

BRAZILIAN MUSIC IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH: AN ANALYSIS OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AVEIRO

*Música brasileira na pesquisa acadêmica: uma análise das teses de doutorado na
Universidade de Aveiro*

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Abstract

This paper discusses approaches to Brazilian music and culture in research conducted at the University of Aveiro. The selected sample comprises doctoral dissertations presented from the beginning of the 21st century until 2024 by professors from Brazilian federal universities who graduated from the doctoral program in music at the University of Aveiro. This is a literature review, and the documentary corpus consists of the full texts of the doctoral dissertations. Quantitatively, we observed that approximately 33% of the texts in the sample address Brazilian music in some capacity. From a qualitative perspective, the analysis review that Brazilian music and culture occupy a relatively reduced space in the academic bibliography under analysis. This finding contrasts with approaches centered on musical traditions of foreign origin that have a longer period of consolidation within academic research.

Resumo

Propõe-se no presente artigo uma discussão das abordagens relativas à música e à cultura brasileira em pesquisas realizadas na Universidade de Aveiro. A amostra selecionada corresponde às teses defendidas desde o início do século XXI até o ano de 2024, de autoria de professores de universidades federais do Brasil egressos do doutorado em música da referida instituição. Em relação à metodologia, caracteriza-se como revisão de bibliografia, e o corpo documental é constituído pelos textos integrais das teses de doutorado. Como resultado quantitativo, foi possível constatar que aproximadamente 33% dos textos que compõem a amostra apresentam algum tipo de abordagem relacionada à música brasileira. Do ponto de vista qualitativo, percebe-se um espaço reduzido voltado à música e à cultura brasileira na bibliografia acadêmica em questão, o que contrasta com as abordagens alinhadas a manifestações musicais de matrizes estrangeiras com maior tempo de consolidação no âmbito da pesquisa acadêmica.

Keywords: *Brazilian Music; Music Research; Academic Publications; University of Aveiro.*

Palavras-chave: *Música brasileira; pesquisa em música; produção acadêmica; Universidade de Aveiro.*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to discuss approaches to Brazilian music and culture in doctoral dissertations defended between the beginning of the 21st century and 2024 by professors from Brazilian federal universities who graduated from the Doctoral Program in Music at the University of Aveiro (UA). The study constitutes a segment of the ongoing research project entitled “Training of Brazilian Professors in the Doctoral Program in Music at the University of Aveiro – Portugal.”⁴.

In addition to the UA, Portugal offers two other doctoral programs in music: one at the University of Lisbon, established in 2010, and another at the University of Évora, launched in 2013, both offering twelve annual positions. The doctoral program at the UA, also established in 2010, provides the largest number of positions, with forty openings per year. According to Silva and Monti (2026):

Master’s and doctoral programs in Portugal are structured within the second and third cycles of higher education, respectively, in accordance with the Bologna Process adopted by European countries. The supervision of higher education is the responsibility of the Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES), an independent private-law entity and member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, as established by Decree-Law No. 369/2007 of November 5 (p. 8).

The Doctoral Program in Music at the UA is organized into six areas of specialization: Music Analysis and Theory, Composition, Conducting, Music Education and Community Music, Ethnomusicology, and Performance. According to the institution’s official website, its objective is “to prepare researchers and artists for professional practice and the development of research activities” (University of Aveiro, 2026).

Silva and Monti (2026, p. 9) reports a “significant demand from Brazilian applicants” in the selection processes for the Doctoral Program in Music at the UA. The program welcomes international students and “allows applications from graduates who do not hold a master’s degree”.

⁴ Research Project supported by the Brazilian Council for Scientific and Technological Development – CNPq (CNPq/MCTI No. 10/2023 – Universal).

Preliminary studies conducted within the framework of the aforementioned project identified a sample of twenty-seven doctoral graduates who earned their degrees at the UA during the 21st century and currently serve as faculty members at Brazilian federal universities, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Doctoral research at UA conducted by faculty members at Brazilian federal universities

