

Three Forms of Experimentation in Brazilian popular music (MPB) in the 1970s¹

Herom Vargas

Abstract

This article aims to analyze aspects and features of the experimental production of composers and bands of Brazilian popular music in the 70's, a period marked by the military dictatorship and the expansion of media industries linked to the popular song's field (record companies and TV stations). It starts with the theoretical discussion about experimentalism led by Umberto Eco and from the concept of "critical song", by Santuza C. Naves, in order to think of the "experimental song". Three broad lines of the experimentation practiced by these creators will be pointed out: 1) relations between tradition and modernity, as a *tropicalista* heritage, but held on another level; 2) experimentalism like aesthetic exercise specifically performed within the materiality of the poetic and musical code of the song leading to specific meanings; 3) the creative use of the body and the performance, as elements which produce meanings, being in line with the national understanding of counterculture.

Keywords

Brazilian popular music. Experimentalism. Counterculture. 70's.

1 Introduction

There are few studies of the more experimental Brazilian popular musicians of the 1970s. In addition to coming between two outstanding moments in recent history – the MPB [initials commonly used to refer to Brazilian popular music] festivals of the 1960s and the marketing explosion of Brazilian rock in the 1980s – the experimental musicians were treated as a secondary cultural product by the record industry. The music business was growing strongly at the time by emphasizing compositions that were more accessible to the broad public, linked to success on radio stations and the soundtracks of the popular Brazilian television series known as telenovelas, especially those of TV Globo, which had the largest audience in the country. Singers who released songs in English also had success including (Morris Albert, Dave MacLean, Mark Davis, and others), in dance music (or *disco*) style and the strong presence of Anglo-American pop.

The Brazilian popular music scene in the 1970s can be divided, according to Napolitano

Herom Vargas | heromvargas@terra.com.br
PhD in communication and semiotics from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo [Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo] (PUC-SP). Professor in the master's program in communication at the Universidade Municipal de São Caetano do Sul [Municipal University of São Caetano do Sul] (USCS), and in the journalism school at the Universidade Metodista de São Paulo [Methodist University of São Paulo] (Umesp).

(2005, p. 127), into three relatively well defined circuits: the activist, which grew from a popular-Brazilian proposal of the 1960s; alternative and experimental, which inherited the *tropicalista* actions; and finally the “mass market” culture, marked by songs of greater success among the public and media. These circuits, although they were conceptually identified by the author, were not totally exclusionary. There were artists who circulated freely among the three, going beyond the borders and creating works that oscillated between one and another. One example is the composer Caetano Veloso, who released various records in the decade with innovative songs, others that were a bit political, and some hits that gained consecrated commercial space (on telenovela soundtracks and radio programs).

Certainly, the popular music circuit that was best established was that linked to mass market success, based on one of the main characteristics of the time: the growth, professionalization and strong penetration of recording companies in the production and promotion of music,² which came to change various criteria for establishing the value of popular music, which had been linked nearly exclusively to public reactions on the programs known as festivals on the national broadcast network TV Record (TATIT, 2005, p. 121-122). This change is also related to the

reorganization of TV programming, with the growth of the TV Globo network and the crisis at Record, and efforts by the military government to chill the impetus of the left which, since the time of the festivals, used art in the political struggle.

Despite the actions that led towards a monopolization of the media (particularly among record companies and TV broadcasters) and the consolidation of the criteria for commercial success, the experimental musical circuit was able to maintain itself with relative strength. The most experimental productions were not established in a homogeneous way, as a “movement” with relative organization. To the contrary, each one of the composers, in their own manner and following their own creative intuition, took parallel routes that had a certain harmony with their time. While some gained greater fame (such as Caetano, who inherited *tropicalismo*, or the groups Novos Baianos and Secos & Molhados, because of their success on the media), few listeners were interested in composers such as Walter Franco, who shunned the commercial circuit’s star production tactics; or Tom Zé, who was jettisoned from the recording market in the late 1970s until he was rediscovered by David Byrne (from the group Talking Heads) and had his songs compiled in the album *The Best of Tom Zé*, in 1990. In

¹ This article is part of the research project *Experimentalismo e inovação na música popular brasileira nos anos 1970*, [Experimentation and innovation in Brazilian popular music in the 1970s] with support and financing from the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo [Research Support Foundation of São Paulo] (Fapesp).

² About the situation in the recording industry and the music market see Morelli (2009), Paiano (1994) and Vicente (2002).

this way, a group such as Som Imaginário was unable to escape the shadow of the singer Milton Nascimento, although it released three records in the period. The same can be said of Jorge Mautner and Jards Macalé, even though they had close ties to *tropicalismo*, their names were not often remembered when speaking of the movement.

