**São Paulo Underground: Creativity, Collaboration, and Cultural Production
in a Multi-Stylistic Experimental Music Scene**

by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the interrelated dynamics of creativity, cultural politics, and cultural production in the context of an independent experimental music scene in São Paulo, Brazil. The participants in this scene hail from a variety of institutional backgrounds and incorporate creative practices that draw from a range of musical styles, from free improvisation to experimental hip hop to local practices such as capoeira and *forró*. Over the past decade, these musicians have created a collaborative network of artists, organizational leaders, and independent performance spaces and record labels dedicated to the production of experimentally oriented sound. Drawing from fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted over a period of five years, the dissertation proposes a framework for understanding musical experimentalism in terms of hybrid, collaborative social practice. The study argues for investigating cross-stylistic experimental musical creativity as a distinct phenomenon motivated by multiplicity, situated in opposition to established institutional supporters of experimental music, and complicated by the tensions that arise from encounters between diverse perspectives, identities, and practices. I further examine the social ramifications of this process, focusing on how participants seek to develop more egalitarian forms of discourse, performance, and community in the face of increasing stratification and authoritarianism in the contemporary Brazilian public sphere.

The dissertation's chapters follow a general narrative of cause and effect, beginning with a discussion of the role of previous cultural movements in shaping the scene's current form, continuing through the ways in which individuals negotiate and transform these ideas within the context of creative and organizational practice, and finally turning to the ways in which the resulting practices sound back into broader urban and aesthetic contexts beyond the immediate

milieu of the scene. Chapter One discusses the historical and ideological context of the São Paulo scene, focusing on the emergence of Brazilian independent experimentalism and the ways in which the DIY ethos pioneered in punk culture motivates experimental musical creativity. The second chapter addresses the ways in which the scene's rhizomatic network dynamics foster ideal conditions for cross-stylistic collaboration and the strategies musicians employ to create the conditions for effective collaborative performance in the face of obstacles such as divergent idiomatic norms and onstage expressions of machismo. In the third chapter, I address the organizational and institutional context of collaborative creativity in the scene, focusing on how musicians have established a network of independent spaces and employed alternative media in order to respond to systemic institutional marginalization and create lasting connections between artists from different backgrounds. Chapter Four addresses the urban context of the scene's creative and institutional dynamics, concentrating on the ways in which musicians employ public performance as a means of facilitating material engagements with urban space and sound. In Chapter Five, I investigate the ways in which members of the São Paulo scene engage with broader aesthetic structures, focusing on how musicians symbolically contest genre standards and song forms in order to create less hierarchical means of musical expression and develop more immediate responses to resurgent authoritarianism in the Brazilian political sphere.

Introduction

Collaboration is interesting, because you leave your comfort zone and you're played… it's like an encounter between two waves. They crash and really provoke other outcomes.[1]

– Gabriela Nobre

The sensation we have is that things expanded in one moment and now they've hardened. You'll see that what's going on in Brazilian popular music, what you see in the media is something very, very poor. If you think about all the experiments that were done, it's… it's cute, it's okay, but… but it's important that there's more wealth, right? More threads going on.[2]

– Marcela Lucatelli

August 15, 2017. There is a worn Portuguese-language copy of Patti Smith's memoir *Just Kids* (*Só Garotos*) lying on the table amongst an assortment of scattered papers with lyrics written on them. MC Rodrigo Brandão sits nearby, gazing forward with his hands on his knees and a faint smile on his lips as twenty or so visitors roam around the room drinking beer and carrying on relaxed conversations. The space is intimate and clean, with soundproof wood paneling covering the walls and a few small lamps providing a warm, subdued light. Toward the back of the room, two tables have been set up with a variety of acoustic and electronic instruments—a metal *agogô*, a carved wooden recorder, a children's xylophone, cowbells on a chain, a cymbal, a bass drum, a clarinet, a Korg sampler, and a range of synthesizers, mixers, and pedals. At the other end, slots in the wooden paneling offer a view to the bustling traffic of Avenida Consolação, where cars pass hurriedly by amidst the rain and faded lights of high rises.

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[1] Interview with Gabriela Nobre, December 6, 2018. "A colaboração é interessante, porque você sai da sua zona de conforto e você é jogado… é como um encontro de duas ondas. Aquilo bate e provoca outros resultados."

[2] Interview with Marcela Lucatelli, August 8, 2017. "...a sensação que se tem é que as coisas se expandiram num momento e agora se endureceram. Você vai ver o que que está acontecendo na música popular brasileira, o que que se veicula na mídia é uma coisa muito, muito pobre. Se você for pensar tudo os experimentos que foram feitos né, é... É bonitinho, é ok, mas... mas é importante que se tenha mais riqueza, né? Mais vertentes aí, rolando."

The hum of the traffic and precipitation provides a soft counterpart to the ambient conversation inside the venue.

The event is the finale of a three-concert artistic residency, Carta Branca (Carte Blanche), hosted by the experimental performance venue Estúdio Fita Crepe, in which Brandão, multi-instrumentalist Rodrigo Martins, and electronic musician and keyboardist Guilherme Granado perform a series of open-ended improvisations with a rotating set of invited musical guests. Tonight, their collaborator will be vocalist Tulipa Ruiz; on previous occasions, they have featured such musicians as the bassist Marcos Gerez, keyboardist Leandro Archela, and drummer Pupilo, who achieved renown for his work with pioneering Recife *manguebeat* band Nação Zumbi. After a period of time, the space's director, Ricardo Garcia, closes the windows and shuts off the main lights. Attendees sit down on bare wooden benches facing the stage as the evening's players take their places at the front of the room.

So it begins. The musicians weave a subdued, ethereal mood. Brandão murmurs deeply into the microphone, Martins gently taps the cymbal with a soft mallet, Granado plays a minimalistic loop of notes on the xylophone, and Ruiz's voice wavers between pitches in a ghostly fashion. Ruiz then cuts through the undulating texture with a bright cackle identical to the cry of a tropical bird. "São Paulo é selva" ("São Paulo is a jungle"), Brandão declares in response.[3] The mood intensifies. Martins plays a semi-pitched blast on his clarinet rich with sharp harmonics while Granado cuts a short loop on his keyboard and taps the side of his xylophone. In the background, there is a soft sheen of feedback. Ruiz's voice wanders in a high register, and Brandão's delivery assumes a more urgent tone. At times, he reads at random from the Patti Smith book and the sheets of lyrics in front of him; at other times, he speaks without any prepared material. Toward the end of the show, he moves about the space, taking time to

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[3] Brandão's use of the phrase "São Paulo é selva" is an intentional quote of the song "Artigo 157," by Racionais MC's.

stop in front of each attendee, look them in the eye, and pronounce a sharp spoken phrase. The musicians continue for almost an hour in this fashion, leaving a surreal sonic impression flecked with brief echoes of song and improvised spoken word. The performance ends, and the musicians laugh warmly amidst the applause.

Figure 1.1: Rodrigo Brandão, Rogério Martins, Tulipa Ruiz, and Guilherme Granado (left to right) perform at Estúdio Fita Crepe during the Carta Branca (Carte Blanche) concert series. Unless noted otherwise, all photos are by the author. August 15, 2017.

The Scene

Something unusual is happening in São Paulo, Brazil. Over the course of the past decade, a collaborative multi-stylistic scene of experimentally oriented musicians, record labels, and independent performance spaces has emerged. The scene's participants incorporate sounds and creative practices that draw from a range of musical styles, from free improvisation to electroacoustic composition to experimental hip hop to local practices such as capoeira and *forró*. They hail from a variety of institutional backgrounds, from the halls of the Brazilian academy to the crucible of the city's hardcore punk scene. They employ open-ended forms of improvisation as a primary creative practice and perform with a constantly changing set of musicians from diverse points of origin. Today, they operate in a matrix of independently

directed creative organizations dedicated to the production of unorthodox sound and performance free from conventional institutional restrictions.

The creative practices and cultural production strategies of this musical culture challenge established models of musical creativity, which scholars have historically portrayed as an individually directed endeavor, and canonical understandings of musical experimentalism that privilege the work of male composers from Europe and the United States. I refer to this musical culture as the "São Paulo independent experimental scene," or simply the "São Paulo scene" for short. It forms the central ethnographic object of study of this dissertation. My use of the term *scene* draws from Richard A. Peterson and Andy Bennett's designation, as a helpful means of characterizing the "contex[t] in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others" (2004:1). In São Paulo, the scene encompasses multiple dimensions, including the specific locales where musicians perform and organize events, the institutional circuits they create as a means of facilitating these events, and the social relationships that form over the course of this process.[4] Although it takes place in both virtual and local contexts, its online manifestation is markedly less central to the experience of participation than personal presence and live performance. My focus on in-person interaction follows Christopher Driver and Andy Bennett's emphasis on the centrality of embodiment in shaping and experiencing music scenes; as they argue, "bodies are not just the *ends* of doing music scenes—they are also the *means* by which scenes must be continuously re-produced" (2015:100; italics in original). Such is the reality of musical participation in São Paulo, where embodied presence acts as the central locus by which practitioners negotiate their experiences as musicians, producers, and listeners.

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[4] My examination of both the site-specific and network-based dimensions of the São Paulo scene draws from Holly Kruse, who employs the term "scene" as a means of characterizing "both the geographical sites of local music practice and the economic and social networks in which participants are involved" (2010:625).

The social and institutional boundaries of this innovative musical culture are porous and shifting, and encompass a range of interrelated creative lineages. The level of participation varies widely, ranging from occasional performances to regular, active collaboration. Its members' frequent connections to local DIY subcultures and their orientation toward self-directed cultural production lend the scene an unmistakably punk essence; at the same time, their performances possess a dramatically different sonic profile than the song-based music played by national and international punk figures. Meanwhile, participants' periodic embrace of creative techniques drawn from free improvisation and electroacoustic composition belies certain shared roots in university music programs. At times, the idiosyncratic amalgamation of stylistic idioms encountered onstage are reminiscent of the exploratory ventures of renowned vanguard Brazilian popular musicians such as Caetano Veloso, Tom Zé, and contemporary "New MPB" groups such as Cérebro Eletrônico and Metá Metá. More commonly, participants subvert or do away with the trappings of melody and harmony entirely, choosing instead to explore a rich, rough timbral spectrum rife with feedback, distortion, and harsh noise. On one night, a musician might perform songs that would be at home in any cosmopolitan MPB aficionado's collection, while later that same week she might participate in a collective free improvisation. Festivals regularly feature electroacoustic sound installations on the same billing as electronic music ensembles and hardware hacking and circuit bending workshops. The sounds and performance practices of its participants resist the neat categorization of genre, while the organizational strategies employed by its institutional leaders defy easy classification as well. What unites them is a shared, sustained dedication to live performance in a collaborative environment designed to minimize restrictions on creative expression.

The scene's patchwork makeup creates both possibilities and pitfalls. Because of the diversity of stylistic backgrounds featured in any given concert and the lack of any overarching

aesthetic mandate related to genre, musicians generally feel free to incorporate a wide variety of creative techniques. This acts as a major incentive for participation and catalyzes the development of a variety of new sounds and performance practices. At the same time, these same qualities that confound conventional understandings of style and provide a measure of creative freedom also restrict the scene's potential listening public and sources of institutional support. Unlike other independent musical cultures defined by known genres, such as jazz or "indie" rock, the São Paulo scene does not benefit from an existing market with pre-existing understandings of style. Furthermore, its members' frequent embrace of harsh sounds and musical elements that challenge dominant standards of melody and harmony often alienate potential fans used to the formal elements of mainstream popular music genres. As a result, despite recent strides in growing the scene and expanding its engagement, its potential listening public remains limited.

The scene's multiplicity generates tensions that both motivate and complicate its organizational and creative dynamics. Benjamin Piekut's observation that "if experimentalism is a grouping, then conflicts are the traces of its formation," holds true as a central fact (Piekut 2011:11). One context in which this manifests is in the strategies that individuals from different backgrounds employ to negotiate effective performances—a process that forms a central object of study in Chapter Two. Another common tension arises from the difficulty of navigating the stratified and often stress-inducing demands of the city's urban and institutional environments. One of the most acute points of contestation is the enduring divide between the scene's independent musicians and organizations, on one hand, and the Brazilian university system, on the other. The academy, both as a concrete institution and as an embodiment of entrenched conservatism, came up as a frequent object of derision among musicians from independent backgrounds, who often considered it a regressive organization that systematically denied access

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and legitimization to those from popular practices. At the same time, many musicians from academic backgrounds have acted as major creative drivers of the scene and key leaders of independent performance organizations in their own right, without whom the city's network of experimental musicians would be considerably poorer.

All of these tensions are further affected by broader processes of exclusion related to race, gender, and class. Despite recent strides in creating space for women musicians, sexism in various forms is common, both on the level of onstage performance, where expressions of machismo can stifle equitable conversations, as well as the context of organizational practice, in which certain venues lend disproportionate space to artists who are men. Similarly limiting is a marked underrepresentation of Afro-descendant artists in comparison to other genre cultures in the Brazilian popular and independent music spheres—a phenomenon that musicians avoided addressing in conversation but nevertheless shapes the contours of the scene on a basic level. As I discuss in Chapters Two and Five, members of the scene exhibit acute consciousness of the politics of cultural representation and appropriation, and often incorporate—or avoid incorporating—references to Afro-diasporic cultural heritage depending on their own identities and personal experiences. Finally, socioeconomic class position and access to financial resources affects multiple facets of participation, from musicians' capacity to buy equipment and attend shows to their ability to maintain performance spaces to their decision to stay in the city of São Paulo in the first place. Over the past five years, multiple members of the scene have had to suspend or cease participation entirely due to factors such as job losses, the country's economic recession, and the excessive personal stress caused by having to make ends meet.

The collaborative network that motivates and informs the creative practices of São Paulo-based independent experimental musicians is at once hyperlocal yet also globally situated and informed. On one hand, participants situate onstage performance as the central locus of creative

practice and social and aesthetic meaning. On the other hand, members of the scene remain in constant conversation with national and international figures, ideas, and institutions. A significant minority of regular participants moved to São Paulo from other regions of Brazil or international locales such as Uruguay, Switzerland, and the United States; furthermore, hundreds of visitors from abroad, including experimental luminaries such as Phil Minton (UK) and Otomo Yoshihidi (Japan), have visited the scene's spaces and collaborated with local artists. Members of the scene also draw from globally circulating ideas about creativity, cultural production, and politics, from the performance approaches of free improvisation figures such as Derek Bailey to the DIY ethos to collectivist political ideas inspired by socialist movements. Finally, the organizations of the São Paulo scene are connected to institutions in other regions of Brazil that produce or lend space to experimental musics, including venues such as Aparelho and Fosso (Rio de Janeiro), groups such as Rumor (Recife), and netlabels such as Seminal Records and Propósito Records.

Participants possess differing opinions about the best way to conceptualize the scene's development and contemporary manifestation. Publicity materials, informal conversations, and self-referential terms reveal a variety of characterizations. Most common among these is the "experimental" moniker. While many express deep ambivalence about the label—which even its adherents typically employ as an umbrella term rather than a stylistic designation—the term serves as a useful means of uniting musicians from different stylistic backgrounds. Others reject the term "experimental music" outright, preferring instead to employ terms such as "intuitive music," "investigative music," "creative music," or simply "music." Everyone seemed to agree, however, that they were experiencing a singular moment, and that despite its shared creative and conceptual roots with other movements, its present-day form was distinct in its own right.

In this study, I investigate what the dynamics of a diverse and highly networked musical culture such as the São Paulo scene demonstrate about the nature and possibilities of collaborative musical creativity in cross-stylistic contexts. In contrast to scholarship that examines the work of individual innovators, bounded groups, or established genre cultures, I argue for understanding interpersonal encounters between and beyond established social and stylistic boundaries as a primary motivational factor in experimental musical creativity. I investigate this process as a distinct phenomenon, with considerable transformative possibilities but also challenges arising from the multiplicity of practices circulating within the scene. The dissertation further addresses the social and political ramifications of this phenomenon, focusing on the ways in which practitioners seek to develop more inclusive and egalitarian forms of discourse, performance, and community in the face of increasing stratification and authoritarianism in the contemporary Brazilian public sphere. In so doing, the project seeks to problematize dominant scholarly trends in studies of musical experimentalism and use the São Paulo scene as a means of making the case for examining more collaborative, multi-stylistic, independent experimental musical cultures beyond the canon. I ultimately propose an understanding of experimental music as hybrid, collaborative social practice, in which individual cultural actors pursue the transgression of creative standards and the transformation of existing modes of cultural production in an ongoing, dialogic relationship with their contemporaries and the broader institutional and ideological discourses that inform cultural production in contemporary urban Brazil.

Creativity and Collaboration

Musical creativity is an enigma. The concept is at once familiar and unfathomable—a notion that deeply informs the way we make and experience music yet is difficult to define in

precise terms. At its most basic, musical creativity leads to the generation of new sounds or novel

performances of existing material. Such is the implicit understanding of the term adopted by

musicological scholarship, which rarely delineates the nature of creativity outright but

consistently situates it in opposition to stasis or orthodoxy.[5] Yet this seemingly straightforward

understanding of creativity belies a series of difficult to resolve questions that complicate any

detailed investigation of the issue. What counts as creative? As Bruno Nettl observes, "what may

be heard as new composition in one culture might be regarded as simple variation of something

already extant in another. Judging the degree of innovation is a tricky business" (2015:50). Can

one musical action be "more creative" than another? If so, who gets to evaluate this quality?

Should we attempt to employ objective metrics to measure creativity or should we be content

with a more indeterminate view?

For the purposes of this dissertation, I adopt a necessarily imperfect working definition of

musical creativity as the state or quality that leads to the creation of something new or distinct

from established practice. Although this definition is imprecise, its amorphous qualities also

allow for a more inclusive understanding of creativity that incorporates diverse perspectives and

practices rather than imposing strict limits on what counts as creative. My focus on creative

processes follows the lead of Keith Sawyer, who emphasizes the importance of examining

improvisational and group creativity in terms of ongoing processes rather than finished

products.[6] This approach also reflects the general orientation found in the São Paulo scene,

whose members more often focus on the process of intersubjective onstage conversation rather

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[5] Joseph Lam, in a characteristic example of this perspective, addresses the "tensions between orthodoxy and creativity" and the ways in which individuals in Ming-era China negotiated this dynamic (1998:14). See also Burnard 2012:9; Nettl 2015:49; Sarath 2018:6-7.

[6] As Sawyer argues, "The purpose of a jazz improvisation is not to generate a created product that will then be displayed or sold in another context; there is no goal external to the improvisation. Instead, the performance is its own goal. In improvisational creativity, the process is the product, and the researcher is forced to focus on the creative processes of group creativity" (2003:22-23). Sawyer contrasts this perspective with examinations of "product creativity, creative domains in which products are created over time, with unlimited opportunities for revision by the creator before the product is displayed" (2003:23).

than the specific sounds that might emerge over the course of a concert, although those are by no means incidental.

Because the topic of musical creativity represents an impossibly expansive issue for any individual study to examine, I focus on *experimental* forms of musical creativity that foreground the exploration of new areas of sound and performance in overt and often radical ways. While all musicians engage in processes of transformation or variation to some degree, few do so while rejecting outright the authority of established musical standards and embracing the wholesale reinvention of conventional performance practice. Whether one characterizes it as experimentation, innovation, invention, exploration, or simply "new music," the process of pushing or transgressing the established practical boundaries of musical performance represents a distinct type of creative act, and deserves to be examined accordingly.

Historically, scholarship has portrayed experimental musical creativity as an individual rather than collectively directed process. This is the tacit perspective adopted in the vast majority of historical musicological literature, which predominantly examines the creative contributions of individual composers. Even studies of experimentally oriented creativity in group-based popular music styles tend to limit their analyses to bounded groups (e.g. Everett 1999:67, 93; Martin 2002) rather than the type of shifting matrix of interpersonal performances found in a musical culture such as the São Paulo scene. Individualistic understandings of innovative creativity are related to the notion of the "creator as genius," which has long influenced thinking about inspiration and innovation in scholarship on creativity in a variety of fields.[7] Those scholars who examine the dynamics of collaborative encounters within art musics typically reify

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[7] Philip McIntyre relates the idea of the "creator as genius" to notions of divine inspiration that date back to the Classical Era (2012:12). As he notes, Plato's "inspirationist view, that a creator must be undisciplined and almost mad while waiting to be divinely inspired, is still with us today. From this inspirationist perspective, it must be the extraordinary being with extraordinary gifts who is more likely to have access to the muse and thus to creativity. It is from this narrative that the genius model arises" (2012:13). This understanding of creativity is inherently oriented toward individual thought and action. See also Burnard 2012:2, 37.

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a structure that separates the creative roles of the composer and the performer in an implicit hierarchy. Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman (2017), for instance, forward a model for understanding collaborative encounters between composers, performers, and improvising musicians as manifestations of *distributed* creativity (see also Barrett 2014; Davidson 2014). While Clarke and Doffman's focus on collaboration shares certain core characteristics with this study, it differs in fundamental ways in its emphasis on *distribution* between the roles of composer, performer, and improviser, which they frame as essentially differentiated.

Although ethnomusicologists are ever conscious of the problematic focus on the authorial intent of the composer, the existing literature, too, offers little hint of the possibility or import of collaborative forms of experimental creativity, particularly those that involve collaborations beyond the social circles of bounded groups or genre cultures. Ethnomusicology's predominant association of innovative creativity with individual action dates to seminal figures such as Alan Merriam (1964) and anthropologists such as H. G. Barnett (1953), who characterized the process of innovation as an individual phenomenon. As they argued, the role of the collective or community was important, yet largely limited to determining whether individually introduced innovations were accepted or rejected.[8] Contemporary ethnomusicologists seem to have tacitly accepted this premise; Timothy Rice, for instance, emphasizes the importance of giving credit to the efforts of lay practitioners in reinventing established performance practices, but still associates innovation with individual musicians.[9] Studying the transformation of musical

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[8] Alan Merriam, for instance, argued that "[a]n innovation remains an individual habit, however, until a second process occurs, that of social acceptance, in which the innovation spreads from the originator to other persons until it may become universally practiced by all members of the society. But every socially accepted innovation must also undergo the process of selective elimination in which it enters into a 'competition for survival;' here the rewards associated with it are weighed against the rewards given by alternative behavior's, [sic] ideas, or things. Finally, the socially accepted innovation which has withstood the process of selective elimination is integrated with other elements of the culture and becomes an accepted part of the functioning whole" (1964:303-04). See also Barnett 1953:39-95.

[9] Rice characterizes the types of innovators examined by ethnomusicologists in implicitly individualistic terms, as "clever folks who responded more effectively or in a more timely fashion than others to the changing economic, political, and social circumstances in which they found themselves" (2014:82). Furthermore, in his book *A Very*

traditions, for these figures, seems to be effectively synonymous with studying a limited set of key individual innovators.

Musicological scholarship's focus on the individual is echoed in the body of empirical literature on the perceptual and cognitive dynamics of musical creativity, which psychological researchers have also tended to investigate in terms of individual processes. Investigations of the neurophysiological processes involved during performance and listening have historically paid little attention to the potential effects of broader contextual factors such as group dynamics or considerations of social and institutional elements, preferring instead to hew to the principles of methodological individualism.[10] This selective focus generates a considerable gap in the understanding of collaborative creative practices; as Keith Sawyer notes, "The interactional processes of group creativity that we can observe among improvising actors is not likely to look anything like the cognitive processes going on within any single actor's head" (2003:52-53). Research on the embodied dynamics of musical performance, by contrast, including studies of flow states (Borgo 2002; Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988; Landau and Limb 2017; Sawyer 2003; 2006), embodied cognition (Cox 2016; Iyer 1998; 2002; 2004; Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991), and empathetic creativity (Biasutti and Frezza 2009; Hill, et. al. 2018; Seddon and Biasutti 2009; Wesolowski 2013), offer more promising considerations of the ways in which group dynamics affect musical creativity that move beyond focuses on isolated individual cognition. As I will discuss in Chapter Two, these studies provide

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Short Introduction to Ethnomusicology, he addresses innovation exclusively within a section on "Individual Musicians" (2014:79-88). He acknowledges that this may arise due to the fact that "[e]thnomusicologists are the products of a culture that values individual excellence and achievement, and by far the majority of their studies single out for attention outstanding musicians, whether innovators or key figures, for attention" (2014:84). Such is the case with other ethnomusicological considerations of key innovators, such as Blind Lemon Jefferson (Evans 2000) and Irish button accordion player Paddy O'Brien (Smith 2008).

[10] Sawyer 2003:33. For examples of empirical studies of musical creativity that focus on the individual, see, e.g. Bashwiner, et. al. 2016; Lock 2011. A curious exception to this trend can be found in music education studies (e.g Odena 2012; 2018), which address the social elements of musical creativity more comprehensively than the average neuroscientific study, but generally examine it in learning and educational contexts rather than performances such as those in the São Paulo scene.

a useful empirical window into the perceptual processes occurring during moments of collaborative performance that benefit from integration with ethnographic analyses that consider broader interpersonal and sociocultural factors.

Despite these issues, a concentrated group of musicologists has pushed back against the focus on individual innovators and investigated collaborative forms of creativity occurring between performing musicians. These individuals principally examine jazz (Anderson 2007:138; Berliner 1994; Doffman 2011; Kenny 2014; Givan 2016; Monson 1996; Sawyer 2003) and free improvisation (Borgo 2005:183-190; Pras, Schober, and Spiro 2017:2; Wilson and MacDonald 2015:1035), and to a lesser extent hip hop (Harrison 2014:3), Andean panpipe and flute music (Turino 1993:61-62), and the improvised "creative music" practiced by the AACM (Lewis 2002, 2008). Of these studies, Ingrid Monson (1996) and David Borgo (2005) have introduced perhaps the most comprehensive consideration of the group dynamics of musical creativity within specific practices (respectively, jazz and free improvisation), while R. Keith Sawyer (2003:40; 2006:148; 2011:60) offers a helpful model focused on improvisation, collaboration, and emergence for bridging the gap between individual cognitive processes and intragroup dynamics and understanding the ways in which collaborative encounters introduce creative possibilities that would not be possible in isolation. That many of these individuals (including Borgo, Monson, and Sawyer) are themselves practitioners of jazz and free improvisation in their own right should hardly come as a surprise; as anyone with experience participating in these practices will attest, they are collaborative to their core.

These studies provide an important basis for understanding the dynamics of group-based forms of musical creativity, yet leave certain questions unanswered in their focus on individual genre cultures, of which only free jazz and free improvisation are experimentally oriented. What possibilities exist within collaborative experimental encounters that cross genre boundaries or

evince common idiomatic standards? What factors and tensions arise within such circumstances? Even free improvisers tend to coalesce around shared principles, even if those principles tacitly reject the idea of adherence to style. Cross-stylistic encounters between musicians from different backgrounds without shared idiomatic languages or norms from which to draw represent a powerful motivational factor for experimental musical creativity, yet remain largely under-investigated and under-theorized.

Building on the works of scholars such as Borgo, Monson, and Sawyer, in this study I propose an investigation of experimental musical creativity centered not on the groundbreaking efforts of individual musicians working alone or within bounded groups, but on the realm of cross-stylistic collaboration. In the São Paulo scene, collaborative encounters between artists from different backgrounds act as a prime driver of independent experimental musicians' exploration of new areas of sound and performance. Although musicians occasionally play alone or within established groups, most regular members of the scene participate in collaborations with a wide set of individuals from disparate backgrounds, which affects their solo and group work in turn. This phenomenon acts as a central object of study for the book's second chapter, which examines the creative dynamics and sonic possibilities generated within the socio-musical space of cross-stylistic collaborative performance, as well as the third chapter, which discusses the institutional and organizational context in which these onstage dynamics are formed. By focusing on the relationship between experimentalism and collaborative creativity in a creative environment similar to, yet ultimately distinct from practices such as free improvisation, this study begins to address this understudied dynamic and shed light on the tensions and possibilities that arise during encounters between different creative practices.

Investigating the interactions between these disparate creative subjectivities offers an ideal means of understanding the distinct dynamics of sustained encounters between different

creative practices and the ways in which they transform the contours of these practices in unpredictable and often volatile ways. While scholars have long drawn attention to the ways in which experimental musicians incorporate diverse stylistic practices ranging from jazz to non-Western traditions such as Javanese gamelan (Lewis 2001:101; Miller and Lieberman 1999; Piekut 2014), with few exceptions (most notably, Meintjes 1990; Rodriguez 2015; Stanyek 2004) they mostly examine instances in which individual musicians are *influenced* by other practices, and rarely investigate the creative ramifications of *in-person* collaboration across styles, particularly in the context of a highly networked musical culture in which this phenomenon occurs on a large scale. The latter process plays a central role in shaping the experimentalist impetus in the São Paulo scene, where invention arises first and foremost as a result of sustained, direct engagement between practitioners themselves.

In order to address this phenomenon, this dissertation introduces a theoretical framework for investigating the distinct dynamics of collaborative musical creativity within cross-stylistic contexts. While many of the creative techniques employed by members of the São Paulo scene intersect with and draw from existing experimental practices, the diverse and active network in which they operate generates novel creative dynamics and possibilities specific to the phenomenon of sustained cross-stylistic collaboration. As I will discuss, these types of encounters can facilitate the exploration of a range of distinctive creative pathways not afforded within collaborative relationships in which the supposed originator of new sounds occupies a different role from those who perform it onstage or arrange the institutional conditions necessary for production to happen in the first place. They can also foster the organization of more democratically oriented creative communities whose dynamics reflect and arise from the nonhierarchical creative relationships at their center, although these inclusive ideals are not always achieved in practice.

The diverse and complex scene at the heart of this study provides an ideal case study for investigating the process of cross-stylistic collaborative musical creativity. Furthermore, the model I introduce is applicable beyond the immediate context of São Paulo. Musicians are forming similar kinds of boundary-crossing relationships in a variety of locales throughout the globe. Moreover, the mediascape in which contemporary experimental musicians operate is global in scope and connectivity, thus ensuring that immediate geographic and sociopolitical factors need not entirely limit artists' ability to connect with like-minded individuals across national, political, and stylistic boundaries.[11] This project's framework represents an initial basis of discussion for examining these encounters and the various rhizomatic webs of discourse and creativity that arise in turn over time.

Independent Experimentalism

Investigating cross-stylistic collaborative experimental creativity necessarily entails a broader reconsideration of the canonical literature on musical experimentalism. Experimentalism occupies a fraught place in musicological scholarship. With only a few notable exceptions, experimental music studies concentrate on a limited canon of musicians—almost exclusively US and European composers such as Henry Cowell, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Schaeffer, and John Cage—whose legitimacy as representatives of the mantle of musical experimentalism is rarely questioned.[12] Existing experimental music literature tends to frame post-midcentury

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[11] My use of the term *mediascape* follows Arjun Appadurai; see Appadurai 1990:53-54.

[12] Piekut 2014:1. Some scholars go so far as to make the connection between experimental innovation and European and American culture explicit. Frank X. Mauceri, for instance, argues that "the category 'experimental music' is motivated by a European ideal. The category draws on the 'discourse of originality' that characterizes art theory and criticism and has roots in the European avant-garde. The uniquely American 'experimentalism' is legitimated as an artistic category according to the terms of European culture; it tries to 'up the ante' on European avant-gardism by claiming a more radical originality" (Mauceri 1997:191; see also Krauss 1985:157). This understanding of experimental music, while not always as unambiguously stated as Mauceri does, continues to be tacitly reified due to the persistence of studies and university syllabi that tacitly reify the Eurocentric canon of musical experimentalism through their choice of case studies.

experimental music as composition that followed in the wake of Cage and, to a lesser extent, electronic musicians such as Stockhausen and Schaeffer.[13] These figures deserve credit for expanding compositional practice, challenging ontological notions about the nature of music, and helping to pioneer practices in electronic music and extended instrumental techniques, among others. Yet it would be inaccurate to portray their works as representative of the contemporary reality of musical experimentalism. As Benjamin Piekut notes, 21st-century experimental musics are "global, multiethnic, and heterogeneous," and contain a "wider frame of reference than the Cagean tradition" on which scholarship has traditionally focused (2014:1; see also Piekut 2011:15). Experimental music scholarship has thus effectively constructed a fundamentally exclusionary and incomplete understanding of musical experimentalism that shuts out the contributions of individuals from popular music practices and non-Western backgrounds and portrays experimental musical capability as almost exclusively the purview of white male composers from Europe and the United States (e.g. Cage 1961; Mauceri 1997; Nicholls 1991; 2007; Nyman 1999; Priest 2013; Sun 2012). This focus is both Eurocentric and inaccurate in its effective exclusion of popular forms such as jazz and rock, both of which have enjoyed rich experimental traditions (Lewis 2008; Martin 2002). Musical cultures such as the São Paulo scene

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[13] The legacy of John Cage in particular looms large in contemporary understandings of musical experimentalism, to the point that there is an entire subgenre of experimental composition often referred to simply as "post-Cagean" (Dietz 2011; Kotz 2001; Tinkle 2015). Some scholars are explicit in this endeavor: Michael Nyman's canonic book *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (1999), for instance, unequivocally situates musical experimentalism as the compositions of John Cage and his direct successors. Others embrace a more expansive understanding of experimentalism and define it as composition whose primary focus is the pursuit of innovation and reinvention (e.g. Landy 1991:7; Sun 2012:n.p). Regardless of the definition they employ, scholars tend to tacitly agree that the study of experimental music is primarily the study of European and American composers. Cecilia Sun's entry on experimental music in the *Grove Dictionary of American Music* provides a characteristic example: she almost entirely discusses composers from Europe and the United States and relegates the work of innovative popular musicians such as the Velvet Underground and Sonic Youth to a single sentence, in which she acknowledges their use of "experimental techniques" (Sun 2012: n.p). Citing George Lewis's inclusion of Charlie Parker in the midcentury experimental canon, Sun does acknowledge that dominant definitions of experimental music have mostly discussed "a predominantly white set of composers and practices," but devotes no space in her article to addressing this issue (2012:n.p.).

are living testaments to the diverse, global reality of contemporary musical experimentalism, with a variety of interrelated traditions, styles, and practices.

Those looking for a progressive ethnomusicological response will find little of consolation in ethnographic examinations of experimental music cultures, which are few and far between. Ethnomusicological scholarship has long avoided discussions of the kind of radical musical innovation that informs musical experimentalism; instead, scholars typically address instances of incremental innovation, in which individual figures within a musical tradition introduce new elements to existing practices and styles but maintain some fundamental sense of continuity.[14] Bruno Nettl attributes ethnomusicology's comparative lack of focus on experimentalism to the field's historical aversion to the valorization of the novel and the paradigm-breaking, which has long remained mostly the purview of historical musicology (2015:54). Nettl further asserts that "most other cultures appear to place less value on innovation than does the West," and notes the prevalence of restrictions on musical innovation in many of these societies (2015:54-55). Nettl's dismissal of the valuation of musical innovation in global musical cultures may well characterize the preservationist outlook found in certain traditional musics, but does not accurately describe the creative orientations of more experimental musical cultures such as free jazz, free improvisation, and the scene investigated in this study. Furthermore, his position may effectively uphold a troublesome binary in which experimentation—and all the positive connotations of modernity and innovation afforded therein—remains solely the purview of European and American composers, while the experimental creative approaches of popular and independent music practices remain

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[14] This view dates back to the early years of the field: Alan Merriam, for instance, synonymized innovation with "internal change" within stable and continuous musical traditions, and devotes little attention to the type of innovation that causes rupture or rifts (1964:303; see also Barnett 1953). More recent ethnographic studies of incremental innovation address a variety of forms, ranging from the development of new instrumental techniques (Risk 2013; Smith 2008) to the use of novel recording technology (Evans 2000) to the fusion of popular and traditional stylistic idioms (Neuenfeldt and Costigan 2004; O'Hagin and Harnish 2006).

marginalized. If ethnomusicology is to play a responsible role in the scholarly investigation of creativity and culture, it cannot afford to ignore experimentalist practices.

Despite the persistence of these issues, a small but growing set of scholars has begun to investigate experimentally oriented musical cultures outside the European and American compositional canon. These figures investigate a limited range of phenomena, most notably free improvisation (Borgo 2002; 2005; Corbett 2016; Costa 2016), free jazz (Anderson 2007, Lehman 2005), Indonesian *musik kontemporer* (McGraw 2009; 2013), avant-garde composition in Latin America (Alonso-Minutti, Herrera, and Madrid 2018; Levitz 2014; Quevedo 2016), avant-garde and underground rock (Graham 2016; Martin 2002), noise music in Japan (Novak 2013) and the hybrid profile of the midcentury New York avant-garde (Piekut 2011). In the Brazilian context, discussion of musical experimentalism is generally limited to jazz musician Hermeto Pascoal (Neto 2011, 2015) and considerations of the ways in which experimental compositional practices influenced elements of orchestration, hybridity and lyricism in popular music movements such as Tropicália and its successors (Dunn 2001:172, 194; 2013:247-50; 2016; Moehn 2012:20; Sharp 2018; Stroud 2010). Finally, George Lewis, in perhaps the most influential example, uses a longitudinal study of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) as a means of challenging experimental music scholarship's history of "eras[ing] African American artists and cultural tropes" and demonstrating the ways in which "experimentalism in music can have many different histories" (2008:xiii). Lewis situates the crisis facing musical experimentalism in political terms, arguing,

> Historians of experimentalism in music have stood at a crossroads, facing a stark choice: to grow up and recognize a multicultural, multiethnic base for experimentalism in music, with a variety of perspectives, histories, traditions, and methods, or to remain the chroniclers of an ethnically bound and ultimately limited tradition that appropriates freely, yet furtively, from other ethnic traditions, yet cannot recognize any histories as its own other than those based in whiteness (Lewis 2008:xiv).