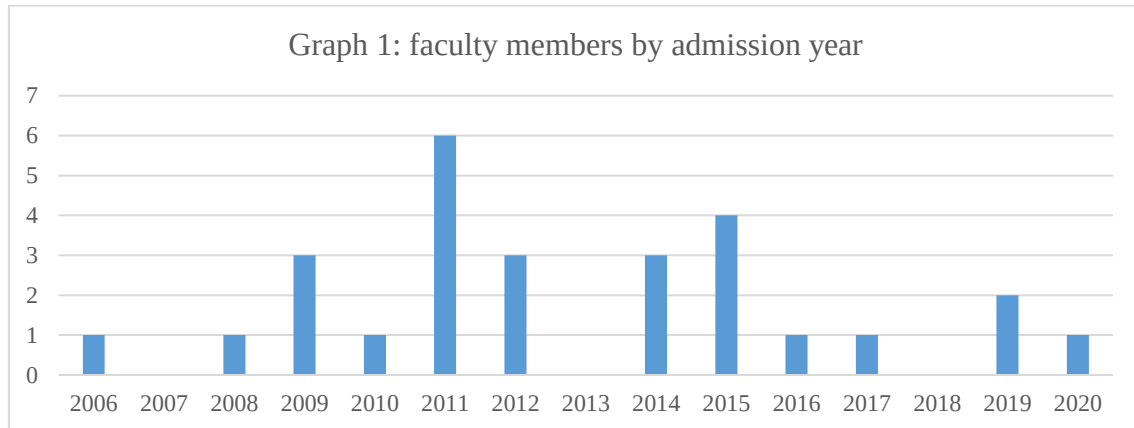
Author	Admission (UA)	University	Region
Padilha, 2014	2011	UFMA	Northeast
Rocha, 2014	2011	UFPB	
Costa Filho, 2015	2009	UFBA	
Rocha, 2016	2011	UFPB	
Oliveira, 2016	2012	UFPI	
Vieira, 2017	2012	UFPI	
Souza, 2020	2014	UFPI	
Sanchez, 2020	2014	UFPE	
Pronk, 2021	2016	UFPB	
Lima, 2022	2014	UFPE	
Nery, 2023	2017	UFS	
Queiroz, 2024	2019	UFC	
Duarte, 2013	2009	UFPA	North
Oliveira Junior, 2019	2015	UFPA	
Bragagnolo, 2019 ⁵	2015	UFMT	Midwest
Pinheiro, 2024	2020	UFG	
Vetromilla, 2010 ⁶	2008	UNIRIO	Southeast
Rocha, 2010	2006	UFMG	
Chaib, 2012	2009	UFMG	
Tullio, 2014	2010	UFU	
Santos, 2015	2011	UFSJ	
Pedrassoli Júnior, 2017	2012	UFRJ	
Roussin, 2020	2015	UFMG	
Isidoro, 2020	2015	UFJF	
Araújo, 2015	2011	UFRGS	South
Corrêa, 2016	2011	UFSC	
Santos, 2024	2019	UNIPAMPA	

Source: Plataforma Lattes (CNPq, 2026)

⁵ Doctoral Program in Music at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), sandwich doctoral that included a research period at the UA.

⁶ Doctoral Program in Music at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), sandwich doctoral that included a research period at the UA.

Based on the presented data, it is possible to observe that the admission of the faculty members included in the sample occurred between 2006 and 2020. The Graph 1 below shows the number of Brazilian faculty members admission at the UA by year:



For illustrative purposes, among the twenty-seven doctoral graduates, twenty entered the program between 2009 and 2015, representing approximately 74% of the sample. Although this aspect is not the focus of the present discussion, it may provide useful insights for future investigations. In any case, the data reveal a substantial number of faculty members working in Brazilian federal higher education who seek the doctoral degree at the UA.

METHOD

This study is characterized as a literature review, and its documentary corpus consists of the complete doctoral dissertations produced by the twenty seven researchers included in the sample described above. Undoubtedly, academic training within a distinct sociocultural context and in another country offers opportunities for expanding concepts, methods, and analytical approaches. In order to examine how Brazilian music and culture are addressed within the doctoral research of the selected sample, the first stage of the study consisted of locating the dissertations in institutional repositories. Of the twenty seven dissertations, twenty four are available in the UA repository, one dissertation could not be located, and two others are available in the repositories of Brazilian universities—namely, the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO) and the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB)—as outcomes of sandwich doctoral programs that included a research period at the UA.

A preliminary reading was conducted, focusing on the front matter of each dissertation, particularly the abstract and table of contents, in order to identify studies that engaged, at any level, with Brazilian music and culture. From the twenty seven dissertations, nine were selected for full reading. Among the remaining eighteen, there is a predominance of topics centered on technical aspects of musical performance within the Western classical tradition. Although one dissertation was unavailable for consultation, its title suggests that it would likely fall within this category.

Following the retrieval, preliminary reading, and classification of the dissertations, a comprehensive reading of the selected works was undertaken. The following sections present a synthesis of the themes related to Brazilian music identified in the analyzed corpus.

RESULTS

The nine dissertations selected for analysis, all of which address Brazilian music and culture to some extent, are presented below in chronological order.

