

## Interpreting Brazilianness: Musical Views of Brazil in Toronto

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*Abstract: In this paper the author examines Torontonians' ideas of Brazilian culture through its depiction in promotional materials of shows and performances. She also considers Brazilians' understandings of Torontonians' expectations of Brazilian culture, understandings that can incite some artists to invoke autoexoticism in order to win over their audiences.*

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What do I think of when I think of Brazil? Well, I think of the dream country to visit! I think of hot weather, the sun, the beach, palm trees, the ocean, the jungle. Brazil is very vibrant, it's a celebratory country: they have carnival with samba, drumming, dancing... Brazilians like to have fun and party! They're friendly people and they also have a strong sense of community, you know. Of course, I think of soccer and capoeira... The influence of Africa on Brazil... I also think of Tom Jobim...

(spectator at a show by the Maracatu Nunca Antes band,  
Lula Lounge, Toronto, 20 December, 2007)

What characterises Brazilian culture? What is “Brazilian,” and based on whose criteria? Many discourses of Brazilianness exist inside Toronto’s Brazilian music scene. They vary between musicians, employers,<sup>1</sup> audience members, Brazilians and non-Brazilians, all of whom define Brazilianness in different ways.<sup>2</sup> The case of the Toronto Brazilian scene illustrates the important role of musical performance, and the discourses that surround it, in (re)presenting an immigrant community in a multicultural city. Yet, the

processes of negotiation that accompany this representation are complex. As this article demonstrates, while music serves as a marker of identity, its role in depicting a culture in a way that fits with its members' conceptions of it is complicated by many factors that emerge in an immigrant context. Beyond examining the particular case of the Toronto Brazilian music scene, this article aims to explore the complex dynamics that exist between immigrants and a fast-changing, increasingly heterogeneous "host" society. Here, I examine the preconceptions and stereotypes Torontonians have of Brazilian culture that influence their expectations of Brazilian music. I also consider notions of Brazilianness presented by employers, the media and musicians in the promotion of Brazilian music shows and bands in Toronto, as these images affect and, in some cases, reinforce the local audience's (pre)conceptions. In addition, I discuss Brazilians' understandings of non-Brazilians' desires and expectations of Brazil, as these understandings sometimes influence the stylistic decisions musicians make in order to reach a non-Brazilian audience in Toronto.<sup>3</sup>

## The Scene

Contrary to recent studies that are concerned with the music of large immigrant communities in Toronto (Chan 2001; Amenta 2005; Chaudhuri 2005), the present article examines the musical culture of one of the numerous immigrant communities that, although recently established and small in size, greatly contributes to Toronto's cultural scene. In 2006, Statistics Canada estimated that 6,135 Brazilians were living in Toronto, a third of whom had immigrated since 2001. Most of the musicians I interviewed immigrated within this period and first came to Canada after being invited to perform in Toronto. While conducting research in 2007 and 2008, I collaborated with most of the Brazilian music bands active in downtown Toronto, focussing on those who perform in diverse contexts and for mixed audiences. I worked mostly with band leaders because these individuals are in charge of making artistic/stylistic decisions and participate in presenting Brazilian culture to Torontonians through both their music and the promotion of their shows.

This paper is concerned with Brazilian music bands (not to be confused with Brazilians' music bands); that is, music presented as being Brazilian, and bands that include non-Brazilian members. Indeed, almost all Brazilian music bands in Toronto include non-Brazilians who are drawn to this music for different reasons (e.g., Brazilian partners/friends, trips to Brazil, or fascination with Brazilian music). In fact, a few bands in Toronto are led by non-Brazilians, such as in the cases of Alan Hetherington's *Escola de Samba de Toronto*, a

samba school inspired by those of Rio de Janeiro for example, and Rick Lazar's Samba Squad, another large ensemble that uses Brazilian instruments while combining musical influences from the African diaspora. Other non-Brazilians play an important role in the music scene in other ways. For example, at the time that I met Alex Bordokas, a Canadian-born musician, he was helping his partner Aline Morales with her *maracatu*<sup>4</sup> band, Maracatu Nunca Antes. The same is true for Negin Bahrami and her Brazilian husband, Maninho Costa, who is the leader of a samba group called Batucada Carioca. Lastly, at the time of my fieldwork, Luanda Jones was also working with her non-Brazilian husband, performing bossa nova and MPB (*música popular brasileira*, i.e., Brazilian popular music) with him and other artists. Conversely, other Brazilian musicians with whom I collaborated were working with Brazilians primarily. Rafael Silva sings Brazilian hits in a band called Banda Simpatia, while Sandro Liberato plays a similar repertoire on his own. Both Rafael and Sandro perform principally for a (homesick) Brazilian audience, whereas the other musicians' audiences are mixed. Finally, Bola is a percussionist who performs in a few Brazilian music bands in addition to being in charge of a *capoeira*<sup>5</sup> school.