This study takes Lewis's observation as an ethical imperative to challenge and transform the limited picture of innovative musical creativity presented by canonical experimental music scholarship and take popular and independent music practices seriously as sites for invention.

Taken together, the individuals, practices, organizations, and sounds circulating in the São Paulo scene represent a distinctly *independent* form of experimentalism, motivated by multiplicity, situated in opposition to dominant cultural institutions, and complicated by points of contestation that arise from the scene's diversity of perspectives and practices. I employ the term *experimental* as an inclusive label, as a means of encompassing the multiple experimentally oriented musics circulating in both the São Paulo scene and the broader global sphere, with the understanding that experimentalism is an inherently multifaceted endeavor. In São Paulo, experimentalism manifests as an intrinsically flexible and pluralistic pursuit—as one of many possible *experimentalisms*, to incorporate terminology introduced by Ana R. Alonso-Minutti, Eduardo Herrera, and Alejandro Madrid, who employ the term to denote "a series of continuous presences that navigate fluidly in a transhistorical imaginary encounter of pasts and presents."[15] In contrast to universalizing histories that endorse a bounded set of artists or practices, this understanding of the experimental situates musical experimentalism as a general type of transformational process that can manifest in any place or time given the right set of circumstances.

I characterize the scene as *independent* because its performance spaces and media institutions are autonomously directed and reject the authority and influence of the mainstream

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[15] Alonso-Minutti, Herrera, and Madrid 2018:2. The authors' use of the plural term *experimentalisms* stands in contrast to the stance adopted by Benjamin Piekut, who argues that "experimentalism is *exactly* what scholars have said it was during the twentieth century, but not for the reasons they gave. That is, the 'tradition' wasn't something that magically coalesced around shared qualities of indeterminacy and rugged individualism. It was a network, arranged and fabricated through the hard work of composers, critics, scholars, performers, audiences, students, and a host of other elements including texts, scores, articles, curricula, patronage systems, and discourses of race, gender, class, and nation" (Piekut 2011:18-19).

cultural industry. "Independent" additionally serves as an important means of emphasizing the ways in which members of the São Paulo scene make efforts to operate separately and think differently from established institutional supporters of experimental music, particularly the academy. My choice of nomenclature reflects the perspectives of several musicians in the scene, who took pains to differentiate the "independent experimental music" taking place in their creative circles from "academic experimental music" occurring in the Brazilian university system. This study represents an ethnographic investigation of one such *independent experimentalism*, and the ways in which its distinct dynamics shed new light on the way we might think about collaborative musical creativity in experimental contexts.

One might justifiably argue that experimentalism has always been an inherently independent endeavor. The actions of heralded "maverick" experimental composers such as Cage and Cowell are nothing if not independent, in the sense that they often operated in opposition to the demands of dominant musical institutions (see Piekut 2011:61), sought to break free of dominant creative and conceptual paradigms for musical composition, and generated new ways of thinking about the nature of musical sound. I do not seek to challenge the significance of these individuals, but I do suggest that the creative and organizational model employed by canonic experimental composers contains certain core differences in comparison to independent forms of experimentalism such as that represented by the São Paulo scene.

Independent experimentalism as it manifests in São Paulo is distinguished by several core characteristics. It operates predominantly outside—and occasionally in opposition to—the conventional networks and institutions that sustain experimental composition, particularly public cultural institutions and the Brazilian academy. In response to these forces, participants form their own circuits of cultural production as a means of establishing alternative social and institutional spaces for performance and ensuring that those spaces are open to different forms of

music-making. Independent experimental musicians also draw from different ideological impetuses in comparison to those that have inspired canonic experimental composers. Finally, its participants hail from diverse points of origin, most of which fall outside the realm of composition, and employ a variety of creative practices from independent and popular styles. As a result, the sounds that emerge on the independent experimental stage in São Paulo are often markedly different than those one might find chronicled in the pages of most academic books about experimental music (e.g. Nicholls 2007; Priest 2013; Saunders 2009).

Independent experimentalism is a lasting and global phenomenon, and has manifested in a variety of forms and artistic realms over the course of the last century. A non-comprehensive list of such experimentalisms might include Fluxus, Movimiento Música Más, industrial rock pioneers such as Throbbing Gristle, the AACM, noise circuits in Japan, and the innovators of Jamaican dub. If one were to expand this beyond the sphere of music one might encompass movements such as Dada, Brazilian concrete poetry, and contemporary glitch artists, among many others. This study represents an effort to engage with the legacies of these artistic cultures and draw attention to shared points of connection that run throughout independent experimental cultures on a global scale.

The diverse and collaborative manifestation of independent experimentalism found in the São Paulo scene constitutes the basis for the dissertation's title, *São Paulo Underground*. This title shares nomenclature with the US-Brazilian jazz-and-electronic music trio "São Paulo Underground," formed by Chicago-based jazz musician Rob Mazurek and two members of the São Paulo scene, Guilherme Granado and Mauricio Takara, whose blessing to use the term I gratefully acknowledge. In addition to characterizing musicians' engagement with alternative means of production, "underground" serves as an ideal means of designating their creative pursuit of the different, strange, and grotesque—the mutant sounds that circulate on the margins

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of both the popular music industry and the canonic experimental music sphere.[16] Despite its

periodic use by media institutions as a marketing buzzword, multiple participants in the São

Paulo scene embraced the "underground" moniker, as a useful way to characterize the

independently directed sociocultural milieu surrounding performance without resorting to genre

classifications. I employ the term for similar reasons, as a helpful means of characterizing the

intersection of creative and organizational practice, where individuals' institutional strategies and

performance practices circulate in shared dialogue, moving toward their own orbit of cultural

production at a fitful yet determined pace.

Experimental Music as Social Practice

As artists who foreground the transgression of creative standards and the organization of

autonomous forms of cultural production, independent experimental musicians embrace the

reinvention rather than the reproduction of dominant aesthetic and institutional norms, in overt

and often radical ways. In a hierarchical and stratified cultural sphere, how much room for

transformation do these initiatives possess? For scholars of a structuralist bent, such endeavors

are ultimately limited in their reach by structural hegemony. Marxist and neo-Marxist scholars

such as Antonio Gramsci and Fredric Jameson, for instance, argue for the fundamentally

deterministic effects of dominant modes of production and emphasize a view of cultural and

social structures as homologous.[17] In this view, no meaningful sea change in cultural production

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[16] Scholarship on "underground" music scenes tends to employ the term to similar ends, although it almost exclusively examines individual genre cultures, particularly those that fall under the umbrella of rock (Barbara-Soares and de Castro 2014; Emms and Crossley 2018; Graham 2016; Martin-Iverson 2012; Skeltchy 2017) and to a lesser extent rap (Kerr 2018; Oware 2014), rather than multi-stylistic creative communities that count participants from different backgrounds.

[17] Peterson and Anand 2004:311-12. This view was especially common among Marxist scholars such as Gramsci, who asserted that hegemonic capitalist forces and figures manipulated culture in such a way as to prolong class dominance, as well as functionalist theorists, who argued for the existence of an inflexible and wide-ranging set of cultural values that controlled the structural makeup of society (Peterson and Anand 2004:312; see also Gramsci 2000; Jameson 1991; Landy 1986:50).

is possible without fundamentally transforming the nature of the underlying institutional and economic system. This view informs the perspectives of ethnomusicologists such as Veit Erlmann (1999:15-16), who argues for the totalizing colonial logic of dominant economic forces in shaping the international music sphere over the course of the twentieth century, and Peter Manuel (1993:14), who emphasizes the ways in which media forms determine musical and cultural expression (see also Jameson 1991:411; Stokes 2004:48-49). For these individuals, cultural production is shaped in an essentially unidirectional relationship by those who control the means of production.

Is it really that hopeless? Must cultural producers who pursue unorthodox creative endeavors and seek to contest conventional modes of production rely on wholesale socioeconomic transformation in order to realize their goals? The case of the São Paulo scene suggests the presence of a more complicated reality. On one hand, the systematic difficulties experienced by independent musicians and organizations in the stratified field of production in São Paulo testify to the presence of a profound deterministic effect imposed by dominant institutional and socioeconomic forces that constrain the realization of experimental performance on a fundamental level. At the same time, despite the persistence of serious structural obstacles, independent experimental musicians have managed to grow and sustain a circuit of like-minded practitioners dedicated to the production of unorthodox sound despite calamitous sociopolitical developments and minimal backing from conventional support networks for experimental art. These individuals create limited, yet meaningful room for transgression and transformation while still confronting dominant—yet decidedly not hegemonic—socioeconomic, ideological, and institutional forces. The dynamics of this musical culture ultimately point to an understanding of creativity and cultural production that is neither utopian (with endless possibilities) nor

hopelessly marginalized by structural power—one that is most effectively realized in the realm of practice, a concept that I will consider below.

As a means of addressing the ways in which individual cultural producers in the São Paulo scene negotiate dominant institutional and ideological forces in the contemporary Brazilian public sphere, I draw from the framework of practice theory. Theories of practice, first articulated by scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990; 1993; 1996) and Anthony Giddens (1979; 1984), examine the relationship between individual human action and existing societal structures through a focus on how individual actors sustain, reinvent, and challenge existing modes of power via specific activities, or practices.[18] Practice theory opens avenues for investigating how agents (musicians) negotiate structuring forces (media institutions, socioeconomic and political realities, expectations about genre and creative practice, etc.) and their own creative agency as it manifests in individual action. In adopting practice theory as a central framework, I follow the lead of music scholars such as Ingrid Monson, who argues that it allows scholars to move beyond deterministic conceptualizations of the power of structure and account for individuals' abilities to transcend social categories and forces and perform transformative acts through the "creative deployment" of practices (2007:26-27; 2009:24). For the ethnomusicologist, practice "is a flexible idea that helps describe individual relationships to social forces and ideas beyond any one person's control" (Monson 2007:27).

To analyze this dynamic, I incorporate Anthony Giddens's notion of the *duality of structure*: the idea that structure is "both medium and outcome of the reproduction of

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[18] The field initially arose out of a drive by sociologists such as Bourdieu and Giddens to reconcile objectivist and subjectivist understandings of human knowledge and ways of acting in the world. Objectivist scholarship, which was influenced by Marxist and Freudian conceptions of underlying economic and cognitive mechanisms that regulate human action, advocated for the existence of objective, fundamental structures that governed human behavior. Subjectivism, conversely, emphasized individual consciousness and phenomenological modes of knowledge and experience independent of the effects of existing systems and structures. Giddens and Bourdieu situated their work as a response to these two branches of scholarship, the division between which Bourdieu characterized as "the most fundamental, and the most ruinous" division in the social sciences (1990 [1980]:25).

practices."[19] In this understanding, although established structures influence actors on a fundamental level, these same actors also affect structures in turn. Moreover, although actors often sustain existing structures, they possess the ability to transform them as well, in both subtle and radical ways. This capacity manifests even in cases of seemingly overwhelming institutional or ideological power. As Giddens argues, relationships of power are "always *two-way*, even if the power of one actor or party in a social relation is minimal compared to another." (1979:93) Even in the sphere of Brazilian music, where established institutional and ideological structures can often seem all-encompassing in their influence, individual actors continue to find new ways to resist and reinvent established modes of creativity and cultural production. My investigation of the dual nature of individual agency in the São Paulo scene is further informed by the perspective of ethnomusicologists such as Mark Slobin, who rejects Veit Erlmann's focus on the "expanding and totalizing reach of global capitalism" in favor of an emphasis on the chaotic and heterogeneous nature of the various forces, structures, and agents at play in the contemporary global economy (Erlmann 1999; Slobin 1992:5; Stokes 2004:49).

As a means of further conceptualizing the independent experimental scene's sociopolitical and institutional dynamics, I draw from Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the field of cultural production.[20] Bourdieu's model offers a study of power and how shifting relationships of inequality between individuals, institutions, and ideas affect artistic production on both a macro

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[19] Giddens 1979:4-5. The notion of the *duality of structure* is a fundamental part of Giddens's broader conceptualization of *structuration*, i.e. the "conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of systems" (1979:66).

[20] Bourdieu 1993; 1996. My focus on the network dynamics of the São Paulo scene shares certain core elements in common with Benjamin Piekut's examination of midcentury US experimentalism in the context of "fabrication through a network of discourses, practices, and institutions," which he argues arises due to the "combined labor of scholars, composers, critics, journalists, patrons, performers, venues, and the durative effects of discourses of race, gender, nation, and class" (2011:7). As I will discuss in Chapters Two and Three, however, the case of the São Paulo scene demonstrates the presence of a distinctly different constellation of individual and institutional actors than what Piekut describes: most significantly, a near-total lack of differentiation between performers and composers, as well as a DIY-driven field of cultural production in which musicians more often than not also act in the capacity of critics and producers in addition to performing onstage. These performer-led dynamics affect the scene on a fundamental level, and constitute a major difference between contemporary independent experimentalism in São Paulo and the spheres in which figures such as John Cage operated in 1960s-era New York City.

and micro level. As he argues, cultural production revolves around ongoing negotiations between dominant institutions and ideas about creativity, or the *field of forces*, and those who seek to resist, reproduce, or transform established institutional and ideological hierarchies, or the *field of struggles* (1993:30). He asserts that despite their differences, these two factions are united by a set of shared references and beliefs—a *space of possibles*—which defines the range of perceived possible actions on the part of an individual or institution (1993:179). This tension constitutes the field's fundamental dynamic and governs both the strategies individuals employ in order to realize their own artistic aims and the perceived meaning of artistic works themselves.[21]

This study's application of practice theory to an analysis of the independent experimental scene in São Paulo acts as part of a broader, dissertation-wide evaluation of the applicability of theories of practice to ethnomusicological contexts—and, by extension, the nature of individual agency on the part of institutionally marginalized cultural actors. While I consider theories of practice well-suited for ethnomusicological research, the field was developed by sociologists who rarely discussed musical case studies in depth. This inevitably merits a certain amount of adaptation. Furthermore, theories of practice are not monolithic. Scholars who have forwarded practice theories do not always reach the same conclusions about the specific ways individual actors operate and their relationship to existing structures.[22] Over the course of this dissertation, I use ethnographic data to offer preliminary conclusions about which elements of practice theory most effectively characterize the creative and organizational strategies of independent experimental musicians. In this sense, while my primary research objective is to investigate

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[21] Bourdieu 1993:78; 1998:40. Bourdieu's model thus presents the symbolic power of artistic works as fundamentally socially determined, and rejects the idea of the autonomous work of art (1993:140). It shares certain core characteristics with other models that emphasize the importance of taking into consideration the dynamics between artists and individuals such as publishers and critics, most notably Howard Becker's theory of "art worlds" (1982) and Mikhail Csikszentmihalyi's "systems" model of creativity (1999; 2014), the latter of which also employs the term *field* in a similar manner to Bourdieu.

[22] As an example, one may compare Bourdieu's understanding of *practical sense* and Giddens's conceptualization of *practical consciousness* (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979).

independent experimental music practice within the urban Brazilian context of São Paulo, I also seek to build on the efforts of scholars such as Monson and offer a way forward for future scholars seeking to adapt theories of practice to ethnomusicological contexts.

Over the course of this study, I address two main ways in which independent experimental musicians' creative and organizational approaches complicate central ideas forwarded in theories of practice. Broadly speaking, I give cultural actors in the São Paulo scene a bit more credit for possessing more self-awareness and potential for reinvention than scholars such as Bourdieu would have us believe (Bourdieu 1993:2; 1996:304; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). First, I discuss the ways in which independent experimental musicians actively *transform* dominant institutions and modes of creativity. My focus on transformation rather than reproduction provides an alternate understanding of practice and agency than Bourdieu, who tended to focus on the ways in which cultural producers uphold rather than reinvent existing modes of power and cultural production. While serious structural issues continue to restrict independent experimental musicians' agency, practitioners possess considerable means for transformation and have found success in fostering the development of institutional spaces and creative practices that do not conform to established trends. By elaborating the complex ways in which independent cultural actors actively reinvent institutional norms and existing creative practices, I build upon a growing initiative in musicology and cultural studies that seeks to re-evaluate Bourdieu's disproportionate focus on reproduction (Born 2010:179; Calhoun et. al. 1993:66, 72; Jenkins 1992:7; Hesmondhalgh 2006:223). As Georgina Born notes, Bourdieu's framework "privileges the iterative over the transformative," thus constituting a "yawning gap in his theory of cultural production, for any analysis of creative practice that does not address the variable forms of invention and the diachronic vagaries of artistic systems and aesthetic formations fails to capture the defining historical processes that constitute this specialized

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domain" (2010:181). My study seeks to address this issue through an investigation of those very strategies that represent means of radical reinvention, in both the creative and the institutional realms.

This project will additionally demonstrate the ways in which independent experimental musicians operate in the creative and cultural realms on a largely—though not entirely— conscious and aware level. If Bourdieu did not leave enough room for invention and transformation in his theory of practice and cultural production, he also neglected to fully account for the conscious elements of this process. This forms the central premise of his notion of *habitus*—essentially, a series of enduring inclinations, rationalizations, and patterns of behavior inculcated by the dominant culture, adopted by individuals, and re-enacted on the body without the active awareness of the individual (1977:72). Thus individuals reproduce the values and structural relationships of the dominant culture without knowledge of having done so.[23] In this study, I acknowledge the role of unconscious thought and action, particularly as concerns certain elements of creative practice. This phenomenon forms the basis for a core premise of my elaboration of independent experimental musicians' embodied approach to improvisation in Chapter Two. Yet I will also demonstrate the myriad ways in which independent experimental musicians act with astute awareness of their situation, the strategies they employ, and even the ways in which their actions may conflict with their espoused beliefs. In this sense, their behavior follows the pattern suggested by Anthony Giddens, who asserted that individual actors "know a great deal" about the way their society functions (1979:255). My findings additionally build upon the conclusions of Ingrid Monson, who observes that jazz musicians employ both

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[23] Bourdieu uses the term *genesis amnesia*, or "forgetting of history," to characterize the ways in which individuals forget the origin of their own actions and behave as if their decisions are entirely their own, without having been shaped, over time, by dominant structural forces and interests (1977:78-79).

"conscious and unconscious modes of awareness," and operate with diverse levels of agency (1996:214; 2009).

Motivating the Moment

Creative practice in the São Paulo scene does not happen in a vacuum, in the immediate context of the experimental stage. It is profoundly shaped by—and shapes in turn—the broader dynamics of cultural production in São Paulo, the country of Brazil, and the international sphere. Independent experimental musicians must negotiate a field of forces that affects musical creativity and organizational strategies on a fundamental level. Chief among these forces are the marginalizing effects of the institutions of the Brazilian cultural industry, which has long excluded cultural producers whose music and art do not conform to dominant market standards in the heterogeneous but highly stratified Brazilian cultural sphere. In Brazil, over the past several decades, ongoing processes of centralization and consolidation of the country's media and cultural institutions have produced a small, dominant group of powerful record companies that have generally disenfranchised independent and experimental musicians (Cassiolato, Matos, and Lastres 2008; Fenerick 2004b). Since the 1980s, four major record labels (Warner, Som Livre, Universal, and Sony BMG) have controlled the majority of the Brazilian market and predominantly promoted artists from genres with broad commercial appeal, such as *sertaneja, axé, pagode*, and rock. Major performance spaces and events exhibit similar biases. Publicly funded cultural spaces and institutions, meanwhile, have occasionally provided opportunities to experimental musicians from certain backgrounds, but tend to exclude the majority of experimental musicians who are not involved in the academy, incorporate styles of music that publicly funded institutions generally avoid (e.g. noise), or do not possess the ability or desire to navigate the bureaucracy involved in obtaining state-funded grants. Although the Brazilian

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cultural industry's hold on independent producers is not hegemonic, their power is considerable

and they play a major role in ensuring that those whose work does not conform to the incentive

structure of this industry must expend considerable resources and form alternative networks of

production in order to create opportunities for performance.[24]

Compounding this tense institutional situation is a set of uncertain and unequal

socioeconomic conditions and a corrupt and increasingly undemocratic political system that most

citizens feel has failed the general populace.[25] Beginning in 2014, after years of economic

growth and reduction in income inequality, the country entered a deep economic recession that

led to widespread unemployment and austerity policies that resulted in extensive cuts in public

funding, including support for the arts. During this time, the country was also wracked by a

massive governmental corruption scandal initiated by the 2014 revelation that hundreds of

national politicians, including members of the ruling Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party,

or PT), had benefited from bribery stemming from the national oil company Petrobras. The

scandal, known as Operação Lava Jato (Operation Car Wash), would eventually become one of

the largest instances of corruption in world history.[26] Toward the end of my main fieldwork

period, the democratically elected leader of the PT, Dilma Rouseff, was impeached on dubious

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[24] The idea that the cultural industry shapes cultural production in a hegemonic manner was most famously forwarded by members of the Frankfurt School, who tended to emphasize its totalizing effects. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, for instance, famously emphasized its "totality" and its universalizing and manipulative effects on consumers (Adorno and Horkheimer [1944] 2006:41). Other scholars have pushed back at this view, which they consider overly simplistic and not sufficiently attentive to individual agency on the part of consumers. Tracey Bowen and Mary Lou Nemanic, for instance, criticize Adorno and Horkheimer's view for portraying audiences as "either cultural dupes or passive/mindless receptacles of normative values" and note how consumers can choose "alternative meanings and individualized uses of cultural texts," thus becoming "active producers of their own meanings and pleasures," while David Hesmondhalgh emphasizes the complex, multidimensional relationships between multinational corporations and smaller, more independent institutions (Bowen and Nemanic 2010:xiv; Hesmondhalgh 2013:2).

[25] Perceptions of corruption in Brazil are widespread and have grown since the *Lava Jato* scandal (Castro and Ansari 2017:357); while public opinion regarding Rousseff's impeachment was split largely along ideological lines, as of the time of this writing Temer's approval rating consistently hovered under 10%.

[26] *Operação Lava Jato* (Operation Car Wash) earned its name due to the fact that the initial corruption investigation focused on a series of gas stations that used a car wash as a money laundering apparatus (Castro and Ansari 2017: 354-55).

charges by a Congress in which 60% of its members were themselves under indictment or investigation and replaced with vice president Michel Temer in a process that many likened to a nonviolent coup d'état.[27] Despite being barred from office for violating election law, caught on tape discussing bribery, and charged with racketeering and obstruction of justice, with the support of fellow legislators Temer avoided prosecution and proceeded to enact draconian cuts in public funding for social programs.

These difficult circumstances only worsened in the ensuing months and years. Later in 2016, São Paulo's progressive mayor, Fernando Haddad, was defeated by right-wing candidate João Dória, who aggressively pushed municipal privatization and deregulation reforms that further reduced governmental support for cultural initiatives, ultimately claiming the jobs of multiple participants in the São Paulo scene who worked in the public sector. In 2017 and 2018, former president Lula da Silva, the presumptive candidate for the PT in the 2018 national elections and a man whom many members of the left viewed as their best hope for regaining power, was prosecuted in a series of politically motivated trials.[28]

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[27] Unlike many members of the Brazilian Congress, Rousseff herself did not face accusations of bribery or large-scale corruption. Instead, she was impeached for borrowing public funds from a state-owned bank to obscure a budget deficit. While this is technically an impeachable offense, it had been a common practice for years and had never before been considered a significant charge. Critics of the move drew attention to the fact that most politicians who voted for impeachment faced more serious charges of their own or were aligned with the conservative opposition and used the budgetary manipulation as a pretext for circumventing the fact of her legitimate election. Because of this, those opposed to the impeachment began to use the term "coup" (*golpe*) to draw attention to the undemocratic nature of the process. A variety of academic commentators have referred to Rousseff's impeachment using the term; see, for instance, Pahnke 2017; Santos and Guarnieri 2016; van Dijk 2017. International newspapers did not generally refer to the impeachment as a coup, citing the fact that the grounds on which it was conducted were technically legal, but several publications drew attention to the undemocratic nature of the process; writing in the *Washington Post,* Amy Erica Smith referred to it as a "misuse of democratic procedure," while the *New York Times*'s Celso Rocha de Barros likened it to a "cover-up" and argued that its real purpose was to "provide a convenient distraction while other politicians try to get their own houses in order."

[28] Da Silva was prosecuted for receiving an apartment as a bribe from a construction company caught up in the *Lava Jato* corruption scandal on the testimony of a former employee of the company who initially supported the former president's innocence but switched his testimony when offered a plea deal in exchange for a reduced sentence. Critics of da Silva's prosecution point to the partisan actions and statements of the judges who oversaw his case, including trial judge Sérgio Moro, as well as the fact that the entire case rests on the testimony of a single individual. As Mark Weisbrot notes, there is "no documentary evidence that either Mr. da Silva or his wife ever received title to, rented or even stayed in the apartment, nor that they tried to accept this gift" (2018:n.p.).

Lula's conviction set the stage for the precipitous rise of the reactionary authoritarian right, embodied most acutely in the rise of senator Jair Bolsonaro, a politician with presidential ambitions who celebrated the torture of dissidents, promised to privatize the country's cultural institutions, denigrated women and black citizens, and openly called for a return to a dictatorship. What at first seemed to many as a quixotic campaign quickly became reality. On October 28, 2018, Bolsonaro won the runoff election over the PT opposition candidate Fernando Haddad. At the time of this writing, since his inauguration on January 1, 2019, Bolsonaro has opened protected indigenous-owned land in the Amazon to occupation by agrobusinesses and mining corporations, revoked protections for Brazil's LGBTQ populations, and eliminated the Ministries of Labor and Culture.

These developments have hit the country hard across the board. Artists of all stripes in Brazil often derive large parts of their earnings from the country's extensive system of public cultural funding, which Bolsonaro has pledged to curtail and privatize. While these programs are not as extensive as those in countries such as Germany and France, they remain important sources of income. As cultural producers whose practices often radically challenge the standards of mainstream cultural institutions, independent experimental musicians have found themselves excluded from consistent public funding for some time, and recent cuts have made their situation even more precarious.[29] Moreover, the country's dismal economic fortunes have decreased the average citizen's already limited ability to spend extra money to support venues and programs dedicated to the arts that depend on regular, paying visitors. This both restricts the available paying public to venues and limits musicians' ability to pay the often exorbitant prices that equipment, transportation, and performance spaces demand. Finally, Bolsonaro's vow to

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[29] In addition to generally restricting artists' ability to gain financial support for their work, the country's austerity policies have also occasionally led to more calamitous consequences. Such was the case with Rio de Janeiro's Museu Nacional, which was almost completely destroyed in a fire on September 2nd, 2018. This occurred in large part due to a delayed implementation of functioning fire protection systems as a result of budget cuts.

imprison those he considers leftist enemies represents an additional level of threat to members of

the São Paulo scene, many of whom address contemporary political issues in their performances.

As I will discuss, independent communities dedicated to the production of experimental music

provide important means for musicians to address these realities in socially supportive

environments.

Independent experimental musicians additionally respond to the structuring power of

established aesthetic standards and philosophies regarding creative practice. Members of the São

Paulo scene operate in a cultural sphere with a wide set of entrenched ideals regarding the kinds

of sound, performance, and attitude musicians are expected to employ. These manifest

themselves perhaps most acutely in the form of expectations of adherence to genre. Since the

advent of Tropicália in 1967, when Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso framed the mixture of

national and international genres of music as a form of "cultural cannibalism" in the vein of

Oswald de Andrade, the Brazilian popular music sphere has embraced stylistic hybridity and the

act of borrowing sounds and performance practices from other locales for some time (Dunn

2001; Rollefson 2007). Yet individuals who subvert aesthetic standards past a certain point or

radically challenge the performance practices of established genre cultures typically encounter

resistance or indifference from venues and audiences that are used to existing stylistic

frameworks.[30] Even those who practice genres labeled as "experimental," such as electroacoustic

composition or free improvisation, and those who participate in scenes devoted, at least in

theory, to unfettered individual expression, such as punk, frequently perceive implicit or explicit

limits on the kinds of practices they feel able to freely incorporate.

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[30] I use the term *genre culture* as a means of conceptualizing the sociocultural milieu surrounding the regular
performance of specific sets of sounds and performance practices grouped together under genre designations. In this
understanding, genres do not only function as collections of specific musical qualities, but also cultural units with
specific boundaries delineated by a variety of factors ranging from musical qualities to shared tradition. My use of
the term follows Keith Negus and Fabian Holt, the latter of whom defines a genre culture as "the overall identity of
the cultural formations in which a genre is constituted" (Holt 2007:19; Negus 1999:28-29)

The musicians in this study have responded to these forces by forming alternative means of developing, performing, circulating, and discussing their music. Over the past decade, due to technological developments and the initiative of individual musicians, a complex network of independent performance spaces, events, and record labels has emerged to produce what multiple consultants in my study have characterized as an unprecedented "moment" for the production of experimental music, free (in theory) from the constraints of dominant ideas, institutions, and socioeconomic realities that have traditionally restricted experimental musicians' agency. This "moment," and the network that has facilitated its emergence, is both cooperative and fragmented—marked by both intensive collaboration and interconnectivity, on one hand, and a wide range of perspectives, sounds, and creative philosophies on the other. They form part of a broader phenomenon in both Brazil and the international sphere in which institutionally marginalized cultural actors pursue independent means of production as a means of realizing performance on their own terms (Couldry and Curran 2003; De Marchi, Albornoz, and Hershmann 2011; Lievrouw 2011). In São Paulo, it has acted as a key strategy for independent cultural producers since the late 1970s, when members of the city's burgeoning punk subcultures organized DIY-informed performance circuits and experimentally oriented musicians formed Lira Paulistana, a record label, theater, and media outlet that was one of Brazil's first successful independent spaces for experimentally oriented music. Since then, independent spaces where musicians resist interference from established cultural institutions have expanded, particularly since the advent of Internet media.

Over the course of this study, I concentrate on four forms of independent cultural production and their relationship to creative practice in the São Paulo scene: performance spaces, record labels, affinity groups, and collaborative events such as concert series and festivals. In addition to providing the basic means for independent experimental musicians to perform on a

regular basis, these initiatives also act as a critical means of transforming the way individual actors form communities, construct identities, engage in personal expression, and shape the symbolic elements of expressive culture. In this sense, the scene's distinct approach to cultural production not only generates novel sounds and performance practices, but in turn acts as a means of *producing culture*. My understanding of culture in this context follows Clifford Geertz's broad semiotic definition, in terms of the "webs of significance" surrounding human society and interaction (1973:5).

I identify three primary ways in which independent experimental musicians participate in this process. First, members of the scene seek to create spaces for more open forms of discourse, performance, and personal expression. They additionally endeavor to ensure that these spaces and modes of performance, whenever possible, foster the development of more democratic, inclusive, and egalitarian creative communities. Finally, over the course of this process, independent experimental musicians transform the connotative elements and symbolic import of the cultural products they generate onstage. This dissertation seeks to elaborate the various means by which members of the São Paulo scene achieve these goals—as well as the ways in which they fall short.

Encountering São Paulo

My fieldwork took place within a city that has long occupied a distinct space in the Brazilian national imaginary. From the colonial period until the mid-nineteenth century, São Paulo was an afterthought—a trading post that served as a base for missionaries and the colonial bands of settlers and slavers known as *bandeirantes* (Monteiro 1988; Russell-Wood 2005). Beginning in the late nineteenth century, due to coffee cultivation and industrialization, the city grew precipitously, from a population of 240,000 in 1900 to about 12 million today (22 million

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metropolitan area population). This growth was largely fueled by immigration from regions such as Europe, the Middle East, and Japan, as well as internal migration from poorer regions of Brazil.[31] This commercial transformation and human influx has enabled São Paulo to dominate the Brazilian industrial sector and economy and epitomize government-promoted notions of national development and modernization (Vasconcelos-Oliveira 2012:273). Contemporary São Paulo is a truly global city, both in terms of the diversity of its inhabitants' national heritages and cultural traditions and in terms of its business connections with the rest of the world.[32] These qualities are embodied in the independent experimental scene, which counts regular participants from across Brazil and the international sphere.

The city presents an imposing face to visitors. Until recently, curious travelers consulting the Lonely Planet guide book's entry on the city, for instance, were warned in the first sentence that "São Paulo is a monster" (St Louis 2017:n.p.). This view is not uncommon. The cityscape extends over a sprawling, hilly maze of concrete, with minimal parkland or open space for recreation. Its urban profile stands in marked contrast to other Brazilian cities such as Rio de Janeiro, which features miles of beaches and the world's largest urban national park (Tijuca), as well as international metropolises such as New York City, which contains ten times the green space of São Paulo.[33] Traffic and congestion are ubiquitous, as the city's metro system primarily

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[31] Between 1872 and 1972, over five million individuals immigrated to Brazil, predominantly to the wealthier South and Southeast regions. Predominant nationalities included Portuguese, Italians, Spanish, Germans, Japanese, Syrian-Lebanese, and various Middle Eastern and Eastern European nations that were often labeled as "others" in immigration statistics. This formed part of a broader policy of "whitening" (*branqueamento*) in which Brazilian politicians encouraged immigration from Europe, the Middle East, and Japan (which many viewed as Asia's "white" nation) and excluded immigration from regions such as Africa and South Asia. See Lesser 2013:13-16. Many of these immigrants settled in São Paulo, where descendants of immigrants make up a significant percentage of the city's population. Over the course of the past few decades, the city has seen immigration from East Asia, West and Central Africa, and neighboring countries such as Bolivia and Paraguay.

[32] Like most of the Southeast region of Brazil, the city is whiter than Rio de Janeiro and the urban centers of the Northeast. At the same time, due to over a century as a national center of internal and external migration, the city has a greater variety of regional and national heritages than other large cities in the country. See Lesser 2008:279.

[33] São Paulo has only 2.6 square meters of green space per resident; moreover, this is divided unequally between wealthy neighborhoods, which are often filled with parks and public squares, and poorer regions, many of which feature as little as a single tree for every 17 inhabitants. See https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2017/04/27/sao-paulos-mayor-tries-to-make-the-city-greener.

covers the wealthier central neighborhoods, and residents must often resort to hours-long commutes in cars, motorcycles, and packed, sweltering buses in lieu of better transportation options. The urban landscape is periodically blanketed with thunderstorms and light rains, which have led to the city being known informally as the "city of drizzle" ("cidade da garoa")—a far cry from the glamorous nickname of "marvelous city" ("cidade maravilhosa") given to Rio de Janeiro. For many, the city's industrialized profile represents a starkly different image of Brazil from Rio de Janeiro and the Northeast, which scholars and journalists alike tend to conceptualize as the true centers of national culture.

Like most of the country, São Paulo is sharply divided along socioeconomic lines and features some of the world's starkest gaps between the rich and the working class. These divisions are epitomized in the city's geography, which ranges from endless high rises in the city's central regions to the extensive makeshift dwellings of the impoverished outer *periferia* (periphery). Over the past decade, the city's problems have been compounded by issues such as police brutality, unemployment, high costs of living, severe water shortages, the Zika crisis, and the social and political upheaval that occurred with the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and the election of Jair Bolsonaro.

Such was the stage I entered at the beginning of my fieldwork in the summer of 2014. At the time, I was studying Portuguese at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo and spending my extra time frequenting shows throughout the city. Like many, I had become enamored with Brazilian popular music after years of listening to inventive movements such as Tropicália and *manguebeat* and the genre-defying, stylistically hybrid amalgamations that emerged in songs such as "Domingo No Parque" and "De Lama Ao Caos." I was in search of a contemporary manifestation of those movements, and had spent a great deal of effort exploring the city's venues and dives, listening to records, and speaking to artists after late night shows.

For the most part, I found little more than echoes, most of which fell under the umbrella of the

enjoyable, but hardly paradigm-inverting blends of rock, hip hop, and Brazilian styles such as

bossa nova and samba that have come to be known as "New MPB."[34]

     As it turns out, I had been asking the wrong questions and looking in the wrong places.

There was, in fact, something distinctive happening right under my nose. So I discovered one

Friday afternoon in the recesses of an inadvertent Google search for "experimental music" in São

Paulo. An odd name that I didn't recognize stood out amongst the various concert postings and

articles on figures such as John Cage: "Ibrasotope." I had attended experimental music concerts

at university venues and the cultural institutions known as SESC-SP, but these events mostly

showcased the same post-Cagean, electroacoustic sonic profile found in concerts around the

world that bear the moniker of musical experimentalism. This seemed different. Ibrasotope's

blog displayed years of concert programs featuring performances from a wide set of creative

practices, some of which hewed to the conventional profile of musical experimentalism, but

others of which incorporated techniques from styles such as hip hop, noise, and electronic music.

A smattering of online videos showed something entirely different—not a judicious evolution of

these styles, but a head-on collision with little more than a resemblance to the sum of its

collective parts.

     I decided to see it for myself. After about an hour spent hopping from city bus to city bus,

I found myself in front of an unmarked white sliding door on a quiet side street in the sleepy

upper-middle class neighborhood of Vila Nova Conceição. After knocking a few times and

waiting for a bit, hearing voices inside, I pushed the door ajar and headed in. I was warmly

greeted by one of the two directors of the space, Natacha Maurer, who welcomed me to the

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[34] As I will discuss in Chapter One, "New MPB" (short for "New Música Popular Brasileira," or "New Brazilian Popular Music") is a journalistic term that publications have used to characterize the stylistically diverse productions of contemporary Brazilian popular musicians such as Lenine, Cêrebro Eletrónico, and in some instances groups such as Hurtmold and Metá Metá with participants in the São Paulo independent experimental scene.

venue and invited me into the kitchen, where several people were gathered around the stove. I was just in time—Maurer beckoned us into the performance area, where the Chilean classical guitarists Ericsson Castro and Andrea Paz were waiting. They played an extended set of free-form, mostly indeterminate works by experimental composers—an interpretation of Alvin Lucier's "Memory Space" that they had entitled "(São Paulo) Memory Space," Larry Polanksi's "II – V – I," Luiz Carlos Csekö's "Tradução l," and Matthew Shlomowitz's "Letter Piece 5: Northern Cities." The next performance, an extended improvisation between drummer Márcio Gibson and bassist Rodrigo Gobbett, presented an altogether more chaotic set of sounds and gestures, transiting between free jazz, free improvisation, and hints of noise. After the performances we spent several hours talking in the kitchen and eating homemade cooking.

