canção do subdesenvolvido" (Song of the underdeveloped), a satire of US imperialism and Brazilian subservience, which was became a favorite song among left-wing students. The first production under Chico de Assis was *Rebelião em Novo Sol* (Rebellion in New Sun), a play that explored both the conciliatory and confrontational strategies employed by landless peasants in their struggle against the abuses of a powerful *coronel.*

Soon after Tom Zé arrived in Salvador, his Aunt Gilka, Fernando Sant'anna's wife, arranged for him to start work at the local chapter of the CPC where he was assigned to direct the music program in collaboration with José Carlos Capinan (b.1941), a native of Esplanada, Bahia, who directed the theater program. The CPC staged numerous performances in poor neighborhoods around Salvador, as well as in small towns of the interior (Barcellos, 66). In 1963, Capinan and Tom Zé created *Bumba meu Boi* (Buck my bull), a musical performance directed by Johnson Santos with artistic direction by Emanoel Araújo, an emergent black artist from Santo Amaro, Bahia. It premiered in the Concha Acústica, an outdoor band shell annexed to the Teatro Castro Alves, with subsequent presentations in public squares and schools in *favelas* and neighborhoods on the urban periphery (Moreira, 94). Bumba-meu-boi is a traditional dramatic dance performed throughout rural Brazil, but mostly in the Northeast and most famously in the state of Maranhão. It tells the story of a poor ranch hand, variously known as Mateus or Pai Francisco, who kills a bull to feed his pregnant wife, Catarina, who craves ox tongue.

Arrested by the landowner for cattle theft, the ranch hand is redeemed and freed when the bull is brought back to life by a traditional healer, or *curandeiro*.

Capinan devised a script that innovated in two essential ways. In place of pregnant Catarina, he cast a collective personage, identified simply as *povo* (people), as the eager recipient of the ox meat. At that time, left-wing artists and intellectuals, especially those affiliated with the PCB believed in the revolutionary potential of the *povo* as historical agents of social and political transformation. Throughout the performance, the *povo* intermittently chants "When will this ox become meat? / When will the people get to eat? What will be its fate? Those who are hungry have no time to wait" (Capinan: 6). Instead of one person with a personal craving for meat, Capinan's script suggested a generalized hunger and deprivation in the rural Northeast. In place of just one wealthy cattle rancher, Capinan cast a series of characters that represent different phases of a commodity chain, beginning with the rancher and ending with the butcher. As the representative of the *povo,* the character *vaqueiro* (cowherd), explains: "from person to person, the ox is passed along, becoming more expensive at each step." By the time it has been prepared for slaughter, the value of the ox has increased six-fold. When the *vaqueiro* attempts to purchase the ox on behalf of the *povo,* the final link of the commodity chain, the butcher rebuffs him: "Your money wouldn't pay for even a sniff of this ox. What was fifty yesterday, is today a hundred" (Capinan: 9).

As the famished *povo* despairs for lack of food, the various agents in the commodity chain begin to worry that they won't find a buyer who will yield a profit for them. At that moment of impasse, Uncle Sam arrives to the sound of the twist, the early sixties dance craze from the US, and promises purchase the ox and offer new technologies, including freezers, to facilitate meat distribution. As he parades around the ox festooned with the logos of American and British meat processors, such as Armour, Swift, Wilson, and Anglo, the *vaqueiro* and the *povo* demand its rightful share of the animal. When Uncle Sam finally begins to distribute the meat from the ox, he first offers portions to figures of authority from the clergy, liberal professionals, and the military. As the *povo* continues to appeal for its share, Tio Sam distributes the ox to American and British meat companies, as well as other multinational companies such as the petroleum producer, Esso, and the shoe

company, Clark. After export demands have been met, Tio Sam distributes portions of the ox to the political elite, including the university chancellor, the governor, representatives, and senators, as the *povo* clamors for food: "the people work and deserve our fare/ you must not forget our share." With the meat divided up and distributed to patrons and clients, the American announces that only the memory of the ox remains, prompting the *povo* to issue a defiant rejoinder: if memory persists, then it's possible to recall that throughout history "THERE IS ALWAYS REVOLUTION," written in capital letters to be exclaimed by the entire cast as a parting message (Capinan: 20-21).