Vetromilla (2011) investigated the 1st Brazilian Competition for Classical Music Composition for Piano or Guitar (I Concurso brasileiro de composição de música erudita para piano ou violão), organized by the National Institute of Music (INM) in 1979 with the support of the Irmãos Vitale publishing house. According to the author, the event became “an object of interest for specialized critics, who situated it within contemporary expectations regarding the role that Brazilian classical music should play in the broader panorama of Brazilian culture” (Vetromilla, 2011, p. 2). To support this argument, the author interprets the competition as a

strategy promoted by the co-sponsoring institutions aimed at constructing a concept of Brazilian classical music according to parameters compatible with the Cultural Policy adopted by the Federal Government, represented by the INM, and with the competitive rules of the sheet music market, represented by Vitale Publishing (Vetromilla, 2011, p. 3).

The competition emerged within a complex historical context marked by a period of cultural repression and, paradoxically, by the establishment of FUNARTE (National Arts Foundation) in 1975, which “included a specific sector dedicated to Brazilian music: the National Institute of Music (INM)” (Vetromilla, 2011, p. 1). Within this framework, FUNARTE—and the competition in particular—served as a mechanism for enabling

specific cultural expressions aligned with prevailing governmental policies. The dissertation also presents an extensive discussion of the Brazilian guitar repertoire within the concert music tradition (Vetromilla, 2011, pp. 98–168), including the works submitted to the competition.

Duarte (2013) investigated musical manifestations in southern Minas Gerais, particularly in the municipality of Jacutinga, through an ethnographic approach covering the period from 2009 to 2012. According to the author, the study seeks “to analyze the leading role of roots music (*música raiz*) in the process of consolidating a caipira identity through its contribution to reversing the condition of dependency historically imposed upon individuals associated with rural identity” (Duarte, 2013, p. 35). To accomplish this objective, the study is structured around three analytical categories: performers, songs (*modas*), and landscapes. The research draws upon an extensive documentary corpus, including audiovisual materials, archival records, bibliographic sources, and oral testimonies. To describe the sonic universe encompassing labels such as *música caipira* and *música sertaneja*, Duarte adopts the broader concept of *música raiz* (“roots music”), which includes genres such as *moda de viola*, *pagode de viola*, *querumana*, and *guarânia*, generally performed by vocal duos accompanied by the *viola caipira*.

The author discusses the identity-building processes associated with *música raiz*:

Caipira identity/southern Minas identity is precisely this “common origin” through which individuals identify and legitimize themselves and others. It is the affective bond that brings them together and constitutes them as a community, through a constant dynamic sustained by the preservation and perpetuation of memory, in which *música raiz* plays a central and decisive role (Duarte, 2013, p. 52).

A particularly relevant discussion concerns the interdependence of musical duos, interpreted not as a limitation but as a cooperative model reflecting the social organization of rural communities. Another issue examined by the author concerns sound recording. Although often viewed negatively because of its association with the commercial logic of the music industry, recording is interpreted here as a crucial means of preserving a predominantly oral tradition:

The absence of a written culture documenting the history of those designated as caipiras (or of a caipira culture) grants music the role of guardian of memory. In this sense, *música raiz* makes it possible to preserve, construct, and ultimately claim a memory transformed into a heroic history that unites the community around a common past—simultaneously lost and desired (Duarte, 2013, p. 217).

Padilha (2014) conducted an ethnomusicological study of the bumba meu boi tradition in Maranhão, focusing particularly on processes of resignification associated with the incorporation of wind instruments, which gave rise to the style known as boi de orquestra. The author identifies several clear contrasts in this stylistic variation:

in the music—which in Boi de Orquestra included melodic instruments; in the dance—which featured more elaborate choreography; in performative intentionality—which was overtly presentational rather than participatory; and in race, since Boi de Orquestra involved a significantly larger number of white participants. Nevertheless, one common element remained: the narrative surrounding the death and resurrection of the ox, celebrated during the São João festivities (Padilha, 2014, pp. 3–4).

To understand this cultural manifestation, Padilha examines the rigidly hierarchical social stratification that shaped the state of Maranhão, the distinct cultural matrices associated with different social strata, and the prejudice historically directed toward bumba meu boi as a cultural expression linked to descendants of slaves. The study relies on bibliographic, archival, hemerographic, and oral sources. The author provides a detailed characterization of bumba meu boi, encompassing historical, technical, and stylistic dimensions, with particular emphasis on instruments, sonic characteristics, and regional styles known as sotaques (Padilha, 2014, pp. 37–125). His historiographical review identifies three major hypotheses concerning the origins of the tradition:

The first, diffusionist in nature, associates it with performative practices of predominantly European origin introduced by Portuguese, French, and Spanish settlers. The second interprets it as the result of syncretism between Brazilian Indigenous cultures and practices introduced by enslaved Africans. The third suggests that bumba meu boi emerged within the colonial context through the articulation of practices common to the three racial groups that occupied Brazil: whites, Blacks, and Indigenous peoples (Padilha, 2014, p. 129).