Thus began a project that has lasted more than four and a half years at the time of this writing. During my year back in the U.S., I explored the scope of the scene bit by bit and followed its progress online during the Michigan winter with wistfulness, waiting to return. That time soon came. In 2015, I returned to São Paulo on a Fulbright fellowship and spent ten months living in the city, attending concerts, speaking with participants, forming relationships, learning new creative techniques such as hardware hacking and circuit bending, and performing at the scene's central venues. I arrived during a time of considerable socioeconomic and political unrest, at the height of the Lava Jato scandal and the ensuing impeachment proceedings. Like the chaotic, labyrinthine city its participants called home, I found myself visiting and revisiting a tangled maze of independent venues, workshops, concerts, and social gatherings. Over the course of 2017 and 2018, I returned regularly to accompany the scene's development. The economic and political situation had deteriorated—the recession continued unabated and a national environment for public support for the arts had become more hostile. As a result, multiple performance spaces had shut their doors or faced potential closure, and public events that had

occurred in previous years frequently closed or reduced programming due to a lack of available funding. In spite of these developments, the scene had managed to persevere and spread to new venues as well. A few groups had even begun to achieve limited mainstream success. The state of this scene at the time of this writing was that of precarity and resistance—anger about the state of the country and the socioeconiomic situation of independent artists, on one hand, and a commitment to continue making music in the face of these obstacles, on the other.

Over the course of this multi-year period, I conducted a long-term ethnographic study of the independent experimental music scene in São Paulo. I engaged with a variety of participants in the scene, who hail from numerous backgrounds and draw from a wide range of musical practices. I investigated a diverse set of institutions involved in the scene as well, focusing particular attention on three independent venues dedicated to the performance of experimentally oriented music: Ibrasotope, Hotel Bar, and Estúdio Fita Crepe. I also frequented establishments that lent space to independent experimental musicians on a part-time basis, including coffeeshops, recording studios, art galleries, bars, and nonprofit cultural institutions.

My fieldwork took place within a sprawling and complex social network. Because of the scene's patchwork nature and the tendency of many of its members to also participate in contiguous genre cultures such as hardcore punk or jazz, estimating its precise "population" is a difficult task. Using a comprehensive aggregate of performances that took place between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2017 organized by ten of the scene's core institutions, 794 individuals performed in the scene's spaces at least once, many of whom were one-time visitors from other regions of Brazil or the international sphere. Of these musicians, it is possible to identify a certain core set of participants: 124 musicians who collaborated with at least ten other individuals, forty-seven musicians who collaborated with at least twenty other artists, and twenty-two individuals who collaborated with at least thirty other musicians. It is crucial to note

that because the scene does not just encompass performances at its core spaces, these figures do not represent the totality of collaboration and participation in the scene as a whole.

The scene's demographic makeup roughly reflects the aggregate makeup of the city's middle and upper-middle class: that is, predominantly white and mixed-race (*pardo*), with a minority hailing from Japanese-Brazilian and Afro-Brazilian backgrounds. Most participants are men (about 80%), although the percentage of women who regularly participate in the scene has risen over the past four years, largely due to the efforts of women organizational leaders who have organized concert series and performances dedicated to showcasing women artists. As I will discuss in Chapters Two and Three, much of this gender imbalance exists due to subtle exclusionary processes that make it more difficult for women artists to gain access to certain institutions and participate in fully inclusive performances. Some members of the scene hailed from lower-income neighborhoods in the city's outer periphery, while others occupied middle-class socioeconomic positions, thus inhabiting positions of comparative privilege. At the same time, given the limited financial resources available to the country's middle classes and the enduringly vast gulf in institutional power and economic capital between the wealthy and the rest of the population, like most of the country's inhabitants, they occupy a position of relative disempowerment in comparison to major institutional players (Arnold and Jalles 2014:7).

In order to investigate the disparate forces at play in the São Paulo scene, I employed ethnography as a central methodology. I initiated my investigation by observing musicians' performances and rehearsals. When possible and with permission, I recorded these events at each stage of the process to supplement my own notes and observations. In total, I attended and recorded over 300 performances and rehearsals by artists from across the spectrum of experimental music in São Paulo. I also conducted participant-observation as both a musician and a volunteer administrator for Ibrasotope's website. Over the course of my research, I

performed alone and in collaboration with local musicians at three different independent experimental music spaces. I also participated in musician-led workshops in practices such as sound poetry and hardware hacking. This experience enabled me to understand, in the moment, the creative choices and possibilities available to performers that may not be discernible from the perspective of an observer. Participant-observation also acted as an important means of joining the scene as an active practitioner, forming social bonds that remain resilient in spite of frequent absences, and expanding my own creative horizons—and the way I view those of the São Paulo scene. I complemented these experiences with informal conversations and semi-structured interviews. In all, I met and spoke with over 200 individuals and conducted interviews with eighty-three of them. My contacts hail from a wide variety of backgrounds, musical styles, and eras. They include relatively well-known artists who rose to prominence in earlier eras, such as Luiz Tatit, musicians just beginning to participate in the experimental music scene, administrators in São Paulo's public cultural policy world, and leaders of independent performance spaces and record labels. Most live and make music in São Paulo, although I also spoke with individuals from other cities in order to provide points of comparison and contextualize the São Paulo scene in its broader national context.

Chapter Summaries

The following chapters seek to elaborate the various dynamics of practice in the São Paulo independent experimental scene: historical considerations and influences, the practical dimensions of onstage performance, organizational and institutional strategies, critical and creative engagements with the city of São Paulo, and the ways in which musicians negotiate standards of genre. In so doing, the dissertation follows a general narrative of cause and effect, beginning with a discussion of the role of previous cultural movements in shaping the scene's

current form, continuing through the ways in which individuals negotiate and transform these ideas within the context of creative and organizational practice, and finally turning to the ways in which the resulting practices sound back into broader urban and aesthetic contexts beyond the immediate milieu of the scene.

Chapter One, "Independent Experimentalism and the Emergence of the Brazilian Musical Underground," discusses the historical and ideological context of the São Paulo scene, focusing on the ways in which previous generations of independent musicians developed creative strategies for pushing established aesthetic standards and organizational frameworks for challenging established cultural production models. In the first half of the chapter, I examine the early seeds of Brazilian independent experimentalism, focusing on the late-1960s project of Tropicália, the 1970s-era "post-Tropicália" work of artists such as Caetano Veloso and the underground movement of *cultura marginal*, and the early-1980s productions of Lira Paulistana. I then discuss the legacy of punk culture and the DIY ethos, concentrating on the ways in which members of the São Paulo scene have adopted DIY-informed approaches and attitudes as a means of motivating creative invention and facilitating independent cultural production initiatives. I introduce the term "DIY experimental" as a means of theorizing this distinct process.

The second chapter, "Cartographies of Collaborative Creativity: Experimental Music as Social Practice," addresses the ways in which collaborative encounters between individuals from different stylistic backgrounds shape the dynamics of onstage performance. The chapter first discusses the multiplicity of musical creativities circulating in the scene and how the scene's rhizomatic network fosters ideal conditions for collaborative cross-stylistic improvisation. It further addresses the strategies musicians employ to negotiate cross-stylistic improvisation and create the conditions for the emergence of effective collaborative performance in the face of

obstacles such as divergent idiomatic norms and onstage expressions of machismo. Drawing from scholarship on embodied and situated cognition, the chapter then examines the embodied dynamics of these encounters, which musicians situate as an intuitive approach to creative practice grounded on the body.

In the third chapter, "'Music Forged in Iron and Fire': Organizational Strategies, Institutional Politics, and Collaborative Creativity in a Stratified Field," I address the organizational and institutional context of collaborative creativity in the scene, focusing on how musicians have established a network of independent spaces and employed alternative media in order to respond to systemic institutional marginalization and create lasting connections between artists from different backgrounds. As case studies, I examine four distinct organizational strategies musicians have employed as a means of addressing these issues: the independent record label Brava, the performance space Hotel Bar, the 2016 experimental music festival Bigorna, and the efforts of the women-led experimental music collective Dissonantes to promote space for women artists. In each of these case studies, I examine the means by which these organizations foster opportunities for open-ended collaborative performance, as well as the ways in which their efforts have alternately succeeded and fallen short in addressing broader structural issues faced by independent experimental musicians. The chapter concludes with a consideration of what the dynamics of the São Paulo scene demonstrate about the ideal circumstances of cultural production for fostering collaborative creativity in the face of structural marginalization.

In the fourth chapter, I address the urban context of the scene's creative and institutional dynamics. The chapter first discusses independent experimental musicians' relationships with the city of São Paulo and how musicians employ musical sound as a means of addressing the city's historical exclusion from artistic understandings of the nation of Brazil. I then investigate the ways in which participants in the scene address their impressions of the city in onstage

performance, focusing on experiences of chaos, noise, aggression, and introspection. The chapter then addresses a burgeoning phenomenon in which practitioners move beyond the scene's performance spaces and intervene in the physical space of the city of São Paulo. Drawing from the work of Lambrous Malafouris (2013) and Michel de Certeau (1984), I introduce the notion of the *material engagement* as a means of theorizing these embodied encounters with urban space and sound and the ways in which they enable musicians to appropriate urban experiences of São Paulo on their own terms. As case studies, I examine the work of sound artist Renata Roman, who uses field recording as a primary creative technique, and the annual performance of the *Bloco Ruído*, a Carnival group that parades through the city center on Ash Wednesday with self-constructed instruments.

Chapter Five investigates the ways in which members of the São Paulo scene engage with broader aesthetic structures, focusing on the ways in which musicians from popular and independent styles symbolically contest genre standards and song forms. I first address the conceptual strategies independent experimental musicians incorporate in order to transform established ideas about genre, including the adoption of rejectionist viewpoints that spurn the idea of categorization, the embrace of radically heterogeneous stylistic blends, and attitudes that treat genres as irrelevant. The chapter then discusses how experimentally oriented musicians, both within and beyond the context of the São Paulo scene, consciously depart from established song structures in favor of participation in open-ended forms of improvisation as a means of enacting political critique and developing less hierarchical forms of performance. As case studies, I examine the musical project *Carta Branca*, which brings together vocalists and MCs with experience participating in hip hop and MPB with instrumentalists from diverse practices for a series of collectively improvised performances, and the work of the band Auto.

Chapter One

Independent Experimentalism and the Emergence of the Brazilian Musical Underground

You take a, I don't know, jazz musician, for instance. He has a whole protocol he has to follow there. As free as he is, he masters a technique, he has a whole protocol—the time he'll play a solo, the time when he doesn't know what's there, the time that he'll return to accompany the saxophonist again. What we're doing— what I'm doing, it's totally without protocol. It's completely punk.[35]
<div align="right">– Alexandre Amaral</div>

May 4, 2016. Keyboardist and electronic musician Guilherme Granado and visual artist and electronic musician Carlos Dias enter the tiny, dimly lit performance area of the venue Hotel Bar to perform a collaborative set. The space is little bigger than a closet, wedged between the restrooms and the kitchen, with a large supporting beam bisecting the view of all but the closest spectators. The smell of beer and human proximity mixes with the whiff of blackening burgers and distant cigarette smoke. Inside, it is dark save for a fixture of white Christmas lights on the wall, a large brown paper canvas at the back of the room, and the periodic glow and glimmer of mixers, feedback and distortion pedals, samplers, and an iPad outfitted with the mixing apps Tape and Funk Brasil. It is possible to make out the faces of the attendees leaning against the walls and the speakers, forming a small ring of curious gazes illuminated by the lights and the gleam of the instruments. Patrons of the bar filter in and out of the space, while ambient noise and conversation from adjoining areas occasionally spill over into the makeshift stage.

The concert begins with the two playing in tandem, facing each other at opposite ends of the table. As Dias triggers various samples on his iPad and adjusts the sound on his mixer,

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[35] Interview with Alexandre Amaral, January 26, 2016. "Você pega um, sei lá, um músico de jazz, por exemplo. Ele tem todo um protocolo a seguir ali. Por mais que ele seja livre, domine a técnica, ele tem todo um protocolo—de a hora que ele vai solar, a hora que não sabe o que lá, a hora que ele vai voltar a acompanhar de novo o saxofonista. Isso que a gente faz—o que eu faço, é totalmente sem protocolo. É totalmente punk."

Granado darts between different instruments, crouches on the ground, and rhythmically sways

back and forth while the colored lights on the equalizer and linear wave sampler flicker in the

semi-darkness. Attentive listeners might detect traces of hip-hop, electronica, punk rock, dub,

musique concrète, Brazilian *funk carioca*, and fusion jazz. As the musicians improvise and adjust

the mix, the sonic texture shifts from moment to moment, lending the show a capricious quality.

Midway through, the performance takes an abrupt turn. Dias stands up from the table, turns

around to face the blank paper canvas, picks up a black marker, and wraps a sheet around his

head, covering his eyes completely. As Granado continues to play, Dias begins to draw a series

of surreal, vaguely humanoid figures on the canvas, pausing occasionally to peek out and release

a sample or rip out a new piece of paper for his next drawing. By the end of the concert, an array

of overlapping shapes and scrawls adorn the papers scattered about the space. Dias removes his

makeshift blindfold, Granado cuts off the sound, and the audience responds in turn.

Figure 2.1: Carlos Dias (left) and Guilherme Granado (right) perform at Hotel Bar. May 4, 2016.

The performance is one of many the musicians have given over the course of the year. While the two play together from time to time, they more often collaborate with other members of the São Paulo scene. Granado is especially prolific—a founding member of the international trio São Paulo Underground and the six-piece band Hurtmold, he has performed with musicians from a variety of stylistic backgrounds, generating a diverse range of sounds depending on the time, space, and configuration of artists with whom he works. In conversation, he cites a similarly wide range of figures and musical movements as creative influences, from the experimental jazz of Sun Ra to the hip hop group Wu-Tang Clan to seminal figures of the Brazilian popular music canon such as Caetano Veloso and Tom Zé. He draws particular attention to his connection to punk culture, which he argues has played a central role in his sense of personal freedom onstage. At the same time, he emphasizes the fundamentally open nature of his creative approach and stresses the impossibility of categorizing his music under a single moniker. To him, that is limiting:

> People will expect certain things of you, even you will expect certain things of yourself, which may be cool, but I don't think it's healthy. I don't think it's healthy for what I do. I live this way: I prefer to do it—I don't know, I go out and do it and see what works and what doesn't work. And that's how I listen to music, too, I don't separate it—"No, today I'm in the mood for free jazz" and go to my free jazz session. […] Even the way I arrange my records doesn't follow that logic. Some people are like, "No, this one here is my session of that." No, it's not like that. For me it makes sense in a completely abstract way.[36]

This approach to music-making is common among members of the São Paulo scene, who incorporate a variety of stylistic practices and often adopt oppositional stances toward the idea of

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[36] Interview with Guilherme Granado, May 2, 2016. "As pessoas vão esperar certas coisas de você, e até você mesmo vai esperar certas coisas, que pode ser legal, mas eu não acho saudável. Eu não acho saudável para o que eu faço. Eu viver assim: prefiro fazer—sei lá, eu vou fazendo e vejo o que funciona e o que não funciona. E é como eu escuto música também, eu não separo—'Não, hoje estou com vontade de free jazz' ai eu vou para minha sessão de free jazz. […] Até o jeito que eu arrumo os meus discos não tem nenhum sentido nessa. As pessoas tem, 'Não, essa aqui é a minha sessão disso.' Não, não tem. Faz sentido para mim de um jeito totalmente abstrato." Granado pronounced the phrases "No, today I'm in the mood for free jazz" ("Não, hoje estou com vontade de free jazz") and "No, this one here is my session of that" ("Não, essa aqui é a minha sessão disso") in a deeper, mocking voice, as if to signify an opposing approach from which he sought to distance himself.

being connected to specific traditions in the first place. What are the origins of this attitude? How does it affect the dynamics of creativity and cultural production in the São Paulo scene? Examining the development of this approach poses a set of challenges for historicizing independent experimentalism in São Paulo. For participants in the São Paulo scene, the experimental ethos is a dynamic, lived practice oriented toward creating, and resists the logic of chronological narrative. How can scholars appropriately contextualize this type of hybrid and unorthodox musical culture?

I contend that independent experimentalism as it manifests in the contemporary São Paulo scene finds its most significant historical precedence in two interrelated lineages of independent musical culture that manifested in Brazil over the past fifty years: a series of experimentally oriented projects in the Brazilian popular music sphere and the DIY ethos. I situate the initial roots of the independent experimentalist impetus in the ashes of the late-1960s musical-cultural project of Tropicália, which reoriented dominant popular musical attitudes toward hybridity but also faced censorship from the authorities of the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-85). The wake of the Tropicálist project gave rise to a series of independent cultural endeavors oriented toward reinventing established creative paradigms, including the "post-Tropicália" experimental works of established singer-songwriters such as Caetano Veloso and the mid-1970s cultural movement known as *cultura marginal*, whose participants organized independent circuits of cultural production under the radar of the military authorities and advocated an explicit move toward experimentalism. These inventive currents would later institutionally crystallize in the independent venue and recording company Lira Paulistana, whose affiliates became known for their innovative reconfigurations of existing aesthetic frameworks of the Brazilian popular music sphere. Members of the São Paulo scene also draw from do-it-yourself (DIY) ethics and approaches pioneered in punk culture but circulating within

a variety of contemporary independent music movements. Despite this natural connection, scholars have devoted little attention to this relationship, which I expand upon and theorize. I identify three primary factors in punk musical culture and the DIY ethos that foster experimental musical creativity: an emphasis on initiative and collective action, a celebration of amateur music-making and lay practice, and an antiauthoritarian stance oriented toward disrupting established institutions and aesthetic standards. I propose the term "DIY experimental" as a means of conceptualizing this distinct phenomenon.

Running throughout these movements and moments is a set of shared motivational factors: an openness toward hybridity and the juxtaposition of disparate symbolic references, experimentation with established aesthetic forms, a tendency to "cannibalize" exterior movements and appropriate them locally, an oppositional attitude geared toward challenging dominant creative practices and institutions, and a concerted movement toward self-directed cultural production in the face of political and institutional marginalization. These qualities constitute the shared ideological backbone of independent experimentalism in Brazil over the past half-century, during which time independent artists seeking to contest existing creative paradigms have had to form their own creative languages and forms of cultural production as a means of making music happen. They remain defining qualities of the contemporary São Paulo scene.

The Universal Sound

The Brazilian popular music sphere has long held a central place for invention. From *sambista* Noel Rosa's deft wordplay to Vinicius de Moraes and Baden Powell's fusion of bossa nova with references from the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé, playfulness and stylistic mixture have remained iconic fixtures of the canon since the early twentieth century. Yet for

much of this history, certain tacit limits existed on the types of sounds embraced by the

mainstream cultural industry. While musicians routinely received acclaim for integrating

complex juxtapositions of disparate styles from Brazil, artists who sought to incorporate genres

outside Brazilian expressive culture often received derision from cultural commentators and

fellow musicians for facilitating cultural imperialism. Formal experimentation, particularly that

which incorporated international symbolic markers, had its limits.

In this section, I examine a moment in which these creative standards received their first

and most lasting challenge: the advent of Tropicália, a brief but influential musical-cultural

project that would prove to enact profound and lasting changes on creative norms regarding

mixture and experimentation in Brazilian culture.[37] Informally led by the Bahian musicians

Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, Tropicália generated immediate and passionate reactions from

the Brazilian public by presenting a wide-ranging and countercultural approach to Brazilian

music and popular culture. Musicians centrally affiliated with the project included Gal Costa,

Jards Macalé, Tom Zé, members of the band Os Mutantes (Rita Lee, Arnaldo Baptista, and

Sérgio Dias), poets Torquato Neto and José Carlos Capinan, and composer and arranger Rogério

Duprat. While Tropicália enacted its loudest and perhaps most long-lasting effect in the sphere of

popular music, the project manifested in the realm of theater, film, and visual art as well—its

name, for instance, came from neo-concrete artist Hélio Oiticica's exhibit "Tropicália." As a

musical genre, Tropicália defied simple categorization: its members fused styles such as samba,

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[37] My use of the term "project" to characterize Tropicália follows scholars such as Marcos Napolitano (1998), who avoids using the term "movement" to characterize Tropicália. Christopher Dunn follows a similar approach and characterizes Tropicália as a "moment": "Tropicália was not a 'movement' with a coherent set of propositions, but a particularly effervescent 'moment' of cultural production that had an impact on all artistic fields, most notably in popular music" (2013:230). It is important to note that although the affiliated musicians with Tropicália predominantly hailed from Bahia—a quality which lent them the nickname of the "Bahian group" (*grupo baiano*)—the project was, as Napolitano notes, "anchored in São Paulo," where seminal events such as the TV Record festival took place (2005:504).

frevo, *capoeira,* avant-garde art music, and Euro-American rock and psychedelia. Veloso and Gil characterized it as a "universal sound" (Moehn 2012:205).

Tropicália most significantly impacted the Brazilian cultural sphere by celebrating and legitimizing the wide-ranging mixture of musical styles from disparate points of origin. This open-ended approach to stylistic hybridity manifested for the first time on October 21, 1967, at the nationally televised TV Record Festival, when Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil debuted the songs that would come to mark the beginning of Tropicália, "Alegria, Alegria" ("Joy, Joy"), and "Domingo no Parque" ("Sunday in the Park"). The songs exemplified Tropicália's characteristic mix of foreign and international genres by incorporating instruments and timbral and harmonic elements associated with rock, on one hand, as well as prominent sonic qualities associated with existing Brazilian idioms, on the other. "Domingo No Parque" featured the rock band Os Mutantes but also drew heavily from *capoeira,* while Veloso backed his performance of "Alegria, Alegria" with the Argentine rock band the Beat Boys but set the song to the beat of a Brazilian *marcha*. In the refrain, Veloso posed the rhetorical question "Por que não?" ("Why not?").

Veloso and Gil's performances generated significant controversy. At the time, the Brazilian government had been under the control of a military dictatorship since a 1964 coup against democratically elected president João Goulart. Despite its authoritarian hold on the country, however, in the first four years after the coup the regime tolerated progressive resistance such a token opposition party in Congress, student protests, and labor organization (Atencio 2014:9). In the arena of popular music, left-wing culture remained dominant (Atencio 2014:9). Members of the Brazilian left vociferously opposed music that they considered contaminated by foreign styles of music such as rock, which they considered symbols of European and US cultural imperialism. This near-monopoly on symbolic resources by the country's progressive

wing presented Veloso and Gil with a central obstacle to their musical project: an invented, mythical narrative of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness) that formed the ideological foundation of MPB (*Música Popular Brasileira*, or Brazilian Popular Music).[38]

Veloso and Gil justified their mixture of national and international stylistic idioms by framing the music of Tropicália as an act of *antropofagia*, or cultural cannibalism. In so doing, they adopted a term introduced by Oswald de Andrade, a poet and founding member of the 1920s-1930s era Brazilian modernist movement known as *modernismo*. In 1928, de Andrade published *Manifesto antropófago* (*Cannibalist Manifesto*), which criticized the idea that Brazilian art had to be entirely grounded in national styles. It advocated absorbing, through acts of "cannibalism," native and non-native elements alike into art without reference to their points of origin.[39] Oswald de Andrade's unapologetic celebration of mixture stood in contrast to the rigid conception of style held by Brazilian musical nationalists. The Cannibalist Manifesto provided a competing model—one that not only sanctioned the incorporation of artistic styles from diverse points of origin as inherently Brazilian, but encouraged it as a source of strength. By presenting their music as cultural cannibalism, the Tropicálists were able to frame their

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[38] Given its name, what constituted the genre of MPB would seem to be self-evident; however, it was a loaded term. Since the 1920s, popular music had become an important forum in which Brazilian citizens across the political spectrum explored the country's ongoing debate over national identity. In 1928, the modernist poet, critic, and musicologist Mário de Andrade published *Ensaio Sobre a Música Brasileira* (Essay on Brazilian Music), which advocated treating popular music as a tradition that needed to be defended from commercial and foreign influences. *Ensaio* stressed the role of folk music as a source of "authentic" inspiration for composers and songwriters: De Andrade's vision was that popular music would eventually "break free from the shackles of international influences, to be regenerated by innately Brazilian qualities" (Stroud 2008:13). This came at a time when there was widespread anxiety that Brazil was an underdeveloped nation, particularly in comparison to countries such as the United States, and thus vulnerable to cultural domination (Harvey 2001:107). De Andrade's views were prominent in intellectual circles through the 1960s, and formed the central ideological backdrop for leftist criticism of Tropicália. Music festivals such as the TV Record Festival were implicitly understood as "televised rituals" in defense of existing nationalist MPB standards against the threat of commercialism and foreign influence (Dunn 2005:64).

[39] Veloso 2002:156. The text, which itself incorporated external artistic sources without citation, referenced the indigenous Tupinambá, or Tupí, peoples, who were known for eating who they defeated in battle. Oswald de Andrade's use of the Tupí metaphor allowed him to provide a philosophical model for "consuming" external influences that might otherwise be perceived as foreign and unwelcome, and to ground such an act in history as something that had existed in Brazil even before colonization. He likened cannibalism to a truly Brazilian act that connected the nation as a whole, proclaiming: "Cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically." See de Andrade 1991.

productions as an act of resistance to foreign domination in the tradition of the country's first inhabitants. Although de Andrade's notion of cultural cannibalism had existed in the Brazilian artistic sphere for four decades by the advent of Tropicália, the Tropicálists' use of it represented the first time that the idea had been incorporated into the realm of mainstream popular music. As Veloso later recalled, "The idea of cultural cannibalism fit *tropicalistas* like a glove. We were 'eating' the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix."[40]

In many ways, the notion of cultural cannibalism aptly characterizes the stylistically hybrid music of the contemporary independent experimental scene in São Paulo. Mixture between disparate styles and forms of media permeates the scene, whose participants affirm an inclusive approach to the mixture of music from different points of origin that resonates with the impulse articulated in the Cannibalist Manifesto. Sharply contrasting musical traditions whose union may seem anathema—noise rock and 19th-century Afro-Brazilian work songs, free jazz and hardcore punk, circuit bending and aleatoric composition—routinely find a shared home in performance. Few practitioners find this to be unusual or striking; if anything, they consider it natural. Juçara Marçal, vocalist for the trio Metá Metá and a regular collaborator with various members of the independent experimental scene, demonstrated a characteristic example of this attitude. In conversation, Marçal repudiated the notion of stylistic purity, and argued instead for the inevitability and the creatively freeing qualities of aesthetic hybridity in collaborative contexts. "You can't be pure if you work with others," she asserted. "Every person brings their reference. This has a lot to do with Metá—the idea of deconstruction is very present in our work,

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[40] In addition to enacting de Andrade's philosophy in sound by mixing national and international styles throughout their work, the group also included self-conscious references to the idea in their music. The opening line of Gilberto Gil and Torquato Neto's song "Geléia Geral," (General Jelly), for instance, off the group's 1968 "manifesto album" *Tropicália ou Panis et Circensis*, directly quotes the manifesto: "*A alegria é a prova dos nove*" (Joy is the real proof).

and that thing of not staying rigid within a pattern, within a genre."[41] She rejected the idea of confining herself to the limits of "dogmatic" styles, asserting that she preferred an approach in which "nothing is prohibited."[42] Marçal exemplifies this outlook in her music, which draws from a diverse set of traditions, ranging from Afro-Brazilian *cantos de congado* to feminist punk to the experimental song of members of the Vanguarda Paulista, with whom she has collaborated on multiple albums.

Despite their openness to hybridity, however, members of the scene generally do not employ the cannibalist label as a central means of characterizing their creative approach. Of the more than eighty figures I interviewed, only one practitioner brought up the term without prompting.[43] Instead, they tended to emphasize the connection between cultural cannibalism and broader Brazilian culture. As record label owner Ângela Novaes put it,

> Brazil is a mixture, right? Because you see it's this way—of colors, of religious beliefs—we light a candle to, I don't know, a Christian saint, and go to the Spiritist center to do a walk through. Everything in the same house, your own parents teach you that. It's a mix, a complete miscegenation of roots. It's a cannibalism of what we heard. I think that now we're already throwing up what we ate, maybe forty years later [after Tropicália] and making something that's… OK, we all have references, but we make our own sounds too. We don't sound much more like Fugazi or, I don't know, Tortoise. We love to sound the way we do and nobody knows what it is, and we're creating a public around it, which is good, and that public is interested in playing, which is even better.[44]

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[41] Interview with Juçara Marçal, May 5, 2016. "Não dá para ser puro se você trabalha em conjunto. Cada um traz a sua referência. Isso tem muito a ver também com o Metá—essa ideia da desconstrução é muito presente no nosso trabalho, e essa coisa de não dá para ficar rígido num padrão, num gênero."

[42] Interview with Juçara Marçal, May 5, 2016. "Dogmáticos;" "Não tem nada que seja proibido."

[43] Individual musicians were equally if not more likely to incorporate other, more recently introduced terms that valorized unfettered stylistic hybridity, such as composer John Oswald's notion of "plunderphonics." John Oswald first introduced the notion of "plunderphonics" in an essay entitled "Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as a Compositional Prerogative," delivered to the Wired Society Electro-Acoustic Conference in Toronto in 1985 (Oswald 1986). The term refers to composition or musical production in which the musician derives the entirety of the sonic material from existing copyrighted sounds, which she then manipulates to her own ends.

[44] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "...o Brasil é uma mistura, né? Porque você vê assim—de cor, de crença religiosa—a gente acende uma vela para, sei lá sabe, um santo cristão e vai no centro espírito tomar um passe. Tudo na mesma casa, os mesmos pais te ensinam isso. É uma mistura, miscigenação completa de raízes. É uma antropofagia do que a gente ouviu. Eu acho que a gente agora já está vomitando o que a gente comeu, talvez a 40 anos atrás e criando uma coisa que é... Tudo bem, a gente teve essas referências, mas a gente soa assim. Não soa mais como tanto Fugazi ou tanto... sei lá o que... Tortoise... A gente adora soar assim e ninguém sabe o que é, e está criando um público em torno, que é bom, e esse público é interessado em tocar, que é melhor ainda."

Novaes's statement reflects a common attitude among members of the São Paulo scene, who often acknowledge the relevance of creative ideologies such as cultural cannibalism but emphasize the impossibility of encapsulating their motivations or approaches within a single philosophy or moniker. As I will discuss in Chapter Five, the idea of cultural cannibalism may act as an important starting point for independent experimental musicians' interest in cross-stylistic collaboration, but does not act as a core philosophical impetus.

For the Tropicálists, however, the notion was central. In addition to legitimizing their incorporation of transnational stylistic hybridity, cultural cannibalism allowed the Tropicálists to frame their music as part of a long history of musical innovation distinct to Brazil. Veloso cited bossa nova co-founder João Gilberto as one of the group's central influences, and characterized him as "a clear example of the anthropophagist attitude." (Veloso 2002:156-57). As he saw it, individuals such as Gilberto personified the kind of musical "evolution" that the Tropicálists sought to employ in their own music. The theme of evolution was present in Veloso's discourse even before the advent of Tropicália. In 1966, in a conversation published in the journal *Revista de Civilização Brasileira*, Veloso argued that the popular music sphere had become stagnant, and that only a resumption of the "evolutionary line" embodied by João Gilberto would allow the field to move forward (Vargas 2012:8). Juan de Castro has drawn attention to the tacit links between this notion and cultural cannibalism, noting that "for Veloso, the evolutionary line is implicitly a genealogy of cannibals" (2008:165). Although Veloso would later distance himself from the idea, at the time, the notion of "evolving" Brazilian popular music acted as a central frame of reference for the Tropicálists (Dunn 2001:57-58). It implicitly framed Tropicália as a vanguard project that sought to be at the forefront of popular music modernity. It is possible to see echoes of this type of presentation in the promotional materials of some of the better-known participants in the contemporary independent experimental scene: São Paulo Underground's

Cuneiform Records, for instance, presents the trio as "an example of the new vanguard in music" and declares its members to be "updating and modernizing Brazilian musical forms."[45]

Affiliates of Tropicália also incorporated ideas and performative elements from beyond the realm of popular music. Several of their songs featured collaborations with members of the Brazilian compositional avant-garde: composer Rogério Duprat, for instance, contributed orchestral arrangements to a variety of projects, including the 1968 manifesto album. The project benefitted from an especially close relationship with the figures of Brazilian concrete poetry, particularly between co-founder Augusto de Campos and Veloso. Veloso recalled spending time at de Campos's house with the rest of the concrete poets as an inspiring opportunity to discuss the global avant-garde, noting, "There we would listen to Charles Ives, Lupicínio, Webern, and Cage, and we would talk about the situation of Brazilian music and the festivals. We, the young *tropicalistas*, would listen to stories about the personages involved in the dada movement, Anglo-American modernism, the Brazilian Modern Art Week, and the heroic phase of concrete poetry."[46] Members of Tropicália also incorporated lyrical structures influenced by concrete poetry into their songs, as was the case with Gilberto Gil's song "Batmacumba" on the manifesto album.[47] The Tropicálists' open attitude toward incorporating the contributions of avant-garde movements from outside the realm of popular music persists in the contemporary independent experimental scene, whose members regularly draw from the ideas of variety of vanguard artistic movements, from concrete poetry to the principles of aleatoric composition.

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[45] http://www.cuneiformrecords.com/bandshtml/saopaulo.html.

[46] Veloso 2002:142. De Campos also acted as a central champion of Tropicália from the beginning of the movement: after Veloso and Gil's 1967 festival performance, de Campos praised the "experimental opening" they offered (Perrone 1985:61; de Campos 1978:155).

[47] The lyrics of "Batmacumba," which are arranged in an ideogram, generate a variety of different words as the song progresses and letters are added and subtracted from the original line: the English words "bat" and "Batman," "*oba*" (Afro-Brazilian greeting), "*ié-ié*" (a pejorative term for Brazilian rock and roll), "*macumba,*" (roughly, "black magic") and others.

The members of Tropicália also adopted a generally nonconformist and adversarial stance toward authorities of all backgrounds. This oppositional attitude manifested in confrontational and controversial form when Veloso and Gil performed at the 1968 TV Record festival, where their submissions were disqualified for incorporating electric instrumentation, which the festival's organizers had banned. Veloso's song "É Proibido Proibir" (It is Forbidden to Forbid) generated an especially contentious reaction: its lyrics depicted images of chaos and declared, "I say no to no / And I say / It is forbidden to forbid." During the song's final performance, the auditorium descended into disorder. Veloso addressed what he perceived as restrictive ideological positions on creativity and political engagement on the part of the Brazilian left, proclaiming, "Gilberto Gil is here with me to put an end to the festivals and all the imbecility that reigns in Brazil! Put an end to it, once and for all! That's the only reason we entered the festival! We don't pretend that we don't know what this is all about! We had the courage to enter all of the structures and withdraw from all of them, and as for all of you?! […] If you have the same attitude to politics that you have to aesthetics, then we're done for!" (quoted in Leu 2006:36). Veloso's actions took the implicitly resistant stances of the 1967 TV Record performance and the 1968 manifesto album to a more confrontational level. It also forwarded a more general critique of the dominant media model of televised, judged song festivals upon which the mainstream sphere of Brazilian popular music was based. As I will discuss, its oppositional stance shares much in common with the antiauthoritarian attitude present throughout the contemporary independent experimental scene.

The Tropicálists' overt disregard for existing artistic and discursive conventions did not come without costs. By the end of the year, the group's performances and statements had grown more brazen and chaotic and the regime's disapproval of Tropicália's anarchic qualities and questioning of the status quo began to turn to outright suppression. In December 1968, in

response to growing public criticism of the dictatorship, the government established the Fifth Institutional Act (AI-5), a law that imposed strict censorship and outlawed political opposition to the regime. Veloso and Gil were arrested that month and held until July 1969, when they were exiled for three years. Journalists and scholars generally consider the AI-5 and the musicians' subsequent arrest and exile to be the end of the Tropicálist moment.

Going Underground

From 1968 until 1974, Brazil suffered the most repressive years of the dictatorship. During this time, in addition to prohibiting expressions of political dissent, the government began a nationwide program of industrial development, privatization, and global capital integration known under the monikers of "development with security" and "conservative modernization" (see Dias 2000:51-54; Fenerick 2004a:158-59; Napolitano 2001). As part of this program, beginning in the mid-1970s the regime sought to centralize the media in the name of national security. The result was the consolidation of power in a limited set of dominant recording companies who systematically excluded most new and independent artists, especially those whose music was political or experimental in any way or did not cater to the demands of the popular market. Compounding this difficult situation was a more general closing of mainstream public spaces to artists whose music was politically or aesthetically challenging, as well as the fact that radio stations regularly demanded payola (*jabá*) as a prerequisite to being featured on air. During this period, which became known as the "years of lead" ("anos de chumbo"), artists and musicians of the Brazilian avant-garde disengaged from the mainstream Brazilian public sphere and instead moved underground to the realm of *cultura marginal.*

In the artistic arena, *cultura marginal* (a term roughly equivalent to the English-language term "underground") drew creative inspiration from the constructivist avant-garde but also had

dispositional roots in the Brazilian counterculture's impetus toward psychedelic experimentation, creative recreation, and disengagement from mainstream Brazilian society (Dunn 2013:231; see also Dunn 2016). Artists who participated included the neo-concretist artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, poet and lyricist Waly Salomão, and Tropicália-affiliated musicians Gal Costa and Jards Macalé. Rather than perform in televised festivals or work with established media, participants in *cultura marginal* released their work in alternative publications in the country's underground press and performed at smaller, more intimate venues such as nightclubs and bars.[48]

Christopher Dunn (2013) identifies the presence of a marked shift during this period from an artistic focus on the avant-garde to the explicit pursuit of the experimental. He highlights two productions as characteristic examples: Oiticica's 1972 manifesto "Experimentar o experimental" (Experience the Experimental), and the single-edition underground publication *Navilouca*, produced by Salomão in 1974 in collaboration with a variety of participants in the Brazilian avant-garde such as the concrete poets and former members of Tropicália (Dunn 2013:247-50). In contrast to the modernizing impulses of the pre-AI-5 avant-garde's "call to programmatic action," the new drive toward the experimental emphasized the destruction of existing creative paradigms as a means of reinventing Brazilian culture and art from the ground up (Dunn 2013:250). As Oiticica declared in his manifesto, "The loose threads of the experimental are energies that sprout an open number of possibilities" (quoted in Favaretto 1992:203).