I also interviewed people involved in other spheres of the local music scene. José Ortega is the co-owner of the bar Lula Lounge, the venue that featured the greatest variety of world music shows at the time of my fieldwork; almost all the musicians with whom I collaborated performed at this bar. In addition, I interviewed Arilda de Oliveira and Antonio G. Scisci who are in charge of a Brazilian entertainment agency in Toronto, as well as being the festival program directors of BrazilFest, Toronto's Brazilian festival. Among other events that I attended are the festival Luminato, which paid tribute to Toronto's Portuguese-speaking community in 2007; Muhtadi's International Drumming Festival, which featured several Brazilian shows; the one-weekend events, Samba on Dundas and Salsa on St. Clair; and the Beaches Jazz Festival. Among other venues in downtown Toronto where I attended shows more than once are the Gladstone Hotel, which has a room specifically for musical shows and other events; the Cervejaria Downtown, a Portuguese bar; Cantina, a Portuguese restaurant<sup>6</sup>; and the Maná Bar & Lounge where Rafael's band performed every week for a young, principally Brazilian audience.

In addition to musicians and other people working in the Brazilian music scene, I surveyed audience members. Eighty spectators, fifteen of whom identified as being Brazilian, participated in this survey. Approximately half of them answered my questions during shows, while the other half filled out an online questionnaire.<sup>7</sup> I interviewed audience members during different bands' performances; most of the interviews took place during shows at the Lula Lounge and the Gladstone Hotel, as well as during the BrazilFest and

the Luminato festivals. It was more difficult to talk with spectators who are particularly fond of Brazilian music as most of them were dancing and singing with friends close to the stage during the shows. In order to survey them, I asked musicians to send a link to my online questionnaire to their contact (fans) list. This method allowed me to reach thirty-seven audience members who had attended many more Brazilian music shows than most of the spectators I interviewed during shows. Most of these fans played in Brazilian music bands and/or had traveled to Brazil.

### Torontonians' Ideas of Brazilianness

I was particularly interested in how non-Brazilian audience members perceive Brazilian culture, and why they are interested in Brazilian music. Other questions I asked audience members included what were the first ideas that occurred to them when they thought of Brazil. Among the ideas mentioned by audience members, happiness was most often mentioned. Other terms referred to Brazilians themselves, such as “friendly,” “warm,” “passionate,” and “vibrant.” The term “community” was also occasionally mentioned, while the words “energy,” “party,” “sun,” “beach,” “hot/heat” and “colours” often reappeared. Some terms referring to music and dance were mentioned many times: “drums,” “samba,” “carnival,” “*capoeira*” and “bossa nova.” Finally, “soccer,” “Amazon,” “jungle” and “Portuguese [language]” were also common. Surprisingly, the answers provided by audience members who have a strong interest in Brazilian culture and/or are amateur musicians in Brazilian bands were very similar to those of spectators who have a very limited knowledge of Brazilian culture. In fact, what might be thought of as stereotypes of Brazilianness generally constituted a large portion of the answers of people who have an interest in Brazilian music and/or culture. Only a few terms mentioned by band members referred to elements of Brazilian culture which are not widely known. Yet, these words (e.g., *maracatu*) are often directly related to the music some of them play in Toronto.

Although many negative images of Brazil have been shown in the media and movies in North America, very few audience members mentioned negative stereotypes such as poverty and violence. This might be due to the positive context in which the audience members answered the questionnaire. The reason why members of the audience highlighted positive ideas rather than negative stereotypes might also reflect an appreciation of Brazilian culture that is less contextual or ephemeral; or, an appreciation that does not depend on, or last for, the duration of a performance at a music venue. The use of such

words might reveal that some people born outside of Brazil have made Brazilian culture a part of their lives, feeling that it contributes to their general well-being.

Answers given by audience members correspond to many of the most common stereotypes Brazilians think Torontonians have of Brazil. Brazilians feel they are associated with cultural phenomena, such as samba and soccer, in the minds of Torontonians. Moreover, Brazilians mentioned another stereotype, which was interestingly not mentioned explicitly by audience members when answering the questionnaire: that of sensuality, frequently embodied in the image of the *Carnaval's* semi-nude *mulata*.<sup>8</sup> The issue of Brazilian sensuality and the absence of this stereotype among the audience members' answers are discussed further on in this article.

I also asked Brazilian musicians about their perceptions of Torontonians' expectations of Brazilian music. The impression that almost all the artists have is similar to the audience members' first ideas of Brazilian music. The musicians believe that many non-Brazilians expect them to play either soft bossa nova classics or loud, fast tempo samba, these two genres being the most widely known outside of Brazil. Yet, as one of the musicians with whom I collaborated told me, "Brazilian music is not only about samba and bossa nova" (personal communication, 27 September, 2007, anonymous).

## Representations of Brazilian Music in Promotional Material

A similar understanding of the Toronto audiences' expectations of, and desires for, Brazilian music emerges in the promotion of Brazilian bands and shows. Promotional material frequently serves as a first point of contact between musicians and audiences. The (re)presentation of the music and artists in such material is therefore crucial as it might ultimately influence the audiences' perceptions of the music. As Da Silva Lucas (1996) notes in her examination of the representation of Brazilian music in the United States' media, promotion reinforces stereotypes of Brazilianness. Indeed, the promotional materials (flyers, posters, websites and emails) used in the Toronto Brazilian music scene frequently employ images and buzz words that fit with stereotypical ideas of Brazilianness, such as "heat," "drums," "Afro-," "roots," "raw," "traditional," "rhythms," "syncopated," "carnival," "dance," "movement," "energy," "party," "fun" and "colours" (many of which corresponding to ideas evoked by audience members). Some bands also use motto-like expressions meant to reflect the essence of their music, such as Maracatu Nunca Antes's "pure rhythm beat movement excitement" (email sent to the group's contact

list, October 2007). The same buzz words are used in newspaper articles and online reviews that comment on Brazilian shows and events. Whereas flyers, emails and posters promote shows through such images and nomenclature, newspapers and online reviews reflect the reception of shows. These texts also influence the audiences' appreciation and expectations of Brazilian music in Toronto. The list of terms above demonstrates that the nomenclature used in publicity and by the media does not refer to Brazilian music specifically. Rather, such words and expressions are borrowed from a broader North American discourse describing what is often labelled "world music," a "style" of music mentioned as a preference by many audience members.