A more careful listening of the records of these artists that were released in the decade brings to light works with profiles that are different from those linked to the more immediate mass consumption. These creators, even acting within a market niche for mass market songs, recorded albums and survived based on works with few ties to commercial projects of the media market of the time. They were outsiders who occupied a small range of production in the recording industry, supported by a specific and dedicated consumer public. These composers and musicians are important because of the characteristics of their work, the creative exercises that they realized and the innovations they offered.

To map the characteristics of this experimentation, this article analyzes three general lines of their creative practices: 1) the anthropophagic relationship between tradition and modernity, as an inheritance of the *tropicalista* movement, but conducted on a new level; 2) the experimental practice specifically within the poetic and musical material that

marks a substantial part of the language of the song, aimed at unorthodox political criticism, nonsense, or a creative exercise with the structures of song; and 3) the innovative use of the body and of performance as elements that produce meaning, in harmony with a Brazilian interpretation of counterculture precepts.

The concept of “experimental music” will be based on the discussion offered by Umberto Eco (1970) about experimentation in electronic music and on the idea of “critical song” developed by Santuza C. Naves (2010).

2 Experimental Song and Critical Song

The concept of experimentation is strongly linked to the modern Western context of the vanguards of the early 20th century. At that time, new configurations of art were sought in a world that was undergoing broad transformations because of industrialization and urbanization, whether because of technological innovations in production, daily life and art, or because of the decline of the traditional rural world that was losing strength because of the development of factory work, war and crises. Innovation was proposed as a creation of the new that arrived through surprises and clashes with the known aesthetic attitudes. Importance was given to confrontation and opposition to the traditional, which were defined as old and ancient. To escape the norm became a basic rule for modern artists, with consequences that were not always easy to deal with.

Experimentation was part of the process and expanded to the arts during the 20th century. The experimental procedure presumed a break with processes and materials known until that time in aesthetic creation. To try to be different and use different materials, questioned the established procedures and became the new standard for creation, based on an interplay of trial and error, at times ludic and fun, at others combative and tragic. The possible achievement of innovation – were it to occur, would only appear as a result of various actions in which error was more common. These procedures were similar to those used in scientific research, in which a scientist tests the available possibilities, either by combining known substances, or by inverting processes in a controlled manner, but fundamentally questioning the role of knowledge accepted until that time about a certain object of study. This is what Umberto Eco (1970, p. 235) would call “an act of methodical skepticism,” or that is, one that questioned everything that is known about an object and sought to create another method to reveal and conceptualize it. Taking the experimental methodology to the artistic field, in particular to electro-acoustic music of which the author spoke, we reach what was defined as the basic characteristic of the contemporary experimental artist:

[...] when he begins a work, he raises doubts about all the received notions about the way of making art, and determines in what way [the

artist] must act as if the world began with him or, at least, as if all those who came before were mystifiers who it is necessary to denounce and question (ECO, 1970, p. 235).³

This involves the radical action of trying to initiate a process of creation practically from zero, as if nothing had taken place before or as if everything that had taken place had literally become invalid. Certainly, this definition is not made concrete in creative practice. As Eco tries to construct the concept based on vanguard erudite electronic music, he tends to treat experimentation as the mere discarding of tradition, given that this type of music uses another type of acoustic materiality to define itself. Strictly speaking, the proposal to dethrone tradition does not occur in a manner as shallow as he appears to assume. Even with electronic music, we know that its sonorous material is completely different from that of traditional music, but this does not mean that that all of the past can be purely and simply annihilated.

The complexity of the problem increases if we consider that this radical questioning that defines the experimental artist expands in a dense relationship that does not take place only within a strictly aesthetic field, in terms of the creative methods and artistic materials used, but is found to be established between artist, work and the context in which the work is produced. These imbrications,

3

[...] en el momento en que empieza una obra, pone en duda todas las nociones recibidas acerca del modo de hacer arte, y determina de qué forma ha de actuar como si el mundo empezase con él o, al menos, como si todos los que le han precedido fueran mixtificadores que es necesario denunciar y poner en tela de juicio.

which follow the proposals of the semiotics of culture - in particular concerning the concept of the “semiotic text of culture” of I. Lotman (1996) - reveal the articulations that a work of art establishes internally and externally. In relation to this point, Eco expands the discussion by indicating an important consequence of experimental work, which is the action of this artist and his work on his context: if he acts on his world based on his experimental work, it is not only creator and work that are transformed, but the very surroundings and the world view that both carry. Like any communicative system – and music is one of them – the work carries certain forms of considering the world and society in its materials and in its constructive grammar. If something in this relationship is radically transformed, it is a sign that the perception of the context and its aesthetic translation are also transformed. According to Eco:

[...] the world view is in fact already changing in the realm of a culture and the artist realizes that he cannot grasp a world of a new type with a system of formal relations that expressed a world of another type and that, as a consequence, strives to continue to speak in the old terms, would present an ambiguous and dishonest discourse (ECO, 1970, p. 238).⁴

Thus, if the experimental practice is in and of itself a work with the artistic materials and procedures or methods of composition, it cannot be thought of only from a perspective

internal to the work of art or to the career of its creator, but in an open and relational form that connects the understanding of these terms with the contacts established by all.