While Capinan's introduced key innovations to the bumba-meu-boi story so that it would square with Marxist ideology, Tom Zé remembers that CPC leaders were less impressed with his musical score, which they believed conformed too much to traditional folklore. According to them, his compositions for *Bumba meu Boi* repeated much of what he had composed for an earlier performance of *Chegança,* based on a traditional dramatic dance that stages a battle between medieval Christians and Muslims. His cultural upbringing had taught him that all of these songs were essentially the same and didn't need to be altered in any way. While CPC directors embraced a notion of time based on change and progress, Tom Zé still lived to some extent in what he has called "circular time of myth" (Pimenta: 70). In Irará, these dances were performed the same way every year in the same context. For his colleagues, mostly urban students steeped in Marxist theory, which was predicated on dialectical change, CPC performances should be based on "folklore" in order to relate to the *povo,* but needed to introduce discursive and formal innovations that would impart a revolutionary message. Tom Zé's work with the CPC in collaboration with Capinan provided a key lesson in agitprop performance, while also convincing him of the need to pursue his musical studies at the university.

Following the military coup of April 1964, the new regime moved swiftly to dismantle the CPC and the UNE, as well as arresting and exiling political activists and leaders affiliated with the Brazilian Communist Party. Fernando Sant'anna was one of the first elected officials to be stripped of his mandate and political rights, after which he went into exile in Eastern Europe where he would remain until 1979. Although Tom Zé's involvement with the CPC was relatively brief, it was essential for integrating him into the

local music scene and introducing him to key issues of time, such as agrarian reform, the struggle against capitalist imperialism, and the role of artists and intellectuals in mobilizing people. Perhaps most importantly, his experience as a composer in the CPC provided the impetus for him to pursue the formal study of music at the University of Bahia.

2 Avantgarde na Bahia

When Tom Zé relocated to Salvador, the University of Bahia (later renamed the Federal University of Bahia, UFBA), was emerging as a center of cultural effervescence. It was founded in 1946 under the direction of Edgard Santos, a surgeon and professor had who directed the School of Medicine of Bahia. Although he was man of science, Santos was also deeply committed to the arts and humanities, seeking to recruit leading European artists and intellectuals, many of whom had immigrated to Brazil, either before, during, or in the wake of World War II. Under his direction, the university established new schools of music, dance, and theater that laid the foundation for a flourishing arts scene in Salvador, which Antonio Risério has characterized as an "avantgarde na Bahia.″Santos believed that the task of the university was to promote both cultural deprovincialization and urban-industrial modernization (Risério, 1995: 35).

In 1954, Santos recruited Hans-Joachim Koellreutter (1915-2005) to found and direct the newly created Seminários Livres de Música. In turn, the German composer convinced Santos to hire Yanka Rudzka (1916-2008), a Polish dancer and choreographer, as the founding director of a new school of dance, beginning in 1956. That same year, he also recruited Eros Martim Gonçalves (1919-1973), a Brazilian director then based in Rio, to create and lead a new theater school, which would contribute to the late fifties and early sixties “Bahian Renaissance” in film featuring early works of Cinema Novo by Glauber Rocha, Roberto Pires, and Triguerinho Neto (Stam: 205-206). Santos also sponsored the creation of independent institutions, including the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais (CEAO), devoted to the study of African, Afro-Diasporic, and Asian societies and cultures. Founded in 1959 under the direction of philosopher Agostinho da Silva (1906-1994), a Portuguese exile who had fled the Salazar dictatorship in 1943, the CEAO was the first

research institute in Brazil devoted to the study of an emergent postcolonial world in Africa and Asia. Santos established a similar arrangement with a new Museu de Arte Moderna (MAM), founded in 1960 under the direction of the visionary Italian architect, Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992). After World War II, she had relocated to São Paulo with her husband, art critic and collector Pietro Maria Bardi, who had been invited to found and direct the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) in 1947.

All of these newcomers to Bahia, mostly emigrés from post-war Europe, shared a commitment to artistic excellence, but rejected the rigid formality of established pedagogical systems. To varying degrees, they were committed to interdisciplinary approaches and to varying degrees engaged in the local culture of Bahia, a city with a substantial black majority under the control of a small white elite. Bo Bardi's essay about her experience in Bahia is suggestively titled "Cinco anos entre os brancos" (Five years among the white men), which make no reference to race, but discusses at length the conservative local elite that opposed her attempts to make the museum into a space of cultural transformation. It's worth noting that the allies she lists at the end of her essay, including figures such as Walter da Silveira, Glauber Rocha, and Eros Martim Gonçalves, were also white men (Bardi, 136). To the extent that the Bahian avantgarde was engaged in an insurgent struggle to deprovincialize and democratize culture in Bahia, it was with few exceptions, such as Gilberto Gil and visual artist Emanoel Araújo, a scene composed of white artists and intellectuals.

