

The Music of Northeast Brazil

Forró

Forró is the most popular genre of music and dance in Brazil's Northeast. "Going to the Forro" meant going to a party. The music is made with three instruments: accordion, zabumba or drum, and a metal triangle. There are three rhythms of forró: xote (a slower-paced rhythm), baião (the original forró) and arrasta-pé (the fastest of the three). Traditionally, lyrics were about drought, migration to look for work, and homesickness (Saudades). Today, lyrics are often about love, romance, and urban life. There are also many styles of dancing with Forro which varies from region to region.



Baião

The baião originated with Amerindian peoples but now is a Northeast rhythmic formula that became the basis of a wide range of music. The main baião instruments are the zabumba, double-headed bass drum played with a mallet in one hand and stick in the other, each striking the opposite head of the drum. Indigenous elements are flutes and wooden shakers; African-influenced baiões are accompanied with atabaque drums and include overlapping call and response singing; and European influences include dance music such as the polka, mazurka, and quadrille.

Samba

Samba has become the best known Brazilian music worldwide especially because of the country's carnival. This rhythm was originally derived from lundu, a song form and circle dance by the Bantu. The samba was brought to Rio de Janeiro by Bahian matriarchs in 1917, and early samba rhythms emerged. The power of African drum polyrhythms from the heavy bands named baterias add to the Carnival parade, making percussion a main component of the music.

There are many different types of sambas; song Samba (Samba Cancao) is primarily about melody and can be performed by one guitarist or many singers. Bloc Afro is a community group founded in 1974 in Bahia, that blended samba and reggae. The tempo was slower than was used in Rio and their lyrics always have political and social content.



Capoeira music

The music of capoeira is an integral part of the martial art dance form. The main instruments include the berimbau, a one-string bow; the atabaque, a drum, and a tambourine or pandeiro. The berimbau controls the pacing of the pair of dance-fighters who move gracefully in attack and defense moves. A chorus sings a call and response type of folk music. Capoeira songs often include accounts of the history of capoeira, may be songs written by older teachers or they may be composed on the spot.