In the specific case of popular music, these ties are made more than clear precisely by the mediatic nature of song. The forms of production, the importance of various recording technologies, their promotional channels, the forms of consumption that they suppose (from mass market and commercial to alternative and segmented) and the symbolic and or imaginary practices placed in action in this consumption, are clear and concrete aspects that permeate each link of the relationship indicated. In a first moment, this configuration linked to the market, to technology and to the cultural surroundings can be considered an obstacle to creative experimentation; nevertheless, in addition to being a fundamental element in the very definition of popular music, it can also be considered as a source of innovation for promotion within this same market which is always looking for novelties.

This article discusses the work of a few MPB composers who - in a specific period of political restrictions and expansion of the media industry linked to popular music - invested in experimentation that was nearly always radical and that unveiled new forms of action and creation even while acting within the music market.

⁴ [...] la visión del mundo está ya de hecho cambiando en el ámbito de una cultura y el artista se da cuenta de que no puede aferrar un mundo de nuevo tipo con un sistema de relaciones formales que expresaba un mundo de otro tipo y que, por consecuente, si se empeñara en seguir hablando en los viejos términos, llevaría a cabo un discurso ambiguo y desonesto.

It is not by chance that the context of the military dictatorship at the beginning of this decade is one of the main references for understanding a portion of the musical production of the time. There is an argument that characterizes some compositions as reactions to censorship and to the constant state of vigilance. In other words, given a prohibition from saying certain things and a refusal to accept this pressure, some composers created works that tended to deconstruct, leaving aside that clear eloquent relationship between melody and lyrics that normally defines the song. Roberto Bozzetti (2007) shows that the attitude of these composers, inspired by the counterculture, and their striving to deconstruct the discourse of the song, was a way of expressing repudiation for the cultural, aesthetic and political standards established by the dictatorship. In other words, unlike the “oral ‘gestuality’” of a song that seeks the best way to articulate text and melody to combine the fluency of daily speech with melodic flow,⁵ “songs of mockery,” according to the author, try to deconstruct by means of shouts, frazzled senses, apparent incoherence and silence, as a response to the prohibitions imposed on the artists:

[...] as if what was said there could only be said and only should be perceived in tatters, as if the difficulty of speaking was incorporated to the very thread of the song, as if that which was said, being so essential and obvious, must be hidden, thrown in the face of that who “does not understand anything” (BOZZETTI, 2007, p. 138).

Even if it is possible to understand these “songs of mockery” – which I prefer to call “experimental songs” – as a result of the military dictatorship, it is difficult to think of the experimentalism in question as a mere reflex, as if these composers were acting only to make this type of criticism and less with aesthetic objectives in which a radical break with what has already been said was the initial inspiration of their works.

Since I will look at the composers who question the various elements of the language of the song, seeking new forms of expression in popular music, and establishing a frank and tense dialog with the structures of consecration of the artistic field, I use another category that tries to describe the character of the experimental song at various times. This is the expression “critical song,” coined by Santuza C. Naves (2010): it is a product of the process of awareness constructed by the composers so that critical reflections about oneself and the cultural and social surroundings are written in the very tessitura of the song, in either deep or superficial layers, but without losing direct communication with the public.

Following the trails of Augusto de Campos, who emphasizes the exercise of innovation in bossa nova and in *tropicalista* music, the category “critical song” questions the capacities of a song to be created and understood by means of the degree of interference that operates in its context,

5 According to Tatit (1996), also cited by the author.

as it critically comments on the elements that constitute it to be able to interfere in reality. These relations take place both in the internal realm of the song, its elements of language, as well as in the cultural fields that contextualize the work. According to Naves (2010, p. 21), the “critical song” operates

[...] dually with the text and the context, with the internal and external planes. Internally, like a modern artist, the composer came to act as a critic in the very process of composition; externally, the criticism is aimed at the cultural and political issues of the country, causing the composers to articulate art and life.

By becoming a “cultural critic,” in a broad sense, the composer makes the song a tool for intervention by creating in it instances whose meanings go beyond its commercial configuration or as a mere object of leisure. The “critical song,” which first appeared with force through bossa nova (although a few examples existed earlier), is the experimental work par excellence of the spectrum of products that were presented in the culture and popular music of the 1970s. It is the production of creation that seeks the “aesthetic information,” or that is, in the search for “a break with the aprioristic code of the listener, or at least, an unexpected broadening of the repertoire of this code” (CAMPOS, 1978, p. 181).