Given Tom Zé's formative experience in the school of music, it's worth examining some of the key figures with whom he studied. Hans-Joachim Koellreutter was born in Freiburg, Germany to a conservative aristocratic family, against which he would rebel, teaching himself music after being expelled from school and grounded in his family home for over a year. Fleeing from his family, he moved to Berlin in the late 1920s during the rise of the Nazi Party, which came to power in 1933. While studying at the Academy of Music (Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik), he became active in anti-Nazi politics and was eventually expelled from the academy. He found refuge in Neuchâtel, Switzerland at the home of Hermann Scherchen, a German composer with left-wing sympathies who had embraced the new music of the Second Viennese School, led by

Arnold Schoenberg and his pupils Alban Berg and Anton Webern, who experimented with atonality and twelve-tone serialism, or dodecaphony, a movement vehemently opposed by the Nazi regime, which classified it as "degenerate art." His uncle, Otto Koellreutter, was a prominent jurist and legal scholar and personal friend of Adolph Hitler, who authored influential treatises in support of national socialism and the *fürherstaat.* When Hans-Joachim became engaged to his first wife, a Jewish woman, his Nazi uncle denounced him to the Gestapo and sent his son, a Nazi organizer in Switzerland, to attack his nephew's fiancée while the couple were visiting Geneva. Soon after, the young composer later had a fortuitous encounter in Budapest with the Brazilian ambassador to Hungary, who arranged for him to immigrate to Brazil with his wife (Adriano;Volobow).

Koellreutter arrived in Rio de Janeiro in November 1937, where he found work in a musical printing press, a job that left him sick from lead exposure. His status as a German emigré also left him vulnerable to suspicion, especially as his surname was then most associated with his Nazi uncle, Otto. In 1942, after German U-boats sank thirteen Brazilian merchant ships and Vargas formally joined the Allied Powers, he was arrested in São Paulo and held for three months at the central train station, Estação da Luz, together with other German and Japanese detainees. Despite these setbacks, he found work as a musician (he was principally a flautist) and as a music teacher. He brought together a group of young composers who were interested in *música dodecafônica,* the twelve-tone serialism Koellreutter had learned from his own mentor. In 1939, Koellreutter established a group known as Música Viva, a name that paid tribute to Scherchen, who had published the journal *Musica Viva* in Brussels from 1933 to 1936 (Kater, 290). A small group of young Brazilian composers, including Claudio Santoro, César Guerra-Peixe, Eunice Katunda, and Edino Krieger, coalesced around the Música Viva project, which sought to introduce the dodecaphonic technique to Brazil. Although initially avoiding confrontation, the group staked out a position contrary to the modern nationalist tradition established by Heitor Villa-Lobos, based on erudite and notated stylizations of popular music, such as choro, samba, and a variety of rural genres understood as "folklore."

The group's first manifesto, issued in 1944, was rather vague in its aims and claims, defining its project as "a door that opens to contemporary musical production, participating

actively in the evolution of the spirit." Without referring to the context of World War II, the manifesto already gestured toward post-war reconstruction, affirming that the group "will struggle for ideas for a new world, believing in the creative force of the human spirit and in art of the future." A second declaration of principles, the Manifesto of 1946, was more combative as it staked out a position against musical nationalism. While rejecting formalism, "in which form becomes autonomous," the manifesto railed against "false nationalism in music," which "exalts feelings of nationalist superiority," a common theme in post-war art in response to the horrors of the genocidal nationalism of Nazi Germany. Instead, the Música Viva group was committed to the "socializing function of music for bringing men together, humanizing and universalizing them." The group's advocacy for dodecaphonic atonality was not entirely divorced from national concerns. Guerra-Peixe, for example, experimented with twelve-tone serialism using melodies and rhythms derived from Brazilian popular music, in an attempt to reconcile the European avant-garde with Brazilian nationalist concerns (Faria: 170). By the end of the decade, however, the Música Viva group had begun to dissolve, as key figures in the movement, including Guerra-Peixe and Santoro, renounced dodecaphonism in favor of musical nationalism based on rural folklore.

In 1950, Camargo Guarnieri issued his notorious "Open Letter to the Musicians and Critics of Brazil," which he wrote as a "a warning call to stop the nefarious formalist and anti-Brazilian infiltration" in Brazilian music. Guarnieri's letter would anticipate the fierce reaction against an emergent constructivist avantgarde in visual arts and especially in poetry. It finds parallels in the nationalist reaction against bossa nova in the late 1950s and against Tropicália a decade later. Antonio Risério has suggested a vanguardist "line of continuity" between Koellreutter's Música Viva and a group that would emerge in São Paulo under the banner of "Música Nova," which included figures such as Rogério Duprat, Damiano Cozzella, Sandino Hohagen and Julio Medaglia, who would participate in the tropicalist movement of the late 1960s (Risério, 1995: 95). Despite the nationalist reaction against Música Viva, Koellreutter continued to find support for his work as well as students who were eager to work with him. He founded international workshops, or *cursos,* in Teresópolis (interior of Rio de Janeiro state) and São Paulo before moving to Salvador to

direct the Seminários Livres de Música, which would later become a complete school of music within the university. During his years at the University of Bahia, Koellreutter completely revamped the music curricular of the university, which had been heavily oriented toward the classical and romantic traditions of European concert music.