At times, club owners and promoters deliberately misrepresent music and bands in order to attract audiences. Such misrepresentation is widespread in the Toronto scene. For example, the Maracatu Nunca Antes band is occasionally presented as a samba school instead of a *maracatu* ensemble. In a similar vein, a Brazilian evening was advertised as presenting Afro-Brazilian traditions from Bahia, Brazil, although only the opening show by a dance troupe was inspired by these traditions, whereas the main show featured a samba ensemble whose style is not identified as being Afro-Brazilian by its band leader (see Figure 1). Samba Squad's band leader, Rick Lazar, presents his group as a world music band, even though some employers prefer to present it as a Brazilian samba group. And Maninho's band was presented as a *pagode* group instead of a samba band in a bar where the musicians per-

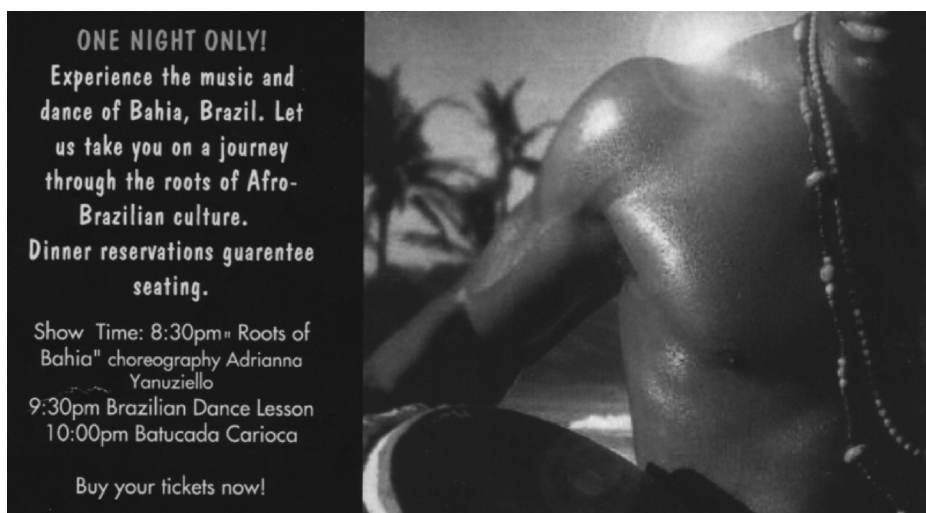


Figure 1. Flyer using a picture and buzz words meant to catch the attention of world music audiences (used here with permission of the management of the Lula Lounge).

formed in Montreal. The reasons for such misrepresentations are diverse. In some cases, promoters seem to believe the publicity would better catch the attention of potential spectators if the band were said to play better-known genres (e.g., samba instead of *maracatu*). In other cases, a show is advertised using terms and images that correspond to concepts that are popular with world music and world beat audiences. For example, the flyer represented in Figure 1 shows a topless black man holding a drum against a background of palm trees; this image is surrounded with buzz words such as “Afro-” and “roots.” Sometimes it is the context that determines which element is more appropriate to advertise; for example, Samba Squad’s music was presented as being Brazilian by the promoters for the Luminato Festival because one of the festival’s focuses was Toronto’s Lusophone community. Finally, misrepresentation can also result from a misunderstanding about the music between musicians and employers, as was the case for Maninho’s band.

In fact, employers have few excuses for unintentionally misrepresenting a band and its music, in large part because many musicians provide them with a presentation package. The majority of the musicians with whom I collaborated have written short descriptions of their band(s) for promoting their shows. These statements, in which musicians have already inserted buzz words, can simply be reused by employers. Pictures and logos are also attached to such documents. Thus, although some employers “rephrase” those statements with the aim of rendering the publicity even more appealing to their clients, musicians are largely responsible for the ideas and images associated with Brazilian music and culture in promotional material. The same images and nomenclature are used by musicians to address potential audience members (be it on their websites, in the emails they send to fans, or on flyers and posters) without the intervention of employers/producers. Although these words and images do not exactly misrepresent Brazilian musical traditions, they sometimes support stereotypes of Brazilianness, as I demonstrate in the following section of this paper.