Strictly speaking, the “critical” side of the song adds little to the discussion, because it can be found in any other language whose work proposes the same radical exercise. Thus, we can have a

critical film, a critical play, a critical poem, as long as their authors seek to establish relations of reflection, questioning and exercising the consecrated limits, seeking to create something new. For this reason, we opt for the concept of the “experimental song,” which is consecrated in the arts and in communication, to consider this dense and complex objective, which conjugates internal and external data, aimed at the production of something new.

Returning to the popular song, being the result of questioning and reflection, of trial and error in the creation process, this production is defined as experimental because it is the object and space of aesthetic debates that concern the artist, her work and the society in which they are inserted and with which she relates. As an “experimental song,” the experimental production of the 1970s is a work of intervention in the very field of popular music. As a meta-song, it is work that reconsiders itself as a function of its internal dynamic and the connections it establishes with the surroundings. For this reason, the aesthetic research that it encompasses can be directed at its own fabric, its materials and its syntaxes. Nevertheless, as “semiotic text,” these configurations will be in a dynamic relationship with the world and the vision that the artist has of it.

3 The forms of experimentation in the MPB of the 1970s

Based on observations of the works of these musicians-composers, it is possible to identify

three broad lines in their experimentation and innovations. This division does not involve establishing static compartments, with clear dividing lines. Strictly speaking, various artists use nearly all three lines together, highlighted by one or another according to the situation and or approach. What I try to demonstrate are basic aspects of these procedures and their relationship with a certain context and certain forms of song.

The first form of experimentation comes from the *tropicalista* inheritance and can be considered as the junction of elements of the Brazilian cultural and musical tradition with other sources that was thought to represent international modernity. Nevertheless, it is important to observe the differences between the two combinations, the *tropicalista* and that which is defined as post-*tropicalista*. In the first case, the anthropophagic proposal was re-edited as a function of the specific political moment focused on the MPB festivals on TV and on the presence of protest songs, whose consequences for the popular song appeared as a type of step backwards, according to the *tropicalista* artists of the so-called “Bahiano group.” The leftist posture of producing a type of music based on what they thought to be the national-popular tradition, in the field of disputes that the festivals on TV Record had become during the second half of the 1960s, led artists like Geraldo Vandré and Edu Lobo to

construct works focused on popular rhythms, typical acoustic instruments and words of a social and activist nature. This caused Caetano Veloso to warn about what he would define as a setback and requested a “return to the evolutionary line”⁶ based on which bossa nova had been conducted.

In this scenery of aesthetic-political struggles, even before the complete clampdown by the military regime with Institutional Act nº 5 (AI-5) of December 1968, the *tropicalista* mixture sought the modernization of Brazilian song through the presence of international musical elements, in a parallel to what took place with Oswaldian anthropophagy 40 years earlier. If the activist songs of the festivals led, according to the *tropicalista* understanding, to a certain “folklorization” of Brazilian culture or to a partiality to nationalism and a social aesthetic, the proposal designed by Caetano, Gilberto Gil, Rogério Duprat, Tom Zé, Mutantes, and others, led towards experimentation through the incorporation of what was seen in the international realm, in particular, rock, pop, electric guitars and the counterculture. But, within the anthropophagic primer, this incorporation was made without forgetting the best of the Brazilian musical tradition, such as rhythms, instruments and some themes of the national songbook, all used to deconstruct the chauvinist and nationalist discourse used, in a nuanced manner, by both the government and the left.

6 This famous statement was issued in a debate promoted by *Revista Civilização Brasileira* and published in nº 7, in 1966, according to Favaretto (1996, p. 34).

In the 1970s, the scenery was a bit different. The festivals were gradually losing energy and were no longer spaces of ideological and aesthetic confrontation. On the other hand, the military regime cracked down even more, after the issue of the AI-5 decree, with persecution, censorship and greater propaganda of its own, seeking to silence or weaken criticism. The musical debate, in the way that it was conducted until then, no longer made sense. Nevertheless, this did not mean the end of musical experiences that linked the national tradition to the international music. What did not take place was the use of these combinations in a programmatic manner and with a polemic and questioning profile as took place at the festivals. This is not to say that this use had been depleted and did not present something new or criticisms. To the contrary, the flank opened by *tropicalismo* gave rise to artists and composers who sought to consider Brazilian music more openly, by incorporating elements different from those that were thought to be the national tradition, and as a form of less orthodox criticism in relation to what was done before.

One of these solutions in the conjugation between tradition and modernity is perceptible, for example, in the songs of the Novos Baianos. Many of them used arrangements that combined genres, instruments and sonorities, especially musical data from rock, mixed with national rhythms,

such as samba, choro, baião and frevo. From these elements, three are recognizable: electric instruments and their timbres (guitars with a saturated and or distorted sound), the musical scales used in the solos (pentatonic,⁷ for example) and the performance (the actions and grimaces of the musicians). Even if *tropicalismo* had already been constructing this relationship since 1967, the Novos Baianos, particularly guitarist Pepeu Gomes,⁸ deepened the possibilities of these junctions in the strictly musical field, by mixing the melodic idioms of choro, frevo and rock.