Oiticica's emphasis on experimentation resonates with the stances taken by contemporary independent experimental musicians, who tend to repudiate the vanguardist drive toward evolving cultural forms in favor of radical reinvention. Although contemporary practitioners do

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[48] Dunn 2013:247; 2016:56. Several individuals also participated in collaborative projects across traditional boundaries. Perhaps the most iconic of these endeavors was the 1970 performance series and LP *Gal Fa-tal*, in which singer Gal Costa collaborated with Oiticica on a series of intimate shows presented at the Rio de Janeiro nightclub Bar Sucata that encouraged audience participation.

not use the term *cultura marginal* to characterize their music or its conditions of production, the strategies of both generations are similar: in the face of marginalization, artists are forced to move underground and form autonomous circuits of discourse and production. In this context, *cultura marginal* represents a key early manifestation of independent experimentalism in the Brazilian cultural sphere, both in terms of its embrace of independent cultural production and its purposeful pursuit of experimentation rather than evolution.

The impetus toward the experimental further resonated beyond the immediate milieu of *cultura marginal* in the broader realm of Brazilian popular song. Herom Vargas (2012) and Roberto Bozzetti (2007) identify qualities such as incoherence, collage, incommunicability, silence, and the deconstruction of melody and lyrics as characteristic sonic elements of experimental popular music production in the wake of AI-5. They argue that the incorporation of such qualities functioned as part of a broader creative strategy that post-AI-5 popular musicians employed as a means of expressing alienation and confronting censorship without explicitly criticizing existing power structures. As Bozzetti asserts, their presence demonstrated an attitude among popular musicians of the era that what musicians wanted to say "could only be said and should only be perceived in tatters, as if the difficulty to speak incorporated itself into the very fabric of the song, as if what to say, being so fundamental and obvious, had to be hidden and thrown into the face of 'those who do not understand anything'" (Bozzetti 2007:138).

The result was the creation of a singularly experimental period of production on the part of Brazilian popular music performers who had previously achieved mainstream commercial success. Although these figures often experienced greatly reduced financial returns as a result of their unorthodox sonic creations, they expanded the structural and aesthetic possibilities of the form of Brazilian popular song in ways that continue to resonate today. Some of the albums of this period, such as Caetano Veloso's *Áraça Azul* (1972)*,* Walter Franco's *Ou Não* (1973) and

Revolver (1975), and Tom Zé's *Estudando o Samba* (1976)*,* have achieved iconic status despite achieving only modest sales upon their initial release. They are also a useful referent for those seeking to contextualize the productions of the contemporary São Paulo scene. The publicity materials for musician Carlos Issa, for instance, declare that his work contains influences "coming from punk minimalism, passing through the more experimental side of Tropicália and the recovery of concepts from the work of John Cage."[49] They act as a significant inspiration for contemporary practitioners as well. Multiple musicians spoke of Veloso's *Áraça Azul* in particular with admiration: one referred to it as "an icon… a milestone," while another characterized the scene as being made up of "people who listen to *Áraça Azul* and make noise."[50] As I will further discuss in Chapter Five, albums such as *Araça Azul* represented a sea change in Brazilian popular music history in which mainstream popular musicians began to contest not only the standards of genre, but also the basic structural format of popular song itself.

The sounds that emerged during this period represent important precursors to the aesthetics and creative approaches found in the contemporary independent experimental music scene. Veloso's *Áraça Azul* provides a characteristic example. Released in the wake of his return from exile, the highly experimental LP marked an abrupt stylistic departure from his previous works and proved to be the most returned album by consumers in the history of the Brazilian popular music industry (Stroud 2010:91). Elements of incoherence and nonsense pervade the album. While Veloso periodically incorporates bits of lyric comprehensibility, he more often sings cryptic or nonsensical strings of words. In the song "De Palavra Em Palavra" (Of Word In Word), for instance, Veloso uses basic words such as "mar" (sea), "maré" (tide), "amarela"

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[49] http://www.noropolis.net/objetoamarelo/. See also
http://www.sescsp.org.br/programacao/6429_OBJETO+AMARELO and
http://www.estudiofitacrepesp.com/p/fotos.html. "…influências que vão do minimalismo punk, passando pelo lado mais experimental da Tropicália e o resgate de conceitos da obra de John Cage."
[50] Interview with Nilton Silva Costa. June 19, 2016. "…um icone… um marco." Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "Gente que ouve Araçá Azul e faz noise."

(yellow), and "anil" (indigo) to create a series of invented compound words ("Amarelanil," "Anilina," "Amaranilanilinalinarama"). This type of lyrical fragmentation, inspired in part by the techniques of concrete poetry, was common in 1970s-era experimental popular song, as in Walter Franco's "Cabeça" (1973) and "Eternamente" (1975) (see Perrone 1985:65-66; Vargas 2012:10-11). The musical background of "De Palavra Em Palavra" is chaotic, with sequences of a cappella recitation and silence abruptly followed by a series of disjointed screams and atonal orchestral accompaniment.

Áraça Azul also exemplifies the ways in which many 1970s-era experimental popular musicians incorporated elements of collage.[51] The song "Sugar Cane Fields Forever" provides an instructive example of such a creative approach. The lyrics consist of a series of brief fragments that range from subtle alliterative social commentary to the overtly nonsensical. The song features six different musical fragments, including orchestral crescendos, the playing of two or more different parts chaotically on top of one another, and abrupt switches reminiscent of a record track skipping. These types of collage-like juxtapositions were present in a variety of other releases of the era, such as Tom Zé's "Toc" (1976). Their jarring effect stands in marked contrast to the widely appealing stylistic mixtures of the Tropicália period. In some ways, they are reminiscent of the non-linearity of Stockhausen's "moment form" (Tissot 2008) in which musical fragments follow one another without adhering to a continuous narrative. They share much in common with sampling and mixing practices common in the contemporary independent experimental scene.

Lira Paulistana and the Vanguarda Paulista

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[51] My use of the term *collage* follows J. Peter Burkholder's definition, as the "juxtaposition of multiple quotations, styles, or textures so that each element maintains its individuality" (2015:n.p.)

The end of the 1970s saw a gradual lessening of the kind of political repression and censorship that characterized the beginning of the decade. Despite this, broader trends of consolidation in the recording industry continued to marginalize experimentally oriented popular musicians whose music did not conform to dominant industry standards and those who were unable to afford the necessary money for payola to radio stations.[52] Although certain venues such as university circuits offered limited opportunities for individual ventures, for the most part musicians without the support of major recording companies found themselves sidelined.

In the midst of these conditions, in 1979 a group of five individuals (Wilson Souto Jr., Chico Pardal, Fernando Alexandre, Plínio Chaves, and Riba de Castro) co-founded the independent São Paulo performance space, publishing house, and recording studio Lira Paulistana, a basement theater in the middle-class neighborhood of Pinheiros that hosted and disseminated a series of landmark independent productions in theater, art, poetry, and music. Souto Jr. described being motivated to create a space "for people who proposed projects that were a bit different than what we heard on the radio and what we saw on the television."[53] Popular musicians and groups affiliated with Lira Paulistana included Itamar Assumpção, Arrigo Barnabé, Rumo, Patife Band, Língua de Trapo, Premê, Titãs, and others. Experimentally oriented musicians from earlier generations, including Tropicálists Jards Macalé and Tom Zé, performed there from time to time as well. Known in the press as the Vanguarda Paulista (São Paulo Vanguard), they became recognized for their adventurous innovations that incorporated

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[52] Vanguarda Paulista musician Luiz Tatit recalled a common experience that experimentally oriented independent musicians faced,: "The disc jockeys even said to us, 'No, your music is really good, I'd listen to it in my house, but I can't put it on the radio,' because he was like those who say, "For the people we have to put out something simpler.' […] The music [we made] was strange for that moment. There was no space for experimentation." Interview with Luiz Tatit, January 18, 2016. "Os disk jóqueis até diziam assim para a gente: 'não, a sua música é muito boa, eu ouviria na minha casa, mas eu não posso pôr na rádio, não,' porque é como quem diz, 'para o povo a gente tem que dar uma coisa mais simples.' […] A música era estranha para aquele momento. Não havia um espaço de experimentação."

[53] Interview with Wilson Souto, Jr., February 23, 2016. "…pelas pessoas que tinham uma proposta de trabalho que era um pouco diferente do que a gente ouvia no rádio, do que a gente via na televisão."

music from a variety of styles and traditions. Nilton "Niltão" Silva Costa, an older-generation fan

of experimental music who has frequented concerts in São Paulo for more than 40 years, likened

the contemporary scene to a "second wave" of the Lira Paulistana productions he saw in the

1980s, although younger practitioners, emphasizing the uniqueness of their own musical

productions and objecting to the implications of the "vanguard" label, tended to downplay direct

comparisons.[54] In addition to having a lasting effect in the Brazilian popular music sphere and

the broader tradition of Brazilian artistic experimentalism, Lira Paulistana's affiliates helped

pioneer the cultural production model that distinguishes the independent experimental scene

today. For them, the connection between institutional independence and creative experimentation

was fundamental: in order to achieve their creative goals, they had to develop self-directed forms

of production.

The (literally) underground concerts held in Lira Paulistana's performance space stood in

marked contrast to the media spectacle of the televised popular music festivals of the Tropicália

era. Those who approached the venue from the street were greeted by a casually adorned door

that led to a bare, informal 250-person basement theater with seats surrounding the stage on three

sides. The space soon developed into a multimedia venue for independent theater, film,

journalism, visual arts, and record distribution.[55] Despite the locale's comparatively modest

accommodations, its existence provided crucial space for performance, recording, and

dissemination that enabled the production of a host of innovative works that otherwise would

have never seen the light of day. Patife Band leader Paulo Barnabé characterized its appeal in

social terms, as a space for people "who didn't listen to commercial music."[56] Lira Paulistana, he

recalled, "was kind of a magical place that way. It brought together these people and these

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[54] Interview with Nilton Silva Costa, June 19, 2016. "…segunda onda."
[55] I draw these characterizations of Lira Paulistana from Oliveira 2002 and Fenerick 2007.
[56] Interview with Paulo Barnabé, August 3, 2017. "...não ouviam som comercial."

people wanted to hear new things—they enjoyed Alceu [Valença], they listened to Caetano [Veloso], they listened to [Gilberto] Gil, but they needed a break from it, they needed a bit of something different."[57]

Although the musicians of the *Vanguarda Paulista* became known for the music they performed and recorded at Lira Paulistana, they had strong institutional roots in the University of São Paulo's Escola de Comunicações e Artes (School of Communications and Arts, or USP-ECA), where many of the movement's affiliated musicians had studied. At the time, the Brazilian academy was one of the few stalwart institutional supporters of experimental music. The musicians' links to the university also formed the basis for the introduction of the "vanguard" label assigned to the movement by the press, which arose from USP-ECA's association with avant-garde composition.[58] The university's location within the city contributed to the movement's development as well. In the late 1970s, student housing at the university was eliminated, causing students to move en masse into the surrounding areas, which included the neighborhood of Pinheiros. Combined with an already-vibrant artistic community in the region, this created ideal conditions for the formation of independent spaces such as Lira Paulistana. USP remains an important institutional point of origin for contemporary independent experimental musicians as well—it is by far the largest academic supporter of experimental music in the city of São Paulo, and while the university's institutional structure is somewhat removed from the circuit of independent performance spaces, a large percentage of participants

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[57] Interview with Paulo Barnabé, August 3, 2017. "…foi um lugar meio mágico nisso. Ele juntou essas pessoas e essas pessoas estavam querendo ouvir coisas novas—eles curtiam Alceu, eles ouviam Caetano, ouviam Gil, mas estavam precisando de uma quebrada, estavam precisando de uma coisa diferente um pouco."

[58] São Paulo newspaper *Jornal da Tarde* popular music columnist Maurício Kubrusly introduced the term because of the associations the university had with the compositional avant-garde. José Jota de Moraes, who taught music history at USP and wrote about art music for *Jornal da Tarde*, introduced the musicians' work to Kubrusly. According to Tatit, Kubrusly concluded: "OK, the people there at ECA are making avant-garde music and are bringing avant-garde music to popular music." Interview with Luiz Tatit, January 18, 2016. "Bom, é um pessoal lá da ECA que faz música de vanguarda e estão trazendo para a música popular a música de vanguarda."

in the contemporary scene studied music at USP-ECA. The region of Pinheiros remains a major

contemporary center for the production of independent experimental music as well.

Affiliates of Lira Paulistana with whom I spoke and who have been cited in the existing

literature have expressed a range of responses to the vanguard moniker given to them by the

press. Some, such as Riba de Castro and Arrigo Barnabé, embraced the term, while others, such

as Itamar Assumpção, repudiated associations with the avant-garde altogether. Rumo co-founder

Luiz Tatit emphasized the distance between the compositional avant-garde and its institutional

roots in the Brazilian academy and the independent productions of Lira Paulistana, asserting,

> [The university] did nothing for our work. That is to say, we can never say it did nothing,
> because everything has an influence. The idea of the avant-garde, for me, comes from art
> music—the idea of the avant-garde. But it didn't add anything in terms of technical
> resources, it didn't do anything, because the way of thinking of art music is one thing
> and the way of thinking of songwriting is another. And the people there didn't know
> this—the art music folks. They just told us that we weren't making music. Is that right?
> It was there that I learned that I wasn't making music, that I was doing something else.[59]

Tatit's recollection of dismissal on the part of the university resonates with the experiences of

many independent experimental musicians I met, who often expressed feelings of exclusion and

delegitimization from the Brazilian academy.

Despite these ambivalent feelings, the vanguardist impetus of positioning artistic

production at the forefront of the field of Brazilian popular music was central to the way Lira

Paulistana's affiliates conceptualized their music. The innovations of Tropicália loomed large.

Barnabé, for instance, declared himself a "son of Tropicália. Without it I wouldn't have existed"

(Fenerick 2007:18). Multiple musicians cited Veloso's notion of the "evolutionary line" of

Brazilian popular music as a central impetus behind their pursuit of musical innovation (Fenerick

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[59] Interview with Luiz Tatit, January 18, 2016. "No trabalho não adiantou nada. Quer dizer, a gente nunca pode dizer que não adiantou nada, porque alguma coisa influencia. A ideia de vanguarda, para mim, veio da música erudita. Isso sim, a ideia de vanguarda. Mas não adiantou nada em termos de recursos técnicos, isso não adiantou nada, porque o pensamento de música erudita é um e o pensamento de canção é outro. E eles mesmos lá não sabiam disso—o pessoal da música erudita. Eles só diziam para a gente que a gente não fazia música. Está certo? Foi lá que eu aprendi que eu não fazia música, fazia outra coisa."

2007:21-22). Even Itamar Assumpção, who rejected the avant-garde label given to him by the press, frames his music in terms of building on the innovations of Tropicália and developing new avenues in songwriting (Stroud 2010:95).

Two broad forms of musical experimentation by members of the *Vanguarda Paulista* stand out: the mixture of popular idioms with the sounds and creative approaches of the global compositional avant-garde, and transformations of the structural elements of Brazilian popular song. The work of Arrigo Barnabé, who became known for combining 12-tone composition with sonic elements derived from styles of popular music, epitomizes the former category. His 1980 album *Clara Crocodilo* (Clara Crocodile) provides a characteristic example. Throughout the album, the lyrics are delivered through a chaotic mix of sung melodies, crude spoken dialogue, and *fala-cantada* (sung speech). The vocalists' intonations change rapidly from line to line and include classic operatic *bel canto*, harsh leering sneers, and mocking imitations of television commercial jingles. The instrumentation, which incorporates a heavily distorted electric guitar and bass, horns, and a drum set, draws from existing templates in both fusion jazz and psychedelic rock. The album's combination of musical idioms and vocal techniques ultimately creates an absurd juxtaposition of both "high" and "low" culture, simultaneously cultivated and commercial. It became best known for its incorporation of 12-tone compositional techniques, a creative decision that Fabio Akcelrud Durão and José Adriano Fenerick have referred to as "appropriation in reverse" (2009:56). Several other productions by members of the Vanguarda Paulista incorporated 12-tone approaches as well; the introduction to Premê's 1981 song "Brigando Na Lua" ("Fighting on the Moon"), for instance, samples Anton Webern's "Five Pieces for Orchestra" (op. 10). Barnabé characterized his incorporation of serial techniques as a critical element of the "next step" in the "evolution" of Brazilian popular music after Tropicália,

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which he believed to only have been truly innovative in terms of lyrics and arrangements (Fenerick 2007:18).

Members of the *Vanguarda Paulista* transformed structural elements of Brazilian popular song in a variety of ways. Itamar Assumpção's album *Beleleu, Leleu, Eu* (1980), for instance, situated songs that followed standard verse-chorus structures within a series of chaotic "vignettes" composed of overlapping fragments of conversation, brief snippets of other songs on the album, spoken word, vocables, and extramusical noise. Others participated in more strictly theorized reinventions of Brazilian song practices. Rumo had roots in the mid-1970s as a discussion group about the formal aspects of popular song, and one of its members, Luiz Tatit, would later become arguably the country's premier academic theorist on the history and semiotic elements of Brazilian song traditions.[60] He characterized Rumo as being motivated by a desire to "discover what, in song, translated, as we say, the heart of language—the core of language."[61] The song "Ah!", off the group's self-titled 1981 debut album, exemplifies the group's self-conscious transformation of musical-structural qualities. In the first half, singer Paulo Tatit narrates the process of choosing the right word for a song:

Ah! You can't use just any word	*Ah! Não pode usar qualquer palavra*
So that's why it didn't work	*Então por isso que não dava*
I tried, repeated, thought it pretty and placed it	*Eu tentava, repetia, achava lindo e colocava*
If it doesn't fit, if you can't do it	*Se não cabe, se não pode*
You have to switch words	*Tem que trocar de palavra.*

In the song's second half, Paulo Tatit vocally pantomimes that very act: "Han… han… / Hummm / Chiiiiii / Ai ai ai ai ai ai ai / Han? / Hei! Hou! / Ara! / Ah! / Ah!" This kind of lyrical

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[60] See Tatit 1996; 2004. The group's name, "Rumo" which translates as "course" or "direction," itself suggests a creative impetus toward forward movement or progress.

[61] Interview with Luiz Tatit, January 18, 2016. "…era descobrir o que, na canção, traduzia, digamos, o âmago da linguagem—o núcleo da linguagem."

experimentation was a core component of Rumo's conceptual mission of "renewing" the musical language of Brazilian popular song (Tatit 2004:62). As I will discuss in Chapter Five, this project continues in radicalized form in the contemporary experimental scene.

In the years after its founding, Lira Paulistana became an increasingly significant institution in the São Paulo cultural world, with several of its affiliated members achieving success on a national scale. Yet it was not to last. In 1983, Lira Paulistana's record label, which had launched the careers of multiple members of the *Vanguarda Paulista,* entered a partnership with national label Continental. In theory, Continental's involvement would have afforded its new affiliate musicians an expanded, nationwide distribution network. In practice, over time, they found themselves marginalized within their new institutional structure. This coincided with the emergence of cultural institutions such as the Cultural Center of São Paulo (CCSP) and the statewide network of privately controlled and publicly funded cultural centers known under the moniker of SESC-SP (Serviço Social do Comércio de São Paulo, or Commercial Social Service of São Paulo), which provided crucial additional performance space for musicians. By 1985, Lira Paulistana closed its doors.

Despite not having achieved the same level of mainstream success as Tropicálistas Veloso and Gil, the intervention on the part of Lira Paulistana's affiliates into the dominant media model of the era continues to resonate. While the founders of Lira Paulistana did not participate in the local punk scene, as I will discuss, the model of cultural production they helped to pioneer shared much in common with the DIY ethos present in punk cultures of the era. Co-founder Riba de Castro asserted that the significance of the movement's contributions outweighed those of Tropicália, which he characterized as being limited in scope and in numbers of participants compared to the Vanguarda Paulista. Drawing attention to the collective, "spontaneous" nature of the culture surrounding Lira Paulistana, he argued that the two were

fundamentally different in terms of motivations: "They were protesting against the system, we were looking for a new system."[62]

The dichotomy de Castro draws between Tropicália and Lira Paulistana—perhaps motivated by his own intimate involvement in the movement—may not be mutually exclusive. It is possible to view the protests initiated by Veloso and Gil as a crucial first step toward the development of autonomous institutions such as Lira Paulistana. In this light, the actions of individuals such as de Castro follow as a natural extension of the critique first launched during the Tropicálist project.

Yet the story is more complicated than the linear progression of Tropicália through Lira Paulistana. While these moments profoundly shaped the development of Brazilian independent experimentalism, the 1970s and 80s saw the rise of a variety of independent music cultures, several of which, while not initially inclined toward formal experimentation, would establish key groundwork for more radically transformative creative approaches and self-directed strategies for cultural production. To fully account for the diverse historical vectors affecting contemporary independent experimentalism, we must turn to a comparatively neglected area in studies of Brazilian popular music and musical experimentalism: the DIY (*faça você mesmo*) ethos pioneered in punk culture.

DIY Experimental

DIY motivates and informs contemporary independent experimentalism in São Paulo on a fundamental level. Creative approaches with connections to DIY musical cultures such as punk are common throughout the contemporary scene, with many members citing DIY as a central inspiration for their work and outlook. I employ the term *DIY experimental* to characterize this

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[62] Interview with Riba de Castro, February 12, 2016. "Eles iam em protesto contra o sistema, a gente era busca de um novo sistema."

approach. Although the DIY experimental attitude shares certain conceptual and performative elements with canonic understandings of experimentation forwarded by scholars (e.g. Ballantine 1977; Nyman 1999) and musicians such as John Cage (1961:3-17), particularly in its emphasis on democratic participation and the founding of new creative paradigms from the ashes of existing ones, it also exhibits its own set of qualities that shape contemporary musicians' actions in distinct ways. Furthermore, as I will discuss, despite its roots in punk culture, the present-day DIY experimental approach manifests as a related yet fundamentally separate phenomenon from the scenes in which it initially arose—an inclusive transformation of the attitude no longer explicitly tied to punk that has, like the DIY ethos itself, come to encompass a variety of perspectives and practices.

This relationship hit home for me when I attended an all-night concert in January 2016 at the independent performance venue Espaço Zé Presidente, in the São Paulo neighborhood of Pinheiros. It took me over an hour to find the space, which was hidden behind a nondescript, unmarked two-story building covered in the runic Brazilian graffiti script known as *pichação*. Upon entering, I discovered a sprawling, labyrinthine complex with two concrete outdoor terraces, open-windowed sitting areas with worn furniture and doodles on the walls, and a compact performance area with a bar, tiny stage, and modest space for spectators. Members of the DIY labels Meia-Vida and Dama da Noite Discos, who co-hosted the event, sold LPs, cassettes, and CDs along a wall. By 2 AM, at least 80 spectators and performers—evenly gendered, aged 20 to 45, dressed in casual clothing punctuated by occasional punk attire—filled the small hall and moved in and out of the performance area as they went outside to chat or smoke cigarettes. Groups started playing abruptly, without introductions or set start times. The musicians mixed in a wide variety of stylistic referents (noise, industrial rock, blues, electronica, free jazz, drone) and performance practices. The groups themselves were similarly diverse in

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makeup, ranging from the solo musician Douglas Magalhães, who mixed in blues- and drone-inflected guitar motifs with loops, to the three-person band Rakta, whose members floated spoken word, samples, and soaring vocal improvisations over a driving punk beat. I realized that despite the performers' genre-defying repertoire, the intimacy and energy of the environment, self-presentation of some of the musicians and spectators, and informal atmosphere of the venue reminded me of DIY shows I had attended in New York City, as well as the type of scene recounted in scholarly accounts of punk cultures (e.g. Matsue 2009; McNeil and McCain 1996; Sabin 1999). I turned to one of the musicians who had just performed and commented that the scene seemed philosophically, if not sonically, linked with punk. He responded with a smile: "All of us are."[63]

Figure 2.2: Members of the band Auto (Alexandre Amaral, Marcilio Silva, Marcelo Fusco, Jonathan Gall, Carlos Issa) perform at Espaço Zé Presidente. January 14, 2016.

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[63] Conversation with Carlos Issa, January 16, 2016. "Todos nós."

Figure 2.3: Vocalist Aline Viera, of the band Círculo Avesso, performs at Espaço Zé Presidente. January 14, 2016.

These connections came as a surprise to me. Although some scholars touch on the experimentalist impetus toward radical reinvention in post-punk (e.g. Reynolds 2005) and the shared elements between punk and earlier avant-garde movements such as dada and futurism (e.g. Henry 1984:1-8; Martin 2002:90; Priest 2013; Simonelli 2002:124-29), few considerations of the connection between punk cultures and experimentalism exist, particularly in terms of its effect on musicians' creative practice.[64] The contemporary independent experimental scene, which both draws from and is distinct from punk culture, presents an optimal case study for this link.

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[64] Lauren Flood's examination of experimental instrument construction and modification practices among independent DIY-influenced creative communities (what she terms *DIY music technology*), provides a notable exception (Flood 2016:2). Benjamin Piekut, focusing on encounters between Iggy Pop and experimental musicians affiliated with the Ann Arbor-based ONCE Festival, also discusses the relationship between early punk figures and the US compositional avant-garde, although he primarily addresses the ways in which Iggy Pop "attempted his own translation of experimental techniques into the networks of popular music" rather than the ways in which punk culture influenced musical experimentalism (Piekut 2011:26).

In drawing from the legacy of punk and DIY, contemporary independent experimental musicians draw from a rich set of performance practices and ideologies that have globally circulated for over four decades.[65] While scholars, journalists, and practitioners often disagree on the "true" birthplace of punk rock, they generally acknowledge that the movement had roots in both the US and the UK and began to achieve global popularity with the mid- to late-1970s productions of bands such as the Ramones, the Clash, the Germs, and the Sex Pistols (Lentini 2003:152-54; Lull 1987:235; O'Hara 1995:10; Simonelli 2002:121-122). Chronicles of the era identify a set of shared impetuses and qualities that exerted influence on the movement during its early years: a reaction against perceived commercialism and superficiality in pop music, fashion choices and self-presentations that embraced fluid expressions of gender and sexuality, a push toward inclusivity and intimacy that many felt had disappeared from the performances of mainstream popular musicians, valorizations of working-class authenticity, youth rebellion, and a creative ethos of self-directed, independent "do-it-yourself" (DIY) production (Henry 1984:1-8; Lentini 2003:154-56; McDonald 1987:91-94; Simonelli 2002:122; Triggs 2006:70). Critics draw particular attention to the movement's motivational roots in returning rock to its perceived origins in lay practice and the rejection of virtuosity as a requirement for musical participation. Simon Reynolds locates part of this antagonism in reactions against the perceived "elitism" of avant-garde genres of rock of the era such as progressive rock (2005:2).

Musically, early punk rock featured small-group ensembles, simplified harmonic and melodic structures, and rough, often loud and aggressive vocal and instrumental tones. Bill

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[65] The term "punk" has roots as a slang term referring to, among other things, homosexuality, prostitution, untrustworthiness, and violence (Laing 2015:55-57) Beginning in the 1960s, the term was used to refer to US-based "garage" bands; by the 1970s, fanzines such as Sniffin' Glue (UK) and Punk (USA) employed it with regularity (Lentini 2003:154; Triggs 2006:70). Today, it has taken on a variety of often disparate meanings that have referred to, among other things, specific stylistic idioms, musical-cultural movements, visual aesthetics, antiauthoritarian and communitarian attitudes, ideologies, and subcultures. I use the term "punk" as a broad term to refer to prominent shared qualities of the legacy of these subcultures, scenes, and styles.

Martin has characterized the musical significance of the punk rock movement in terms of its "reinvention of radical negativity," arguing that its "rejection of musical technique is first of all a rejection of the orientation of the aesthete" (2002:90). Musicians generally performed in small, informal venues and distributed their music on independent record labels. Many early punk rock lyrics became notorious for confrontational and often shocking lyrics that explored oppositional themes of antiauthoritarianism and revolution.

Central to the burgeoning punk movement of the mid- to late-1970s and the movements it generated was the DIY ethos, which emphasized individual initiative, self-determination, independent thought, and creative freedom. In the arena of music, those who follow the DIY ethos seek to generate autonomous, cooperatively directed cultural production initiatives that do not depend on the support of dominant institutions. Musicians adopt the DIY approach both out of necessity, due to factors such as exclusion from mainstream music markets, and out of ideological opposition to capitalism and consumer culture. Although the notion of adopting "do it yourself" approaches as strategies for cultural production did not initially emerge in the context of punk musical culture—it had previously manifested, for instance, in the 1950s-era Situationist International movement—its prominence in early punk culture represented the beginning of a broader global transformation of the concept into a variety of contexts and practices (Bennett and Guerra 2019:7). Since then, as Andy Bennett and Paula Guerra note, DIY has "developed from a punk-focused ethos of resistance to the mainstream music industry into a more widely endorsed aesthetic underpinning a broad sphere of alternative cultural production" (2019:7; see also Bennett 2018).

Some scholars highlight a connection between the DIY ethos and the anarchist concept of direct action, in which individuals collaborate to achieve a goal without the support of outside

authorities.[66] DIY shares much in common with the anarchic impetus to create not only alternative modes of production, but also alternative modes of existence, in which "one's actions are radically disconnected from centralized modes of production and consumption" (Cuffman 2015:7). The DIY ethos further represents a powerful philosophical means of democratizing culture, transforming passive consumption into active creation, and focusing on process rather than product, thus creating a value system in which "producing is as crucial as *what is produced*" (Rivett 1999:43, emphasis in original).

Although it rose to prominence with the productions of early punk rock figures and their successors, DIY approaches have manifested in a variety of different contexts; indeed, there are a host of independent, self-directed networks of cultural production outside of the punk arena that one could characterize as implicitly DIY. Multiple genre cultures in Brazil, such as those focused around hip-hop and *funk carioca*, have exhibited these very qualities since their inception (see Essinger 2005; Pardue 2011). Furthermore, many international instances of independent experimentalism, such as Fluxus or the Chicago-based Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), have also exhibited elements of DIY in their founding principles and approaches to cultural production. Early independent experimental projects in Brazil are no exception—Lira Paulistana and the community of artists affiliated with *cultura marginal* very much embody core qualities associated with DIY, despite not containing prominent ties to punk culture. One might go so far as to characterize independent experimentalism itself as an intrinsically DIY endeavor, in the broad sense of the term. Such is the case with the

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[66] Ferrell 2005:82-84; McKay 1998:6; Triggs 2006:73. Early punk musicians garnered particular attention for incorporating references to "anarchy" in their lyrics. This took diverse forms that ranged from nihilistic celebrations of chaos, as in the work of bands such as the Sex Pistols, to more explicitly ideological adoptions of radical anarchist politics, as in the work of bands such as Crass (Cogan 2008:78-81; Simonelli 2002:124). The latter stance on ideological anarchism, while comparatively rare in early manifestations of punk, became one of the key philosophical precursors for global punk movements of the 1980s such as anarcho-punk and hardcore (Cuffman 2015:6).

contemporary São Paulo scene, which counts a variety of participants who do not have roots in punk culture but employ DIY as a central impetus guiding their own approaches to creativity and cultural production.

Scholars and journalists generally mark 1979, the year of Margaret Thatcher's election and the death of Sex Pistols bassist Sid Vicious, as the symbolic "death" of the first wave of punk rock (Hesmondhalgh 1997:255). Despite this, punk gave rise to a diverse set of offshoots in the musical and cultural arenas across the global sphere. Those who believed punk had strayed from its original energy and philosophical roots carried on its legacy in an even more intense and ideologically focused form with the movement that became known as "hardcore." Although the DIY ethos had acted as a central guiding influence in punk since its beginning, hardcore foregrounded it in a more prominent and ideologically focused way than before (Wolf 2013:n.p.).[67] The movement originated in the late 1970s, primarily in Southern California and the Washington, D.C. area, with the productions of bands such as Black Flag, S.O.A., the Teen Idles, Bad Brains, and Minor Threat. Seeking to build on the energy and concise sonic foundations of their early punk rock predecessors, as well as the riff-centered guitar textures of mid-1970s hard rock, hardcore bands produced intense, short, and aggressive songs characterized by distorted, riff-driven guitar motifs, fast and energetic percussion, and extreme vocals delivered via screams, groans, and spoken word (Azerrad 2012; Easley 2015; Goldthorpe 1992:39; Sabin 1999:4). Lyrics were direct and confrontational, and generally explored political issues such as socioeconomic inequality, corruption, and police brutality (McDonald 1987). Hardcore practitioners generally esteemed live performance over recording—a choice that was

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[67] Bands who recorded albums released their music independently, and several bands, such as Black Flag and the Teen Idles, started labels centered around DIY as a guiding principle. Some of these labels remain in existence today: Dischord Records, founded in 1980 by Teen Idles members Ian MacKaye and Jeff Nelson, continues to act as a major institutional force in the Washington, D.C. hardcore scene (see Cuffman 2015:8). Their approach remains a model for independent, DIY-oriented record labels and performance spaces throughout the globe, including the independent experimental music scene in São Paulo.

deeply tied to the communitarian, anticapitalist impetuses that ran through the scene.[68] Timothy Cuffman has drawn attention to the rejection of aesthetic judgment and artistic hierarchy implicit in hardcore bands' focus on live performance, noting that "the immediacy and energy of the punk show were paramount over both creating something beautiful—accessible through dispassionate contemplation—and creating something profitable—accessible through the market" (2015:8). As I will discuss, the focus on the live show as the central locus of musical production persists in the contemporary independent experimental scene.

Not everyone who followed early punk rock followed the back-to-basics strategy of hardcore. Initially centered in the US and the UK, a loose conglomeration of bands and individuals emerged out of local punk scenes but instead began to foreground more complex and overtly experimental approaches. These figures came to be known under the moniker of "post-punk"—an umbrella term that captures the musicians' roots in punk musical cultures, but also belies the vast diversity of musical trajectories and philosophical stances held by its members. Post-punk bands embraced stylistic hybridity to a degree not previously seen in punk rock, mixing such diverse genres as funk, reggae, Krautrock, disco, and heavy metal into the musical template provided by early punk rock. Many of them, such as Talking Heads and Throbbing Gristle, are regarded as pioneers of related genres such as new wave and industrial rock in their own right. Post-punk bands also incorporated formal experimentation to a degree not previously seen in punk musical cultures. Complex arrangements in the vein of 1970s-era progressive rock were common, as were creative techniques such as collage, field recording, and the incorporation of harsh noise. Simon Reynolds highlights the presence of a vanguard impetus toward pushing

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[68] As Teen Idles and Minor Threat member Ian MacKaye recalled, releasing an album produced a commodity for profit and consumption, which was "totally the opposite of punk rock. You're not supposed to make money; you're supposed to make shows, a point of gathering" (Cuffman 2015:8). Ironically, MacKaye would soon found Dischord, one of the first DIY labels of the hardcore scene. He characterized his motivations as being grounded in the desire to "document something that was profoundly important to us" (quoted in Cuffman 2015:8).

artistic boundaries and modernizing existing musical forms, asserting that the figures of post-punk "defined punk as an imperative to constant change" and "dedicated themselves to fulfilling punk's uncompleted musical revolution" (2005:1). In contrast with early punk rock bands, who tended to reject vanguardist pretensions, these figures centrally incorporated the contributions of the artistic avant-garde and made references to a variety of vanguard artistic movements, from dada to Italian futurism to the films of Jean-Luc Godard (Reynolds 2005:2).