After learning from the school secretary that no applicants had declared an interest in specializing in cello, Tom Zé asserted in his first interview with Koellreutter, that his childhood dream was to study the instrument (Scaramuzzo: 68). He joined a cohort of talented students, including Fernando Cerqueira, Lindembergue Cardoso, Jamary Oliveira, Nicolau Kokron, Milton Gomes, and Rinaldo Rossi, most of whom had also come from small towns in the interior of Bahia. He has compared his professors to fishermen "who cast the net and looked for the potential among musical illiterates" with little formal training (Tom Zé, 89). His classmate, Lindembergue Cardoso, also felt out of place, feeling "like a donkey staring at a palace," and unable to understand any of the technical terms, often spoken in German (Cardoso: 45). Tom Zé entered the university in 1962 during Koellreutter's final year in Bahia, but was able to take a course in the history of music from the German composer. He has recalled the first day of class when Koellreutter walked into the classroom, looked at the students, and declared: "Music is *not* the expression of feelings through sound" (Tom Zé: 89). Besides challenging deeply rooted romantic notions of music as the expression of sentiment, it left open the question of what music was or could be. By that time, Koellreutter has eased up on dodecaphonic orthodoxy, which as Tom Zé recalls, "permitted speculations in relation to the musical scales of the Recôncavo, tonal and modal scales with altered chords." In other words, Koellreutter had become interested in possible encounters between the musical avantgarde and traditional Afro-Bahian music in the region surrounding All Saint's Bay. Tom Zé has characterized the "vibe" (*clima*) in the school as "*caboclo* serialist," using a polyvalent term often used to describe anything that is native to Brazil (Valetta).

In his first years at the university, Koellreutter recruited a cadre of young instructors, including Swiss composer Ernst Widmer (1927-1990), who arrived in 1956 and assumed the leadership of the school following Koellreutter's departure. Widmer didn't share the vanguardist verve of Koellreutter, but he was an inspired teacher and

administrator dedicated to eclecticism and experimentation. While the university remained a training ground for predominately white, middle-class students, the music school under Widmer encouraged dialogue and exchange with the predominantly black city. Tom Zé has recalled that his European professors were "invading Bahia of the *orixás* with the craziness of the Vienna School," while training independent students who would resist following "schools" or "currents" within music (Tom Zé: 50).

In 1966, Widmer founded the Grupo de Compositores da Bahia together with his students, including Tom Zé. The group came together following a Holy Week recital in April 1966 for which the group of young composers presented short oratorios for vocals, wind instruments, and percussion (Nogueira: 28). In its first published bulletin, the group stated objectives to "stimulate and disseminate contemporary musical creation through exchange, concerts, research, workshops, festivals, print editions, and lending of recordings" (*Boletim:* 5). Cognizant of the bitter polemic between Guarnieri and Koellreutter, the young composers under Widmer's direction sought avoid taking sides between the nationalists and the dodecaphonist avantgarde. In lieu of a manifesto, the group issued a simple declaration of principles: "Principally, we are against every and all declared principles." Widmer held a deep appreciation for popular music, declaring above all, his love of the music by Dorival Caymmi, a Bahian singer-songwriter renowned for his compositions about Afro-Bahian culture. In a conversation with David Byrne decades later, Tom Zé remembered that "the irreverant treatment of *sertanejo* folklore was the starting point for many works by the Bahian Composers Group." ("David Byrne in Conversation with Tom Zé,": 85).

Widmer would also send his students to experiment with the instruments made by his colleague Walter Smetak (1913-1984), a Swiss cellist who Koellreutter had recruited in 1957, who would become Tom Zé's first cello professor. Smetak demonstrated little interest in teaching the instrument and was replaced by the Italian cellist Piero Bastianelli. Relieved of his responsibilities as a cello instructor, Smetak devoted himself to creating new instruments using gourd calabashes, styrofoam, PVC pipes, and other found materials, which he called *plásticas sonoras,* a name that suggests that he conceived them as art objects. In 1966, he first showed his instrument-sculptures at the I Bienal Nacional das Artes

Plásticas, a milestone exhibit that challenged the centralization of art circuits in Rio and São Paulo. The following year, Smetak exhibited several of these works in the watershed exhibit Nova Objetividade Brasileira organized by Hélio Oiticica, which brought together diverse manifestations of the Brazilian avant-garde, broadly oriented toward constructivist and participatory art. At that exhibit, Oiticica would show his famous installation *Tropicália,* which Caetano Veloso would later appropriate as a name for a song, eventually becoming the name used for an entire cultural movement in 1968.