Toronto’s mainstream media also play a role in the representation of Brazilian musical culture or, more precisely, in presenting this music. With the exception of local Brazilian journals and CBC radio, which has recently started to advertise local immigrant communities’ shows, the major and national media scarcely mention any local Brazilian shows, even when these events are geared towards a non-Brazilian audience. This applies to other immigrant communities’ artistic events as well. Toronto’s leading media present mainstream artistic shows almost exclusively. The few Brazilian shows in Canada that are covered by the media are usually those of well-known Brazilian musicians who tour outside of Brazil. Based on her exami-

nation of the newspapers' coverage of Toronto's Caribana festival (a festival where Brazilian culture is frequently represented), Gallagher argues that the misrepresentation of the Caribbean/South American communities in the mainstream media constitutes a mechanism for the host country's majority "[to reaffirm] its own dominance" (Gallagher 1995:400). Indeed, there is likely a power dynamic performed through the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of local Brazilian shows in Toronto's mainstream media, as other authors interested in the representation of minorities by the Canadian media and music industry have argued (Mahtani 2001; Young 2006). However, whether this dynamic is performed consciously is another question.

Hopefully the recent support of locally-grown Brazilian music bands by large, mainstream Toronto organisations indicates an attempt to better represent the cultures of Toronto's diverse immigrant communities. For example, the Harbourfront Centre, which promotes diverse types of cultural events, produced a show by Alan Hetherington's Escola de Samba de Toronto in 2007. The music of this samba school was described as Brazilian by the Harbourfront Centre, although the band is based in Toronto and is comprised principally of non-Brazilian musicians. Thus, while the Harbourfront Centre supported a local band, it also presented a "foreign" culture in line with its mandate for multicultural representation. However, one could question to what extent this band, comprised largely of non-Brazilians, counts as a representation of the actual local Brazilian community. Other organisations and events that support local Brazilian music bands select performers based on different criteria. The BrazilFest program directors, Arilda de Oliveira and Antonio G. Scisci, told me that Brazilian authenticity – as they understand it – is the main criterion for choosing the bands that perform at their festival. Arilda grew up in Brazil, and the couple's understanding of Brazilian authenticity is, therefore, based mostly on her experience as a Brazilian. Although they have occasionally hired bands either led by non-Brazilians or comprised principally of non-Brazilian musicians, Arilda and Antonio judge the music played by artists who were born in Brazil as more authentic.

Thus, employers might not play a major role in the representation of Brazilian music in the promotion of bands and events, but they play a major role in representing this culture in Toronto by deciding which bands will perform. Certain types of music and artists are favoured and, therefore, these musical genres and artists get to represent Brazilian culture on stage in Toronto, influencing the audience members' conception, or rather conceptions of, Brazilianness.



## Self-Representation and Autoexoticisation

As noted earlier, musicians in Toronto are largely responsible for the ideas and images associated with Brazilian culture in promotional material. Because they want to reach out to the local audience, their understanding of the spectators' desires and expectations influences not only the promotional material they produce but also the artistic decisions they make. Guitarist Wagner Petrilli believes that “*É o exotismo que chama a atenção*” (“It’s exoticism that catches [Canadians’] attention”) (personal communication, 1 November, 2007). Indeed, most of the musicians with whom I talked believe that Toronto audiences share a taste for the exotic and for the exotic images that are exploited in the world music industry. Consequently, some of them emphasize, or even add elements that they believe help Torontonians identify their music as being Brazilian or, more generally, foreign and exotic. For example, in its press kit, Samba Squad advertises itself as an “innovative *bateria* [sic] (drum corps) [that] takes you on a dance-till-you-drop tour of global grooves [with musical innovations that] fulfill the beat migrations created by the African Diaspora.” Other artists such as the Samba Rio Divas present themselves by focusing on stereotypical, exotic images of Brazil: “Passionate exotic dancers dressed in authentic ‘Carnaval’ costume give an elegant taste of the cultural flavor that is Brazil” (Itabras Entertainment poster advertising the “Brazilian Carnival Fever” event, 2008).

By re-reading their culture based on the Torontonians’ exoticising conceptions of it, and by identifying with Torontonians’ (pre)conceptions of Brazilian culture, Brazilian musicians practice what Savigliano (1995) calls “autoexoticism.” In the case of Toronto’s Brazilian music scene, the process of autoexoticisation does not stop at the identification with exotic images. In addition to seeing themselves through the exoticising lenses of non-Brazilians, Brazilians project these images to Torontonians, endorsing them as characteristic of Brazilian culture. However, in some cases, Brazilians do not fully identify with these images, but rather adopt them for tactical purposes, as Bramadat (2005) also suggests with regard to other immigrant groups’ representations of their cultures in Canada. By presenting themselves according to Torontonians’ expectations of Brazilianness, musicians first get the attention of non-Brazilian audience members; this tactic allows the artists to introduce subsequently music that is less exotic, or that corresponds less to stereotypes of Brazilianness.

The process of autoexoticisation can be observed not only in publicity but also in the musicians’ presentations on stage and sometimes in their music. For example, some samba schools work with female dancers. In front of a Brazilian audience, dancers sometimes stayed on stage for one song only. However,

when presenting a show to an audience mainly comprised of non-Brazilians, dancers often become the most important component of the performance. It has been argued that North American spectators enjoy musical performances more if they are visually arresting (Roberts 1999:87). Indeed, most non-Brazilian spectators in Toronto seem to expect and desire the presence of dancers during Brazilian music shows.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, Brazilian audience members, who often participate by dancing and/or singing along, do not appear to need the same degree of visual stimulation on stage. In fact, in their view, their dancing off stage might complete the performance happening on stage (Crook 2005; Packman 2009). Most non-Brazilian spectators do not seem to consider their reactions to be part of the actual performance. Rather, most of them are used to contexts in which a clear barrier exists between performers and audience; conversely, many Brazilian spectators interact with musicians as if they were in informal gatherings (i.e., parties). The behaviour of non-Brazilian spectators during performances reflects audience participation codes and rules that differ from those of the Brazilian audience. Non-Brazilians and Brazilians are therefore sometimes presented with slightly different versions of a band's programme, when the context allows. One version is an attempt to satisfy the Brazilians' desires and criteria of evaluation and appreciation (which are largely based on their knowledge of Brazilian culture as they experienced it when they lived in Brazil), while the other version is meant to satisfy the desires, expectations, and fit within the limitations of non-Brazilian audiences.