Over the course of the late 1970s and 80s, the legacy of early punk rock, hardcore, and post-punk resonated across the global sphere. In Brazil, the city of São Paulo became an early center for the country's burgeoning scenes. Pioneering Brazilian punk bands such as Restos de Nada (Remains of Nothing) and Condutores de Cadáver (Corpse Drivers), inspired in part by the anarchic call to arms put out by bands such as the Sex Pistols, found common ideological ground in expressing opposition to a variety of entrenched issues in Brazilian society. This included the dictatorship—one famous early band, AI-5, for instance, took its name from the eponymous 1968 law that suspended habeas corpus and outlawed antigovernment political expression. Much like the pioneering figures of Brazilian hip-hop in the 1980s, early Brazilian punk rockers generally came from the working-class outskirts of the city of São Paulo known as the *periferia* (periphery), and sought to speak truth to the realities of everyday life and confront pervasive feelings of exclusion and alienation. As Clemente Nascimento, bassist of Restos de Nada and the 1980s-era hardcore punk band Inocentes, put it, "The first bands arose out of the necessity of speaking, of hearing a sound… the Sex Pistols were saying 'Anarchy in the U.K.,' or 'being on the street in London,' and that left out who spoke of the breakdown of [São Paulo neighborhood Vila] Carolina, of what was happening to you… who spoke of you, of your reality."[69]

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[69] Quoted in de Oliveira 2011:133. Originally featured in the documentary film *Botinada: A origem do Punk no Brasil* (dir. Moreira 2006). "As primeiras bandas surgiram da necessidade de você falar, de você ouvir um som… *Sex Pistols* falando 'Anarchy in U.K.,' ou 'estava na rua em Londres,' e faltava quem falasse da quebrada da Carolina, do que estava acontecendo com você… falasse de você, da sua realidade." "Carolina" refers to "Vila

Although early punk musicians in Brazil do not generally cite figures from the canon of

Brazilian popular music as influences, certain key shared elements exist. The punk impetus

toward circumventing institutional obstacles and resisting the dictates of authority shares much

in common with the archetypal figure of the *malandro* ("rogue" or "hustler"), a streetwise

character in Brazilian culture celebrated by samba songwriters for his savvy and ability to

achieve goals despite societal barriers. One musician in the São Paulo scene cited classic samba

performer Bezerra da Silva, who adopted the *malandro* persona in his own performances, as a

classic example of the punk attitude.[70] Silvio Essinger has highlighted the connections between

Brazilian punk and the flippant attitude of early samba songs such as Noel Rosa's "Último

Desejo" (Last Wish), as well as Tropicália, which he refers to as a "liberating example" for punk

rockers.[71] He further highlights Veloso's performance of "É Proibido Proibir" at the 1968 TV

Record festival, which he argues "inaugurated the era of punk attitudes on Brazilian stages"

(Essinger 1999:88).

By the end of the decade, news reports of punk gatherings began to circulate in the press.

In 1979, the journal *O Repórter* announced the presence of a regular gathering of punks in the

São Bento metro station, which it dubbed "Panquilândia" (Punkland).[72] During this time, DIY

production in the form of fanzines and independent record labels was central to the burgeoning

scene. A variety of independent venues, including Lira Paulistana, opened their doors to punk

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Carolina," a working class *periferia* neighborhood in the North Zone of São Paulo that became an early hotspot for
São Paulo punk rockers.

[70] As he declared: "Put Bezerra da Silva in a punk band and I'll say: 'this guy is more punk, man.'" Interview with
Paula Rebellato and Douglas Magalhães, March 14, 2016. "Coloca o Bezerra da Silva em uma banda de Punk, eu
vou falar: 'esse cara é mais Punk, véi.'" (Statement by Magalhães.)

[71] 1999:85-87. The lyrics of "Último Desejo," which Essinger refers to as "definitively pre-punk," exhibits many of
the oppositional qualities found throughout punk songs: "To the people I hate / Always say that I do not pay / That
my home is the tavern / That I ruined your life / That I don't deserve food / That you paid for me." "Às pessoas que
eu detesto / Diga sempre que eu não presto / Que meu lar é o botequim / Que eu arruinei sua vida / Que eu não
mereço a comida / Que você pagou pra mim." Essinger further highlights other samba figures such as Nelson
Cavaquinho and Aracy de Almeida as key exemplars of samba's "punk spirit." See Essinger 1999:85-86.

[72] Quoted in Essinger 1999:104. The journal noted that the punk rockers expressed a desire to "contest the political
regime in which we live" ("contestar o regime político em que vivemos"). In the 1980s, the São Bento station
became an early hotspot for early Brazilian hip-hop practitioners.

rockers as well. Over the course of the early- to mid-1980s, punk scenes rapidly expanded throughout the country. This coincided with the rise of *rock brasileiro* (Brazilian rock), a phenomenon that fostered the rise of nationally based rock musicians in a range of genres, including punk (Béhague 2006:86-87). In 1982, São Paulo bands Inocentes, Olho Seco, and Cólera released the first Brazilian punk rock album, *Grito Suburbano* (Suburban Scream) on Olho Seco vocalist Fábio Sampaio's independent record label Punk Rock Discos. The LP's songs addressed a litany of societal woes in adversarial and unapologetic tones. Since its release, many of its songs, such as "Pânico em SP" (Panic in SP), have become iconic.

By the mid-1980s, punk had entered the mainstream Brazilian cultural sphere, although underground scenes would continue to operate for decades to come. This period also saw the rise of Brazilian "post-punk" bands such as Patife Band, Os Voluntários da Pátria, Fellini, and Chance. Many of these groups were motivated to expand the existing template of the Brazilian popular music industry; Chance singer and keyboardist José Augusto Lemos, for instance, characterized his creative approach at the time in large part as a reaction against the rise of *rock brasileiro*, asserting, "Brazilian rock, sung in Portuguese, sounded grotesque to me, condemned to a straitjacket of clichés and secondhand ideas."[73] Brazilian post-punk bands presented a wide and eclectic variety of musical explorations, some of which seemed to depart entirely from the strict musical template provided by early punk and hardcore. Several directly engaged with the legacy and techniques of the popular music avant-garde, such as Patife Band, which mixed rhythms and guitar riffs derived from various popular styles with melodic elements derived from 12-tone composition. Headed by Arrigo Barnabé's brother Paulo Barnabé, Patife Band exemplified the type of intermittent collaboration of the time between the underground punk

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[73] Email interview with José Augusto Lemos, October 20, 2016. "O rock brasileiro, cantado em português, me soava caricatural, condenado a uma camisa-de-força de clichês e ideias de segunda mão."

scene and the kind of avant-garde MPB represented by the figures of the Vanguarda Paulista.[74]

Other post-punk figures mixed in iconic Brazilian styles, albeit in unpredictable and subversive ways. Characteristic examples of this approach include Chance's 1985 release "Samba do Morro," which blends elements of electronica and drone with the "bossa nova" preset beat of a Casiotone MT-65 keyboard, and Fellini's "Zum Zum Zum Zazoeira," which incorporated a Northeastern Brazilian *baião* beat.

Over the course of the ensuing years, the interventions of early punk and hardcore and the impetus toward experimentation present in post-punk gave rise to a variety of different creative approaches. Some figures, such as "post-hardcore" bands like Fugazi (US), kept the DIY ethos and political discourse of the hardcore movement while introducing a more flexible creative template that incorporated the kind of stylistic fluidity common in post-punk productions. Other figures made music that gave rise to new genres altogether. Today, the diverse constellation of styles and subcultures that grew out of early punk rock occupy a heterogeneous and overlapping cultural sphere in which it is possible for individuals to participate in locally driven punk cultures while still consuming media and music from across the globe, including styles that arose entirely outside the punk trajectory.

Members of the contemporary São Paulo scene draw from punk culture and the DIY ethos in several important ways that shape musicians' creative and organizational strategies on a fundamental level. Central to this process is an emphasis on initiative and collective action. Musician Carlos Issa, who plays a central role in organizing events in the contemporary scene,

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[74] Patife Band was one of several punk and post-punk bands that played at Lira Paulistana, which, despite its founders' roots in the academy, often collaborated with local punk figures. This resulted in a variety of performances by iconic figures of Brazilian punk, including a 1985 concert by São Paulo hardcore punk bands Cólera and Ratos do Porão that was later released as an acclaimed live album, *Ratos do Porão e Cólera Ao Vivo*. See http://www.vanguardapaulista.com.br/a-invasao-punk-na-sessao-maldita-do-teatro-lira-paulistana/. In conversation, Paulo Barnabé expressed resistance to Patife Band's frequent characterization as a punk or post-punk band, but acknowledged being attracted to the "anti-star" (*anti-estrela*) mentality fostered within punk cultures. Interview with Paulo Barnabé, August 3, 2017.

situated the roots of this approach in his formative years playing in the 1990s-era hardcore punk scene in São Paulo, saying, "I learned to do things from them. You want to record? Record. You want to do a show? Do the show. Get yourself a place to do it. Make your cover, make your poster."[75] Independent experimental musicians ground their approaches in punk culture's focus on making music regardless of societal obstacles or personal misgivings. "Go out and do it!" ("Vai fazer!") and "Do it!" ("Faça!") became regular exhortations in conversation when discussing strategies for making music. This focus often arose hand-in-hand with a general skepticism of over-analyzing creative practice, which many considered to be a hindrance to the kind of spontaneous action and non-judgmental environment necessary to sustain the scene.

The DIY ethos's emphasis on collective action also provides a foundational motivational factor in fostering collaboration, both within and beyond the context of the experimental stage. Participants in the São Paulo scene often emphasized the importance of acting in concert with fellow musicians, which some referred to as a "do-it-with-others" ("faça com outros") or "do it together" ("faça em conjunto") ethos that complemented the DIY approach's emphasis on individual initiative. This helps to provide a supportive peer environment where individuals feel free to take creative risks, thus facilitating the creation of a community where individuals feel empowered to confront the realities of everyday life—as Issa put it, to "creat[e] their universe to survive, to keep the mood, to stay healthy, to steady the spirit, to confront the city, confront money problems, relationship problems and such."[76] As I will discuss in the following chapters, the impetus to work with others plays a central role in not only confronting exclusionary

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[75] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "Aprendi com eles a fazer as coisas. Quer gravar? Grava. Quer fazer um show? Faz o show. Arranja um lugar pra fazer. Faz a sua capa, faz o seu poster."
[76] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "São pequenos grupos de pessoas criando o seu universo pra sobreviver, pra manter o humor, pra manter a saúde, pra desamassar o espírito, pra enfrentar a cidade, enfrentar o problema de dinheiro, problemas de relacionamentos e tal."

institutional structures, but also developing the cross-stylistic interpersonal relationships onstage

that have acted as a prime driver of experimental creativity in the scene.

Independent experimental musicians additionally adopt punk cultures' emphasis on

amateur music-making and lay practice. Individuals consistently cited punk's rejection of

virtuosity as a prerequisite for musical participation as an inspiration for beginning to play music

in the first place. Many were self-taught, and cited their autodidactic musical development as a

point of great pride and distinction. These same individuals often expressed perceptions of

exclusion on the part of dominant institutions such as the academy, which many perceived as

having delegitimized the musical practice of self-taught, independent musicians. This has

resulted, at times, in a reluctance on the part of some independent experimental musicians to

theorize their music or self-conceptualize as musicians in the first place. The following

conversation, with musicians Douglas Magalhães and Paula Rebellato, illustrates a common

attitude I encountered:

> Magalhães: I learned how to play completely alone—I'm not a musician, I don't know
> anything about theory.
> *McNally: Yeah, but you* are *a musician, right?*
> Magalhães: Yeah, kind of…
> Rebellato: But we have difficulty in saying "I'm a musician." Every time I say it, I say
> "No, no… I'm not." Because we're tied to that academic thing—the diploma.[77]

The DIY experimental attitude allows musicians to address this dynamic by not only legitimizing

their work, but re-asserting their worth and status as musicians and artists in their own right.

For some, this is a revolutionary act. As Rebellato declared, "A lot of people would hate to hear

that, right? 'Anyone can be an artist.' The hell they can!"[78] Rebellato's view provides a tacit

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[77] Interview with Paula Rebellato and Douglas Magalhães, March 14, 2016. Magalhães: "Aprendi a tocar tudo sozinho—não sou músico, eu não sei nada de teoria." *McNally: "É, mas você* é *músico, né?"* Magalhães: "É, sim, tipo…" Rebellato: "Mas a gente tem dificuldade em dizer: 'eu sou músico.' Sempre quando eu falo, eu falo 'não, não… não sou.' Porque a gente tá preso a essa coisa acadêmica—o diploma."
[78] Interview with Paula Rebellato and Douglas Magalhães, March 14, 2016. "Muitas odiariam ouvir isso, né? 'Qualquer pessoa pode ser artista.' Pode meu!" (Statement by Rebellato.)

rebuke to authorial understandings of creative ability as the sole purview of individuals with special talent. Under the auspices of DIY, anyone can make music. Creative communities with members who adopt this perspective can thus count on a wider breadth of ideas and practices being introduced than would be possible in musical cultures that require virtuosity or extensive training as requirements for participation.

The DIY ethos's orientation toward creative freedom crucially encompasses the freedom to make mistakes and to see those mistakes as a welcome and necessary part of performance practice. Practitioners often spoke of the improvisational milieu of the independent experimental stage as a sort of laboratory for innovation, where musicians could test out new sounds and performance practices with minimal fear of repercussion. Rebellato spoke of embracing mistakes as one of the most exciting and creatively stimulating elements of performance in the scene, asserting, "I think it's really cool when that happens, more for the challenge—not because of the way the sound comes out, but because of the challenge of 'what are you going to do now?' 'What do you have?' It forces you to listen even more to what you're doing, you know? To perceive everything that you're doing, all the sounds."[79] Rebellato connected the scene's laboratorial approach to improvisation to a broader challenge of Brazilian societal norms running through the scene. As she argued, "But even the error isn't an error, right? It's a deconstruction of how things are done—because today, we live culturally with the teaching that it's not permitted to make mistakes."[80]

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[79] Interview with Paula Rebellato and Douglas Magalhães, March 14, 2016. "Acho muito legal quando acontece isso assim, mais pelo desafio, não porque o som vai sair de como ele tava, mas pelo desafio de "que que você vai fazer ali, agora". O que que ce tem, e te força a escutar mais ainda o que você tá fazendo, sabe? A perceber tudo que você tá fazendo, todos os sons…"

[80] Interview with Paula Rebellato and Douglas Magalhães, March 14, 2016. "Mas mesmo o erro não sendo um erro, né? É uma desconstrução a se fazer porque a gente já vive culturalmente um ensino que nos é dado de que também não é permitido errar, né?"

The scene's DIY-driven focus on individual initiative, collective action, and lay practice creates ideal conditions for the exploration of new areas of sound by fostering a steady stream of performances where creative risks are welcome and encouraged. On a basic level, the impetus toward overcoming doubts and structural obstacles in favor of action—of "doing it," so to speak—empowers individuals to organize the means of production necessary for performance to happen in the first place. The scene's focus on amateur music-making further democratizes the independent experimental sphere by breaking down perceptual barriers to entry. The repudiation of the act of aesthetic judgment generates an environment where unorthodox musical explorations and creative risks—what one individual characterized as "bizarre actions without grand ambitions"—are welcome.[81] Pushing individuals to set aside misgivings about whether they are ready to play and encouraging them to venture into new sonic territory that they might feel otherwise disinclined to explore fosters spontaneity and facilitates the state of flow necessary for such explorations.[82] For many participants, the resulting musical creations, despite not sharing prominent sonic elements with traditional punk rock, embody the essence of punk culture. Drummer Alexandre Amaral contrasted the DIY experimental creative approach to that of a jazz musician, asserting, "You take a, I don't know, jazz musician, for instance. He has a whole protocol he has to follow there. As free as he is, he masters a technique, he has a whole protocol—the time he'll play a solo, the time when he doesn't know what's there, the time that he'll return to accompany the saxophonist again. What we're doing—what I'm doing, it's totally without protocol. It's completely punk."[83]

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[81] Interview with Thiago Salas Gomes, December 21, 2015. "Ações bizarras sem grandes ambições."

[82] Andrew T. Landau and Charles J. Limb draw attention to the importance of comfort and ease in performance settings in fostering flow. As they argue, "It is critical for musicians to feel confident and comfortable in their musical environment to experience flow" (Landau and Limb 2017:29). See also Biasutti and Frezza 2009:233; Csikszentmihalyi 1990.

[83] Interview with Alexandre Amaral, January 26, 2016. "Você pega um, sei lá, um músico de jazz, por exemplo. Ele tem todo um protocolo a seguir ali. Por mais que ele seja livre, domine a técnica, ele tem todo um protocolo—de a hora que ele vai solar, a hora que não sabe o que lá, a hora que ele vai voltar a acompanhar de novo o saxofonista. Isso que a gente faz—o que eu faço, é totalmente sem protocolo. É totalmente punk."

The São Paulo scene's motivational grounding in DIY provides critical energy that drives the scene and helps to compensate for the comparative lack of institutional support for experimental musics in Brazil. Guilherme Granado, speaking of his experience touring in Western Europe, noted the region's wealth of public financial support for experimental music but argued that the DIY spirit had led São Paulo-based musicians to be "less complacent" in comparison to the scenes in European cities, which he characterized as having "less fire."[84] This mentality leaves little room for excuses. I discovered this firsthand when two musicians, upon learning of my own experience as a composer and performer, invited me to share an upcoming bill with them at the venue Hotel Bar. After gratefully assenting to their invitation, I asked if it would be possible to exit the bill and join them for a later performance date since all my instruments were in the United States, it was prohibitively expensive to buy new equipment, I had nothing prepared to play, and the concert was in six days. None of these issues appeared to be obstacles to the two, who encouraged me to perform without overthinking things. The performance was going to be great, they assured me, and the experience enjoyable regardless. So I took their advice and put something together: I downloaded music programs for my iPad, recorded a variety of vocal loops and environmental noises, hastily learned how to sample and mix those loops in real time, and went out and performed. Thus began a months-long series of personal experimentations with vocals, field recording, and mixing programs that I performed at three separate venues in São Paulo, both individually and in collaboration with other musicians.

Independent experimental musicians' emphasis on direct action and lay practice dovetails with a generally oppositional stance oriented toward breaking down established institutions and disrupting creative paradigms. This mentality, which has roots in the antiauthoritarian stance present in global punk cultures since the 1970s, fosters an attitude in which the transgressive is

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[84] Conversation with Guilherme Granado, November 28, 2015. "Menos complacentes;" "mais fogo".

not only tolerated, but encouraged.[85] This impetus toward disruption rather than reproduction naturally lends itself to breaking established aesthetic and performance patterns. Musicians often incorporate sonic and performance qualities, such as extreme levels of volume or music that completely eschews harmony and melody, that violate the accepted standards of the mainstream musical sphere. Crucially, this includes the sonic roots of punk rock itself. As one musician put it, "Ah, punk is saying that it's that? That's what punk is? Alright, you break it. You have to do it differently."[86] These kinds of strategies effectively desacralize structures of signification that enjoy widespread, unquestioned acceptance in Brazilian society and force others to question the *doxa* that reinforce existing aesthetic hierarchies and political realities. They share much in common with the kind of subversion of social norms, inversion of traditional hierarchies, and tendency toward desacralization present in the impetus of the carnivalesque, although in São Paulo, individuals adopt stances centered on transgression and disruption year-round rather than only during the proscribed transgressive period of Carnival.[87]

For many musicians, this fosters broader feelings of freedom and personal autonomy beyond the creative realm. Musicians consistently cited punk cultures' drive toward confronting dominant power structures as one of its most important and liberating aspects. Still others conceptualized the creative ethos running through the independent experimental music scene as a means of resisting a more general sense of censorship and stifling of creative expression in the Brazilian cultural sphere writ large. Two members of the scene related this to what they perceived as excessive political correctness in the Brazilian cultural sphere, which in one

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[85] One musician, for instance, attributed her desire to seek out new sounds to her own experience in punk culture, which she said had given her an "education" in questioning established ideas and institutions. Interview with Carla Boregas, June 30, 2016. "…educação."

[86] Interview with Guilherme Henrique, June 20, 2016. "Ah, o punk está falando que é isso? É o punk? Então você quebra. Você tem que fazer diferente."

[87] Carnivalesque behavior expresses freedom from tradition and authority, and is characterized by satire, subversion, and laughter (see Bakhtin 1984:8).

individual's mind "affects everything, because it's affecting us as a society, it's going to affect the way you express yourself."[88] For them, the attitudes and approaches present in the experimental music scene offered a means of liberating themselves from such discursive and creative restrictions.

Musicians' incorporation of creative approaches and ideological stances drawn from punk culture accompanied a deep skepticism toward the institutionalization and canonization of experimental music, which many believe discourages direct engagement with the music and saps it of critical energy. Practitioners often critiqued the predominantly white, male, European and American academic canon of experimentalism—to which one musician referred unironically as "sacralized music"—which numerous musicians consider limited and exclusionary.[89] This is not to say that practitioners reject figures such as John Cage or Karlheinz Stockhausen outright—on the contrary, some consider those individuals central inspirations for their own approach to creative practice. Instead, practitioners object to the way these figures have been appropriated and presented as canonical figures against which they should feel obligated to situate their own music. This generates an environment in which musicians repudiate the vanguardist drive toward positioning art at the forefront of a historical trajectory. In the independent experimental scene, musicians tend to view previous historical movements as potential, but non-essential sources of inspiration that one may choose to engage with or ignore as they see fit. One musician argued that this played a central role in fostering the creation of music that "doesn't need to insert itself

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[88] Interview with Guilherme Granado, May 2, 2016. "Afeta tudo, porque está afetando a gente enquanto sociedade, vai afetar o jeito que você se expressa." It should be noted that the term *politically correct* (politicamente correto)—used, in this case, by two individuals with generally left-wing politics—carries a different connotation in Brazil than in the US, where it has been primarily employed by conservatives as a means of minimizing racism, sexism, and other vectors of oppression. In Brazil, the government itself has released missives on appropriate, or "correct" speech, which has provoked strong resistance from across the artistic and literary spectrum. As Frederick Moehn notes, "in a country where authoritarian suppression of civil liberties and free speech were still repugnant memories for many intellectuals, censorship of any stripe was to be resisted fiercely" (2009:281).

[89] Interview with Daniel Brita, April 9, 2016. "…música sacralizada."

in musical history—it kind of ignores it."[90] Another contrasted independent experimental

musicians' attitudes with that of the Tropicálists and the members of the Vanguarda Paulista,

arguing that members of the contemporary scene "don't really worry about maintaining any

specific tradition of Brazilian music," and that this had generated a more "flexible" creative

environment.[91] Other musicians were less rejectionist, choosing instead to develop projects that

foregrounded mindful connections to existing musical practices while maintaining a creative

prerogative to depart from those practices if they so desired.

The sonic and performative profile of the contemporary independent experimental scene

reflects both the influence of punk culture and the vast diversity of practices that circulate in the

broader international sphere. On the surface, practitioners do not follow the musical model

pioneered by the figures of early punk and hardcore. Ensembles seldom feature a traditional

guitar-bass-drum-vocals setup; when such configurations do exist, individuals more often than

not employ extended techniques and a variety of electronic effects that mix and manipulate those

sounds far beyond the core punk sonic template. Musicians generally dispose of the harmonic,

melodic, lyrical, and rhythmic template of early punk and hardcore in favor of a sonic palette that

foregrounds timbre and texture. With the exception of the few individuals who draw from sound

poetry, vocalists generally dispose of lyrics entirely. Recognizable chord progressions and

melodies, when they exist at all, are similarly rare. When percussionists incorporate identifiable

rhythmic motifs, they generally mix them with a variety of stylistic idioms over the course of a

single performance.

At the same time, certain key shared elements with punk centrally shape the scene's

musical profile and lend it a crucial energy and spark. Although musicians regularly record

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[90] Interview with Bruno Trochmann, December 3, 2015. "…não precisa se inserir dentro da história da música—ela ignora um pouco isso."
[91] Interview with Maurício Takara, April 20, 2016. "…não tem muita preocupação em manter nenhuma tradição específica da música brasileira;" "flexível."

tracks and full-length albums, the scene revolves first and foremost around live performance, where musicians often infuse shows with the kind of extreme sonic qualities (noise, feedback, distortion) found in punk-derived genres such as hardcore and grindcore. Some musicians drew direct connections between these styles and their own creative motivations: one individual, for instance, reported being inspired by the "intensity and the starkness" that he saw in the performances of post-hardcore band Fugazi.[92] Shows generally take place in informal, intimate venues where it is common for musicians and listeners to mingle freely in close proximity. These qualities lend shows an energy from co-presence and an unpredictability that encourages taking creative risks that does not exist in controlled studio settings.

More importantly, the DIY experimental impetus toward desacralization and breaking with established traditions fosters a creative approach that is ideal for mixing styles and practices from disparate sources in idiosyncratic ways. This shares certain elements in common with cultural cannibalism's embrace of transnational stylistic mixture, but takes it a step further. Cultural cannibalism offers an agglomerative creative model focused on developing the self through the absorption and "digestion" of other styles and creative approaches. This implicitly evolutionary approach offers the potential for transformation but still relies on continuity with previous paradigms and identities. The DIY experimental mentality, by contrast, advocates unapologetic radical reinvention and fosters an attitude toward creativity where individuals feel empowered, as Guilherme Granado put it, "to not give satisfaction to anyone, to not compromise with anyone except yourself and who you're playing with."[93] Rather than adopt the vanguard impetus toward development and evolution, DIY experimentalism advocates the destruction of existing aesthetic hierarchies and the construction of new creative paradigms upon their ashes.

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[92] Interview with Jonathan Gall, November 3, 2015.
[93] Interview with Guilherme Granado, May 2, 2016. "…não dar satisfação para ninguem, não fazer comprometimento com ninguém a não ser com você mesmo e com quem você está tocando."

The DIY experimental drive toward radical reinvention inevitably entails leaving the musical milieu from which it arose. Indeed, although in many ways the contemporary independent experimental scene is very much adjectivally "punk" in that its practitioners' approaches derive in large part from the impetus pioneered by early punk musicians and their successors, it is not a "punk" scene in that it is not a genre culture centered around the performance of punk rock.[94] As Frederico Finelli, the leader of independent record label Submarine Records, described it, "it's really a mutation."[95] The resulting musical-cultural manifestation, while deeply informed by the legacy of punk cultures, exists as a separate entity in its own right—free to depart from the bounded musical and ideological profile of early punk rock and mix music, ideas, and individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds in a way that would not necessarily be possible in a strictly punk scene. Thus the mutated strain of punk culture running through the independent experimental music scene authors a break from its musical foundations and fosters a new creative culture with myriad possibilities.

Concluding Thoughts: Negotiating with the Past

In this understanding of creative practice, history acts as both associate and antagonist. On one hand, participants in the São Paulo scene explore a variety of novel directions in their music and seek to demonstrate independence from previous movements. To be experimental, in this context, is to repudiate the authority of the past, if not its occasional usefulness. Although musicians do incorporate established musical forms with regularity, they seek to do so on their own terms, rather than as a means of fulfilling a vanguard impulse toward modernizing art. The repudiation of tradition also functions as a means of demonstrating autonomy from dominant

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[94] For some participants, this development is a natural consequence of the creatively enabling elements of punk culture. As one musician put it, "Punk isn't a thing that limits. It's an 'expansory' thing." Interview with Carla Boregas, June 30, 2016. "O punk não é uma coisa limitadora. É uma coisa 'expansora'."
[95] Interview with Frederico Finelli, April 19, 2016. "É bem uma mutação."

power structures, whether discursive, as with the established canon of experimentalism, or institutional, as is the case with the Brazilian university system. In this philosophical framework, to situate one's music as an evolution of previous forms or to adjust one's music to external demands is to capitulate—to inhibit the autonomy that informs the scene's creative ethos. In this context, being *independent* and *experimental* are inextricable.

At the same time, no music is ever completely free from the influence of earlier traditions, and the music of the São Paulo scene is no exception. The enduring influence of punk culture and the DIY ethos, for instance, present a particularly apt example of this. Yet it is important to note the implicit power differential between the dominant scholarly presentation of experimentalism, in which canonical figures such as Cage exist on a lofty plane, to be emulated and admired, and the DIY experimental attitude, in which such figures are to be viewed (at least in theory) as collaborators with whom musicians may engage on equitable terms. And although it would be inaccurate to say that practitioners ever enact a truly clean break with the past, their drive toward subverting the authority of history generates an environment that is ripe for exploring new musical directions.

Chapter Two

Cartographies of Collaborative Creativity: Experimental Music as Social Practice

Obviously it's political. Because you create new territories, you create new relationships, but the search is for the unknown. You can't know what's going to happen. I can't promise you that I'll change the world. Because maybe the world will disappear and rise anew, or nothing will change. After I do it I'll know what happened. It's always this leap into the void. So it… it creates this problem, right? This dead end. I can't tell you what's going to happen. Nor do I know exactly what's happening. After it happens we can think about the subject. You can see politics in that. You can see an expansion of musical language, you can see someone who ends up healthier, feeling better. Like a kind of therapy, you know?[96]

— Carlos Issa

November 11, 2015. Natacha Maurer and Marcelo Muniz, the two members of the duo Brechó de Hostilidades Sonoras (Flea Market of Sonic Hostilities), approach the compact backroom performance area of the sprawling concert venue Trackers. The audience is composed of about fifteen fans, dressed casually and roughly ages 25-45. A gold sequined tablecloth adorns the center stage rectangular table, which is covered in a variety of mixing equipment, cords, and makeshift instruments Maurer and Muniz have constructed using secondhand materials. The two have appropriated an unorthodox set of items for their ensemble: a chicken-shaped jar, a gas mask, a large toy racecar, children's instruments that play prerecorded MIDI melodies, a plastic unicorn head fitted with a radio receiver in place of a horn, and two naked baby dolls with pentagrams inscribed on their foreheads. Maurer and Muniz have extensively rewired these items

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[96] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "Obviamente é político. Porque você cria territórios novos, cria novas relações, mas a busca é pelo desconhecido. Não dá pra saber o que vai acontecer. Então, eu não posso te prometer que eu vou melhorar o mundo. Porque, talvez, o mundo suma ou surge um novo, ou nada mude. Depois de fazer é que eu vou saber o que aconteceu. É sempre esse salto no vazio. Aí tem o… aí tem... cria esse problema, né? Esse beco sem saída. Eu não posso te dizer o que vai acontecer. E nem sei exatamente o que tá acontecendo. Depois de acontecer a gente pode pensar sobre o assunto. E aí, você pode enxergar política naquilo. Você pode enxergar uma expansão da linguagem musical, você pode enxergar alguém que termina aquilo mais saudável, se sentindo melhor. Como uma espécie de terapia mesmo, assim, sabe?"

with electronic apparatuses. When played, the instruments generate a diverse set of sounds; the plastic unicorn, for instance, functions as a jury-rigged theremin that Muniz uses to create various distorted unpitched tones depending on the placement of his hands in relation to the receiver. The ensuing concert features a cacophonous industrial collage of textures and timbres: scraping metallic grinds, echoing gears, high-pitched electronic squeals, desperate vocal screams, and at the end a subdued whisper of feedback.

The performance is the first of four this evening. Joining Brechó de Hostilidades Sonoras on the billing are São Paulo-based drummer Marcio Gibson and Portuguese guitarist Jorge Nuno, followed by US percussionist Frank Rosaly and Brazilian-Bolivian sufi dancer Ibelisse Guardia Ferragutti. At the end of the evening, the venue invites all those interested to participate in a collective improvisation. The event, hosted by the affinity group Circuito de Improvisação Livre (Circuit of Free Improvisation), is part of a regular monthly series held at Trackers that brings together experimentally oriented musicians from within and beyond São Paulo for open-ended performances. Although the attendees hail from a wide range of backgrounds, they find common ground in the shared collaborative spaces of the independent experimental scene. Maurer and Muniz are central participants: Maurer co-directs the Ibrasotope experimental music collective, and Muniz, a Ph.D. student in neuroscience at the University of São Paulo, is a member of multiple groups and leads workshops on how to build instruments using techniques such as hardware hacking and circuit bending.

Collaborative encounters such as these drive and define the creative profile of the São Paulo scene. Rather than remaining within the bounds of established groups or genres, independent experimental musicians operate in a rhizomatic network of artists and institutions and pursue interpersonal creative engagements with musicians from a range of disparate stylistic backgrounds. The mostly improvised encounters that emerge over the course of this process act

as a central motivational factor in the exploration of new areas of sound and the formation of diverse creative communities across traditional boundaries of practice. Musicians employ a variety of creative strategies as a means of negotiating these complex and often challenging encounters, from the development of conceptual narratives to interaction with audiovisual stimuli to mass-scale improvisations where individual musicians are free to do as they please. Independent experimental musicians' collaborative approaches challenge conventional individualistic understandings of musical creativity and resituate them in the realm of hybrid, collaborative social practice—in the encounters between different individuals and the diverse musical backgrounds and histories they bring to the stage.

This chapter addresses the dynamics of onstage collaborative creativity in the São Paulo scene. I begin with a discussion of the diverse creative approaches musicians employ in concert, focusing on the use of electronics, extended instrumental techniques, and instrument construction practices such as circuit bending and hardware hacking. The chapter then discusses the ways in which the scene's rhizomatic network dynamics affect onstage performance and foster ideal conditions for cross-stylistic collaborative creativity. I subsequently investigate the strategies that musicians employ as a means of negotiating these onstage interpersonal engagements and creating the conditions for the emergence of effective collaboration in the face of obstacles such as divergent idiomatic norms and onstage expressions of machismo. Drawing from scholarship on embodied cognition, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the ramifications of the embodied and intuitive nature of these encounters.

Mixing Musical Creativities

Multiplicity motivates and characterizes the contours of independent experimental creative practice in São Paulo. Musicians incorporate a variety of different creative strategies in

concert and interact with others who employ similarly diverse approaches in turn. Creativity in the scene is multifaceted—an array of potential creativities rather than a singular phenomenon with bounded qualities. My use of the plural term *creativities* follows Pamela Burnard, who argues for understanding musical creativity not as an individual phenomenon, but instead as a range of practices whose manifestations vary widely depending on contextual, practical, and individual factors (2012:7-10, 37). Burnard emphasizes the inherent heterogeneity of musical creativities in practice and the ways in which different creativities can not only coexist, but also interact in productive and unpredictable ways within collaborative contexts (2012:7-8). As she argues,

> The term 'musical creativity' makes creativity manifest as a singular term focused on single creators and on a distinctive set of masterworks (i.e. creative products). This plays down musical creativity as an overtly collective or collaborative activity, and presupposes a relatively stable and unified human subject. Furthermore, it does not allow for activity between domains, or for the radically creative challenge of interdisciplinary or cross-cultural music exchanges which result in hybrid genres (Burnard 2012:30).

The São Paulo scene represents a locus of performative interaction in which otherwise disparately situated musical creativities meet and mutate in unforeseeable ways.

Within the spectrum of the scene's broad variety of creative techniques, certain practices play a central role in building its novel sonic vocabularies: principally, a combination of electronic music technology, extended instrumental techniques, and self-constructed instruments. These broad categories contain a range of subcategories, whose combinations onstage generate a boundless variety of sonic possibilities in turn. The resulting permutations distinguish the scene from other experimental music cultures such as free jazz or genres of underground rock, which also mix creative techniques from different practices but rarely feature such disparate sets of techniques onstage at the same time on a consistent basis.

The use of electronic technology permeates the independent experimental scene in São Paulo, where it is common for electronic equipment to outnumber acoustic instruments by a

large margin (Fig. 3.1). Musicians' electronic tools roughly fall into two broad categories:

instruments designed to manipulate external sounds via techniques such as sampling, distortion,

looping, and feedback, and instruments such as synthesizers that allow the user to construct

sounds from scratch using electronic means such as wavetable synthesis.[97] Some musicians use

computer programs such as SuperCollider or PureData that allow users to manipulate sampled

sound on the fly via live coding. Those who incorporate this kind of programming software

generally employ it electroacoustically as a means of modifying external sounds such as

instruments, field recordings, or in one instance the sounds of a musician cooking lunch for

attendees (Fig. 3.2). More often, participants choose to refrain from the use of computers and

instead employ tactile or analog equipment such as synthesizers, delay and distortion pedals, and

samplers.

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[97] Wavetable synthesis allows the musician to construct sounds via repeating cycles of waveforms. This manifests in multiple ways. Additive synthesis involves blending basic waveforms together in order to generate a more complicated waveform. Subtractive synthesis allows the musician to use filters to selectively eliminate undesired elements of an existing complex waveform. Musicians also modulate existing waveforms by changing elements such as frequency. See Holmes 2016:249-54. In addition to allowing musicians to construct and manipulate timbres, these electronic resources also facilitate temporal manipulations of melody via techniques such as cutting, looping, and splicing.

Figure 3.1: Collection of instruments and equipment at the collaborative performance Mesa (Table). Elevado Cafe and Bar, October 27, 2015.

Figure 3.2: Blu Simon Wassem cooks lunch for attendees, while Rodolfo Valente uses SuperCollider to sample, loop, and mix the sounds of the cooking. Estúdio Fita Crepe, October 25, 2015.

Independent experimental musicians' rationale for using electronic equipment and programming follows a similar logic to that of pioneering electronic musicians such as Pierre Schaeffer and Karlheinz Stockhausen, who conceptualized electronic resources as a means of moving beyond the limitations of acoustic instruments. A variety of scholars have highlighted liberating elements of these techniques and, accordingly, have situated them at the heart of experimental music literature (see, for example, Beal 2006; Demers 2010; Hiller and Isaacson 1979; Holmes 2016; Mauceri 1997; Nyman 1999:89-109). Thom Holmes, for instance, emphasizes the "unlimited" sonic materials available to the electronic composer, who "not only creates the music, but *composes* the very sounds themselves" (2016:171). While these characterizations aptly describe the attraction of electronic music technologies to independent experimental musicians, multiple elements differentiate the São Paulo scene's incorporation of

electronic resources from the pioneers of early electronic music. First, although São Paulo-based musicians investigate a variety of challenging sonic areas, they also feel free to incorporate recognizable idiomatic material from popular styles. In this sense, their approach shares more in common with composers such as John Oswald, who regularly adapted elements from the popular music sphere, than with the canonic figures of *musique concrète* or *Elektronische Musik*, who viewed electronic techniques as a means of expanding formal, composer-directed investigations of new regions of sound. More importantly, as I will discuss, they primarily use electronic techniques as tools for live improvisation rather than studio-based composition.[98]

Independent experimental musicians' use of electronic technology intersects with the widespread use of unconventional instrumental techniques and prepared instruments. Unorthodox instrumental practices have long been a fixture of experimental composition, ranging from Henry Cowell's introduction of piano techniques that allowed players to generate dissonant stretches of overtones to the transformation of existing instruments such as the prepared piano to the use of atypical items, as in Cage's *Water Walk* (1959), which generated sound with items such as a toy fish and a pressure cooker (Cage 1961:149; Cowell 1930:5-6; Miller 2006:53). While participants in the São Paulo scene occasionally employ approaches drawn from the work of composers such as Cage, they more often invent their own innovative and often grotesque ways of broadening instrumental sonic horizons. Guitarist Mário del Nunzio, for instance, employs an empty beer can and a dog hair brush to violently strike the strings of his electric guitar to generate a variety of distorted, grating timbres (Fig. 3.3). For del Nunzio, these kinds of techniques de-emphasize conventions of melody and harmony. As he noted,

> In general, I don't really work with notes, with notes in general. When I go out and improvise, normally I don't tune the guitar. Whatever way it is, I pick it up and play it. What this means is that each string will be tuned in a way and the relation between the strings will be different, and if I want to do something specifically melodic or harmonic,

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[98] The use of the studio as a site for experimentation is common in other experimentally oriented genre cultures in Latin America; see, e.g., Bodiford 2017; Tironi 2012.