By the early 1970s, Smetak's workshop attracted emergent figures in the local music scene, including Bahian multi-instrumentalist Tuzé de Abreu, singer-songwriter Gereba (Geraldo Barrero Monte Santo), percussionist Djalma Corrêa, and composer-arranger-instrumentalist Marco Antônio Guimarães, a native of Belo Horizonte who would later find Uakti, a group that created its own instruments using PVC pipe, wood, and metal. In 1972, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, recently returned from exile in London, began to frequent his workshop in the basement of the UFBA School of Music. Veloso recorded his most experimental album *Araça Azul,* in which he entoned "Smetak, Smetak e Musak e razão" on "Épico," the track most indebted to avantgarde music on the album. In 1974, he produced *Smetak,* a collection of recordings featuring Walter Smetak's microtonal experiments with *plásticas sonoras.* While Tom Zé's interactions with Smetak were limited, he was inspired by the *plásticas sonoras* when he began to create his own instruments, known as *instromzémentos,* in 1972. The heterodox experimentalism of the Grupo de Compositores da Bahia and Smetak's *plásticas sonoras* captivated the imagination of Tom Zé, then around thirty years old, but also coincided with his turn toward popular music, which until then had been a side project.

Other colleagues at the UFBA School of Music who also played popular music would ultimately remain dedicated to "erudite" music and pursue careers within the university system. The trajectory of Lindembergue Cardoso provides an interesting comparison to that of Tom Zé. Born and raised in Livramento de Nossa Senhora, a small town around 500 km from Salvador in a mountainous region in south-central Bahia state, Cardoso's early childhood memories are of narrative performances such as *marujadas, cavalhadas,* and *reisados,* as well as *cantigas de roda* (circle chants) and brass bands that

played *marchas* for both civic and religious festivities—all music and dance traditions that would have been familiar to the Irará of Tom Zé's youth. Like Irará of Tom Zé's youth, Livramento was also a town without electricity and running water (Cardoso: 12-13). While studying in the Seminários Livres de Música, he played in local nightclub bands, including the Orquestra Tabaris, which nightly played bolero and samba-canção, as well as a more adventurous jazz-samba group called Avanço, featuring emergent musicians working in the realm of popular music, such as multi-instrumentalist Tuzé de Abreu, renowned drummer Tutty Moreno, and vocalist Paulinho Boca de Cantor, who would later become the lead singer for the Novos Baianos. In the late 1960s, Cardoso abandoned his career in popular music to devote his efforts to "erudite" music. Following bifurcated paths in Brazilian music, they both enjoyed early success. In 1968, Cardoso won first prize at the 2nd Presentation of Bahian Composers and the following year he joined a contingent from the Grupo de Compositores da Bahia that competed in the I Festival de Música de Guanabara. Cardoso's composition, "Procissão de Carpideiras" (Procession of Weepers), combined mid-century atonality with a typically modernist will to stylize folklore.

After receiving his music degree in 1967, Tom Zé taught counterpoint and harmony at the university and played the cello in the UFBA Symphonic Orchestra. However, he quickly abandoned this path to pursue a career in popular music in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo together with a cohort of young Bahian musicians with whom he had worked for several years. Up until 1968, the Tom Zé and Lindembergue Cardoso had remarkably similar trajectories that combined work as popular musicians as well as composers and instrumentalists of erudite music, which suggest the porous, dialogical relationship between these cultural realms in Bahia of the 1960s.

3 *Grupo baiano*

In 1963, a local filmmaker, Orlando Senna, introduced Tom Zé to Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso, two young students and aspiring musicians connected to the university, the CPC, and the local popular music scene. At that meeting, Veloso remembers being impressed by Tom Zé's "*sertanejo* airs" and rural accent that seemed to underscore "the

classic elegance of his erudite and correct Portuguese" (Veloso: 203). Tom Zé would later meet Veloso's sister, Maria Bethânia, and Maria da Graça, later known as Gal Costa, who would emerge later in the decade as leading vocalists of Brazilian popular music. This cohort of musicians, later known as the *grupo baiano,* was eclectic in their musical tastes, but broadly devoted to the modern Brazilian song tradition, from the samba-canções they heard on the radio in the 1940s to the *toadas* of Dorival Caymmi, a Bahian singer-songwriter who achieved critical acclaim and commercial success with songs, both mournful and celebratory of Afro-Bahian life with special attention coastal fishing villages.