The dissertation contributes significantly to understanding the process through which bumba meu boi evolved from a marginalized and often criminalized practice into one of the most important contemporary symbols of Maranhense identity. Through a long process of resignification and social acceptance—mediated by political strategies and adapted to elite expectations—the tradition was transformed into an officially recognized cultural heritage. It became part of Brazil's intangible cultural heritage in 2011 and currently occupies an important place within the tourism sector.

According to Padilha, *boi de orquestra* represents a “whitened” version of the tradition, serving as “a reflection of all the social asymmetries that Maranhão contains, while itself being a product of those asymmetries” (Padilha, 2014, p. 213).

Tullio (2014) examined the Percussion Group of the Brooklin Paulista Music Conservatory (GPCMBP), aiming to “address exclusively contemporary Brazilian percussion within the realm of classical music, without establishing relationships with the ‘popular percussion’ employed in Brazilian popular music” (Tullio, 2014, p. 3). The study combines bibliographic research, audiovisual materials, and oral sources. It presents a historical overview of twentieth-century concert percussion composition and the development of academic percussion practices in Brazil, followed by a detailed account of the activities of the ensemble (Tullio, 2014, pp. 32–198). The author concludes that:

Contemporary percussion in Brazil has grown considerably since the 1980s. Numerous concerts have been performed, and many works have been composed by Brazilian composers. Brazil has strengthened itself significantly across various sectors over recent decades. Economic stability greatly benefited culture and other areas, and contemporary percussion ultimately benefited from this stability as well. Percussion festivals and gatherings, increasingly frequent since 1988, along with visits from important musicians and ensembles, have directly or indirectly stimulated the teaching and performance of contemporary percussion (Tullio, 2014, p. 200).

Santos (2015) also focused on percussion, developing a series of case studies on Latin American instruments, including a section dedicated to the Brazilian *pandeiro*. According to the author,

some instruments, including Latin American instruments, remain on the margins of the central percussion repertoire of contemporary music, particularly in works dedicated to solo instruments. This situation results partly from the specific performance techniques required by these instruments and partly from their deep association with other musical traditions and cultural identities (Santos, 2015, p. 15).

The dissertation provides a historical contextualization of the Brazilian *pandeiro*, tracing its documented presence back to the sixteenth century. Choro is identified as a major influence on the development of instrumental technique, while samba is highlighted as a key factor in popularizing the instrument. A substantial section is devoted to performance techniques, notation practices, and electronic resources applicable to the *pandeiro* within contemporary music contexts (Santos, 2015, pp. 116–149).

Pedrassoli Júnior (2017) explored the relationship between musical notation and the performance of Villa-Lobos's guitar works. As the author emphasizes, the focus of the dissertation "is not the Brazilian composer's work itself, but rather the way in which it relates to the issue of tacit and explicit knowledge through musical notation and performance" (Pedrassoli Júnior, 2017, p. 4). Two chapters are dedicated to Villa-Lobos's solo guitar repertoire, presenting a comprehensive review of the literature, analyses of manuscript and printed sources, and discussions of interpretive and notational issues (Pedrassoli Júnior, 2017, pp. 89–203).

Isidoro (2020) investigated the presence of the violin in Brazilian popular music, focusing specifically on the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The study proposes "an investigation into how performers articulate elements found in both classical and urban popular music in order to define a contemporary approach to Brazilian popular violin performance" (Isidoro, 2020, p. 20). The research combines bibliographic investigation, fieldwork, oral testimonies, ethnographic observation, and documentary analysis. The dissertation includes chapters devoted to the historical development of urban popular music in Brazil, ethnographic analyses of four violinists, and discussions of style, performance, and pedagogy. The author observes:

A few years ago, I had no awareness of the role of the violin in Brazilian urban popular music. More recently, I have also noticed a significant lack of knowledge concerning the presence of the violin in Brazilian popular music in the academic conferences, orchestral settings, and university environments I have attended, both within and outside Brazil (Isidoro, 2020, p. 99).

The dissertation acknowledges the violin's strong association with the Western classical tradition while demonstrating its versatility within Brazilian musical contexts, particularly through jazz and choro ensembles. The author advocates the use of the term "Brazilian popular violin" to describe these practices.

We can see that the violin, originating from a dominant culture, was strengthened through a one-sided discourse guided by a European tradition. As this instrument interacted with local culture, that is, with the urban popular music that at the time was reflected in musical genres emerging in the big cities, we observe the beginning of a break with this segregating paradigm, which was necessary to maintain the possibility of engaging in other contexts without social disapproval. As the violin became involved with the musical genres emerging in the urban sphere, it revealed another face, now popular (Isidoro, 2020, p. 177).