I'll have to adapt it to the situation then and there. I'll have to discover, 'Ah, this string is this way, and the other is that way, so I have to do something that will sound…' but normally this is secondary.[99]

Over the course of time, as his guitar becomes "seasoned" by the often rough effects of previous concerts, the palette of tone colors available to del Nunzio changes as well, thus adding an element of timbral indeterminacy shaped by the physicality of live performance. This unpredictable process generates an additional collaborative dynamic between del Nunzio and his guitar, each of whom dictate the possibilities of performance to one another in an ongoing embodied conversation of action and material transformation.

Figure 3.3. Marcio Gibson (drums) and Mário del Nunzio (electric guitar) perform. Del Nunzio is using a knife to play his guitar, while Gibson has put a metal plate on the snare drum. Trackers, October 10, 2015.

Many musicians choose to adapt traditional instruments associated with iconic Brazilian styles. Swiss-Brazilian instrumentalist Thomas Rohrer, for instance, has become widely known

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[99] Interview with Mário del Nunzio, May 24, 2016. "Em geral, eu não trabalho muito com notas, notas em geral. Quando eu vou tocar improvisação, normalmente eu não afino a guitarra. Do jeito que tá, eu pego e vou tocar. Isso significa que cada corda vai estar afinada de um jeito e que a relação entre as cordas vai ser sempre diferente, e se eu quiser fazer alguma coisa especificamente melódica ou harmônica, eu vou ter que me adaptar a aquela situação lá. Vou ter que descobrir, 'ah, essa corda aqui tá de tal jeito, a outra de tal jeito, então eu posso fazer a coisa que vai soar...' mas normalmente isso é secundário."

for his improvised transformations of the Brazilian *rabeca* fiddle. Rohrer has collaborated with a variety of musicians in São Paulo, from percussionists to experimental hip hop DJs to venerated master *rabeca* player Nelson da Rabeca. He has introduced a variety of innovations on the *rabeca* in order to explore new areas of sound, such as the use of a makeshift multi-threaded bow instead of the traditional Portuguese gut bow (Fig. 3.4) and the placement of industrial tools such as motor-driven screws and whirring rotors on the *rabeca*'s sturdy steel strings (Fig. 3.5). For Rohrer, these explorations stem from an early fascination with the rough timbre of the *rabeca*, whose steel strings and solid wooden body afforded him a wide set of possibilities not possible on more delicate stringed instruments such as the violin. The diverse range of preparations and extended techniques he has pioneered allow him a great deal of performative flexibility in the realms of both timbre and melody and is one of the primary reasons he has been able to successfully collaborate with such a diverse range of individual musicians. As I will discuss in Chapter Five, these kinds of transformations also offer members of the São Paulo scene the opportunity to reinvent established notions of genre.

Figure 3.4: Thomas Rohrer uses a multi-threaded bow to play the Brazilian rabeca *fiddle. Rohrer's apartment, June 27, 2016.*

Figure 3.5: Thomas Rohrer uses motor-driven screws and rotors on the rabeca's *steel strings and body. Rohrer's apartment, June 27, 2016.*

Figure 3.6: Thomas Rohrer's rabeca *and the various bows, items, and mechanical apparatuses he employs in concert. SESC Paulista, July 1, 2018.*

Independent experimental musicians often move beyond the incorporation of extended instrumental techniques and construct instruments from the ground up. Some practitioners, such as Marcelo Muniz and Natacha Maurer, adapt existing secondhand items and retrofit them for performance (Fig. 3.7). Others prefer to construct instruments from scratch, using basic components such as wires, receptors, and construction materials. Members of the scene who engage in these practices draw principal inspiration not from canonic figures such as David Tudor, but instead from internationally circulating ideals, movements, and communities oriented towards self-directed production and the re-appropriation of existing commercial materials.[100] Practitioners learn the techniques necessary for instrument construction via collective, DIY-informed organization. Some individuals attend workshops where interested parties can learn basic practices, while those seeking sustained engagement can frequent Garoa Hacker's Club, a permanent collective of knowledgeable leaders and interested participants who use circuit bending and hardware hacking to build a variety of musical and non-musical electronics.[101]

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[100] The most iconic global example of such a movement is the burgeoning Maker Movement, a global agglomeration of local and virtual communities oriented towards collaborative independent technical craftsmanship. The Maker Movement is generally traced back to the 2005 founding of *Make* magazine by Dale Dougherty, who sought to foster collaborative participation in activities such as hardware hacking and instrument construction (Dougherty 2012:11-12; Flood 2016:45). Dougherty situated the movement's roots in amateur hobbyism, a "need to engage passionately with objects in ways that make them more than just consumers," as well as a desire to incorporate emerging technologies and digital materials (2012:12). As Lauren Flood notes, the movement "promotes personal empowerment—simply by learning how the things around you work—while providing a skill-based, amateur-friendly community for those interested in a variety of technical and craft-oriented projects. While *making*, broadly construed, is hardly a new human pursuit, the Maker Movement solidifies around a particular trajectory rooted in Euro-American hobbyism, a utopian futurist ideology mixed with a vernacular, low-tech approach, and a handful of favored tools and technologies (e.g., soldering irons and Arduino microcontrollers)" (2016:45). Despite the obvious shared qualities, however, no practitioner in the São Paulo scene I spoke with mentioned the Maker Movement as a direct influence, possibly due to the movement's principal groundings in Europe and the United States and the comparatively limited access to some of the more advanced technical apparatuses common in Maker events. Natacha Maurer, for instance, acknowledge awareness of the movement, but said it was not her primary impetus for participating in instrument construction practices. It is likely that both the circuit-bending and hardware-hacking corners of the São Paulo scene and the Maker Movement draw from the same ethos of independent craft and reappropriation of commercial material common in DIY communities around the globe.
[101] "Garoa" (drizzle) makes reference to a common nickname for the city of São Paulo, "cidade da garoa" (city of drizzle).

Figure 3.7: Natacha Maurer demonstrates the gas mask she has appropriated for performance. On the table is the chicken jug and the tools (soldering iron, solder, circuits, glue gun, transistors) she employs to in order to turn these items into instruments. Ibrasotope, September 25, 2015.

Participants employ two principal creative techniques when constructing instruments: circuit bending, in which builders rewire electric circuits in instruments such as Casio keyboards or mass-produced toys, and hardware hacking, in which individuals solder wires, speakers, and other necessary parts together to build sound-creating apparatuses (see Collins 2006; Flood 2016:77; Ghazala 2004, 2005; Grand 2006). Circuit bending has roots in the work of multi-media artist Reed Ghazala, who happened upon the procedure by chance in 1967 when a toy transistor amplifier short circuited and generated a series of sweeping, high-pitched frequencies (Ghazala 2004:8). Ghazala has conceptualized circuit bending in egalitarian terms, as an "anti-theory approach to electronic design [that] makes accessible to all audio explorers an endless frontier of original sound-forms to discover, and fantastic instruments to create" (Ghazala 1999:n.p.). Circuit-bending and hardware hacking share additional conceptual approaches with certain strains of postwar experimental composition, such as David Tudor's work with

homemade electronic feedback systems (Novak 2013:156-59). Over the past two decades, they have flourished in independent musical communities such as noise scenes in Japan and the Maker Movement (Flood 2016:78-79; Novak 2013:161-64).

Circuit-bended and hardware hacked instruments generate a variety of unexpected sounds, ranging from chaotic electronic squeals to abrasive feedback. With the exception of rewired musical toys or instruments, which spit out various combinations of prerecorded melodies, almost all of the sounds fall outside of conventional melodic modes. Furthermore, due to the instruments' often precarious quality of construction and the inherent unpredictability generated by rewiring circuits, any given performance involves a large degree of randomness. Even those who take the time to precisely construct circuits find that unexpected connections and electronic mistakes, or "glitches," are common. Participants often welcome the sense of unforeseeability and excitement these processes create in performance. Multi-instrumentalist Bella, who constructs her own electronic instruments, welcomed the inherent volatility of the practice. "It's really magical," she asserted, "because sometimes interference comes in, because I've been researching the radio wave thing—interference comes in here that I can't always master or control, you know?"[102] As an example, she cited one concert in which a radio frequency from a local station playing *pagode*, a neotraditional variant of samba, emerged unexpectedly amongst the various layers of distortion and glitches she had constructed over the course of the show. Rather than working to achieve total control over as many elements of sound as possible, musicians such as Bella follow an ethical and aesthetic system centered in part around the sustained cultivation and celebration of error, in which unexpected glitches and malfunctions are part of the practice's core appeal.

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[102] Interview with Bella, July 4, 2018. "É muito mágico, porque às vezes entram interferências, porque eu tenho pesquisado a coisa da onda do rádio—entram interferências aqui que nem sempre eu posso dominar e controlar, sabe?"

By empowering individuals to create the primary materials needed for musical performance, the creative culture of instrument construction in São Paulo allows musicians to subvert dominant patterns of consumption and understandings of creative and economic value. As David Novak argues, circuit bending "makes commodities into idiosyncratic junk" and "takes apart the objects of musical consumption and reassembles them into a new form of technological subjectivity" (2013:165). Participants in the São Paulo scene occasionally reinforce this by opting to use found or secondhand objects such as construction materials or discarded toys instead of new equipment for their novel instrumental creations. The incorporation of found objects is by no means limited to the São Paulo scene; as Lauren Flood notes, it is prevalent both in experimental music cultures such as sound art, glitch music, and *musique concrète*, as well as non-Western genre cultures that are "guided by very different cultural and musical aesthetics," such as hip-hop turntables and the music of the Zimbabwean *mbira* (Flood 2016:181; see also Labell 2006). In the São Paulo scene, the practice enables independent experimental musicians to transform the detritus of consumption into artistic tools and reverse the dominant directional flow of creative practice and economic consumption in Brazilian culture.

Cartographies of Collaborative Creativity

The diverse mixture of creative practices circulating within the São Paulo scene comes together within the context of collaborative open-ended improvisation. While musicians occasionally present pre-composed works, the majority of concerts feature open forms of improvisation as a core creative technique. Improvisation constitutes the scene's most "experimental" element of creative practice—people perform, introduce kernels of musical thought, see what happens, and react to the sounds and social dynamics of the performance space as they develop in real time. Improvisation also provides a major distinction between the

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contemporary São Paulo scene and earlier generations of experimentally oriented Brazilian

popular musicians, such as the 1970s-era "post-Tropicália" singer-songwriters and the members

of the *Vanguarda Paulista*, who employed a variety of inventive techniques but mostly

performed and recorded pre-composed songs. Although musicians intermittently present solo

performances and disseminate music online through institutions such as netlabels, the majority of

concerts take place in collaborative configurations. These encounters are almost always led by

the performing musicians themselves and rarely feature a delineated creative director, although

such dynamics may naturally arise over the course of a project's development. Collaborative

improvisation lends a crucial dimension of unpredictability and expressive potential to

performance in the scene that motivates experimental creativity on a core level and plays a

central role in generating the scene's sense of community, egalitarianism, and creative freedom.

George Lewis (2002) has introduced a distinction between these kinds of collaborative,

performer-directed forms of improvisation, which he characterizes as "Afrological," and the

understanding of improvisation implicit in Cagean indeterminacy, which he labels as

"Eurological."[103] Eurological conceptions of improvisation, Lewis argues, are characterized by a

creative vision focused on "pure" spontaneity that dismisses historical memory and a "composer-

to-performer" hierarchical musical relationship in which a composer creates conditions for

performers to operate according to delineated rules.[104] Afrological improvisatory practices, by

[103] Broadly speaking, indeterminate (alternately, aleatoric) composition leaves core elements of performance unresolved, whether through the incorporation of chance procedures or by leaving creative decisions up to individual performers. Although early experimental composers such as Charles Ives and Henry Cowell had intermittently introduced works that left certain decisions up to performers, indeterminacy only truly assumed a central place in experimental composition beginning with John Cage, who foregrounded it as a principal element of his approach to composition. For Cage, indeterminacy was central to the very notion of experimental music itself; in 1955, for instance, he defined the experimental as "an act the outcome of which is unknown" (quoted in 1961:13, see also 1961:69). Cage took pains to differentiate indeterminacy from the kind of improvisation in jazz, which he famously disdained as "derive[d] from serious music" (Cage 1961:72; Kim 2012:64).
[104] Such was the perspective expressed by Cage himself, who famously declared in an interview, "Composing's one thing, performing's another, listening's a third. What can they have to do with one another?" (quoted in Cage 1961:15). Lewis centrally situates the Eurological perspective within the hierarchical idea that "to be musically coherent, improvisation cannot be left as "free," but must instead be "controlled" or "structured" in some way" (2002:239). His critique resonates with the observations of Pamela Burnard, who criticizes "the idea that music is a

contrast, do not tolerate the "erasure of history" and operate according to a collaborative "composer-improviser" positioning directed by performers themselves (2002:231-34). Lewis argues that the two perspectives embody "very different conceptions of real-time music-making," and cites the "open" improvisation practiced by members of the Chicago-based American Association of Creative Musicians (AACM) collective as a characteristic example of a counterpoint to dominant Eurological perspectives in musical experimentalism.[105] Although it would be inaccurate to strictly apply the "Afrological" label to the São Paulo scene, particularly given the minority position that black musicians occupy in its broader network, the scene's improvisatory approaches hew much more closely to the "composer-improviser" dynamic practiced by collectives such as the AACM (Lewis 2002:235-239).

Collaborations in the São Paulo scene can be roughly divided into two types: performances by established groups or configurations of individuals that have played together for some time and performances that bring together individuals who have not worked together before or do not do so regularly. While a majority of these collaborations occur locally between musicians from São Paulo and the surrounding region, a significant minority takes place between performers from different regions of Brazil or from outside the country. Over the course of my fieldwork, I saw collaborative concerts and shared billings between members of the São Paulo scene and international artists from over twenty different countries, ranging from Mexico to Switzerland to Japan. Several members of the scene itself hail from outside of Brazil as well.

These collaborative encounters generate a series of continually renewing permutations of musical minds and approaches to performance practice. Collaboration in the São Paulo scene

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simply three-step event involving composer, performer, and listener: and idea which privileges composers over performers and both composers and performers over listeners" (2012:38).

[105] Lewis 2002:217-18, 235. David Borgo has drawn attention to critiques of the "problematic nature of binary thinking and cultural and aesthetic dyads" present in Lewis's model (Borgo 2005:23); moreover, Lewis himself highlights the ways in which African American improvising musicians had themselves advanced "creolized" forms of experimentalism that drew from a variety of disparately situated traditions (Lewis 2008:360).

thus acts as a primary motivational factor for experimental musical creativity by foregrounding points of contact between individuals. Rather than taking in new sounds via records or concerts in a comparatively unidirectional manner, independent experimental musicians actively engage with other artists in person and negotiate these encounters and novel creative stimuli in the context of live performance. The diverse makeup of the scene accelerates this phenomenon by ensuring a constant level of interaction between individuals with different ideas and experiences regarding performance. Their effects extend to members of the audience as well, who are continually exposed to new music regardless of whether they collaborate onstage.

In order to analyze the interpersonal dynamics of this network, I aggregated data from publicly listed concerts over the course of three years (Jan. 1, 2015 – Dec. 31, 2017) hosted by ten independent experimental organizations who devote all or the majority of their programming to collaborative experimental performance and then mapped the resulting web of collaborative performances using the network analysis and visualization application Gephi. Each node (circle) represents an individual musician, while edges (lines) between nodes represent the presence of at least one onstage collaborative performance between the two musicians. Instances in which musicians shared the same concert billing but did not play together were not included, nor was co-presence at the same show. In total, I included data from shows organized by five performance spaces (Centro da Terra, Estúdio Fita Crepe, Ibrasotope, Hotel Bar, and Leviatã), one independent record label (Brava), two affinity groups (Circuito de Improvisação Livre and Dissonantes), and two concert series (Improvise! and Nós da Voz), whose organizational strategies form a central object of study in the following chapter.[106] It is important to note that because independent experimental musicians do not exclusively perform at events hosted by these organizations, this aggregation does not represent a comprehensive picture of collaboration

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[106] Because Hotel Bar devotes its weekend programming (Friday and Saturday nights) to more conventional programming such as genres of MPB or "indie" rock, I excluded that data from my analysis.

in the scene, which is considerably larger than these maps suggest.[107] Nor do these maps capture the myriad social bonds generated over the course of a shared evening at a venue or the creatively stimulating experience of watching others perform. Nevertheless, they do present a meaningful representation of the large-scale social dynamics of collaborative onstage performance in the scene.

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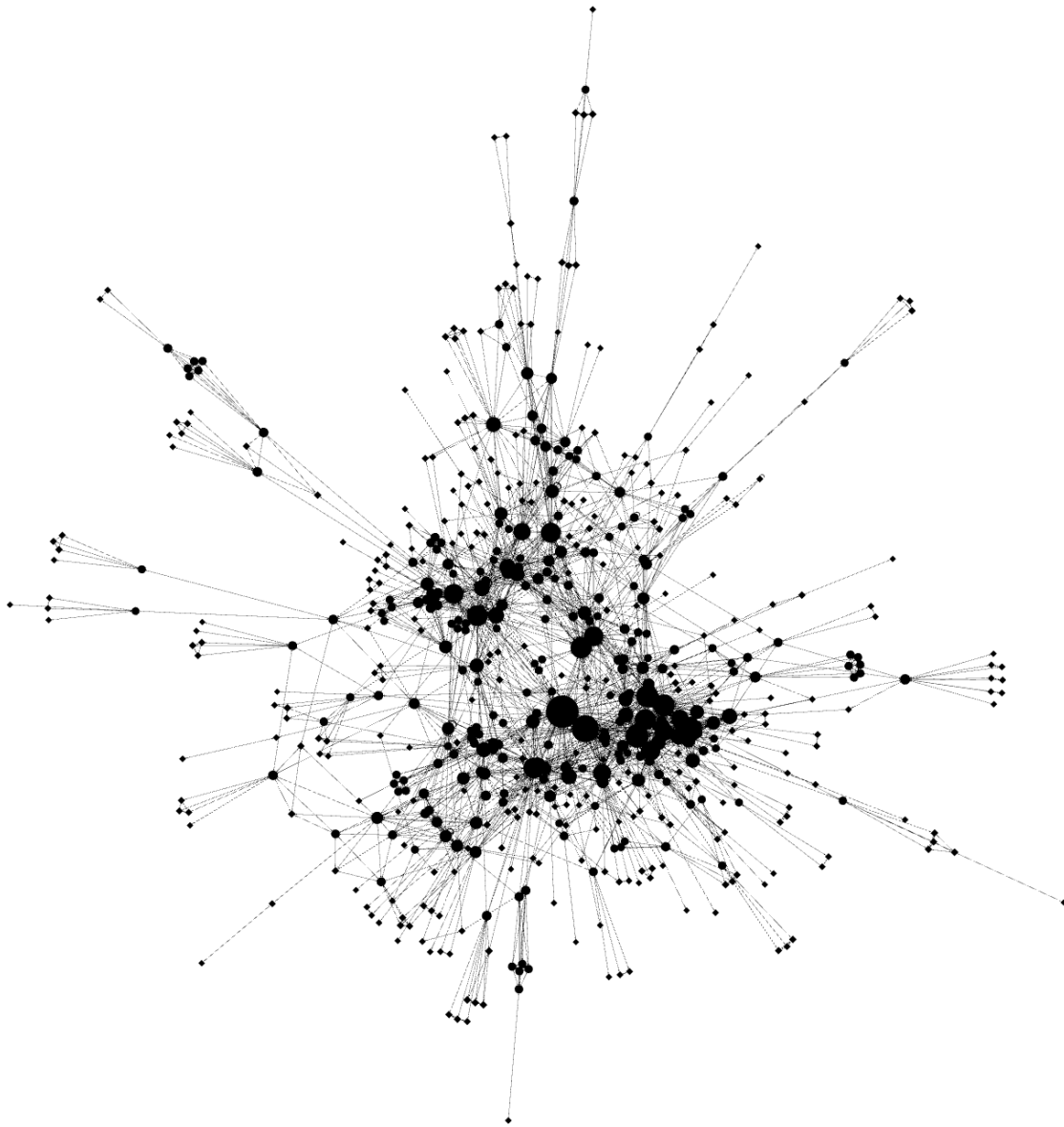
[107] I primarily chose to exclude concerts at public cultural institutions such as SESC-SP and independent venues that devote only part of their programming to experimental performance from my data because I did not want to make a subjective decision about which concerts counted as experimental and which did not.

Figure 3.8: Degree-weighted network diagram of collaborations in the São Paulo scene's core network of musicians between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2017. A total of 580 musicians (out of 794 total participants in the scene) are represented in the diagram. Each edge (line) between two individual musicians represents the fact that the two musicians have played together onstage at the same time at least once; the size of the nodes corresponds to degree (the number of other artists with whom the individual musician has collaborated). Concerts included in the diagram were arranged by ten core organizations in the scene: Brava, Centro da Terra, Circuito de Improvisação Livre, Dissonantes, Estúdio Fita Crepe, Hotel Bar, Ibrasotope, Improvise!, Leviatã, and Nós da Voz. Modeled by the author using Gephi.
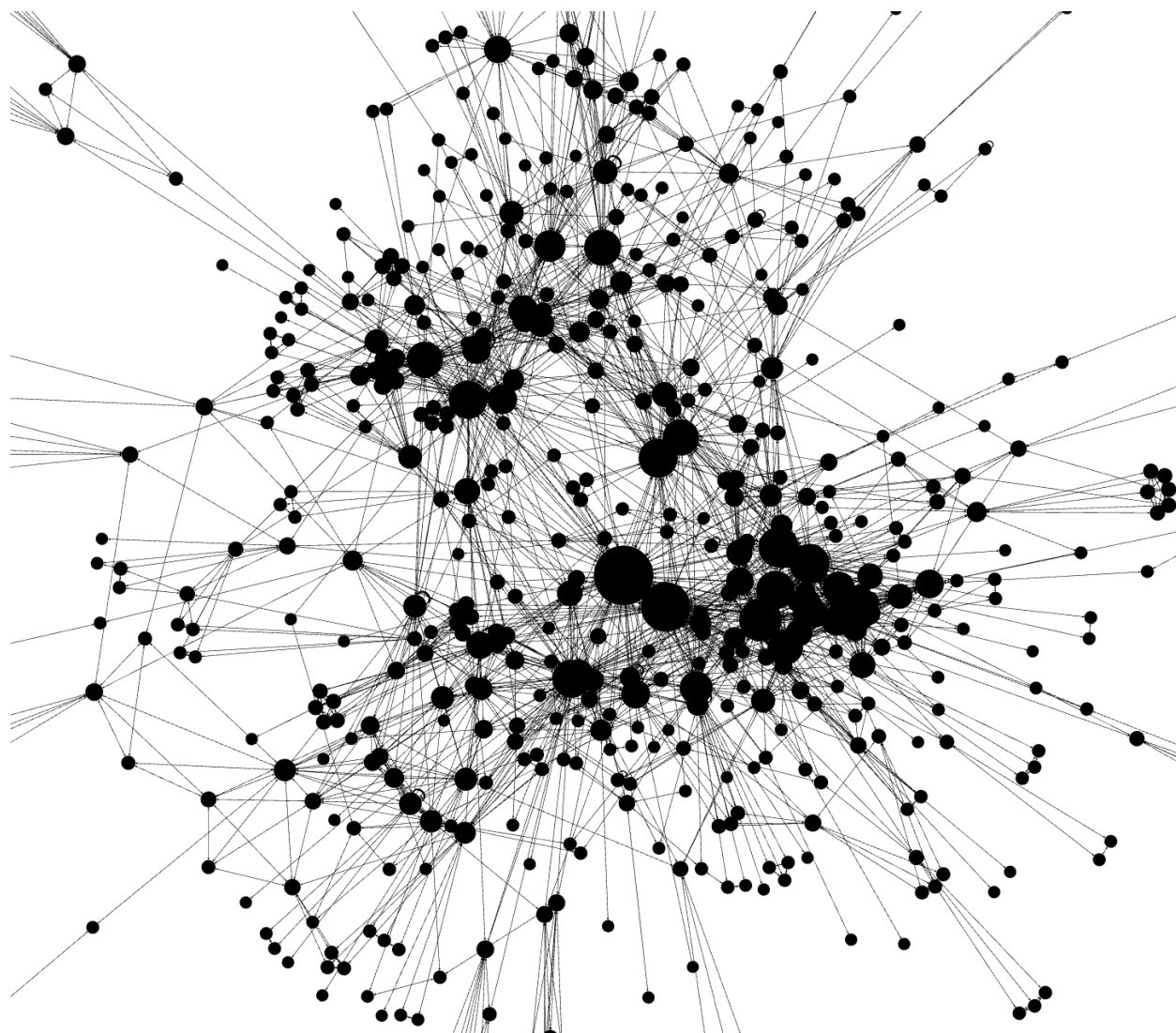
Figure 3.9: Zoomed-in snapshot of degree-weighted network diagram of collaborations in the São Paulo scene. Modeled by the author using Gephi.

Examining the interpersonal dynamics of this network reveals a telling set of patterns and

trends. First, the scene contains a core group of collaborators who enjoy a high level of

connectedness; out of the 794 musicians who played at concerts organized by the six organizations I included in my data pool, 580 musicians (73.05%) were connected to one another either directly via collaboration or indirectly through others. Of these musicians, certain individuals stand out as especially prolific collaborators: twenty-two musicians collaborated with at least thirty different artists over this time period (with a maximum of eighty in one individual), and forty-seven musicians collaborated with at least twenty different artists. Due to the selective nature of the data sample, these numbers represent only part of the total number of collaborations they participated in during this time. One might see similar patterns of connection in scenes devoted to collaborative practices such as jazz or free improvisation; however, it is unlikely that those genre cultures would feature similar levels of stylistic diversity in comparison to the São Paulo scene, where individuals from historically collaborative practices such as jazz and free improvisation regularly perform with musicians with backgrounds in genres such as hip hop, punk rock, and MPB.

Furthermore, the network of collaboration in the São Paulo scene is not a closed circuit. Although the scene's nexus of performance is concentrated among a core group of individuals who live and perform regularly in São Paulo, it also counts participants from genre cultures beyond its immediate geographic and stylistic milieu. These visitors engage in a variety of practices and hail from diverse points of origin, from English free improvisation trailblazer Phil Minton to Chinese hardcore punk band Lao Ayi to the Minas Gerais traditional *banda de pífanos* group Cataventoré. Although these musicians often present their own material solo, they more often participate in collaborative performances with local artists. Some of these figures have returned to São Paulo on a regular basis, thus forming lasting relationships that further inform the practices of the scene's core participants and its guests. They represent a key means by which the

activity at the heart of the São Paulo scene both draws from international circulations and also sounds back out the broader global experimental sphere in turn.

Despite the generally high level of interconnectivity in the scene's core group, interdependence is not absolute. More often than not, participants tend to concentrate a disproportionate number of their performances within broad social subgroups, and while many artists regularly reach out and play with other subgroups, elements of group-based division persist. These divisions arise due to a variety of factors, including differences in institutional affiliation, genre background, and variation in the organizations to which individual musicians enjoy regular access. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, musicians are additionally affected by subtle yet entrenched patterns of identity-related exclusion, particularly concerning gender. Because these divisions correlate in part to genre backgrounds, shows put on by performers within specific subgroups often contain certain idiomatic elements more than others. A show with a disproportionate concentration of individuals with roots in hardcore punk and related genres such as grindcore, for instance, is likely to feature a great deal more harsh noise than one performed by musicians with shared roots in electroacoustic composition.

In spite of these divisions, meaningful levels of connection between subgroups have grown over the course of the past five years. These connections exist in large part due to the efforts of individual musicians who reach out to other artists from different backgrounds on a regular basis and enjoy what social network analysts refer to as high levels of *betweenness centrality* (Figs. 3.10 and 3.11).[108] Many of the most prolific collaborators in the scene are themselves institutional leaders or active members of affinity groups; drummer Marcio Gibson, for instance, is a founding member of the Circuito de Improvisação Livre (Circuit of Free

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[108] The term *betweenness centrality* refers to an individual's level of connectedness and centrality within a social network. In addition to enjoying a high level of interconnectedness, those with high levels of betweenness centrality are especially crucial to the functioning of a social network, and play key roles in bridging gaps that might otherwise remain disparate. See Riondato and Kornaropoulos 2016.

Improvisation), while Natacha Maurer is the co-leader of the Ibrasotope experimental music collective. As I will discuss in the following chapter, institutional figures such as these form the backbone of the scene's organizational efforts towards making interest in collaborative performance become a reality. Others are simply connected to multiple social subgroups and are eager to make performance happen—to "do it," in the parlance of the DIY experimental attitude—and bridge social gaps by virtue of their energy and willingness to look beyond their immediate social milieu.
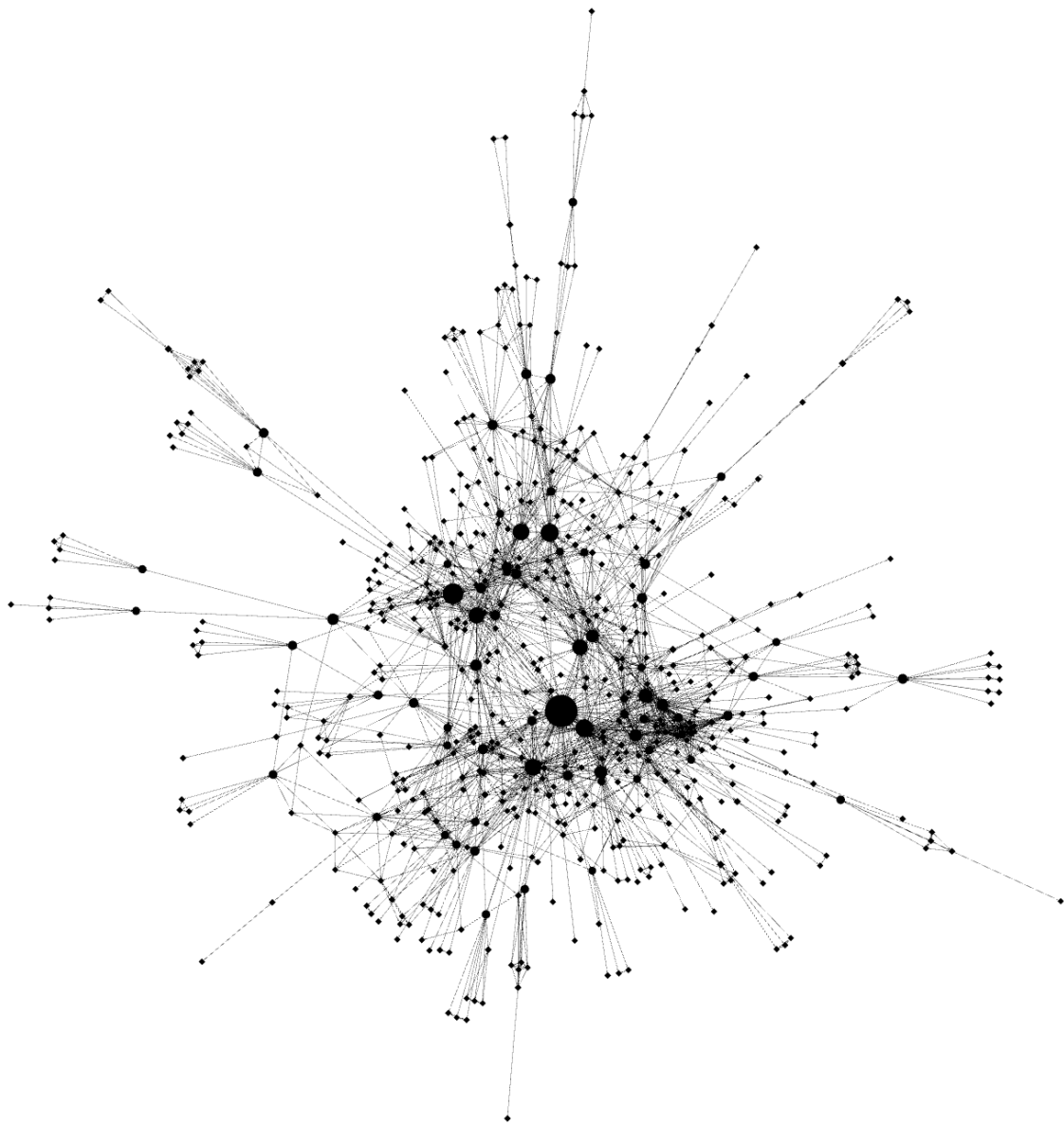
Figure 3.11: Zoomed-in snapshot of network diagram of collaborations in the São Paulo scene weighted for betweenness centrality. Modeled by the author using Gephi.

In many ways, the scene's decentralized, interconnected interpersonal web follows a rhizomatic logic, shaped not by the directives of a central authority but instead by the fluid ebb and flow of disparately situated individuals who form and reform relationships according to factors beyond the control of any single actor or institution. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's

likening of a rhizome to a map that "fosters connections between fields" provides an especially apt characterization; as they argue, such a map is "open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation" (1987:12). It is this very quality that motivates the creative possibility inherent in the São Paulo scene's networked interactions of performance and the sense of malleability and resilience the scene's members have shown in the face of grievous sociopolitical developments that might otherwise incapacitate a more hierarchical and centralized musical culture.

At the same time, Deleuze and Gattari's model contains a utopian quality that does not quite match up with the decidedly dystopian realities faced by musicians in São Paulo. Despite the scene's high level of interconnectivity and multiplicity, certain individuals and institutions *do* play a more crucial role in its functioning than others. Moreover, as I will address further below, despite its members' egalitarian aspirations, elements of hierarchy and exclusion persist. Although the scene's web of musicians has proven resilient in response to recent developments, there is no guarantee that they will succeed in the future should the situation worsen. It may instead be more appropriate to say that the scene's constituent members and the various shifting socio-sonic assemblages they produce over time approach the model of the rhizome, but never fully achieve it in practice.

Members of the São Paulo scene welcome its collaborative dynamics and emphasize its considerable creative benefits. Guitarist Cacá Amaral, in a characteristic viewpoint I encountered during my fieldwork, framed cross-stylistic collaboration as an endeavor that "only enriches things. You play with, for instance, a samba percussionist, drums—he can take you places that, I don't know, you as a musician never imagined, because the music kind of wakes me up, it presses a little button there. So I react to what he's playing just as I'm talking to you—we're

reacting to the conversation, I react to what the person is playing."[109] Amaral's occasional

creative partner Carlos Issa characterized cross-stylistic collaboration as an endless fount of new

musical ideas and a key element in fostering feelings of creative and personal emancipation.

Working with performers from different backgrounds, he asserted, offered musicians

> the freedom for you to make songs, make abstractions, make noise, make beautiful melodies, experiment with shared instruments, experiment with the sounds of the world. So every day, it depends on your mood, it depends on the friends you're working with at that time, who sometimes come from different places—sometimes they come from rap, sometimes they come from rock, sometimes they come from experimental music itself, sometimes they come from jazz. Then you come together in that moment and something happens there. Then you take it apart and put it back together again.[110]

Issa, who has acted as both a participant and organizer of collaborative events in the scene,

stressed the importance of working with musicians with whom he could form a mutually

respectful bond. The most important thing, he argued, was for "you to be dealing with friendly,

generous, hospitable people. The rest is fun. The sound will appear."[111] The specific nature of

this sound forms a central object of study in Chapter Five, where I discuss the creative dynamics

of Issa's band Auto and how the group's collaborative efforts act as an important means of

pushing beyond existing genre boundaries and challenging the format of popular song.

Collaborative creativity in the São Paulo scene manifests in multiple dimensions,

including but not limited to onstage performance. As the nexus in which individual musicians

actively negotiate intersubjective exchanges of musical ideas, collaborative improvisation

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[109] Interview with Cacá Amaral, April 5, 2016. "…só enriquece. Você tocar com, por exemplo, com percursionista de samba, bateria—ele pode te levar a lugares que, sei lá, você como músico jamais imaginou, porque a música meio que me desperta, ela aperta um botãozinho ali. Então eu reajo aquilo que ele está tocando assim como eu estou conversando com você—a gente vai reagindo na conversa, eu reajo ao que a pessoa está tocando."

[110] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "...a liberdade de você fazer canção, fazer abstração, fazer ruidagem, fazer melodias bonitas, experimentar com instrumentos comuns, experimentar com sons do mundo. Então, cada dia, você depende do seu humor, depende dos amigos que tão trabalhando com você naquela época, que às vezes vêm de um lugar diferente, às vezes vêm do rap, às vezes vêm do rock, às vezes vêm da música experimental mesmo, às vezes vêm do jazz. Aí juntam naquele momento e acontece uma coisa lá. Depois desmonta, monta de novo."