They were all inspired to varying degrees by bossa nova, the "new thing" that took urban Brazil (and later the world) by storm. Veloso and Costa, in particular, were devotees of João Gilberto, the singer-guitarist from Juazeiro, Bahia, who invented the distinct finger-plucking technique associated with the style. While also attracted to bossa nova's urbane lyricism, Gil and Bethânia turned increasingly to the musical traditions of the rural northeast together with themes of rural poverty and exploitation. Within the *grupo baiano*, Tom Zé was the least indebted to bossa nova and most closely connected to the tradition of the northeastern *cantadores* with his use of humor and satire to comment on everyday life. At the same time, he was the only member of the *grupo baiano* who was pursuing an advanced degree in music at the university, while Gil completed a degree in business administration and Veloso took classes in philosophy.

Tom Zé continued to compose satiric songs of local interest of the sort that he had mastered in Irará, but now focused on everyday life and events in Salvador. "Rampa para o fracasso" had provided him with confidence that he could apply his satiric sensibilities to other contexts beyond his hometown. One of his first compositions after relocating to Salvador was "Incêndio do Teatro Castro Alves" (Burning of the Castro Alves Theater), which commented on the destruction of a new modernist theater named for the famous abolitionist poet Antonio de Castro Alves. One of Governor Balbino's pet projects designed to symbolize the modernization of Salvador, the Teatro Castro Alves (TCA) famously burned down five days before inauguration day in 1958. In the song, Tom Zé insinuated a parallel to Nero's putative burning of the Circus Maximus in Rome in 64 A.D., remarking that "to prove it was made for an emperor/ it was necessary for the theater

to burn down one evening." In face of the tragedy, local artists came together to turn the charred ruins into an experimental theater space. Eros Martim Gonçalves staged a production of Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* with set designs by Lina Bo Bardi.

While gently lampooning the grandiosity of the theater and its connection to the political ambitions of the governor, "Incêndio do Teatro Castro Alves" also praised the audacious repurposing of the burntout shell: "we are the first in the entire world/ to have a theater that is only a husk." In preparation for the staging, Lina Bo Bardi placed a roughly hewn thirteen-foot wood statue of Antonio Conselheiro, created in 1955 by renowned Bahian sculptor Mário Cravo Jr., at the entrance to the theater. The song tells a surreal story of the Conselheiro statue coming to life and challenging a monument commemorating the federal troops that destroyed Canudos, which was erected in 1900 in front the São Pedro Fort located near the TCA in Salvador's city center. The Second of July monument, erected in 1895 to commemorate Bahia's independence from Portuguese rule in 1823, joins Conselheiro in his struggle. Located in the Praça do Campo Grande (in front of the TCA), the Second of July monument features a native Brazilian, or *caboclo,* the symbol of Bahian independence, brandishing a spear. "Incêndio do Teatro Castro Alves" pays homage to Bahian modernism, represented by Bo Bardi's innovative use of the destroyed theater and Cravo's imposing Conselheiro statue, which was an affront to classical sculpture.

In 1964, Roberto Santana presented the *grupo baiano* with its first opportunity to perform after a local theater group fell behind in their production schedule for one of the inaugural events for a new performance space, Teatro Vila Velha, which would become a cherished venue for the local theater and music scene. Veloso named the show *Nós, por Exemplo* (Us, for example), which was described as "a bossa nova show." In November, the group would present another musical showcase *Nova Bossa Velha, Velha Bossa Nova* (New old bossa, old new bossa) before reprising both shows at the Teatro Castro Alves, the premier venue in Salvador still in the process of renovation after the devastating fire of 1958.

For this series of musical showcases, they presented an eclectic repertoire based on the modern Brazilian song tradition, with sambas by revered composers of the previous

generation such as Noel Rosa and Dorival Caymmi, bossa nova standards by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes, and new songs by their contemporaries, such as Carlos Lyra, Sergio Ricardo, and Geraldo Vandré, artists who approached popular music as a vehicle of social critique and political protest in the early years of military rule. Veloso has explained in addition to addressing political and social issues, the show was designed to historically situate their group within the development of Brazilian popular music (Veloso: 58). The Bahians also debuted original compositions, some of which would become classics of the MPB songbook, such as Veloso's "Sol Negro" and "É de manhã." Tom Zé performed two original songs, "Maria, Colégio da Bahia," featured on the b-side of his first single, "São Benedito," and "A moreninha," which Gilberto Gil later performed at the Third Festival of Brazilian Popular Music and included on his first LP, *Louvação,* in 1967.