Songs by traditional composers were also revived in new instrumental arrangements, like those of the classics *Brasil pandeiro*, by Assis Valente, or *Samba da minha terra*, by Dorival Caymmi. In this song, the rhythmic cadence of the samba is combined with the distorted and rock sound of Pepeu's guitar in the main riff of the song and the solo. The combination of styles and sound parameters (rhythmic syncopation, time, instrumental phrases and timbres) of both genres gained an innovative accent through the creativity of the experimental exercise.

Another example is Tom Zé's important album *Estudando o samba* (1976) in which he used rhythmic and instrumental elements of samba and treated them in an inventive manner by in a type of collage (DURÃO; FENERICK, 2010). One

7 As the name indicates, this is a five note scale that is commonly used in the blues.

8 About Pepeu Gomes' guitar playing, see the dissertation by Affonso Miranda Neto (2006).

of the outstanding tracks is *Toc*, an instrumental piece in which a guitar string plays the role of a tambourine while various sounds and noises intercross the piece in an *assemblage* of sound. Tom Zé once categorically stated that he was not an experimental composer, but that he only reused the inventions of erudite vanguard musicians.⁹ Nevertheless, what he did not realize was that, by bringing some of those inventions to the field of the song, this experimentalism was precisely having them dialog with the format of the record, with the performatic event of the spectacle and with the public that consumed popular music, which was poorly accustomed to bold experimentation.

A second trend was based on processes of experimentation that were also focused on language, but that, instead of emphasizing the specific relationship indicated above, sought distinct articulations between the codes of song and other networks of meanings. The practice was like laboratory experimentation that worked with the materiality of the codes that penetrated the language of song – like new forms of singing, instrumental arrangements, phonemes and words and the various relationships between words and music – and the range of meanings that can be explored. Not that the previous trend did not do this. The issue was that it emphasized the relationships between modernity and tradition,

in a dialog with the marks left by *tropicalismo*, yet which were not so clear in *tropicalismo*. The composers were seeking a practice that would be open to other semiotic formulations. Some of these intended meanings were unorthodox political criticisms, the non-sense (or the “mocking,” mentioned before) as a form of deconstruction of the song or the free and ludic creative exercise in the structure of the song.

One case is that of the singer Walter Franco. His composition *Cabeça*, for which he became known after a polemical presentation at the 7th Festival Internacional da Canção (FIC), [7th International Song Festival] organized by TV Globo in 1972, was intensely jeered by the public, although it pleased the jury. Recorded on the record *Ou não* (1973), it was an apparently chaotic collage of phrases and their fragments sung and pronounced amid the sounds of a synthesizer that demonstrated the innovative possibility of speaking about the moment without resorting to the populist discourse used by the activist composers of the left. By speaking and shouting the words in short and simultaneous passages, he emphasized fragments of meaning present in the words and expressions such as “head,” “can,” “or not” and “explode.” These, in turn, constantly altered their meanings through the combinations. While the chaos was constant, with no traditional melody or harmony, there were flashes of ideas that

⁹ According to a statement for the documentary *Tom Zé, ou quem irá colocar uma dinamite na cabeça do século?* [Tom Zé, or who will place dynamite at the head of the century?], by Carla Gallo, 2000.

remained in the ear: of something that could be done, or not, that there was some danger, or not, that your head could explode, or not, that there was something in your head, or not...

Eternamente, recorded on the next record (*Revolver*, de 1975), has extremely concise lyrics that are ripe with meanings. The word that gives name to the song is divided in the song into other words to form: “Eternamente/ É ter na mente/ Ternamente/ Eterna mente” [Eternally/It is to have in mind/tenderly/eternal mind” (according to the record insert). The words were constructed through the decomposition of their parts into fragments, leaving another barely explicit reference partially exposed: to “éter” in Portuguese, or ether, a substance that causes motor and perceptive instability. Enriching the work with the language of song, the metaphor of the effect of ether, which appears subtly in the words, is also provoked by the musical structure, nominally the rhythmic, founded on the repetition of a set of measures with differentiated and asymmetric beats: three three-beat measures, one of five beats, another of three and a final one with seven beats. This alternation of beats and accents causes surprise and destabilizes the hearing, because it is not easy to dance to or accompany the music.¹⁰

Tom Zé has examples that fit this type of experimentation, as can be seen in the track