Elements are sometimes inserted into the music in order to make it more obviously or typically Brazilian. This was the intention of the Maracatu Nunca Antes band leader, Aline Morales, when she added a *berimbau*<sup>10</sup> in one of her recent compositions, "*Navio Chegando*." The *berimbau*'s distinctive sound is associated with *capoeira*, a Brazilian tradition more widely known in Canada than *maracatu*. Aline had decided to use this instrument to evoke a stronger sense of Brazilianness in the mind of non-Brazilians. In order to please the latter, she also inserted a series of words (e.g., *saudade*, *tambor*)<sup>11</sup> which correspond to what she believes are typical ideas of Brazilianness. Yet, these words are likely understood by only a small portion of the audience, that is, aficionados who like Brazilian culture, speak Portuguese and/or play Brazilian music.

It was not Aline who initially thought of composing songs using recognizable, typical Brazilian sounds and words to emphasize Brazilianness but, rather, her husband, Alex. As a Canadian, he believes that he is more adept at guessing the local audience's desires because his mind-set is similar to that of many non-Brazilians, more specifically, that of young urban Canadians who like "roots music," as he puts it (personal communication, 13 March, 2008). Audience members' comments indicate that some world music fans

still appreciate “authentic” or “traditional” musical elements such as *berimbau*. However, the term “authenticity” is not used by audience members or in the promotional material for Brazilian music in Toronto, but it is frequently used by world music fans and the world music industry in the 1990s (Taylor 1997). This might mean that what is valued in world music is gradually changing. Instead, as Taylor suggests, “Hybridity is occasionally constructed as simply another kind of authenticity, demonstrating the always-shifting nature of regimes of authenticity around what is commonly called ‘world music’” (2007: 12). Indeed, the concept of hybridity was mentioned favourably by some audience members as a characteristic of Brazilian music. Thus, in the present case, “hybridity” might have replaced “authenticity” in the discourse surrounding Brazilian music in Toronto. In fact, right after Alex talked about young Canadians’ tastes for “roots music,” he mentioned his efforts to encourage Aline, who prefers to compose music that respects the *maracatu* tradition, to compose “hybrid” music by combining different musical traditions. As a result of being involved in the organisation and production of their Brazilian partners’ bands, it is evident that some non-Brazilians, like Alex, influence the artistic creation as well. While some Canadians encourage their Brazilian partners to choose a repertoire in line with the notion of Brazilianness, but with the addition of (sometimes generic) exotic musical elements, other Brazilian musicians do so on their own initiative. Still other musicians categorically refuse to exploit exotic elements to please their audiences.

Autoexoticisation emerges from complex processes of intercultural exchange and interpretation. As noted above, the Brazilians I spoke with believe that non-Brazilians associate Brazil with cultural phenomena such as samba and soccer. Some Brazilians complain about stereotypical ideas that direct non-Brazilian expectations of Brazilian culture, but at the same time, they see some of these cultural elements as symbols of national identity. Taken out of their cultural context and inserted into foreign imaginary of Brazil, these elements become stereotypes. Occasionally, Brazilians look at these exoticised representations of their culture and appropriate them anew. Indeed, this process sometimes comes full circle, and it is difficult to determine where it starts, or whether symbols of Brazilian identity are initially identified as such by Brazilians or by non-Brazilians.

## The Mythical Brazilian Sensuality

Sensuality often stands as a symbol of Brazilianness. Indeed, in popular belief, Brazilians are often perceived, and frequently imagine themselves, as being

more sensual than people from most other countries. According to Parker (1991), it was European colonials who first described Brazilians as being highly sensual. It is only a few centuries later that Brazilians endorsed sensuality as part of their identity.

In the Toronto scene, Brazilian sensuality appears to be highly prized in certain contexts, such as corporate events. Many musicians mentioned that, in this context, the audience members and employers seem to be more interested in attending a dance performance featuring female dancers than a music show. Indeed, musicians feel that the audience members' attention is focused on the dancing, not because it is easier to appreciate than the music, but because of the sensual character of the dance that interests them. As Alex noted, some audiences at corporate gigs were disappointed with Maracatu Nunca Antes's Afro-Brazilian dances which do not display the type of sensuality that fits within their North American conception of both sensuality and Brazilian dancing. Alex recognizes the expectation for the "highly sexualised *batuque*,"<sup>12</sup> in other words, "*mulatas* dancing naked" (personal communication, 13 March, 2008). Alex's view is shared by Rick, who notices that audiences at corporate events show more enthusiasm and satisfaction when his music band performs with a group of samba dancers.