In "Maria, Colégio da Bahia," Tom Zé paid homage to a legendary *baiana de acarajé,* a term referring to the women who sell bean cakes fried in *dendê* (African red palm oil) on the streets of Salvador. Successful *baianas de acarajé* secure vending points around the city where they build up a loyal clientele, such as the students who attended the Colégio da Bahia, the high school where Tom Zé had studied in the early 1950s. Known as "Maria dos Estudantes," she was known for her compassion and generosity, even allowing students to pay using streetcar passes or buy on credit: "De todos era íntima amiga/ ouvia confissões, aconselhava e até receitava" (She was a dear friend to all/ she heard confessions, gave advised and even prescribed). One day, however, another *baiana* set up her vending stand, or *tabuleiro,* next to Maria's, introducing unwelcome competition, which was a common occurrence before the formation of a professional association tasked to regulate the *acarajé* vendors and defend their collective interests (Castañeda: 104). After complaining to the school director and even enlisting a Candomblé priest, or *pai-de-santo,* for otherworldly assistance, Maria finally gives up and eventually leaves the vending point, leaving the students with *saudade,* or longing, for her food and comradery. The song ends with reference to those who are now "professionals and politicians" who benefitted from her generosity in their youth. Although she abandoned her vending point in frustration, the final stanzas of the song describe Maria strutting triumphantly down the street in a silk

dress on her way to a graduation ceremony, suggesting that she maintained her connections with the students. Although outside of the scope of the song, a recent anecdote suggests that Maria may have, in fact, been rewarded for her generosity. One former teacher of Colégio da Bahia has claimed that a former student secured lifetime employment for Maria dos Estudantes in the municipal government after he was elected to the city council.[1]

With the critical and popular success *Nós, por Exemplo* and *Nova Bossa Velha, Velha Bossa Nova*, more opportunities emerged for the *grupo baiano,* particularly for Maria Bethânia, whose earthy contralto voice and fervent demeanor was well suited to an emergent post-bossa nova protest music. In 1965, she was recruited to substitute for Nara Leão in the tremendously popular musical Show Opinião, directed by Augusto Boal for the Teatro de Arena, the premier company associated with left-wing nationalism that worked closely with the CPC. She gained special notoriety with the song, "Carcará" (Caracara), named for a bird of prey common in the Brazilian northeast, which served as a metaphor for the struggle for survival in the arid *sertão.* The song ends with her strident recitation of statistics about migration from the rural Northeast to the large metropolises of the center-south, an implicit critique of the *latifúndio* and the political system that prevented agrarian reform. Released as a compact disc and included on her first LP, *Maria Bethânia* (1965), "Carcará" was a hit among left-wing audiences and effectively launched her national career.

With the success of the *Show Opinião*, Augusto Boal proposed a new musical showcase featuring Maria Bethânia, this time with other musicians from Bahia, including the her brother, Caetano, together with Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, Tom Zé, as well as a few other young artists included Jards Macalé, who would become a key figure of the Brazilian countercultural scene in the 1970s. Boal recruited Veloso and Gil to assume the musical direction of the show, titled *Arena Canta Bahia* (Arena sings Bahia), and propose a repertoire of songs relating to Bahia, including new compositions. After rejecting a storyline based on a traditional Bahian fairy tale that the group had proposed, Boal stitched

[1] I am grateful to Vanessa Castañeda for this information given to her by one of her informants who worked as a baiana de acarajé and related this remembrance from a school teacher who taught at the Colégio da Bahia.

together a basic narrative structure for over sixty songs, divided roughly between unattributed "folklore" and credited songs by Gil, Veloso, and Tom Zé, as well as Dorival Caymmi, Bahia's most celebrated mid-century composer. Veloso has noted that the majority of the songs were "northeastern in character" (ie. relating to the interior *sertão*), rather than songs that were "typically Bahian" from the *recôncavo* region and the capital, Salvador (Veloso: 63).

Without any unifying storyline, Boal devised a simple structure for *Arena Canta Bahia* based on thematic clusters, such that it was more like a concert rather than musical theater. Boal's main argument was to draw a contrast between idealized images of Bahia (and by extension Brazil) and what leftist intellectuals of the time called *realidade nacional*-- the infrastructural and social "reality" that kept millions of Brazilians in poverty. In his program notes, Boal explained:

> Brazil is the country of the future, Bahia is the land of happiness, Rio is the marvelous city, and São Paulo most certainly never stops. But São Paulo, Rio, Bahia and Brazil are abstractions. São Paulo never stops, but thousands of *paulista* workers are refusing to work; Bahia is very happy, but take a look at the infant mortality and illiteracy rates of this state; Rio has the Corcovado, but beneath the arms (of the statue) how many lack water, wheat, meat, housing and sanitation?[2]

Arena Canta Bahia failed to garner the commercial and critical success of *Arena Conta Zumbi,* Boal's previous musical theater production with songs composed by Edu Lobo. Although the show wasn't a success, it opened doors for the leading artists, who were all given the opportunity to record compact discs with RCA Victor. Tom Zé's first recording "São Benedito" (advertised on the record sleeve for its association with *Arena Canta Bahia)* and "Maria, Colégio da Bahia," a song from the *Nós, por Exemplo* showcase that hadn't been included in Boal's production.