Pronk (2021) presented “artistic processes and products derived from arranging Armorial music through the use of looping techniques” (p. 21). Although centered on performance with the Brazilian viola and electronic resources, the dissertation includes a substantial literature review dedicated to the history of the viola in Brazil and the musical dimensions of the Armorial Movement (pp. 33–81). According to the author:

The movement named ‘Armorial’ by its creator, the Pernambuco-born writer Ariano Suassuna (1927–2014), emerged during the 1970s and advocated values embedded in the popular arts of Northeastern Brazil, aiming to create a Brazilian classical art rooted in popular traditions. Beyond music, the Armorial Movement also encompassed theater, dance, literature, visual arts, architecture, cinema, and other artistic expressions” (Pronk, 2021, p. 58).

Methodologically, the study is grounded primarily in artistic research, with outcomes focused on performance and sound production, complemented by bibliographic, oral, and audiovisual sources.

Pinheiro (2024) investigated the work *A Noiva do Condutor*, composed by Arnold Glückmann and Noel Rosa in 1935, drawing upon perspectives from performance studies, ethnomusicology, and popular music studies. The dissertation problematizes the notion of the musical work as a fixed entity within popular music contexts. Although composed in 1935, the work was first recorded only in 1985, subsequently underwent multiple reinterpretations, and the manuscripts analyzed in the study were rediscovered only in 2022. As the author notes:

It is important to emphasize that the 1985 LP recording was produced from Arnold Glückmann’s manuscript, recovered through the research of João Máximo and Carlos Didier. After the album’s release, however, the score was considered lost, and all subsequent productions were based either on that recording or on freely reconstructed versions characterized by significant changes to both the musical structure and the narrative (Pinheiro, 2024, p. 3).

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the nine dissertations presented above, it was possible to identify a number of thematic orientations, which served as the basis for the establishment of analytical categories. A predominance of studies focused on relatively circumscribed contexts was observed, from which technical aspects related to musical instruments, musical events, compositional characteristics, arranging, and editing practices are

examined. At the same time, some studies address broader contexts by analyzing Brazilian cultural manifestations in which music plays a central role. While the previous section outlined the main ideas developed in the dissertations, the present discussion focuses specifically on their approaches to Brazilian music. For analytical purposes, the studies were organized into three categories: music and culture; compositional processes; and musical instruments.

Table 2 – Thematic Categories

Category	Author	Predominant Theme
Music and Culture	Duarte, 2013	Popular musical manifestation
	Padilha, 2014	Popular musical manifestation
Compositional Processes	Pronk, 2021	Musical arrangement
	Pinheiro, 2024	Musical editing
Musical Instruments	Vetromilla, 2011	Guitar
	Tullio, 2014	Percussion
	Santos, 2015	Percussion
	Pedrassoli Júnior, 2017	Guitar
	Isidoro, 2020	Guitar

Source: Authors

Within the category of **Music and Culture**, Duarte (2013) examined a specific context of Brazilian music that the author designates as *música raiz* (“roots music”). In this regard, he discusses the terms *caipira* and *sertanejo* from both geographical and sociocultural perspectives. According to the author,

we may identify three equally important frameworks in the attribution of labels and categories to the music that, in this context, I designate as roots music. One is found in written discourses produced by academics, folklorists, local intellectuals, and journalists who, for supposedly ‘objective’ reasons, employ the generic category of ‘caipira music’, drawing upon the legacy of Cornélio Pires, that is, within the context of the recording industry. Another originates in the music industry itself, which, for market purposes, creates commercially viable labels such as caipira music, sertanejo music, and university sertanejo. Finally, there is a third framework generated within performance contexts and employed by the musicians themselves—viola players, singers, and accompanying performers—who do not use any generic category, referring instead to their music as *moda*, *catira*, *folia*, *congada*, *São Gonçalo*, *cururu*, *cateretê*, among others. These universes are clearly permeable to one another, and musicians seek, in various ways, to incorporate and negotiate the concepts produced by scholars and the music industry, either accepting or rejecting them (Duarte, 2013, p. 22).

According to Duarte (2013), the terms *música sertaneja* and *música caipira* were used interchangeably until approximately the 1960s, after which they acquired distinct functions. “From a market perspective, the category *caipira* carried depreciative connotations that somehow hindered the objectives of the music industry” (p. 22). Consequently, the industry increasingly adopted the label *sertanejo music*, whereas *caipira music* remained associated with collective rural practices. The proposal of the term *música raiz*, according to the author, is grounded in local discourse and in the perspectives of the research participants, constituting “a designation capable of overcoming all dichotomies” (Duarte, 2013, p. 24). The author advances the following hypothesis:

modas, as the minimal unit of roots music, articulate a triangular relationship between the symbolic universe of caipira identity—as a repository of memories for the construction of a cohesive community—and, on the other hand, the universe of belonging that constructs a place represented by music while simultaneously being represented through it. This process of representation occurs through a mode of singing caipira identity and, therefore, celebrating it by describing it through multiple textual resources of a toponilic nature and narrating it through the evocation of sounds, characters, and events from the past (Duarte, 2013, p. 32).