[111] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "...você tá lidando com pessoas amigáveis, generosas, hospitaleiras. Aí o resto é diversão, assim. O som vai aparecer."

represents the most acute of these dimensions. Yet meaningful collaboration also occurs between performers and the audience, whose co-presence constitutes a central element of the way independent experimental musicians emotionally experience performance. Members of the scene often spoke of their experiences as both musicians and listeners as a type of dialogue with considerable emotional power—a process that is amplified by the fact that a large percentage of the audience in concerts are themselves musicians who performers have known personally for an extended period of time. Instrumentalist Guilherme Henrique characterized the experience of connecting with audience members in visceral terms, asserting that the audience member "doesn't have to verbalize what she thinks, because she's standing there in my face. I feel—you already feel it, by the dance, by the movement, by the… you know? Even the person who was quiet but you feel that it was a good experience."[112] Some organizational figures blur the line between audience and performer by inviting all those present to participate. At times, these performances occur informally during social events; on one occasion, for instance, two members of the scene hosting a party set up a large table in their apartment, covered it with electronic instruments such as synthesizers and mixers, and left guests to adjust the sonic texture as they saw fit.

Independent experimental musicians also collaboratively engage with the spaces in which they play. Members of the scene present their work at a variety of different venues, ranging from curated black box theaters with professional-grade sound to open-air back room stages where a chaotic mix of sonic vectors penetrate the collective sound space. The spatial acoustics of these venues deeply affect the creative decisions of musicians, most of whom perform in multiple locales and have to adjust their approaches in turn. Some individuals spoke of the spaces

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[112] Interview with Guilherme Henrique, June 20, 2016. "…não precisa verbalizar o que ela achou, porque ela estando próxima ali, na minha cara. Eu sinto—você já sente, pela dança, pelo movimento, pela... sabe? Até a pessoa que estava quieta, mas que você sente que foi uma experiência boa."

themselves in which they performed as objects of engagement in their own right that affect and could be affected by performance on a basic level. Keyboardist and electronic musician Leandro Archela, for instance, situated "feeding into and feeding back from the space" as a central element of his experience of performance.[113] For him, the audience and the performance space existed in an active, inextricable relationship with the performer. He emphasized the dynamic, unpredictable quality of this experience over the course of time, which in his mind

> arises precisely from all the senses that are connected at the same time in that space. The aroma that I feel emanating from the site, the sound that's circulating inside, what I was—what we were talking about before I started playing. In any case, when I speak of a "photographic clipping," I treat this spontaneity thing a lot like a photograph—the diaphragm opening and closing, and it captured that moment. That moment is unique and it won't repeat itself. It's a photograph, and this is very rich for me, because it's not pre-established, it wasn't thought about before, it will happen that way.[114]

In this context, the specific qualities of spaces at individual points in time offer a crucial measure of dialogic unpredictability—a dynamic character who shapes musical creativity in much the same fashion as a new audience member or new onstage collaborator.

These interactional dynamics ensure that even solo performances are fundamentally collaborative in nature. By participating in live shows in compact venues that foreground intimacy with audience members, concerts featuring single musicians enjoy a baseline measure of interpersonal connectivity that would not manifest similarly in the studio. More importantly, given the fact that almost all artists who play solo shows also participate in collaborative projects, performing alone onstage offers the possibility for musicians to incorporate experiences from previous collaborations and express them in new configurations, informed by embodied

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[113] Interview with Leandro Archela, October 28, 2015. "…alimentar e retroalimentar o espaço."
[114] Interview with Leandro Archela, October 28, 2015. "ela se dá por conta justamente de todos os sentidos que estão ligados ao mesmo tempo dentro daquele espaço. O aroma que eu estou sentido que é emanado no local, o som que propaga ali dentro, o que eu havia—o que o que a gente conversava antes de eu começar a tocar. Enfim, quando eu falo 'recorte fotográfico,' eu trato muito essa coisa da espontaneidade como a fotografia—o diafragma abrindo e fechando, e captou aquele momento. Aquele momento e único e ele não vai se repetir. Ele é uma fotografia, é isso para mim e muito rico, porque não está preestabelecido, ele não foi pensado antes, ele vai acontecer daquela maneira."

social memory yet also unmediated by the more acute dynamics of intersubjective negotiation that occur during onstage interaction with other actors. Such experiences contain their own distinct dimensions of invention that aptly complement the effects of onstage collaboration.

Negotiating Collaborative Creativity

The creative manifestations that arise from cross-stylistic collaboration in the São Paulo scene are unpredictable and complex, subject to directions and modes of expression that can emerge from a range of capricious stimuli. Keith Sawyer has introduced the term *collaborative emergence* as a means of theorizing the dynamics that arise as a result of these types of improvised group encounters (2003:32; 2006:148; 2011:60). Sawyer characterizes *emergence* as a fundamental property of successful group creative encounters in which the interactive dynamics between individual actors cause "each individual to perform at a higher level than he or she would have been capable of alone" (2003:30; see also 2011:64). He situates emergence, in tandem with improvisation and collaboration, as a fundamental property and driver of group creativity.[115]

Scholars emphasize the fundamentally complex and unforeseeable nature of emergence in musical contexts. Sawyer, for instance, argues that due to the emergent qualities of collaborative creative encounters, "the flow of the performance cannot be predicted even if the analyst has unlimited advance knowledge about the skills, motivations, and mental states of the individual performers. Even with this knowledge, there is simply too much potential variability in what might emerge during the performance; the multiplying moment-by-moment combinatorics make advance prediction practically impossible" (2003:33). David Borgo

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[115] 2006:148-153. Sawyer traces the concept of emergence to early twentieth-century philosophical discourse regarding the unpredictable qualities of emerging aspects of complex systems, particularly in the work of George Herbert Mead (Sawyer 2011:63; see also Mead 1932).

highlights the mercurial nature of collaborative musical encounters within the context of free improvisation, whose complex system dynamics "are hard to predict but not entirely random. They can exhibit regularities, but these regularities are difficult to describe briefly and impossible to describe over time with absolute precision."[116] He notes that these elements of unpredictability often act as a key appeal of the practice for free improvisers, who "revere the uncertainties of new techniques, new conceptions, and new performance occasions, groupings, and venues. During performance, improvisers also must revere the process of exploring and negotiating uncertainties together" (2005:14).

Central to the process of effective collaborative emergence is the phenomenon of what Sawyer refers to as *group flow* (Sawyer 2003:46; 2006:158). Drawing from the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who introduced the term *flow* to characterize the state of consciousness that individuals enter when immersed in an activity, Sawyer likens group flow to a "collective state of mind" in which groups attain a state of total presence and maximized fitness and "activity becomes spontaneous, and the group acts without thinking about it first."[117] As an emergent quality of collaborative encounters, group flow "can inspire musicians to play things that they would not have been able to play alone, or that they would not have thought of without the inspiration of the group" (2006:158; see also Berliner 1994:388). Sawyer compares the term to common phrases encountered in performative discourse such as "good chemistry," "clicking," or

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[116] Borgo 2005:62. The term "free improvisation" is typically applied to a constellation of improvised performance practices that grew out of 1960s-era free jazz and experimental composition in Europe and the United States. Scholars of the practice draw attention to the lack of total uniformity in free improvisation; as David Borgo notes, free improvisation practices share certain core characteristic but "differ enormously in their details and aesthetics" (2005:3). Borgo further emphasizes the personal diversity featured in free improvisation, which he argues contains "the ability to incorporate and negotiate disparate perspectives and worldviews" (2005:19). See also Corbett 2016; Costa 2016; Watson 2004. In contrast to other genre cultures that feature improvisation as a central practice, free improvisation typically eschews the incorporation of idiomatic references or predetermined structural elements; instead, musicians employ a nominally free form guided by real-time interactions between different performers who rely on shared histories of performance and mutual trust and respect as a means of facilitating effective and meaningful performances.

[117] Sawyer 2017:32-33. Csikszentmihalyi refers to flow as an "optimal experience," and emphasizes the "deep sense of enjoyment" and self-empowerment it produces in individuals (1990:3). For a discussion of flow as it pertains to musical practice, see Biasutti and Frezza 2009:233; Landau and Limb 2017:28-29.

being "in sync" (2006:157). In São Paulo, the immersive and emergent experience of group flow can function as both a means of stimulating unusual musical explorations onstage and an end in its own right that supersedes any consequences of sound.

Effective collaborative emergence is by no means a given. It can collapse or remain absent as a result of a variety of factors, ranging from to musicians' unwillingness to listen to one another to a lack of shared norms to expressions of onstage dominance or aggression. Borgo, discussing free improvisation, speaks of a "critical moment at which a complex system either moves toward a state of greater fitness or is extinguished" and emphasizes focused dialogue and shared onstage experiences between performers as critical elements in facilitating successful outcomes (2005:9; see also 2002). In São Paulo, the difficulties inherent in improvisation are compounded by the sheer diversity of participants in the scene, the majority of whom employ a wide spectrum of performance approaches, draw from a variety of different perspectives on creativity, cannot count on shared idiomatic norms, and do not hail from free improvisation backgrounds. This diversity offers considerable creative possibilities but also contains pitfalls. As a means of negotiating these potentially volatile encounters, members of the São Paulo scene develop their own strategies for negotiating cross-stylistic collaboration and producing performances whose emergent dynamics are productive rather than conflicting.

Members of the São Paulo scene employ a wide range of approaches for structuring collaborative encounters and relish inventing new ways of stimulating improvised performance. These elements of structure provide one of the most acute distinctions between the constellation of improvised practices in the São Paulo scene and circuits devoted more explicitly to free improvisation, whose practitioners, Borgo notes, tend to be skeptical of "highly involved schemes for structuring improvisation" as distractions (2005:189). Some of these strategies hew to a more strictly unstructured profile, while others incorporate idiosyncratic sources of structure,

ranging from concerts with extensive pre-composed themes to pre-arranged conceptual narratives to dialogues with audiovisual stimuli. Like the diverse creative practices that musicians bring to the independent experimental stage, these strategies are characterized by their multiplicity.

The most straightforward and explicit source of structure in the São Paulo scene arises from the incorporation of **pre-established themes**. Artists who employ this approach operate similarly to a jazz combo by integrating motifs collaboratively developed over the course of rehearsal with extended periods in which musicians are free to improvise as they see fit. Such is the approach favored by the instrumental group Trio Repelente, whose musicians have a range of experience with both structured popular idioms such as post-rock and more open-ended practices such as free jazz and incorporate a middle ground between the two poles in concert. Those who incorporate techniques associated with hip hop and electronic music genres often pre-record brief sonic clips and load them into machines such as samplers for use in onstage performance. DJ Ricardo Pereira, for instance, routinely incorporates pre-written samples and beats into his performances with other improvising musicians. The decision to incorporate these themes is typically independent of any ideological commitment to improvisation or composition; instead, it often rests on the whims of individual artists, many of whom simply enjoy adapting pre-established material from time to time.

Independent experimental musicians also develop **conceptual frameworks** as a means of lending structure to otherwise open-ended shows. In its most basic manifestation, this takes the form of decisions regarding the overall trajectory of a concert that provide a rough road map for musicians in the moment of performance. Natacha Maurer and Marcelo Muniz's work with Brechó de Hostilidades Sonoras provides a characteristic example. Although the musicians avoid developing specific musical themes, before concerts they agree on a sequence of general actions

to pursue over the course of a show. In the concert discussed at the beginning of this chapter, for instance, the performance followed a sequence of three distinct pre-determined sections. The duo began by placing objects on a backstage table outfitted with contact microphones and periodically playing with a small selection of their hardware hacked instruments. They then turned to the larger table at the front of the stage and initiated a noise-laden timbral conversation between the hardware-hacked unicorn theremin, the two pentagram-embossed baby dolls, and the chicken jug. The concert ended with the musicians adorning gas masks outfitted with receivers, at which point they launched into a sequence of frenzied screams. Maurer and Muniz accompanied the three unofficial "acts" of the performance with lighting choices and special effects that corresponded to each segment: respectively, two interlocking white spotlights highlighting center stage, a smoke machine generating plumes of mist amidst a deep red light placed at the front of the table, and a strobe light sending jets of light through pitch blackness. The effect is alternately grotesque and carnivalesque, reminiscent of a horror movie or an absurd steampunk cabaret. These decisions allow the musicians to immerse themselves in the many moments of surprise and shock that emerge over the course of a concert while maintaining key structural elements that keep the two musicians in sync. It also affords them the chance to incorporate more theatrical and fantastical elements into their performance that highlight the visual elements of the instruments and would not be possible to work into a purely free improvisation.

Figure 3.12: Marcelo Muniz (left) places objects on the backstage contact-microphone-outfitted table, while Natacha Maurer (right) plays the hardware-hacked chicken jug. Trackers, November 11, 2015.

Figure 3.14: Marcelo Muniz (left) and Natacha Maurer (right) scream into retrofitted gas masks during the final act of their show. Trackers, November 11, 2015.

Some practitioners develop more abstract conceptual narratives that guide performers' creative decisions based on predetermined sequences of extra-musical referents. I experienced this firsthand when I was invited to participate in a concert with musicians Carlos Issa, Jonathan Gall, Carla Boregas, and Ricardo Garcia. Issa came up with the idea for the show, but did not specify any musical ideas he had for the performance, declaring only, "I bet something good will come out of it."[118] Although the concert did not materialize due to scheduling conflicts, the dynamics of collaborative development over the course of the project's embryonic phase provide

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[118] Facebook conversation with Carlos Issa, February 12, 2016. "…aposto que vai sair coisa boa".

important insight into the way independent experimental musicians develop conceptual strategies for performance. We met one February afternoon in Garcia's performance space Estúdio Fita Crepe. After a discussion of the onstage setup, we decided to investigate the possibility of developing a performance narrative inspired by the nature of human emotional development— divided into three phases, "Memory," "Present," and "Future"—and the makeup of the cosmos. Other than deciding upon the techniques and instruments each individual would employ, we did not specify any specific musical themes. Instead, we addressed the emotional and sensorial trajectory of the concert, which we provisionally titled "Black Hole" ("Buraco Negro"). It would begin, we decided, with chaos. Then, a shattering event would occur. In the final third of the performance, we would pick up the pieces. We developed the following draft notation of the instrumental setup (Fig. 3.15) and the overall narrative of the performance (Fig. 3.16 and top of Fig. 3.15). Like the graphic scores for canonic experimental works such as Cage's *Variations I* (1958) or Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* (1967), the makeshift musical blueprint was meant to suggest points of creative departure rather than determining specific sonic qualities.
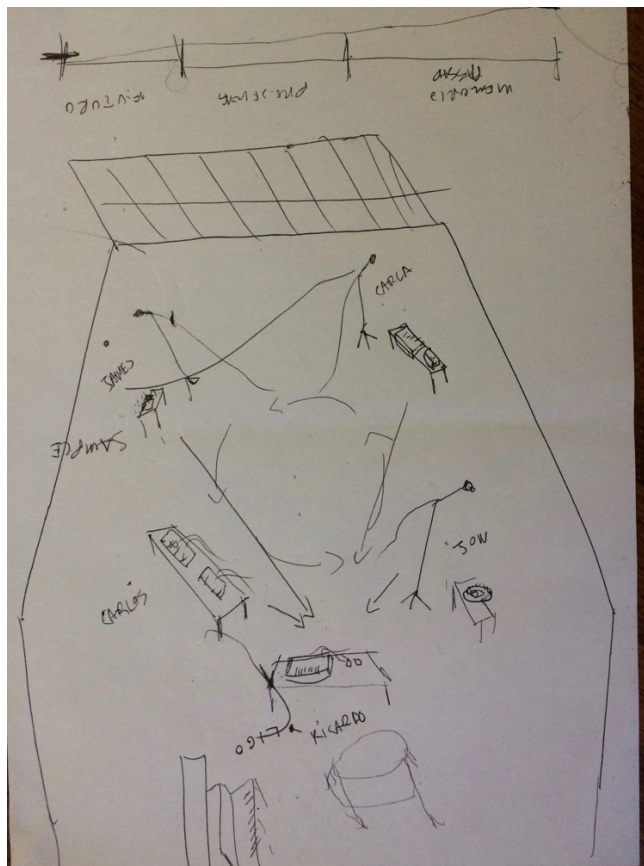
Figure 3.15. Draft notation of "Black Hole" concert instrumental setup, with narrative suggestions (delineated into "Memory," "Present," and "Future") at the top. Estúdio Fita Crepe, March 29, 2016.

Members of the São Paulo scene also employ **visual and audiovisual material** as a means of stimulating creative decisions during performances and lending playful forms of structure to otherwise improvised shows. They incorporate an idiosyncratic range of materials in service of this end—to cite just a few, the Swedish-Danish silent horror film *Häxan* (1922), a live broadcast of Brazil's 2-1 loss to Belgium in the 2018 World Cup quarterfinal, and the collected lifetime highlights of boxer Mike Tyson, among others. In some cases, the visual stimuli are provided by improvising actors in their own right: video artist and photographer Fernanda Cirelli, for instance, employs the video mixing program Modul8 as a means of generating ever-changing visual collages in response to musical themes played by her collaborators, who respond to her creations in turn. In addition to providing novel sources of stimulation and shared structure to musicians, audiovisual materials afford further dimensions of collaboration beyond interpersonal relationships. When musicians include visual stimuli on the independent experimental stage, they also engage with whatever charged imagery comes up, whether in the form of the narratives depicted onscreen or the more amorphous creations of fellow improvisers. This can add novel emergent dynamics to combinations of musicians who have developed otherwise mature improvisational languages.

In a few curious cases, musicians have engaged with previous recordings of themselves as a means of creating multilayered improvisations between various iterations of the self at different points in time. Such was the approach employed by Maurício Takara during his collaborative project Música Resiliente em Camadas Lentas (Resilient Music in Slow Layers), in which Takara participated in four successive three-person collaborations with a rotating set of musicians: pianist Philip Somervell (piano) and André Bordinhon (guitar), Thomas Rohrer

(*rabeca* and saxophone) and Marcelo Cabral (bass), Victor Vieira-Branco (vibraphone) and Rodrigo Brandão (spoken word), and finally Somervell and Bordinhon again. Only the first concert was performed without audiovisual stimuli; during the subsequent encounters, the musicians improvised in tandem with recordings of the previous encounters, which were projected on the back of the stage. The musicians also determined a set of general qualities they would apply to each concert: the first show, for instance, was characterized in publicity materials as "more spacious, minimal" ("mais espaçoso, minimal") while the third show featured a designation of "more chaotic, rhythmic, jagged" ("mais caótico, rítmico, recortado"). During the final performance, the initial trio returned to the stage and performed with the cumulative material Takara and his collaborators had generated over the course of the project. Intertemporal encounters such as these afford musicians the possibility of interacting with their own embodied memories of those experiences, which provoke emergent dynamics in distinct ways.

Figure 3.17: Maurício Takara (drums), André Bordinhon (guitar), and Philip Somervell (piano) perform in collaboration with a recording of Takara, Victor-Viera Branco (vibraphone), and Rodrigo Brandão (spoken word) taken a week earlier. Photo taken by Alexandre Matias at Centro da Terra, August 28, 2017.

A great deal of the performers in the São Paulo scene avoid incorporating predetermined structural agents and instead draw from **shared experiences** and **mutual trust** that allow them to effectively negotiate emergent dynamics without falling into stagnancy or conflict. While these qualities are necessary to a certain degree in all improvised encounters, they are particularly important in instances where individual musicians purposely eschew planned elements of structure. Musicians who have spent extended periods of time collaborating in specific configurations often forego preparing formal elements for individual concerts and instead condition improvisation by drawing from collective experience and the earned belief that they will be able to take risks in a supportive, responsive environment. Having confidence that one's onstage partners will respond in respectful rather than competitive or aggressive ways is especially important in encounters between musicians who have never played together before. As I will discuss in the following section, however, such encounters do not always produce equitable and inclusive experiences for all involved.

During my fieldwork, it was common for artists to liken the dynamics of these encounters to an ongoing dialogue between different individuals and the ideas they brought to the table. These individuals emphasized the fundamentally two-way nature of this dynamic, and affirmed the central importance of listening as a means of achieving more mindful, considerate forms of musical communication. Carla Boregas, discussing a performance she developed with occasional collaborator Carlos Issa, asserted that effective improvisation depended on developing a means of communication rather than focusing on specific musical elements. As she asserted, "It's not a rehearsal, actually, because we're not going to play the same thing later. It's more about meeting and playing and developing a language and a dialogue, I think, through music."[119] Boregas

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[119] Interview with Carla Boregas, June 30, 2016. "Não é um ensaio, na verdade, porque a gente não vai tocar a mesma coisa depois. É mais essa coisa de se encontrar e tocar e desenvolver uma linguagem e um diálogo, eu acho, através da música."

characterized the resulting dynamic at its best as "a very fertile chaos" driven by the personal and creative collisions between musicians from different backgrounds.[120]

The importance of developing respectful and mature communicative dynamics in improvisatory contexts is well-documented. Ingrid Monson emphasizes the significance of the metaphor of conversation in jazz ensembles, which she notes indicates a conception of performance as a participatory, responsorial framework in which individuals' musical reactions demonstrate a mature and considerate understanding of what their partners "say," so to speak (Monson 1996:81-82; see also Goodwin 1990). Borgo draws attention to the importance of "intense communication and cooperation and a shared history of interactions" in facilitating effective and meaningful performances in improvisatory contexts that lack pre-arranged structural elements or common idiomatic norms (2005:9). He further emphasizes the ways in which the shared norms of interaction that arise from experience playing together can enable a state of group flow (Borgo 2005:184; see also Sawyer 2003:46). Frederick A. Seddon identifies the phenomenon of *empathetic attunement* as a key means by which individual musicians working in group contexts navigate the co-presence of diverse subjectivities and facilitate effective collaborative emergence (2005:50; see also Biasutti and Frezza 2009:237). This process, he argues, constitutes a "heightened state of empathy when improvisers go beyond responding supportively to their fellow musicians and stimulate the conception of new ideas," and depends on shared trust (Seddon 2005:50). Just as an effective verbal conversation relies on the understanding that one's partner will listen and not dominate the dialogue, so, too, does the intrinsic conversation of open-ended improvisation depend on mutual trust and respect.

Finally, members of the São Paulo scene occasionally participate in **concerts that intentionally unite large amounts of people from different points of origin** who have never

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[120] Interview with Carla Boregas, June 30, 2016. "…um caos muito fértil."

before performed together. These performances represent the most extreme and volatile types of collaborative encounters in the São Paulo scene, and carry both considerable emergent potential but also significant risks that do not always resolve to the satisfaction of all performers involved. They also act as an important motivating factor for cross-stylistic interconnectivity by creating a space for forming connections between individuals from different backgrounds who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet or collaborate.

The collective improvisatory performance series Coisa (Thing) provides a characteristic example of the creative dimensions of such endeavors. Organized by vocalist and performance artist Marcela Lucatelli, the event took place a total of three times over the course of 2016-17, and featured a total of eighteen, twenty, and thirty-one musicians in each successive manifestation. Few of the artists had ever played together before and many hailed from vastly different circles, both within and beyond the city of São Paulo: vocalist and guitarist Negro Leo, for instance, had achieved renown as an independent singer-songwriter in Rio de Janeiro, while theremin player Julia Teles was an active member of the São Paulo-based experimental music collective NME and had written articles for their online publication *Linda*.

I had the opportunity to attend the event's first iteration, which took place in the informal backroom performance area of the venue Trackers on a chilly Sunday night on June 5th, 2016. The majority of the room was bathed in an array of soft neon light and occupied by an expanse of equipment—mixers, electronic apparatuses, microphones, instruments, and a maze of cords running from one end of the space to another. After an extended setup time, Lucatelli stepped up to the microphone, paused for effect, and announced the name of the event with a dramatic flair. The ensuing performance followed an completely open-ended format, in which musicians were free to come and go as they so pleased, without any restrictions on what they chose to incorporate while playing. Over the course of an hour and a half, artists entered and exited the

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makeshift stage, creating a series of shifting configurations of individual performers that changed

from moment to moment. The sounds that emerged were similarly diverse, transitioning between

collectively expressed harsh noise at the beginning to a series of quieter moments later on.

Figure 3.18: Musicians perform during the first iteration of the collaborative concert series Coisa. Trackers, June 5, 2016.

Participants in Coisa with whom I spoke expressed a range of reactions to their

experience playing in the event, ranging from the frustrated to the exhilarated. Most felt

conflicting feelings about the experience, which they generally agreed became more effective as

it went on. Júlia Teles, for instance, characterized the event as having a "very interesting

dynamic," and drew attention to the alternating sense of volatility and possibility she felt as a

result of having to play with so many musicians with whom she had never before collaborated.

At first, she recalled,

> it was a little desperate—there were a lot of people. A bit of, "Wait, where am I, where am I?" But then later, things started to get going, it was more interesting to leave and watch, you know? To think, "How do I want to come back in?" I don't know. There were moments that had more space for one type of sound, others… I think it really works to

listen, if the person is willing. I think there must also be musicians who go there and play and it seems that sometimes they don't listen what's around them, which I find to be a problem in this context. But I found it really interesting, because there were really different people there.[121]

Carlos Issa expressed similarly conflicting views, recalling that at times, he felt that the texture was dominated by indiscriminate noise, but over time there were also more effective moments where he felt musicians had "space to emerge."[122] Issa and Teles's testimonies resonate with my own experience of the event, which was tense at the beginning—at one point, multiple individuals left because of the deafening noise—but seemed to afford room for individuals to come out of the sonic fabric in more effective ways as it went on.

The Coisa concert series embodies the encounter-driven model of collaborative creativity of the São Paulo scene at its most anarchic and extreme: individual musicians from different backgrounds meet each other at concerts, perform together onstage, explore novel configurations of sound over the course of these performances, and form new relationships as a result. At the same time, the presence of so many individuals onstage at the same time also runs the risk of preventing the kind of respectful dialogue necessary for negotiating effective cross-stylistic collaboration. These events interrupt group flow in disruptive but also potentially stimulating ways, with both risks and rewards for those involved.

Underlying elements of collision and tension may in fact be some of the core elements of appeal for such events. Large-scale happenings of this scale are a rarity in São Paulo, both within and beyond the purview of the independent experimental scene, and as such offer a distinct change of pace for those interested in something more explosive than what one typically

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[121] Interview with Julia Teles, June 13, 2016. "Foi um pouco desesperador—que era muita gente. E isso um pouco "Espera, onde eu estou, onde eu estou?" Mas aí depois... a coisa da rotatividade um pouco, foi mais interessante também sair e assistir, sabe? Pensar "Como que eu quero voltar?" Sei lá. Teve momentos que tinha mais espaço para um tipo de som, outros... eu acho que trabalha muito a escuta, se a pessoa está disposta. Acho que deve ter músicos que também que vão lá e tocam e parece que também não, às vezes não ouvem o que está em volta. Que eu acho um problema no contexto desse, mas lá eu achei bem interessante isso, porque pessoas muito diferentes."
[122] Conversation with Carlos Issa, July 4, 2018. "…espaço para emergir."

encounters. Lucatelli embraced the inherent volatility of the event, which she tied to a broader sense of "energy and immediacy" she felt in São Paulo in comparison to Copenhagen, where she lived for the majority of the year.[123] Events such as Coisa thus shed light on the potential appeal of tenser emergent dynamics of performance and the ways in which certain members of the São Paulo scene seek to foreground those very elements of explosivity and conflict that musicians might otherwise avoid.

Harmony and Discord

The scene's dynamics of performance spring from a creative practice grounded in possibility rather than proscription, motivated by the facilitation of creative freedom, at least in theory. Many participants situated this in the elements of unpredictability that exist in the improvisatory encounter. Musicians consistently affirmed the essential impossibility of knowing the exact nature of future performances and seemed to crave the energy that resulted from this feeling of interaction-driven indeterminacy. Others drew attention to more basic feelings of happiness and pleasure fostered by engagement in open-ended forms of improvisation. Mauricio Takara, for instance, identified its joyous qualities as a central motivational factor for his own participation, and asserted that those elements came through in the music itself. Having the freedom to do what one wanted in performance, he asserted, was "fun—a child's pleasure, you know? Of discovering things. It's that moment of discovery, you know? I think the music really reflects that."[124] The scene's generally open-ended approach to improvisation plays a critical role in this endeavor by creating a site where personal expression, regardless of how unusual, is not only welcomed but encouraged.

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[123] Interview with Marcela Lucatelli, August 8, 2017. "…energia e imediatismo."
[124] Interview with Mauricio Takara, April 20, 2016. "…curtição—um prazer de criança sabe? De descobrir as coisas. É esse momento de descoberta sabe? Acho que a música reflete muito isso."

In the personal sphere, this approach to performance can act as a key means of fostering individual expression and feelings of fulfillment. Mariana Cetra likened improvisation to an embodied means of addressing the difficulties and complexities of quotidian personal experience, in which "all the sensations that you're feeling at that moment, that day, or that week, everything ends up being transformed and manifested through the music that you're making. So for me, improvisation has that—a lot of how you deal with life and how you resolve things, you know?"[125] Fernanda Cirelli compared her hectic professional life as a children's photographer to her experience improvising in the audiovisual duo Auto Solidão, which provided a "very personal immersion" and the opportunity to explore and express "a more tranquil, psychological, interior side."[126] Collaboration thus plays a critical therapeutic role in helping individuals address the difficulties of everyday life by fostering experiences of catharsis and release not possible in other spheres. Engagement with experimental sound, in this context, facilitates a sort of emotional alchemy that is ideal for channeling experiences of stress into healthier forms of expression.

These encounters contain important social ramifications in addition to their creative potential. Alexandre Marino Fernandez argued that the scene's shifting collaborative matrix fostered a powerful sense of interconnectedness that drove individual musicians to improve their craft and generated a broader "discourse in the moment" that resonated throughout the broader scene.[127] Fernandez emphasized the communitarian ramifications of the scene's collaborative dynamics, and asserted that this generated "a more profound conversation and with that it

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[125] Interview with Mariana Cetra and Cesar Zanin, December 20, 2015. "…todas as sensações que você tá sentindo naquele momento, naquele dia, ou naquele semana, enfim, aquilo tudo acaba sendo transformado e se manifestado por meio da música que você tá fazendo. Então pra mim a improvisação tem isso—muito de como você lida com a vida e de como você resolve algumas coisas, sabe?"
[126] Interview with Fernanda Cirelli, June 22, 2016. "…um mergulho bastante pessoal;" "um lado mais tranquilo meu mesmo, de interior, mais psicológico."
[127] Interview with Alexandre Marino Fernandez, February 22, 2016. "…um discurso ali no momento."

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establishes a sense of community."[128] For some, the social consequences of this process were equally if not more significant than the creative benefits. Vocalist Jonathan Gall drew attention to the diversity of perspectives the scene brought together, and argued that its focus on collaboration played a critical social role in fostering difficult but necessary conversations between people with different points of view. As he asserted, "I think a lot of people misconstrue diversity as something where we have to be okay with different things. You know, I'm not okay with a lot of things. But there needs to be a conversation. There needs to be some kind of co-existence. Even if the co-existence is a separation—some kind of a recognition, you know? When people are afraid to say things that are tough to say, the conversation atrophies."[129]

For many, the lasting relationships that grow out of these encounters are some of the most creatively enriching and personally satisfying qualities of the scene. Guitarist Nahnati Francischini, for instance, spoke of an ongoing collaboration with vocalist Inés Terra and multi-instrumentalist Bella in glowing terms, as a deeply rewarding experience driven by the artists' mutual respect for one another and the new perspectives each musician brought to the encounter. In addition to employing different instrumental techniques, each artist hails from disparate backgrounds: Francischini played in heavy metal bands before transitioning to improvisation, Terra moved from Argentina and pursues sound studies at USP, while Bella integrates electronic techniques with self-constructed instruments. Francischini contrasted her history working informally with Bella, who participates extensively in independent and DIY circles, with her own history participating in USP's free improvisation group Orquestra Errante. Bella, she asserted, "is a very different improviser, and I think it's really fucking cool, because she doesn't have that thing they have in the academy—this practice of having a frame at the beginning.

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[128] Interview with Alexandre Marino Fernandez, February 22, 2016. "…uma conversa mais profunda e com isso estabelecer uma sensação de comunidade."
[129] Interview with Jonathan Gall, November 3, 2015.

Doing ten seconds of silence before beginning, for instance—something that really comes from concert music. You'll start and do all those things with the body. She doesn't have any of that."[130] Francischini situated the creatively stimulating elements of the experience as a product of novel intersubjective encounters between individuals with different perspectives, noting, "With them, I always get pulled in a different direction."[131] Encounters such as these represent the collaborative dynamics of the São Paulo scene at their most harmonious and rewarding. They constitute the interpersonal foundation on which its broader network is built, and the human element that makes it worthwhile on a long term basis.

Not everyone seemed to agree on the ideal dynamics of these encounters, however. Some individuals rejected the scene's more chaotic qualities and forwarded alternative understandings of ideal improvisatory approaches. Violinist and sound poet Flora Holderbaum affirmed a conversational understanding of improvisation and the value of freedom in performance but expressed a more skeptical attitude toward what she viewed as insufficiently considerate approaches to sonic dialogue. In the São Paulo scene, she argued, improvisation was not always as communicative as it could or should be. As she recalled, "I see some sound works that are free improvisation—I saw one this weekend, that can leave things simply chaotic. So we take a job that everyone improvises in any form and plays anything, there you have more, I think, a symptom of the chaos we live in than an individual expression, strictly speaking."[132]

Perhaps the most acute obstacle to effective improvisatory conversations arose from manifestations of machismo, which women artists consistently situated as a major issue they had

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[130] Interview with Nahnati Francischini, June 25, 2018. "Ela é uma improvisadora muito diferente, e eu acho foda demais, porque ela não tem uma coisa que tem na academia—essa prática de ter uma moldura no início. Fazer uns dez segundos de silêncio antes de começar, por exemplo—uma coisa bem de concerto. Você vai começar e faz toda aquela coisa com o corpo. Ela não tem nada disso."

[131] Interview with Nahnati Francischini, June 25, 2018. "Com elas, sempre me puxo para um lado diferente."

[132] Interview with Flora Holderbaum, October 20, 2016. "Vejo uns trabalhos sonoros que são de improvisação livre—eu vi agora um nesse final de semana, que pode deixar as coisas simplesmente caóticas. Então a gente pega um trabalho que todo mundo improvisa de qualquer forma e toca qualquer coisa, aí você tem mais, eu acho que, um sintoma do caos que a gente vive do que, propriamente, uma expressão individual."

had to confront on the independent experimental stage. These individuals identified two prominent forms in which this manifested: expressions of aggression or dominance and instances in which male artists predominantly or exclusively engaged with other men. Bella, for instance, spoke of having experienced aggressive onstage dynamics with certain male musicians, particularly the act of dominating the onstage conversation by playing louder than her and not giving her space to emerge on equitable grounds. She tied the phenomenon to broader power structures marginalizing women in Brazilian society and likened the experience to "really, literally being swallowed, as if I didn't exist—a concrete exclusion, you know?"[133] Francischini spoke of an undercurrent of "subtle machismo" that led to women performers being ignored or not taken seriously as artists in their own right.[134] She spoke of one individual's behavior during a four-person collaboration with two other men and one other woman as a characteristic example of this phenomenon. During the performance, she recalled, "we got really pissed off, because during the whole improvisation the guy stayed there sitting, kind of turned that way, and kind of didn't interact with us."[135] In conversation, she addressed the ambiguous yet pervasive nature of this interactional behavior, noting, "You're there, and that's how it is. You don't know if the guy is talking with you seriously without trying to hit on you, so it's like, 'Shit!' You don't know if the guy is taking you seriously—if you're having a serious conversation with him—or if he's just being an asshole."[136] These gender dynamics constitute one of the most pervasive and entrenched obstacles to the realization of the egalitarian ideals running throughout the scene and a major impediment to the creative freedom to which performers aspire.

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[133] Interview with Bella, July 4, 2018. "…realmente, literalmente ser engolida, como se eu não existisse—uma exclusão concreta, sabe?"

[134] Interview with Nahnati Francischini, June 25, 2018. "…machismo sútil."

[135] Interview with Nahnati Francischini, June 25, 2018. "…ficamos muito putas, porque durante a improvisação inteira o menino ficou sentado meio que virado para lá, e meio que não interagia com a gente."

[136] Interview with Nahnati Francischini, June 25, 2018. "Você está lá, é assim. Você não sabe se o cara está conversando com você na moral sem estar te cantando, aí fica meio, 'que merda!' Não sabe se o cara está te levando a sério—se está levando uma conversa séria com ele—ou se só está sendo cuzão."

As a means of confronting onstage instances of masculinist aggression and exclusion, some members of the scene have developed shows foregrounding the contributions of women artists. One of the earliest and most large-scale iterations of this type of event, the all-women concert XX, occurred in August 2015. Held at Ibrasotope, XX brought together a total of eleven musicians for a series of solo and small-group presentations, after which the artists came together onstage for a free improvisation (Fig. 3.19). The event also featured expositions by two other artists that visitors could peruse throughout the evening.

Figure 3.19: Bella (electronics and keyboard), Júlia Teles (theremin), Natacha Maurer (electronics), and Sannanda Acácia (electronics) participate in a free improvisation during the finale of XX. Photo taken by Fernando Iazzetta at Ibrasotope, August 8, 2015.

Those who participated in XX spoke of it as a refreshing change of pace, both for its creation of a space where women could feel fully included and for the new creative opportunities they felt it opened as a result. Holderbaum cited her experience as having provided a welcome counterpoint to the scene's more anarchic, overbearing elements. Drawing attention to what she perceived as a more egalitarian attitude, she asserted that its performances featured an approach

to improvisation that was "based in collective listening and was very democratic. It was very open and nobody imposed on anyone—you could hear everyone, and at the same time, something was emerging."[137] In her mind, the more communitarian attitude in the series fostered crucial two-way communication that was necessary for generating more productive improvisatory encounters. As I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapter, endeavors such as XX form part of a broader phenomenon in which women artists and organizational leaders strive to combat broader exclusionary processes beyond the stage that not only hinder effective performance, but also restrict women's opportunities to join collaborative projects in the first place.