There are other occasions where Brazilian sensuality is stressed, whether through the initiative of non-Brazilians or Brazilians. For example, during the summer of 2007, the Toronto Portuguese community organised an event that was meant to pay tribute to Brazilian culture. However, many Brazilians were annoyed at the way their culture was depicted (Liberato 2007:12). They were offended by the way the Portuguese community ridiculed Brazilians, presenting them as sex objects. For example, a Brazilian man stripped in front of the audience. Ironically, Maninho's band was playing *behind* the curtains on stage at the same time. Many Brazilians would have preferred the musicians' performance to be emphasized instead, as they judged it was a much more accurate representation of Brazilian culture. They also disliked what was likely meant as a caricature of Carmen Miranda, that is, naked women covered with fruit lying on tables.

The Brazilian complaints noted above suggest that a power dynamic was at play between the former coloniser and colonised. One of the musicians with whom I talked, Sandro Liberato, thinks that such representations of Brazilians by non-Brazilians constitute a means for the latter to experience sensuality vicariously, as they would not allow themselves to experience it otherwise. Nevertheless, Brazilian sensuality is more mythical than real in many Brazilians' opinions. Many non-Brazilians build their conceptions of Brazilianness around cultural references that have been spread outside Brazil, namely *Car-*

*naval* (Parker 1991; Ford, Meloni Vieira and Vieira Villela 2003:53). Toronto's major annual fund-raising event, the Brazilian Carnival Ball, also perpetuates such stereotypes and discourses locally. However, as Sandro mentioned, the sensuality depicted in *Carnaval* is the reality of only a few days of the year, after which Brazilians behave in a very different manner, their behaviours being directed by Catholic values, among others (Parker 1991).

The topic of Brazilians' relations to sensuality/sexuality and to their image as highly sensual beings could be examined in more detail.<sup>13</sup> Although the performances of the musicians with whom I collaborated could scarcely be qualified as sensual, one could suppose that the widely spread stereotype of Brazilian sensuality contributes to arousing the interest of certain Torontonians in Brazilian music. Nevertheless, as noted, sensuality (or similar concepts) is not among the first notions that come to mind when members of the audience think of Brazilian culture. The reasons for this absence are hard to determine. As Da Silva Lucas (1996) notes in reference to the United States, sensuality is a stereotype of Brazilianness that has a strong presence in the media and the marketing of Brazilian music. The same is true in Toronto where the beauty and sensuality of Brazilian women are emphasized in pictures and texts of show reviews (e.g., in the Toronto-based online journal *Drumcultures*), as well as in promotional material. For example, the pictures on a flyer advertising a show at the Lula Lounge does not account for the presence of any musicians, although the show featured not only one but several bands; indeed, the four pictures show female dancers exclusively (see Figure 2). Such representation in the media and publicity certainly influences Torontonians' perceptions of Brazilian culture.

Another possible reason for the absence of sensuality in the comments on Brazilian culture is that some male participants in the survey might have been reluctant to answer questions on the subject when interviewed by a



Figure 2. Flyer showing pictures of dancers to advertise a Brazilian evening at the Lula Lounge (used here with permission of the management of the Lula Lounge).

woman (*i.e.*, me). However, this does not explain why people who filled out the questionnaire online (that is, half of the participants) did not mention sensuality, even though their answers were anonymous. Moreover, women, when asked during shows what came to mind when they thought of Brazil and what they liked about its culture, did not mention sensuality (or related ideas) either, nor did they when filling out the questionnaire online. However, the fact that they are women and not men does not seem to repress their taste for “Brazilian” sensuality. Indeed, Brazilian evenings featuring Brazilian go-go boys were attended by large groups of women at the Lula Lounge.

In fact, perhaps the audience members’ answers would have included stereotypes such as “*mulatas*,” “good lovers” and “Brazilian bikini” (all preconceptions that Brazilians mentioned they think Canadians have of their culture) if they had been asked outside of Canada. According to Herold, Garcia and DeMoya (2001), some Canadians allow themselves to enjoy their own sensuality more when they travel outside of Canada, because they leave behind the inhibitions of their everyday lives, among other reasons. In addition to traditional cultural factors that might restrain Torontonians’ sensuality when in Canada, the more recent discourses on multiculturalism and feminism in Canadian public forums might keep Torontonians from mentioning sensuality as a characteristic of Brazilian culture. Indeed, while many exotic stereotypes of Brazilianness persist, that of sensuality might be more repressed than others in Canada because of such discourses. I believe many Torontonians would be ashamed of admitting, not only overtly but even to themselves, that they are drawn to Brazilian culture, or worse to Brazilians, because of this mythical sensuality.

### Brazilian and non-Brazilian Spectators: Musicians’ Interpretations of their Audiences

In some cases, musicians who advertise themselves as playing Brazilian music feel that they must adapt, at least to a certain extent, to their audiences’ conceptions of Brazilianness. Because the audience members who attend Brazilian music shows might have different expectations and tastes, some musicians’ repertoires are constituted, on the one hand, of pieces that please the Brazilian audience and, on the other hand, of pieces that correspond to the non-Brazilian audience’s tastes. For example, musical code-switching sometimes occurs during a particular show, and musicians will play songs that are well-known to Brazilians so that they can sing along and dance, as well as other songs that they believe will be enjoyed more by the non-Brazil-

ian spectators in the audience.