In Padilha’s (2014) study of *bumba meu boi* in Maranhão, this cultural manifestation is characterized as a syncretic and multicultural practice in which “we may find forms of dialogue among the different human universes that today constitute Brazil” (p. 7). Originally associated with descendants of enslaved populations, *bumba meu boi* underwent a process of resignification that, according to the author, was largely motivated by electoral interests. This process “required popular festivities to undergo a civilizing transformation in order to become acceptable to the dominant social class” (Padilha, 2014, p. 6). Such transformations contributed to the emergence of *boi de orquestra*, a stylistic variant—or *sotaque*—that incorporated instruments such as saxophone, trombone, trumpet, banjo, and guitar alongside the traditional percussion instruments of the manifestation. For Padilha,

Bumba Boi de Orquestra currently constitutes a territory of dialogue, inclusion, and disguise, enabling its performers to establish spaces of both internal and external interlocution while allowing political agents to maintain authority. In this case, interlocution also becomes a site of historical reconciliation and aesthetic agreement in a context where memory constantly recalls conflict, but which today simultaneously represents a space of domination and control (Padilha, 2014, p. 10).

The resignification of *bumba meu boi* extends beyond attempts at class mediation and affects the manifestation itself, which increasingly becomes a performative spectacle encompassing music, dance, theatrical elements, costumes, and handicrafts, often presenting a stereotyped version of what are presumed to be its original forms. In this regard, “the narrative of Boi de Orquestra projects a desire for understanding that seems absent in the world beyond the festival itself” (Padilha, 2014, p. 38).

Musically, the performance is structured around songs accompanied by instruments, known as *toadas*. The author offers the following concise description of its musical organization:

The *amo* is responsible for leading the *toada*, that is, performing the song solo, which is then followed by a response from the other participants, usually centered on a single verse or vocal interjections. This response also involves the entrance of the instrumental accompaniment and dance. Thus, *Bumba meu boi* may be defined as a sequence consisting of a *toada* performed solo by the *amo*, followed by a choral response accompanied by dance and instrumental music. The *toadas* are sung during the enactment of the narrative of the ox’s death and resurrection, marking symbolic moments and following a predetermined order” (Padilha, 2014, p. 43).

The two studies included in the category of Music and Culture (Duarte, 2013; Padilha, 2014) address markedly different musical manifestations originating in distinct geographical contexts. Nevertheless, they share a significant common characteristic: both investigate popular cultural expressions that were historically marginalized and subsequently re-signified through processes of spectacularization, eventually becoming consumable cultural products strongly associated with regional identities.

It should be emphasized that academic categorization is understood here as a heuristic device for broadening our understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Nevertheless, evident interconnections exist among the categories. In the case of **Compositional Processes**, for example, Pronk’s (2021) dissertation, despite its emphasis on arrangement practices, also addresses the viola sertaneja as a musical instrument and Armorial music as a cultural context. Likewise, Pinheiro’s (2024) study, although culminating in a musical edition, engages with composition within the cultural universe of samba while simultaneously deconstructing the Western concept of the musical work itself. Despite their predominantly technical focus, both studies include meaningful discussions of Brazilian music.

Pronk (2021) provides a characterization of the viola sertaneja that goes beyond its material existence as a musical instrument, integrating it into the sociogeographical universe of the *sertão*, a term that, according to the author, “originates in colonial geography and reproduces the interests of domination and the appropriative gaze of expanding empires and their civilizing projects” (p. 33). The dissertation addresses physical characteristics of the instrument, tuning systems, stylistic and idiomatic features, and its dissemination throughout Brazil, particularly in the Northeast, where it is used in *repente*, a tradition of improvised singing. The singer (*repentista* or *cantador*) “who sings the verses uses the viola for accompaniment” (Pronk, 2021, p. 43).

Although Pronk’s study (2021) was not classified within the category of Musical Instruments, it introduces an argument that will later reappear in that category: the attempt to legitimize instruments associated with popular culture within academic contexts, particularly through repertoire construction.

My motivation for developing this research initially stemmed from my interest in the Brazilian viola. My first contact with the instrument occurred around 2009 while pursuing a Master’s degree in Music at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, Netherlands. In that time, I had the opportunity to interact with musicians from other countries. Being the only Brazilian guitarist among my classmates encouraged me to incorporate more works by Brazilian composers into my repertoire, including César Guerra-Peixe, Cláudio Santoro, Edino Krieger, Francisco Mignone, Marlos Nobre, Mozart Camargo Guarnieri and Radamés Gnattali (Pronk, 2021, pp. 22–23).