At the end of the playbill for *Arena Canta Bahia,* each of the performers were provided with space to make brief personal statements about themselves. Maria Bethânia wrote a portentous text, referring to her artistic vision: "I am a singer. I sing what I see. In the market of men, I see humanity commercialized. I sing this. I, Maria Bethânia." Veloso,

[2] Boal refers here to slogans of the time, such as "Brazil is the country of the future" (based on a book by Stefan Zweig), "São Paulo never stops" (made famous by Ademar de Barros, who served both as governor of São Paulo state and mayor of the capital), "land of happiness" (a slogan devised by promoters of tourism in Salvador), and "marvelous city" (a description of Rio made famous in 1935 in a carnival song by André Filho).

Gil, and Gal Costa (then still using her given name Maria da Graça), offered modest remarks that gave no indication of their future renown as artists. Gal presented herself as a teenager who "only recently began to sing"; Caetano mentions his origin in Santo Amaro, the success of *Nós, por Exemplo,* and his samba "De manhã"; Gil references his early interest in music and few experiences singing on TV. Tom Zé told his origin story with characteristic irony and self-deprecation: "I'm from Irará, in the *recôncavo-sertão* of Bahia. I started by making songs for my girlfriend. When I lost my girlfriend, I got out of that business." He next provides the highlights of his early career-- his debut on TV Itapoã, his work with Capinan in the CPC, and finally, his studies at the University of Bahia: "My professors would not be proud of their student." Indeed, for the next two years, he would focus on his studies at the university and his work with the Grupo de Compositores da Bahia.

While Tom Zé was finishing his studies at the university, he earned extra money writing for *Jornal da Bahia,* a progressive newspaper founded in 1958 by journalists affiliated with the PCB. In August 1967 he had a chance encounter with Caetano Veloso, who had come by the newsroom to give an interview about his activities in Rio de Janeiro, where he had been developing his career since 1966. On the spot he convinced Tom Zé to join him on the return flight to Rio de Janeiro the next day (Scaramuzzo: 91-92). By that time, Veloso was already planning to move to São Paulo, where Gilberto Gil was already living, and organize a collective intervention in the field of Brazilian popular music. Veloso has written that he invited Tom Zé to join this adventure due to his penchant for satire, his music theory training, and his "anti-bossa nova sophistication" that combined rural and experimental sensibilities (Veloso*,* 203-04). When Tom Zé moved to São Paulo at the beginning of 1968, it marked the end of his formative period in Salvador and the beginning of his adventure with Tropicália, a movement that explored the experimental potential of popular music. Later that year he participated on the milestone concept album *Tropicália, ou Panis et Circensis,* release his first solo album, and win first prize at the 4th Festival of Brazilian Music broadcast and sponsored by TV Record in São Paulo. His transition to a career in popular music was complete.

One of the great musical artists our time, Tom Zé has since garnered critical acclaim at home in Brazil, as well as in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere in Latin America. His life story and artistic trajectory offer a microhistorical prism through which to examine a range of topics, including modernization and underdevelopment, rural-to-urban migration, authoritarian rule and structural violence, growing inequality under neo-liberal regimes, insurgent social movements, and cultural globalization. His work also provides an exquisite example of the creative repurposing of cultural tradition in dialogue with experimental music and poetics. Although he has developed his artistic career in São Paulo for the last fifty years, his formative experience in Salvador during the 1960s in the CPC, the university, and the popular music circuit have remained central to his work.

Since the beginning of his recording career, his songs have maintained a heavy focus on social and political critique, a legacy of his early experience composing for the CPC. Of all the tropicalists, he has remained the most dedicated to the experimental possibilities of popular music, including the use of invented electro-acoustic instruments, which connect directly with his training in avantgarde techniques at the university. While the other members of the *grupo baiano* enjoyed considerable success in following years, Tom Zé pursued more vanguardist and less commercially viable experiments with popular music. For a time, he was all but written out of the history of Tropicália. Yet it was the very audaciousness of these experiments in the 1970s that caught the attention of influential musician and producer David Bryne, who helped to relaunch his remarkable career in the 1990s. Today Tom Zé is revered for his humorous, satiric, critiques of Brazilian society, and for his steadfast devotion of musical experimentalism, approaches to popular music that he first developed as a young student in Bahia.

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