As I mentioned earlier, musicians sometimes make stylistic choices depending on their perceptions of the audience's expectations and desires. However, this understanding is, in fact, only partly based on experience (e.g., spectators' feedback, reactions of the audience during shows). The musicians' perceptions are largely based on suppositions and preconceptions, or on what they imagine the audience's tastes and expectations to be, as noted in other immigrant contexts by Averill (1998) and Hammerlund (1994). It appears that some Brazilians' understandings of Torontonians' ideas of Brazil actually reveal the preconceptions Brazilians have of Torontonians, and by extension, Canadian culture. Indeed, although I have mostly considered the non-Brazilians' ideas of Brazilian culture in this paper, non-Brazilians are certainly not the only ones who have preconceptions about the other group (i.e., Brazilians); the opposite is true as well. These reciprocal misconceptions influence the interactions between both groups, encouraging them to react either in opposition to, or in accordance with, what they believe is expected from them. Some Brazilian musicians refuse to play the game of exoticism, whereas others actively present an autoexoticised image of their culture to non-Brazilians. Yet, all of them wish that Torontonians had more knowledge of Brazilian culture and that Torontonians would leave behind stereotypes of Brazilianness. Thus, by showing an exotic image of themselves, some musicians get caught in a vicious circle that thwarts their own attempts to separate Brazilian culture from stereotypes.

While it might seem surprising, most Brazilian musicians with whom I collaborated prefer nevertheless to perform for a non-Brazilian audience. One of the main reasons for this is the attitude of Brazilian spectators. Some musicians mentioned that many Brazilians who live in Canada have in fact more preconceptions toward Brazilian music than many non-Brazilians. Also, some Brazilians who live in Toronto seem to be interested in attending shows only if the musicians perform Brazilian hits that play on the radio in Brazil. As a Toronto-based musician said, "*A propia comunidade se fecha nesse mercado ... : não quebra a cabeça para ouvir outras coisas*" ("The [Brazilian] community limits itself to this music market ... : they don't make the effort to listen to other things") (personal communication, 26 July, 2007, anonymous). Whereas many Brazilians in Toronto listen to these hits as a means of decreasing their feelings of homesickness, few musicians in Toronto are interested in playing this type of music. Moreover, music that is not widely known in Brazil is sometimes deprecated by some Brazilian spectators. Aline believes some Brazilians feel their identity as

Brazilians would be threatened if they admitted that they do not recognize melodies or musical genres from Brazil's numerous musical traditions; consequently, some of them simply deny that the music played by a band in Toronto is Brazilian. In other cases, Brazilian racial prejudices limit Brazilians' appreciation of certain types of music. As Aline notes, this is the case of Afro-Brazilian music, which is considered to be only noise by some Brazilians.

For all these reasons, many artists prefer to play for a non-Brazilian audience. Of course, not all performances in front of a non-Brazilian audience bring the same degree of satisfaction, just as those for a Brazilian public do not. However, some Canadian audiences give musicians the freedom to play the music they like. Musicians like Luanda Jones appreciate Torontonians' open-mindedness and their desire to discover new music. Indeed, although some stereotypes and preconceptions of Brazilianness are problematic in the Toronto Brazilian music scene, none of the musicians with whom I talked felt it was necessary to present only the small portion of the Brazilian music culture that is well-known in North America. The open-minded attitude of Toronto audiences might depend, in large part, on the fact that the audiences are largely comprised of other (non-Brazilian) immigrants, which was not the case a mere fifteen years ago. It could be suggested that immigrants who also experienced the negative effects of cultural preconceptions, as they attempt to fit into Canadian society, are more willing to put an end to cultural stereotypes and accept music as it is presented. Most certainly, thanks to the growing number of immigrants, Toronto audiences are becoming increasingly heterogeneous, a factor which impacts on the audience members' tastes, expectations, attitudes, and behaviours, all of which are now diverse. This diversity gives musicians greater freedom in making stylistic choices; for others, it simply gives them the opportunity to perform for an audience. Indeed, regardless of the chosen musical genres, musicians' styles seem to please at least a portion of the audience in Toronto.

The case of Toronto's Brazilian music scene is but one example of the types of relationships that exist between immigrants and an increasingly complex "host" society. Many issues discussed in this article apply to the experiences of musicians from other immigrant communities who perform in Toronto, as well as in other fast-changing multicultural cities, such as Montreal. Indeed, preliminary results of research I am conducting in Montreal's Brazilian music scene show interesting similarities between the experiences of, and the challenges faced by, musicians of both cities and their respective multicultural audiences.



## Conclusion

It is clear that different definitions of Brazilianness exist in Toronto. The ideas and images used in the promotion of bands and shows by both employers and musicians influence the local audiences' notions of Brazilianness. Choices made by employers and promoters in deciding which bands will perform also influence local definitions. Further, Brazilianness is interpreted differently by artists who sometimes exoticise their own images and performances based on their understandings of the non-Brazilians' desires and expectations. Therefore, all the participants of Toronto's Brazilian music scene contribute to shaping and influencing other participants' definitions of Brazilianness. These definitions differ not only between musicians, employers and audience members, Brazilians and non-Brazilians, but also within each of these groups. Indeed, there are crossovers between, and subdivisions within, these groups which reflect different interpretations of Brazilianness. For example, some people who were born in Canada, like Alan Hetherington, share an understanding of Brazilianness with certain Brazilians; however, Brazilians coming from different classes or regions of Brazil may not share the same definition.