Todos os olhos, on the 1973 record of the same name. After the introduction with an *ostinato*,¹¹ the lyrics reveal the composer’s concern when he realizes that he is surrounded by eyes staring at him through the dark, hoping that he is a hero. The passage is accompanied by a samba with a cadence played in only one chord, along with voices, noises and cries. The tension created is resolved in the naive response repeated by the singer: “But I’m innocent!” By singing the line continuously, the previously perceived tension is resolved in a secure harmonic cadence whose chord sequence captures the hearing and leads the listener to recognize as correct the singer’s posture in response to the demands placed upon him. The audio text reverberates the meanings brought by the words. This structure – *ostinato*, noises, samba with a single chord and samba with a cadence of chords – is repeated with other inquiries and similar responses until the final phrase “But I am innocent!” stated for the last time in a mocking and crazed manner. The diction and the noises with voices (cries, barks, moans etc.) broaden the political meanings that emerge from the structure of the language and demonstrate the composer’s attitude.

Another example that demonstrates this laboratory-like experimentation with the code of the popular song appears in the compositions of João Ricardo, a founder of and musician in the

10 About Walter Franco, see Vargas (2010).

11 Motif or melodic-rhythmic phrase that is played repeatedly and that composes part or all of the song.

group *Secos & Molhados*, in particular those that adapt poetries to the format of musical lyrics, as in *As andorinhas*, a poem by Cassiano Ricardo, and *Rondó do capitão*, a poem by Manuel Bandeira, both on the group's first record, released in 1973.

Another case that stands out is nearly the entire record *Araçá azul*, by Caetano Veloso (1972). Most of the tracks take the experimentation to the maximum, even bordering on nonsense as an extreme point of the limits of communicability.

In all of these cases, the basic challenge of the artists was to reveal new and radical possibilities for the construction of the song and for its interpretation based on the handling of the material in the hands of the composer-musician, whether they are poetic or sonorous.

The third line of innovation perceived in these artists is linked to a realm that is not highly observed in popular music, but contradictorily, has great importance for being an element that is determining in the definition of the network of meanings of song. Quite associated to the counterculture at the time, the use of the body and of *performance*, above all during a show, mobilized artists, seeking new forms of subjectification. One group that used this device considerably, practically in a pioneer manner in modern song, was *Secos & Molhados*. The group highlighted singer Ney Matogrosso through his dance, his body on display, his evident androgyny, mixed with the idiosyncrasy of the high tone of his

countertenor voice. In addition, his use of makeup and that of the other members of the band were a fundamental scenic-visual component of their artistic identity.

Creative and provocative performance was also used by Walter Franco in the presentation of *Cabeça* in the International Song Festival of 1972, but in another sense. While the audience was intensely booing, making it impossible to hear his voice, the singer simply ignored the noise and continued to sing as if nothing was happening. His apparently inert and passive attitude intensified the chaotic feeling of the song and consciously responded to the people differently than they expected. As Walter Franco told journalist Ana Maria Bahiana (1980, p. 177), in 1976:

It was a very violent moment. I knew that I was confusing the people issuing a yes and a no in a very quick count. The people reacted by throwing back a strong negative charge, even when I repeated a positive word like "brother."

Performance, as a constitutive element of the semiotics of the song, came to be used more effectively through the work of these experimental artists, particularly, since the *tropicalismo* at the end of the previous decade. Their creative and polemic potential was still observed at the time and sought to complement the political and aesthetic intentions of the singers and musicians.

4 Final considerations

Although, in the 1970s, these composers and musicians did not constitute a collective

defined by each one their idiosyncrasies, their creative practices can be considered jointly based on certain aesthetic formulations and political relations with the context. The interfaces between tradition and modernity, the experimental laboratory practice, and the performances were matrixes for the construction of this experimental project, whose background was the dictatorship and the echoes of the counterculture with its ideals of liberation and invention.

While the understandings developed by Umberto Eco about experimentalism established the bases for the construction of the concept, it was necessary to go beyond this, particularly so that it could be used as an operating concept within the mediatic field of the popular song. In this way, Santuza C. Naves' idea of the "critical song" expressed a broader vision of the creative dynamic in song, although it appears not to be able to completely contemplate the innovative processes involved in the experimental practices because the "critical" tone was not exclusive to the field of song or explicit in relation to the experimentalism.

For this reason, we proposed using the concept "experimental song," in particular based on song as a "semiotic text," so that these procedures that characterized the creative circuit of MPB in the 1970s could be considered collectively, along reasonably determined lines. The forms of experimental practice varied in their manner and according to the proposal of each artist. All

of these composers and musicians sought to relate with the song within the media field, but also, conceived it as a political instrument for intervention in society and as an aesthetic object for the exercise of the limits of perception and creative sensibility.