At the same time, the author recognizes the paradox inherent in this process:

when we characterize the Armorial Movement as a ‘*Sertanejo* Baroque’ or even a ‘*Sertanejo* Classicism’, we run the risk of interpreting the movement from a European perspective, whereas its purpose was precisely to create an art grounded in the popular culture of Northeastern Brazil” (Pronk, 2021, p. 60).

Pinheiro’s (2024) dissertation offers a compelling deconstruction of the Western concept of the musical work, including consideration of the role played by mediators such as performers, producers, sound engineers, and other participants involved in any given production. The study also presents a critique of authenticity and of the historically informed performance movement. Paradoxically, however, the dissertation culminates in the proposal of an Urtext edition (Pinheiro, 2024, pp. 323–399), which, despite all preceding critiques, nonetheless constitutes an important contribution to the consolidation of the work within the scholarly repertoire.

The author contextualizes the work within the broader framework of urban music, samba as a form of black resistance and national identity, and radio not merely as a vehicle for musical dissemination but as a medium with profound social significance, particularly given that the work under study was originally conceived for broadcast media (Pinheiro, 2024, pp. 59–80). The author argues that:

the work *A Noiva do Condutor* is directly related to the various cultural moments and movements that emerged in Rio de Janeiro as a result of diverse musical and artistic influences seeking forms of expression aligned with the ideals promoted by Brazilian nationalism. In this sense, it functions as a mediating element representing the context of Brazilian urban popular music during the first decades of the nineteenth century (Pinheiro, 2024, p. 80).

Within the category of **Musical Instruments**, a tendency toward reduced engagement with Brazilian music becomes apparent. Brazilian music generally appears as a thematic unit embedded within broader technical and instrumental discussions. Among the five dissertations included in this category, two focus on the guitar (Vetromilla, 2011; Pedrassoli Júnior, 2017), two on percussion (Tullio, 2014; Santos, 2015), and one on the violin (Isidoro, 2020). The only dissertation that establishes a consistent interface with Brazilian musical manifestations is the latter, devoted to the instrument least commonly associated with Brazilian music among the three categories considered—the violin. By investigating the violin within the context of popular music in major Brazilian urban centers, Isidoro (2020) revisits the long-standing academic debate concerning the relationship between the classical and the popular, a recurring theme in academic research in the past.

Regarding the studies devoted to guitar and percussion—two instruments strongly identified with Brazilian musical culture—a different academic tendency emerges. Rather than pursuing dialogue between classical and popular traditions, an approach that may itself be considered somewhat outdated, these studies often move toward an even more problematic objective: the academic legitimization of such instruments as “classical” instruments through the suppression or marginalization of the sonic identities historically associated with popular cultures. To illustrate this tendency, it is useful to examine the authors’ own arguments. According to Santos (2015), one of the percussion researchers, “this common depreciative representation of these instruments causes the repertoire written for them to remain at the margins of conservatory and university curricula” (p. 22). Likewise, Tullio (2014) argues that:

Brazil was becoming internationally known for popular music and Bossa Nova during the 1960s, and it would have been difficult for the country to emerge simultaneously as a leading force in contemporary percussion music during the subsequent decade, particularly due to the factors described throughout this dissertation, such as delays and stagnation in the teaching and performance of percussion instruments (pp. 199–200).

Vetromilla (2011), in his investigation of the First Brazilian Competition for Classical Music Composition for Piano or Guitar (*I Concurso brasileiro de composição de música erudita para piano ou violão*), adopts a similar argumentative perspective. Referring to the works submitted to the competition, he states that “there was an effective approximation to the compositional techniques of recent European classical music” (Vetromilla, 2011, p. 190). The author further characterizes the intended audience as follows:

Who constituted this target audience? Essentially, professional and amateur pianists and guitarists eager for access to a repertoire written by Brazilian classical composers, published in Brazil, and capable of escaping a stereotyped image of Brazilian classical guitar music, in which the instrument’s sonority is associated with folk or popular music practices (Vetromilla, 2011, p. 187).

This argument concerning a supposedly “stereotyped image” of music—an image from which authors aligned with such perspectives seek to distance themselves—is not restricted to a single university, a specific research context, or a particular academic aesthetic orientation. Upon closer examination, one frequently encounters similar arguments in academic discourse. Such positions may reflect a certain form of intellectual arrogance that is not necessarily attributable to individual researchers but rather emerges as a structural characteristic of the field itself.

As an illustrative example, the other dissertation devoted to the guitar implicitly reproduces a similar perspective: “It was through this dialogue with the musical language derived from urban popular culture—especially that of the *chorões*—that Villa-Lobos was able to extract materials subsequently transformed into aesthetic creation” (Pedrassoli Júnior, 2017, p. 192). An interpretation of this statement is that the “urban popular culture” that originally generated such materials is not itself considered to constitute “aesthetic creation,” a status that is instead directionally attributed to the academically recognized composer. Pedrassoli Júnior (2017) also revisits the relationship between the popular and the classical:

This synthesis between popular tradition and modernity—or, alternatively, between intuition and technique—is characteristic of Villa-Lobos's oeuvre as a whole. If the particular language of the popular guitar appears to provide the point of balance between these seemingly divergent tendencies—which never actually come into conflict in Villa-Lobos's music—the influence of this instrument clearly extends far beyond works specifically written for it, becoming a kind of allegory of the symbiosis between the popular and the classical, an idea recurrent in Brazilian culture and shared by a substantial portion of the scholarship devoted to this composer (p. 94).