As I have demonstrated, emergent musically mediated relations between immigrants and the "host" society play an important role in defining identities, as well as in determining dynamics between cultural groups. As noted by Maninho, "*É ainda mais importante pra mim tocar samba aqui pois me permite apresentar-me como brasileiro*" ("Playing samba here [in Toronto] is all the more important for me as it allows me to present myself as a Brazilian") (personal communication, 17 July, 2007), music allows immigrants to present themselves to both people born in Canada and other immigrants in Toronto. At the same time, as music acts as a marker of identity, it serves as a vehicle for immigrants to claim their place in their adopted society. Yet, these processes of negotiation in which musicians are involved are complex. Artists face obstacles that complicate their attempts to present themselves as they wish. In fact, musicians occasionally feel that they must resign themselves to presenting their culture along the lines dictated by cultural preconceptions. In the case of the Toronto Brazilian music scene, autoexoticisation is one of the means some musicians (feel forced to) use in order to reach the local audience. Clearly, overcoming cultural stereotypes and preconceptions is among the challenges that even the most multicultural of societies must still face. 🍁

## Notes

1. The term “employers” includes show promoters, club owners, associations and companies (either volunteer or for-profit gigs), and individuals who hire musicians for private parties, etc.

2. Drawing on Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman’s definition of *Latinidad* (1997), I use the word “Brazilianness” to refer to more than what is considered “authentically” Brazilian by Brazilians only. Therefore, Brazilianness, or *brasilidade*, also includes “the sets of images and attributes superimposed onto both [Brazilian] and [Brazilian-Canadian] subjects from the dominant sector [i.e., the host country’s majority]” (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1997:15). Thus, in this article, this word reflects different groups’ conceptions of Brazilianness.

3. In this article, I use the terms “non-Brazilians” and “Torontonians” interchangeably to refer to people who live in Toronto and who do not identify as Brazilians. I use the term “Brazilians” to refer to people who identify themselves as such (exclusively or not), either because they were born in Brazil or because they have made Brazilian culture their own. Of course, there is no such thing as a single Brazilian identity. However, to a certain extent, immigration reunites people coming from different regions, classes, etc., in Brazil, as evidenced by the formation of social networks and observable behaviours among Brazilians living in Toronto. I have retained these two terms, “Brazilians” and “non-Brazilians,” because this dualism corresponds to a distinction made by most participants in Toronto’s Brazilian music scene. Obviously, all the members of each of these groups do not like the same music or behave in the same manner during shows; other factors, such as age and class influence an individual’s appreciation of the music. However, a musician’s or a spectator’s cultural identity (specifically, Brazilian identity versus another cultural identity) frequently has a significant impact on his/her musical choices, tastes and behaviours with respect to Brazilian music in Toronto. In addition, other factors that contribute to drawing a line between “Brazilian” and “non-Brazilian” in the Toronto scene include music used as a marker of identity by Brazilian immigrants and the “Brazilian label” that is used to market music.

4. *Maracatu* is an Afro-Brazilian genre that originated in Northeastern Brazil. In Brazil, large *maracatu* ensembles perform in parades: most members play percussion instruments, while others dance. See Crook (2005) for more details.

5. *Capoeira* is a Brazilian martial art in which music plays an important part.

6. As Witmer (2001:1204) notes, because Brazilians speak Portuguese, the Brazilian community is somehow “nested” within Toronto’s Portuguese community, which is larger, older and consequently more organised.

7. I asked audience members to answer the following questions: “How old are you? Of what descent/origin are you? In which country were you born? You now identify yourself principally as... (national identity)? What comes to your mind when you think of Brazil/Brazilian culture?” Alternatively, if the spectators identified themselves as Brazilians, I asked the following: “In your opinion, what

comes to the minds of non-Brazilians when they think of Brazil/Brazilian culture?" "Which Brazilian music shows have you attended in Toronto? Did you decide to go to that (those) bar(s)/venue(s)/site(s) specifically for the Brazilian music show(s)? Did the music correspond to what you were expecting? If not, how did it differ?" When talking with spectators during shows, I also asked them, "Are there musical elements of the show that led you to identify/recognize the music as being Brazilian? If so, which ones? Do you have an interest in Brazilian music/culture? If so, what draws you to it? Do you play in a Brazilian music band? What (other) types of music do you usually listen to?"

8. A *mulata* is a Brazilian woman of mixed white and black ancestry.

9. Dancing is not the only type of performance that engages the audience visually. The percussionist Bola believes that Torontonians who attend *capoeira* performances are impressed with the *jôgo* (game; that is, the martial art itself), whereas they are indifferent to the music being played.

10. A *berimbau* is a chordophone used in *capoeira*. This instrument is not usually a part of *maracatu* ensembles.

11. "Saudade" refers to a feeling between longing and nostalgia. Brazilians who live outside Brazil frequently use the term to refer to their feeling of homesickness. "Tambor" means "drum."

12. The word "*batuque*" usually refers to a Brazilian dance (and music) of African origin.

13. For further readings on this topic, see Parker (1991), Ford, Meloni Vieira and Vieira Villela (2003) and Rebhun (2004).

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