References

- BAHIANA, Ana M. **Nada será como antes: MPB nos anos 70**. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1980.
- BOZZETTI, Roberto. Uma tipologia da canção no imediato pós-tropicalismo. **Letras**, Santa Maria, v. 34, p. 133-146, 2007.
- CAMPOS, Augusto de. **Balanco da bossa e outras bossas**. 3. ed. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1978. (1. ed. 1968)
- DURÃO, Fabio A.; FENERICK, J. Adriano. Tom Zé's unsong and the fate of the tropicália movement. In: SILVERMAN, Renée M. (Ed.) **The popular avant-garde**. Amsterdã: Rodopi Press, 2010. p. 299-315.
- ECO, Umberto. **La definición del arte**. Barcelona: Martínez Roca, 1970.
- FAVARETTO, Celso. **Tropicália: alegoria, alegria**. 2. ed. São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 1996. (1. ed. 1979)
- LÓTMAN, Iuri M. **La semiosfera 1: semiótica de la cultura y del texto**. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1996.
- MIRANDA NETO, Affonso C. **A guitarra cigana de Pepeu Gomes: um estudo estilístico**. Dissertação (Mestrado em Música) - Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2006.
- MORELLI, Rita C. L. **Indústria fonográfica: um estudo antropológico**. 2. ed. Campinas, SP: Ed. Unicamp, 2009. (1. ed. 1991)
- NAVES, Santuza C. **Canção popular no Brasil: a canção crítica**. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2010.

NAPOLITANO, Marcos. MPB: totem-tabu da vida musical brasileira. In: RISÉRIO, Antonio et al. **Anos 70: trajetórias**. São Paulo: Iluminuras: Itaú Cultural, 2005. p. 125-129.

PAIANO, Enor. **O berimbau e o som universal: lutas culturais e indústria fonográfica nos anos 60**. Dissertação (Mestrado em Comunicação) - Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1994.

TATIT, Luiz. A canção moderna. In: RISÉRIO, Antonio et al. **Anos 70: trajetórias**. São Paulo: Iluminuras: Itaú Cultural, 2005. p. 119-124.

_____. **O cancionista: composição de canções no Brasil**. São Paulo: Edusp, 1996.

TOM Zé, ou quem irá colocar uma dinamite na cabeça do século? Direção e roteiro: Carla Gallo. Produção: Net Filmes/Quanta, 2000. 1 DVD (48 min.).

VARGAS, Herom. A canção experimental de Walter Franco. **Comunicação e Sociedade**. São Bernardo do Campo, v. 54, p. 191-210, 2010.

VICENTE, Eduardo. **Música e disco no Brasil: a trajetória da indústria nas décadas de 80 e 90**. São Paulo, SP. Tese (Doutorado em Comunicação) - Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2002.

Três formas do experimentalismo na MPB da década de 1970

Resumo

Neste artigo, pretende-se analisar aspectos e características da produção experimental de compositores e grupos da música popular brasileira dos anos 1970, período marcado pela ditadura militar e pela expansão das indústrias midiáticas ligadas ao campo da canção popular (gravadoras e emissoras de TV). Parte-se da discussão teórica sobre experimentalismo feita por Umberto Eco e do conceito de “canção crítica”, de Santuza C. Naves, para pensar a “canção experimental”. Serão apontadas três linhas gerais da experimentação praticada por esses criadores: 1) relação entre tradição e modernidade, como herança tropicalista, mas efetivada em outro patamar; 2) experimentalismo como exercício estético realizado especificamente na materialidade do código poético e musical da canção visando determinados significados; 3) uso criativo do corpo e da *performance* como elementos produtores de sentido, em sintonia com a leitura nacional da contracultura.

Palavras-chave

Música popular brasileira. Experimentalismo. Contracultura. Anos 1970.

Tres formas del experimentalismo en la música popular brasileña de los años 1970

Resumen

En este artículo se pretende analizar los aspectos y características de la producción experimental de los compositores y grupos de música popular brasileña de la década de 1970, un período marcado por la dictadura militar y la expansión de las industrias culturales vinculadas al campo de la canción popular (las compañías discográficas y cadenas de televisión). Se inicia con la discusión teórica de la experimentación realizada por Umberto Eco y el concepto de “canción crítica”, por Santuza C. Naves, para pensar la “canción experimental”. Se señaló tres grandes líneas de experimentación que practican los creadores: 1) la relación entre tradición y modernidad, como herencia del tropicalismo, pero hecha en otro nivel, 2) el experimentalismo como ejercicio estético llevado específicamente en la materialidad del código poético y musical de la canción teniendo en vista determinados significados, 3) el uso creativo del cuerpo y *performance* como elementos productores de sentido, de acuerdo con la lectura nacional de la contracultura.

Palabras clave

Música popular brasileña. Experimentalismo. Contracultura. Años 1970.

Expediente

A revista E-Compós é a publicação científica em formato eletrônico da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação (Compós). Lançada em 2004, tem como principal finalidade difundir a produção acadêmica de pesquisadores da área de Comunicação, inseridos em instituições do Brasil e do exterior.