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the premise that all knowledge may be valuable and that every researcher should be free to investigate the topics that inspire their intellectual curiosity, then any sufficiently grounded study can be valid. Within the field of music, however, an examination of doctoral research conducted by professors from Brazilian federal universities who earned their doctoral degrees at the University of Aveiro reveals a clear predominance of approaches centered on musical performance and a stylistic alignment with repertoires derived from European traditions. Admittedly, this constitutes a highly specific sample of twenty-seven dissertations, and the choice to pursue doctoral studies at a European institution may itself contribute to such alignment.

Among the twenty seven dissertations analyzed, only nine address some aspect of Brazilian music. These nine studies encompass a variety of themes and methodological approaches, including musical instruments and performance practices, issues of notation and musical editing, musical events, individual works, and broader cultural contexts. Six dissertations place musical instruments at the center of their investigations: two focus on percussion (Tullio, 2014; Santos, 2015), two on the guitar (Vetromilla, 2011; Pedrassoli Júnior, 2017), one on the violin (Isidoro, 2020), and one on the viola sertaneja (Pronk, 2021). The latter two move beyond questions of performance, repertoire, and specific contexts to engage, at least to some extent, with broader issues concerning Brazilian music and culture. One dissertation centers on a specific musical work and its editorial reconstruction (Pinheiro, 2024), while also establishing meaningful connections between music and Brazilian cultural contexts. Only two dissertations focus primarily on Brazilian cultural manifestations and the music associated with those contexts (Duarte, 2013; Padilha, 2014), both of which are methodologically aligned with ethnomusicological approaches.

When compared with broader literature reviews in the field of music, these findings suggest patterns that are quantitatively similar to those identified in previous studies. In a bibliographic survey published in 2015, Lia Tomás reported the following results based on the proceedings of the National Association for Research and Graduate Studies in Music (ANPPOM):

We conducted a search across the body of work in several subfields using the descriptors ‘Brazilian music,’ ‘Brazil,’ ‘Brazilian,’ ‘national,’ and ‘nationalism,’ obtaining the following results: Ethnomusicology: 196 papers – 88.2%; Popular Music: 67 papers – 91.8%; Musicology: 419 papers – 72%; Performance Practices: 188 papers – 44.33%; and Theory & Analysis: 86 papers – 32.3%. These data comprise a total of 956 papers, representing 36.0% of all production published in the ANPPOM Proceedings since the association’s foundation in 1988 (Tomás, 2015, p. 55).

Since the publication of Tomás’s study (2015), several literature reviews addressing music research have been conducted using diverse methodologies and theoretical perspectives. Nevertheless, most do not employ “Brazilian music” or related expressions as explicit descriptors. As an illustrative exercise, it is noteworthy that the nine dissertations identified among the twenty-seven analyzed in the present study correspond to approximately 33% of the sample, a figure relatively close to the 36% reported by Tomás (2015). Naturally, such a simple comparison does not permit the establishment of definitive trends regarding the treatment of Brazilian music in academic research. At most, it provides an indication that may reveal certain similarities across distinct contexts and methodologies. Yet, as an indication, it suggests that the limited presence of Brazilian music observed in the present sample may reflect broader tendencies within the field.

Pereira’s (2020) discussion of curricular issues in higher music education may be interpreted as reinforcing this argument:

Higher education curricula in Music have often functioned as instruments of colonization of musical *aesthesis*, defining European aesthetic standards as the foundation of a system for evaluating musical value and, consequently, for curricular selection in music. First and foremost, however, it is necessary to recognize the existence of a crisis and to perceive within that crisis an opportunity for transformation, for structural reforms capable of addressing the very essence that organizes curricular structures in higher music education. The proposal of a transmodern project, a decolonial turn, a deconservatory turn, presents itself as a possibility for transformation (Pereira, 2020, p. 19).

The still limited space occupied by Brazilian music and culture within the academic literature of the field contrasts sharply with the prominence of approaches aligned with musical traditions frequently described as “canonical,” “classical,” or representative of “high culture,” whatever meanings these labels may ultimately carry. This discrepancy appears not only in scholarly production but also in pedagogical practices, curricular structures, and educational approaches within Brazilian university music programs. In many respects, it reflects a colonial legacy that remains both present and predominant.

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