E-COMPÓS | www.e-compos.org.br | E-ISSN 1808-2599

Revista da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação. Brasília, v.15, n.2, maio/ago. 2012.
A identificação das edições, a partir de 2008, passa a ser volume anual com três números.

CONSELHO EDITORIAL

Afonso Albuquerque, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brasil
Alberto Carlos Augusto Klein, Universidade Estadual de Londrina, Brasil
Álvaro Larangeira, Universidade Tuiuti do Paraná, Brasil
André Luiz Martins Lemos, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil
Ângela Freire Prysthon, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil
Angela Cristina Salgueiro Marques, Faculdade Cásper Líbero (São Paulo), Brasil
Antonio Roberto Chiachiri Filho, Faculdade Cásper Líbero, Brasil
Arthur Autran Franco de Sá Neto, Universidade Federal de São Carlos, Brasil
Benjamim Picado, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brasil
César Geraldo Guimarães, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brasil
Cristiane Freitas Gutfreind, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil
Denilson Lopes, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
Eduardo Peñuela Cañizal, Universidade Paulista, Brasil
Eduardo Vicente, Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil
Eneus Trindade, Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil
Florence Dravet, Universidade Católica de Brasília, Brasil
Gelson Santana, Universidade Anhembi/Morumbi, Brasil
Gislene da Silva, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brasil
Guillermo Orozco Gómez, Universidad de Guadalajara
Gustavo Daudt Fischer, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Brasil
Hector Ospina, Universidad de Manizales, Colômbia
Herom Vargas, Universidade Municipal de São Caetano do Sul, Brasil
Inês Vitorino, Universidade Federal do Ceará, Brasil
Jay David Bolter, Georgia Institute of Technology
Jeder Silveira Janotti Junior, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil
John DH Downing, University of Texas at Austin, Estados Unidos
José Afonso da Silva Junior, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil
José Carlos Rodrigues, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
José Luiz Aídar Prado, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, Brasil
Kelly Cristina de Souza Prudêncio, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brasil.
Laan Mendes Barros, Universidade Metodista de São Paulo, Brasil

Lance Strate, Fordham University, USA, Estados Unidos
Lorraine Leu, University of Bristol, Grã-Bretanha
Lucia Leão, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, Brasil
Malena Segura Contrera, Universidade Paulista, Brasil
Márcio de Vasconcellos Serelle, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Brasil
Maria Aparecida Baccega, Universidade de São Paulo e Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, Brasil
Maria Ataíde Malcher, Universidade Federal do Pará, Brasil
Maria das Graças Pinto Coelho, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Brasil
Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes, Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil
Maria Luiza Martins de Mendonça, Universidade Federal de Goiás, Brasil
Mauro de Souza Ventura, Universidade Estadual Paulista, Brasil
Mauro Pereira Porto, Tulane University, Estados Unidos
Mirna Feitoza Pereira, Universidade Federal do Amazonas, Brasil
Nilda Aparecida Jacks, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil
Osvando J. de Moraes, Universidade de Sorocaba, Brasil
Potiguara Mendes Silveira Jr, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, Brasil
Renato Cordeiro Gomes, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
Robert K Logan, University of Toronto, Canadá
Ronaldo George Helal, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
Rose Melo Rocha, Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, Brasil
Rossana Reguillo, Instituto de Estudios Superiores del Occidente, Mexico
Rousiley Celi Moreira Maia, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brasil
Sebastião Guilherme Albano da Costa, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Brasil
Simone Maria Andrade Pereira de Sá, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brasil
Tiago Quiroga Fausto Neto, Universidade de Brasília, Brasil
Suzete Venturelli, Universidade de Brasília, Brasil
Valerio Fuenzalida Fernández, Puc-Chile, Chile
Veneza Mayora Ronsini, Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Brasil
Vera Regina Veiga França, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brasil

COMISSÃO EDITORIAL

Adriana Braga | Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
Felipe Costa Trotta | Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brasil

CONSULTORES AD HOC

Adriana Amaral, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Brasil
Ana Carolina Escosteguy, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil
Claudia Azevedo, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
Gisela Castro, Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, Brasil
Luis Queiroz, Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Brasil
Rodrigo Carreiro, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil

EDIÇÃO DE TEXTO E RESUMOS | Susane Barros

SECRETÁRIA EXECUTIVA | Juliana Depiné

EDITORIAÇÃO ELETRÔNICA | Roka Estúdio

TRADUÇÃO | Sieni Campos

COMPÓS | www.compos.org.br

Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação

Presidente

Julio Pinto

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Brasil
julio.pinto@pucminas.br

Vice-presidente

Itania Maria Mota Gomes

Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil
itania@ufba.br

Secretária-Geral

Inês Vitorino

Universidade Federal do Ceará, Brasil
inesvict@gmail.com