Curiously, in contrast to the prevalence of discussions of sexism, testimonies of experiences of racial exclusion within the boundaries of the scene were conspicuously absent. While musicians of color expressed acute awareness of broader processes of racism and underrepresentation in Brazilian society and were quick to address these issues in conversation, not once did a musician of any background accuse other members of the scene of treating them negatively based on their own racial or ethnic identity. At the same time, the scene as a whole suffers from marked underrepresentation of certain groups, particularly artists of African heritage, who comprise a small minority of the scene's participants, even taking into consideration the city of São Paulo's generally whiter racial composition in comparison to the country of Brazil as a whole.

What can one make of this discrepancy? How can one reconcile the scene's issues with racial representation with the lack of explicit testimonies of exclusion, particularly in comparison to those relating to sexism? It is unlikely that the São Paulo scene represents an oasis of racial

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[137] [137] Interview with Flora Holderbaum, October 20, 2015. "Senti que a improvisação estava baseada em uma escuta de todas e estava muito democrática. Ela estava muito aberta e ninguém se impunha sobre ninguém—dava para ouvir todas e, ao mesmo tempo, a coisa foi surgindo."

harmony, free from processes of discrimination that shape Brazilian society on every level.

Several contributing factors may be at play. One obvious explanation is that Afro-descendant

members of the scene may be understandably hesitant to recount experiences of discrimination to

a white ethnographer who does not possess experiential knowledge of racism. Similarly, those

same musicians may also feel reluctant to call out other participants out of concern for reprisal or

pushback from individuals in positions of organizational power. Gender could also play a more

central role in structuring interpersonal creative relationships than race, thus generating

circumstances in which musicians may tend to be more open to playing with artists of different

racial backgrounds than different genders. It may also be that underrepresentation arises as a

consequence of broader patterns of exclusion beyond the boundaries of the scene and that

independent experimental musicians from marginalized groups represent those who have already

secured access. After all, many of the creative circles from which the scene tends to draw, such

as the university performance circuit and certain genres of independent rock, contain similar

problems with representation.

This is not to say that questions of race were absent from the independent experimental

stage. On the contrary, Afro-descendant participants in the scene regularly discussed general

experiences of discrimination within Brazilian society and their own personal connections to

Afro-diasporic and Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage as central elements of their experiences as

musicians and individuals.[138] Such is the approach that informs the creative mission of Rômulo

Alexis and Wagner Ramos, whose duo Rádio Diaspora integrates stylistic and political

references from across the African diaspora—rhythms from Brazilian *maracatu*, samples of

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[138] My use of the inclusive term "Afro-descendant" rather than "black" or "Afro-Brazilian" to characterize racial background arises from the fact that in Brazil, a majority of those with African heritage do not identify as black, choosing instead to identify under designations such as mixed-race or *pardo*. Generally, residents of Brazil use the term "Afro-Brazilian" as a designation of cultural heritage or specific cultural practices rather than individual racial or ethnic identity.

speeches by political activists such as Abdias do Nascimento, distorted guitar riffs in the style of Jimi Hendrix—within collage-like improvised performance settings.

Figure 3.20: Rômulo Alexis (trumpet) and Wagner Ramos (drums and sampler) perform as the duo Rádio Diaspora. 74 Club, December 1, 2018.

Members of the duo situated social critique and connection with Afro-diasporic cultural heritage as equally important motivational factors in their approach to creative practice. Alexis, for instance, asserted that "Black musicians of all the languages of the African diaspora who artistically developed in the context of oppression in the Americas are always in my thoughts, as are all the styles of the African diaspora and the music of the African continent itself."[139] Ramos emphasized a desire to embrace the diaspora's complexities and heterogeneity, arguing, "It's something that we think about a lot—the deconstruction of the concept [of the diaspora] as simply rhythmic, or this confusion of the diaspora. I think the diaspora is really a huge confusion

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[139] Email interview with Rômulo Alexis, November 25, 2015. "…os músicos negros de todas as linguagens desenvolvidas na diáspora africana que se desenvolveram artisticamente no contexto de opressão nas américas e no mundo estão sempre em meu pensamento, assim como todos os estilos da diáspora africana e da própria música do continente africano."

that way, and I think that our sound is full of that—of this movement of confusion."[140] This

perspective informed the duo's use of the term *radio*, which refers to both the cultural diversity

of the African Diaspora as well as the collage aesthetic the duo employs in concert. Ramos

emphasized the value of generating feelings of discomfort in listeners, arguing,

> When we talk about that plurality, we make our sound, we like the way it works, and we want it to reach some spaces and places—that there's a black representation of another order. So we've got hip hop, there's samba here in Brazil that's very strong. Only it doesn't have any of that thing we always talk about: discomfort. It doesn't bother people, it doesn't show dissatisfaction. And our sound tries to go in that direction, it tries to unite with militancy, with people you study, who provoke us—and we want to provoke, too, you know? That's the idea, and we're managing to enter some of these spaces too. To rescue this mode of thought, the movement toward making a sound but not what's conventional. It's not conventional and people hear it and say "Wow!"[141]

Ramos's sentiments are echoed in the duo's publicity materials, which characterize their

objective as making a "loud noise to break the pact of silence about the whitening and

naturalization of racism in constant and regular cannibalization of black-diasporic intangible

cultural heritage."[142]

Projects such as Rádio Diaspora reflect broader Afrological creative currents running

throughout the São Paulo scene that speak to distinct expressive and critical possibilities not

afforded within established genre cultures. The discomfort induced by experimental sound acts

as a key tool in this endeavor. By creating acoustic textures that unsettle listeners and challenge

established frameworks of listening, the musicians seek to generate sonic spaces that provoke

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[140] Interview with Wagner Ramos, December 17, 2018. "…é uma coisa que a gente pensa muito assim, na desconstrução desse conceito simplesmente rítmico ou essa confusão da diáspora. Eu acho que a diáspora é uma super confusão assim, e acho que o nosso som está cheio disso aí—desse movimento de confusão mesmo."
[141] Interview with Wagner Ramos, December 17, 2018. "Quando a gente fala dessa pluralidade, a gente faz o nosso som, gosta do jeito que ele funciona, e quer que ele atinja alguns espaços e lugares—que existe uma representatividade negra de uma outra ordem. Então a gente tem o hip hop, tem o samba aqui no Brasil que é muito forte. Só que não tem uma coisa que a gente costuma dizer: o incômodo. Não incomoda, não mostra uma insatisfação. E nosso som tenta esse caminho, tenta união com a militância, com pessoas como você que estudam, que nos provocam—e a gente também quer provocar, sabe?! É essa a ideia, e a gente está conseguindo entrar em alguns espaços desse tipo também. Resgatar esse pensamento, esse movimento de fazer um som, mas não é convencional. Não é convencional e a pessoa ouvir e falar 'nossa!'"
[142] See https://selonetlabel.bandcamp.com/album/radio-diaspora.

new ways of thinking about black Brazilian culture and history in turn. For musicians such as Alexis and Ramos, experimental performance functions not only as a vehicle for personal engagement with Afro-diasporic cultural heritage, but also as a vehicle for the kind of confrontation necessary for social change.

Embodying Collaborative Creativity

The spontaneous, communicative approach to performance encountered in the São Paulo scene is governed by an intuitive approach to creative practice grounded in the body. Musicians consistently situated sensation and bodily experience rather than discourse and conscious thought as the primary means by which they experienced performance and a chief source of inspiration for musical expression. This orientation arises from a creative environment centered on open-ended improvisation, in which practitioners can feel free to channel immediate physical and emotional reactions in performance without having to worry about adhering to constrained idiomatic elements. The facilitation of such experiences constitutes one of the most appealing qualities of participation in the scene—a basic part of not only the nature, but also the *purpose* of onstage collaboration.

That independent experimental musicians would situate performance in embodied terms is not unusual. Human experience is an inherently embodied phenomenon, with a variety of processes that occur below the level of conscious thought. Some researchers have employed the idea of *embodied* or *situated cognition* as a means of understanding the ways in which the human body acts as the primary agent and locus of perceptual engagement with the world (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991:173; see also Borgo 2005:42-45; Gallagher 2005; Iyer 1998:24; 2002:389). In contrast to understandings of cognition that emphasize a fundamental separation between internal perception and interaction with the external world, studies of embodied

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cognition argue for understanding the two as intrinsically linked. As Francisco J. Varela, Evan

Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch assert,

> Cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context. By using the term action we mean to emphasize once again that sensory and motor processes, perception and action, are fundamentally inseparable in lived cognition. Indeed, the two are not merely contingently linked in individuals; they have also evolved together. [143]

Their model is influenced in part by the phenomenological theory of Maurice Merleau-Ponty,

who argued for conceptualizing the body as "our general medium for having a world" and

eliminating the distinction between perceiving subject and perceived object.[144] To know the

world, in these frameworks, is to actively engage with it via embodied, socially situated action.

Musical performance aptly exemplifies this phenomenon. David Borgo highlights the

frequent use of embodied metaphors in musical discourse (bright sounds, high pitches, musical

space), and notes that these metaphors relate to both physical and social relationships (2005:46;

see also Johnson 1987; Walser 1991:120). Vijay Iyer draws attention to the ways in which

musicians perceive sound in terms of bodily motion, and argues that the temporality of

performance is governed by a sense of *mutual embodiment*, in which both listener and performer

experience a sense of "shared time" (1998:31; 2002:393-395; 2004:161). Fernando Iazzetta

addresses the ways in which individual physical actions play a key role in the process of

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[143] Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991:173. For Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, embodied cognition offers a means of "negotiat[ing] a middle path between the Scylla of cognition as the recovery of a pregiven outer world (realism) and the Charybdis of cognition as the projection of a pregiven inner world (idealism). These two extremes both take representation as their central notion: in the first case representation is used to recover what is outer; in the second case it is used to project what is inner. Our intention is to bypass entirely this logical geography of inner versus outer by studying cognition not as recovery or projection but as embodied action" (1991:172). They emphasize the importance of examining contextual influences on the production of knowledge, which they argue arises from "the structures of our biological embodiment but are lived and experienced within a domain of consensual action and cultural history. They enable us to make sense of our world; or in more phenomenological language, they are the structures by which we exist in the manner of 'having a world'" (1991:149-150).

[144] Merleau-Ponty 1962:146; 1968:138. Merleau-Ponty proposes an understanding of the body as "a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them; we say, because it is evident, that it unites these two properties within itself" (1968:137).

understanding musical sound itself (2000:261; see also Corness 2008:23). Studies such as these contribute to a growing musicological consensus on the inseparability of the performing body and the perceiving brain and the centrality of embodied action within this phenomenon.[145]

Furthermore, this relational process is empathetic in nature, encompassing not only the relationship between individual actor and musical sound, but also the various constituent human and non-human actors in a given performance environment. Such was the experience of Leandro Archela, who spoke of "moments of immersion, where you're in contact with the public and you release the sound inside a certain room and the sensations that this causes feed back into the creativity, and you express yourself in an extremely natural and true way—or rather, the place and the reference and the people who are in the place and the energy that the people emanate are the components that you'll use to create."[146] Archela's perspective points to an understanding of broader factors such as the listening public and the spatial dimensions of venues as fundamental elements of embodied musical experience.

In São Paulo, musicians described the embodied experience of performance as an intuitive process existing outside the realm of conscious thought. Practitioners often found themselves at a loss for words when discussing what happened in the moment during a concert, and often preferred instead to situate performative action outside, or even in opposition to, the realm of verbal discourse. For instrumentalist and electronic musician Cesar Zanin, for instance, improvisation offered a key means of exiting conscious thought and analysis. As he recalled, "At the moment I play, and I release the field recording, I kind of close my eyes. I don't think. I don't

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[145] Research on the embodied dynamics of dance is richer still; as Edward C. Warburton notes, embodiment as a term has been "embraced by dance scholars" (2011:66) Some of this scholarship intersects with ethnomusicological research; Tomie Hahn, for instance, discusses the ways in which dance transmission can act as a means of embodying "cultural knowledge" (2007:1).

[146] Interview with Leandro Archela, October 28, 2015. "…momentos de imersão, aonde você está em contato com o público e você propaga o som dentro de uma determinada sala e as sensações que isso causam retroalimentam a criatividade, e você se expressa de maneira extremamente natural e verdadeira—ou seja, o local e a referência e as pessoas que estão no local e a energia que as pessoas emanam é o componente que você vai utilizar para criar."

think. There is no mental procedure in which I organize things and say 'Ah, now, at such-and-such minute of my field recording I'll do this!' No, there's no such thing. I let go. And afterwards, when I listen to it, the insights come."[147] Others emphasized the intuitive nature of their approach to improvisation. One musician, for instance, acknowledged the importance of preparing for concerts and rehearsing with others, but asserted that during performance, his act became "intuitive—almost a meditation."[148] I encountered this attitude throughout my fieldwork; one individual even suggested the term "intuitive improvisation" ("improvisação intuitiva") as a preferred moniker for the type of music practiced in the São Paulo scene.

Independent experimental musicians' emphasis on intuitive performative action taking precedence over self-conscious contemplation resonates with the observations of Dard Neuman, who discusses the ways in which Hindustani musicians "perform, but do not reflect" on what transpires during a concert until well afterwards (2012:428). In the Hindustani context, he argues, musical creativity "is an activity that starts not at first with the thinking subject but with the practiced hands (if an instrumentalist) and throat (if a vocalist)" (2012:438). The resulting form of musical agency "is not a subject-centered activity for the Hindustani musician, at least not at first. Rather, the fingers and the throat are trained to carry the epistemological burden such that the mind can later catch up" (2012:426). The notion of the mind "catching up" to what the body performs in concert was a common theme in conversations with members of the São Paulo scene, many of whom asserted both the essential unknowability of their actions in the moment of performance and the undesirability of pursuing such knowledge in the first place.

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[147] Interview with Cesar Zanin and Mariana Cetra, December 20, 2015. "No momento em que eu toco, e que eu solto a gravação de campo, eu meio que fecho os olhos. Eu não penso. Eu não penso. Não há um procedimento mental em que eu organize as coisas e fale, 'Ah, agora, no minuto tal da minha gravação de campo eu vou fazer isso!' Não, não existe isso. Eu solto. E depois, na hora de escutar, que vem os *insights*." Zanin spoke the word "insights" in English.
[148] Interview with Carlos Dias, February 18, 2016. "…intuitive—quase uma meditação."

One might contextualize this approach to creative practice within the nonverbalized, embodied realm of *habitus*, acted out through the body rather than through conscious thought or verbal discourse.[149] As Pierre Bourdieu argues, an individual's *habitus* produces "regulated improvisations" that make up the actions of everyday life, and functions largely on the level of the unconscious (1977:21). Furthermore, in São Paulo, the *habitus* of improvisation is a rebellious one: rather than upholding existing musical structures, it tends to act as an agent of chaos and change. This understanding of *habitus* as a means of transformation resonates with scholarship that explores its resistant potential (e.g. Grove 2007:162; Fatton Jr. 2011:160), in contrast to Bourdieu, who emphasizes the ways in which *habitus* tends to reproduce existing societal structures (e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

In part, this can be explained as a product of the inherently intuitive and embodied experience of improvisation. Yet there is also a set of greater purposes at work that affects the value and meaning of improvised performance in São Paulo on a core level. For many practitioners, focusing on the body acts as a crucial component of the experience of group flow. Archela, in a characteristic expression of this sentiment, situated a central objective of his personal creative practice as "composing from sensations and not from pre-established models, scores, chords," and argued that this approach allowed him to achieve a state of immersive engagement that would not be possible in other performance environments.[150] Some musicians develop performance practices purposely centered on the body itself as a means of achieving a state of presence and immersion. Alexandre Marino Fernandez and Bruno Hiss, for instance, collaborated on a performance series guided by the amplified and electronically modified sounds

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[149] Pierre Bourdieu defines *habitus* as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (1977:72).
[150] Interview with Leandro Archela, October 28, 2015. "…compor a partir de sensações e não de modelos preestabelecidos, partituras, acordes."

of their breathing. Over the course of performances, aided by receptors attached to their chests, the two breathe rhythmically, adjusting the way they exhale and engage their vocal chords so that they are able to generate a shifting texture of alternately deep, raspy timbres and semipitched sighs. Fernandez situated achieving a state of flow as a central objective of the act, arguing that the first cycle of breathing allowed him to feel "so much in the present that I forget that I'm playing."[151] Multiple scholars have drawn attention to this connection; Michele Biasutti and Luigi Frezza, for instance, draw attention to the ways in which improvisation can generate a flow state in which performers "begin to forget personal problems, lose critical self-consciousness, and lose track of time" (2009:233), while Borgo highlights the "complete annihilation of all critical and rational facilities" reported among free improvisers (2002:175; 2005:25).

Perhaps the most significant consequence of musicians' intuitive, embodied understanding of creative practice lies in its ability to provide an important practical and symbolic contrast to what practitioners conceived of as an overly thought-out approach to music-making in other areas of Brazilian creative culture. For these individuals, embodied approaches to performance can function as a crucial nonverbal form of expression that creates vectors of creative exploration and self-expression that would not be possible within the realm of discourse or conscious thought. Archela asserted that the scene's embodied, intuitive approach to performance allowed him to connect to an "anti-rational ideal—this idea of non-mathematical things."[152] In his mind, improvisation functioned as a "quest for instinct. To create from instinct. We're animals. And that intuitive side, I think, is the purest side of the human being. I think that

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[151] Interview with Alexandre Marino Fernandez, February 19, 2016.. "…tanto no presente que eu consigo esquecer que estou tocando."
[152] Interview with Leandro Archela, October 28, 2015. "…essa ideia antirracional—essa ideia da não matemática das coisas.".

improvisation put me in touch with my origins *[natureza de gênese]*, you know? The rational takes away the focus of things, somehow."[153]

Academic study and the general act of analyzing performance occasionally came up in conversation as examples of the type of institutional practice that restricted truly immersive and open-ended forms of musical expression. Thiago Salas Gomes situated the experimental scene's intuitive approach to performance in direct opposition to his work studying music in a university setting, and argued that improvisation allowed him to work "completely intuitively and non-academically."[154] Gomes admitted to feeling conflicted about his own engagement with the academy, noting,

> My current doubt is that sometimes academic ways of working with art, that require… for example, I have a masters from USP in the creative process and I try to create works and analyze the works themselves. And when I stop to make a report about it, my body has already stopped acting and I sometimes feel like, "Gosh, I've moved away, and now, ok, I go back and reflect, elaborate, and such." But often this isn't what I want—what I want is just to do, do, do, do, and not think.[155]

This perspective forms part of a broader phenomenon in which independent experimental musicians consider the scene to be an important site for open-ended performance and self-expression that many feel is not possible within the confines of the Brazilian university system.

These approaches suggest the presence of a conceptual and practical dichotomy among independent experimental musicians in which engagement with the body stands in opposition to conscious thought. In this understanding of creative practice, to actively think about one's

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[153] Interview with Leandro Archela, October 28, 2015. "…uma busca do instinto. Criar a partir do instinto. Nós somos animais. E esse lado instintivo, eu acho, que é o lado mais puro do ser humano. Eu acho que a improvisação me colocou em contato com a minha natureza de gênese, sabe? O racional tira um pouco o foco das coisas de alguma maneira."

[154] Interview with Thiago Salas Gomes, December 21, 2015. "…de forma completamente intuitiva e não acadêmica."

[155] Interview with Thiago Salas Gomes, December 21, 2015. "Minhas dúvidas atuais é que às vezes as maneiras acadêmicas de se trabalhar com a arte, que exige... por exemplo, eu tenho lá na USP um... meu Mestrado é em processo criativo e eu pretendo criar obras e analisar as próprias obras. E quando eu paro para fazer um relatório sobre aquilo, o meu corpo já parou de agir e eu sinto às vezes, 'Puxa, distanciei, e agora, tudo bem, e eu volto lá como reflexão, elaborada e tal.' Mas muitas vezes não é isso que eu quero, eu quero é só fazer, fazer, fazer, fazer e não pensar."

approach to performance is dangerously close to overthinking it; conversely, to concentrate on the body facilitates an immersive state that sets one free to let the music take one where one wishes to go, even if the destination is unknown. The conscious mind can be an impediment to creativity; by diverting focus to the body and facilitating less conscious, more intuitive forms of performance, practitioners may facilitate the exploration of new sonic territories that the conscious brain is hesitant or unwilling to enter. For members of the São Paulo scene, as with their compatriots in neighboring genre cultures such as free improvisation or free jazz, this phenomenon is essentially liberating; a source of both creative promise and personal emancipation.

Concluding Thoughts: Beyond Musical Experimentalism

Thus the participants in the São Paulo scene appropriate the practices of musical experimentalism and fashion them into something new. In São Paulo, independent experimental musicians follow their own logic, hybrid in nature, that draws from existing conceptual and practical models of creativity but also confounds them at the same time. Theirs is a fundamentally social practice that situates experimental music in social terms, in direct relation to the shifting permutations of individuals coming together onstage. Instead of the hierarchical composer-to-performer relationship inherent in experimental composition is a model for innovation and cultural production based on the collective—what one musician referred to as "encounters of free musics."[156]

Yet reconceptualizing musical experimentalism remains an important but ultimately secondary consequence compared to the realization of the scene's collaborative social dynamics and the creative investigations that arise in turn. Interpersonal interactions constitute the most

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[156] Interview with Carla Boregas, June 30, 2016. "encontros de músicas livres."

significant elements of the contemporary independent experimental "moment" that the São Paulo scene currently enjoys—a moment that arose not because of a collective creative or ideological epiphany, but because people from different backgrounds who had not historically collaborated shared an affinity for open-ended performance and began to share spaces and work together. These encounters point to an understanding of experimental creativity grounded neither in mathematical procedures nor ideology, but in the human element—the realm of possibility created when collaboratively minded individuals from diverse backgrounds come together onstage to see what happens.

Chapter Three

"Music Forged in Iron and Fire": Organizational Strategies, Institutional Politics, and Collaborative Creativity in a Stratified Field

We felt the need to change the scene—not to stay at the university discussing the problematics. We wanted to touch a nerve. It's no use pointing fingers. We have to propose a solution. And the solution is to create the space that doesn't exist.[157]
<div align="right">– Renata Roman</div>

June 26, 2016. A crowd has gathered this sunny Sunday afternoon at the Praça José Molina park for the daylong finale of the inaugural Festival Bigorna. The mood is buoyant and relaxed, as attendees watch the performances, eat at pop-up food and drink stands, and roam around the space making conversation. Through the park's ring of trees, one can see waves of light traffic pass by the neighborhood's jumble of grey buildings and colorful street art. In the distance, hundreds of residents walk down the city's arterial boulevard Avenida Paulista, which is closed to the public for the day. Onstage, the free improvisation trio Coletivo Abaetetuba plays a thirty-minute set (Fig. 4.1). Composed of Thomas Rohrer (prepared *rabeca* fiddle), Antonio Panda Gianfratti (percussion), and Rodrigo Montoya (prepared *shamisen*), the group weaves a dissonant texture with a variety of shifts in tone. Soon after the trio wraps up, a participatory event organized by the University of São Paulo-affiliated sound studies group NuSom opens to the public. NuSom has programmed a website where anyone with a smartphone can submit brief sets of characters to a live feed of text, which is displayed on a projector at the center of the park (Fig. 4.2). Each available character is tied to a specific sound; as the submissions come in and the

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[157] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "Sentíamos necessidade de modificar a cena—não ficar na universidade discutindo a problemática. A gente queria mexer na ferida. Não adianta a gente apontar. A gente precisa propor solução. E a solução é criar o espaço que não existe."

feed scrolls down, the park resounds with noises ranging from pitched electronic tones to hi-hats to the ring of a cash register. The result is akin to a bizarre sonic version of Twitter.

Figure 4.1: Thomas Rohrer, Antonio Panda Gianfratti, and Rodrigo Montoya perform at the Festival Bigorna. June 26, 2016.
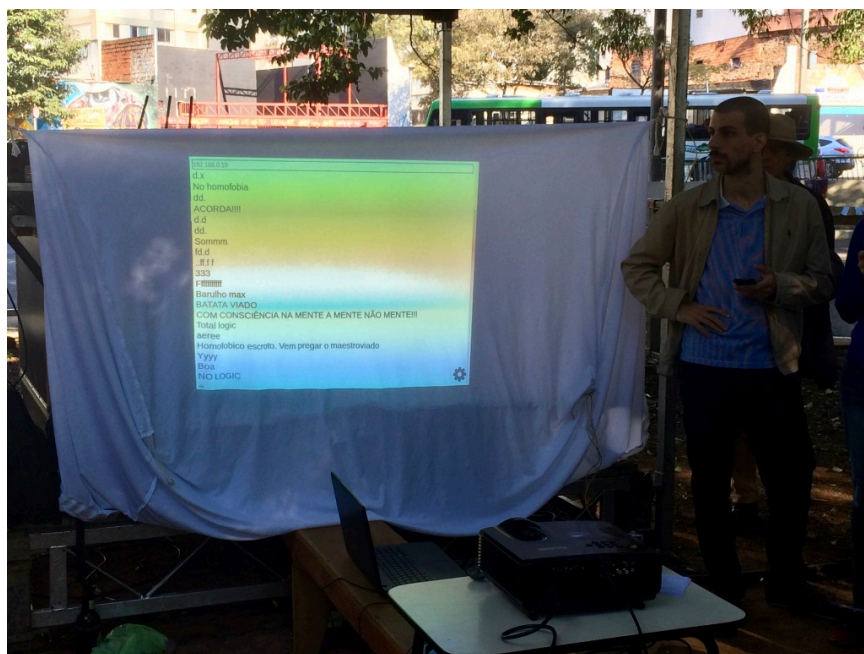
Figure 4.2: NuSom's participatory audiovisual installation. June 26, 2016.

Over the course of the afternoon and evening, the two groups are joined by a diverse set of artists—the solo acts Holofonica and Acavernus, the band Auto, the electronic music duo National, and the instrumental six-person band Hurtmold—who employ a similarly varied set of sounds, evoking genres such as post-punk, hip hop, and noise. The event is one of the scene's most well-attended, growing from an initial crowd of about forty individuals to well over 150 during the evening finale. It marks the culmination of seven days of activities, including concerts, a sound installation, workshops, and lectures. During this time, the festival has brought together participants from a wide range of backgrounds, from affiliates of local DIY labels to graduate music students of the University of São Paulo's Escola de Comunicação e Arte (USP-ECA). It is the result of almost a yearlong organizational collaboration between the experimental venue Estúdio Fita Crepe and the independent record labels Submarine Records and Brava, with the financial support of public funds from the state of São Paulo.

With participants from a wide spectrum of inventive musical practices and an eclectic set of sounds to boot, productions such as the Festival Bigorna represent the community and creative potential of the São Paulo scene. They also epitomize its challenges. The organizers of the festival spent hundreds of hours collaborating with local cultural institutions and navigating the complicated São Paulo state bureaucracy in order to secure funds for the festival, for which they received minimal personal financial compensation. In the following months, as the country's recession deepened and state-funded cultural programs faced continued cuts, potential sources of economic support became increasingly competitive and scarce. Although those who participated in the festival cited it as a singularly positive experience, its organizational leaders expressed ambivalence about the work they had invested, which left them exhausted and facing another extensive round of efforts if they wanted to make the event happen again. In the end, it proved to be an unsustainable endeavor for its creators, who decided not to invest their time and energy in

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organizing any subsequent iterations. For all its effervescence and the many new points of connection it fostered, it happened only once.

These types of events do not emerge overnight. They are the result of a supportive and collaborative network of musicians and institutions born of years of ongoing conversations and a dogged willingness to persevere in the face of structural obstacles. What are the dynamics of this network? What are its tensions? How do they affect the contours of creative practice? In this chapter, I address the ways in which sustained interaction between organizational actors from disparate points of origin motivate and complicate the collaborative dynamics of the São Paulo scene. These actors confront a profoundly stratified field, with obstacles ranging from limited spatial and economic resources, social divisions arising from disparate institutional backgrounds, and processes of exclusion related to identity markers such as gender. They foster collaboration in the face of these difficult circumstances by consciously facilitating meetings between musicians from diverse points of origin and providing space and organizing events where these individuals can develop new musical ideas in minimally restrictive institutional environments. Motivated in large part by DIY-informed communitarian impetuses but facing compromises due to the realities of cultural production in contemporary São Paulo, the scene's organizational leaders employ a variety of strategies in order to mitigate the constant threat of institutional precarity. Their organizational efforts function as a distinct type of creative practice in their own right that shapes the scene's dynamics of sound and performance on a basic level.

This chapter addresses the organizational and institutional context of the São Paulo scene and the ways in which its leaders foster collaboration in the face of calamitous sociopolitical developments in the Brazilian public sphere. I begin with an overview of the scene's challenges and structural limitations and the various forces that have shaped musicians' organizational strategies over the past five years. In order to investigate the interrelated dimensions of this

network and their effect on creative practice, the chapter employs a longitudinal investigation of four major components of the scene: performance spaces, record labels, affinity events, and experimental festivals. I integrate this discussion with an examination of how practitioners' espoused egalitarian ethos has become complicated by the realities of cultural production over the past five years and the ways in which their strategies have alternately succeeded and collapsed in the face of these developments. I conclude with a consideration of what the dynamics of the São Paulo scene demonstrate about the ideal circumstances of cultural production for fostering collaborative creativity in the face of structural marginalization.

Collaboration and Compromise

In the institutional matrix of the São Paulo scene, creative freedom is anything but free. Practitioners operate in a deeply stratified field of cultural production with complex social and institutional relationships that contain significant ramifications for creative practice. As Pierre Bourdieu argues, a field revolves around ongoing negotiations between dominant institutions and ideas about creativity and those who seek to reproduce or transform established hierarchies (1993:30, 78; 1998:40). Independent experimental musicians operate from an almost exclusively subordinate position within this field. They must navigate multiple structural forces that have fostered social division, devalued the worth of their performances, and restricted their ability to produce music in the first place.

Chief among these obstacles is a general paucity of economic capital. While experimental music has long occupied a precarious economic position in Brazil due to its small listening public, the country's prolonged recession and the resulting cuts in public funding for the arts have crippled musicians' access to financial resources. Among other costs, practitioners must spend money to purchase equipment (often paying in excess of 50% import taxes on top of the

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initial costs), navigate the city with said equipment, and secure performance space. Limited access to space carries the most significant consequences in the creative realm. Space is at a premium in São Paulo, which features the most expensive cost of living in Latin America (Lamazares 2014:321). Those without the financial means to support their own space are left dependent on larger institutions with little inclination to devote programming to experimental music, while individuals who do own spaces often have to pay additional informal costs such as bribes to keep their venues open.

Independent experimental musicians must also navigate a challenging system of public support for the arts that restricts spontaneity and occupies an extensive amount of organizational leaders' time and resources. In theory, the Brazilian government has furnished two powerful sources of support for musical projects: public grants known as *editais* and an extensive taxpayer-financed network of nonprofit cultural institutions, particularly the statewide conglomeration of cultural spaces known as SESC-SP (Serviço Social do Comércio de São Paulo, or Commercial Social Service of São Paulo). *Editais* are a major source of financial support for independent cultural organizations across the state of São Paulo, including those affiliated with the independent experimental scene.[158] Each *edital* is directed towards supporting a specific type of cultural activity, ranging from hip hop to indigenous culture to the publication of dramaturgical texts. Interested participants must compete with others across the state, and the threat of rejection is a constant reality. Because of limited access to money and space, the organizational figures of the São Paulo scene have often had to turn to *editais* in order to finance festivals or keep performance spaces afloat.

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[158] The term *edital* (edict) comes from the fact that the grants are announced as edicts with specific rules and objectives laid out by the São Paulo state secretary of culture. For more information, see http://www.proac.sp.gov.br/proac_editais/principal/.

Securing even a single one of these grants can be an extensive ordeal. Applicants must elaborate every aspect of the proposed project beforehand: the onstage activities, the musicians and groups involved, the steps of production involved for each activity, which individuals will be hired, a detailed schedule with explanations of each event, the project's cultural merit, and a line-by-line budget of all individual expenditures that must precisely align with the actual costs for the project. Those who wish to secure funds for musical events must further specify whether their proposed events fall under the category of popular or classical music—a distinction that members of the independent experimental scene often found vexing. One must perform these activities while navigating the notoriously labyrinthine state bureaucracy, in which even a single misaligned figure is grounds for disqualification.[159] Many of those who wish to succeed, particularly individuals without extensive experience applying for state grants, must spend weeks or even months working on their applications.[160] Due to cuts in public funding for the arts, competition for *editais* has become only more and more competitive over the past few years. As I will discuss, personal well-being is often the price of success in these endeavors.

Members of the São Paulo scene also face limited opportunities for performance in the city's nonprofit cultural institutions. Of these, one organization plays a particularly significant role: SESC-SP. Part of a nationwide network of cultural institutions established in 1946, SESC-SP receives funding from a 1.5% payroll tax established in the Brazilian constitution.[161] Despite

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[159] The confusing and extensive nature of the Brazilian state bureaucracy is well documented. As Larry Rohter notes, the Brazilian bureaucracy "pervades everything from enrolling in school to getting electrical service or buying a house," and often drives individuals to engage in bribery or participation in the informal economy (2012:35). Scholars have characterized bureaucratic systems in Brazil as "internally fractured and contentious" (Coslovsky 2015:1109), a major cause of wage differentials between public and private workers (Marconi et. al. 2009:67), highly politicized and a source of patronage by ruling political parties (Praça, Freitas, and Hoepers 2011:142), and in at least one case, "Kafkaesque" (Oliveira 2017:52).

[160] A few members of the scene with greater experience navigating the system reported greater facility navigating the bureaucratic process of the *editais*; however, most individuals with whom I spoke regarded it as laborious and difficult.

[161] See Gough 2015:116-17; Rohter 2012. Founded in 1946 by a federal mandate to cater to industrial and commercial workers, over the course of the twentieth century SESC transitioned from a focus on health and recreation to an emphasis on artistic and leisure-related activities. By the 1980s, SESC counted cultural engagement, including a focus on diversity, as one of its primary goals. As a result of this shift, the institution's various physical

receiving public funds, however, SESC-SP's affiliates are privately run. They offer a variety of services to local residents, ranging from exercise classes to health services. They also host some of the city's best performance facilities and feature extensive programming for concerts and workshops. Their considerable budgets have enabled the organization to pay participating artists a competitive fee for performances and subsidize ticket prices so that more people can attend events. With twenty-one units in the São Paulo metropolitan area alone, SESC-SP has dominated musical production in the city since the organization's expansion in the 1980s.[162]

While nonprofit institutions such as SESC represent real value to musicians, they also possess significant drawbacks that render them ineffective as a sustainable model for the consistent production of experimental music. For one, while they occasionally open their doors to atypical musical acts, competition is fierce. Independent experimental performances comprise a tiny minority of these spaces' overall programming, and those musicians that do perform tend to be among the scene's better-known acts. Nor do nonprofit venues offer the kind of seamless organization facilitated at independent spaces. As a result, independent experimental musicians typically rely on independent venues to facilitate the kind of spontaneous, minimally restricted performance that characterizes the scene's profile.

Over the course of the past five years (2014-2019), this difficult institutional situation has acutely worsened due to the country's brutal series of developments in the economic and political spheres. Due to the multi-year recession and the extensive cuts in public funding for the arts that occurred over this time period, independent spaces have found themselves bereft of already-strained levels of support from both the state and the general public. The recent election

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sites have served as major hubs for musical activities for decades. See Gough 2015:116-120; Cheibub 2014; https://www.sescsp.org.br/unidades/#/content=grande-sao-paulo.
[162] In 2012, for instance, SESC's affiliates in the state of São Paulo recorded 17,351,389 attendees at its events (Gough 2015:62). K. E. Goldschmitt draws attention to the fact that the SESC affiliates in São Paulo typically enjoy greater financial support because of the city's status as a national economic and business center (2019:111).

of Jair Bolsonaro, who has pledged to further privatize public cultural institutions, promises to exacerbate this situation. Many of the venues in the independent experimental scene have found themselves the victim of these changes and have often had to reduce programming or close altogether. Electroacoustic composer Rodolfo Valente summed up the general sentiment I encountered in 2018 concisely—"things have gotten more difficult."[163] In contrast to the heady period of 2014 to 2016, he recalled, when he felt a real "effervescence" ("effervescência") in São Paulo for experimental music, due to extensive cuts in support for the arts the inherently precarious situation faced by the scene's cultural producers had become untenable in many quarters. Valente's sentiments were echoed in conversations I had with other practitioners, many of whom expressed pessimism about the country's direction as a whole and the prospects for the contemporary "moment" for independent experimental music continuing in the face of these obstacles.

For members of the scene who are women, these strained dynamics are compounded by systemic patterns of gender-based exclusion. Experiences of being not taken seriously as musicians and discouraged from performing in certain spaces were common themes in conversation with women artists, who enjoy markedly fewer options for performance and collaboration than their male counterparts. Musician and organizational leader Renata Roman, in a characteristic example of this testimony, spoke of a subtle yet pervasive phenomenon of "female segregation" within independent music circuits, including the São Paulo scene, in which male organizational figures and musicians devalued women's musical abilities and predominantly opened their spaces to other men.[164] "Generally," she asserted, "it's a boy's club. For a while, the scene was really a boy's club. Just men. So this… this thing of leaving us on the side is kind of veiled. And today that has subsided, but I don't think it's subsided, Jimmy,

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[163] Conversation with Rodolfo Valente, June 23, 2018. "As coisas ficaram mais difíceis."
[164] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "…segregação feminina."

because the guys really believe it. I think it's because of the risk of embarrassment."[165] Multi-instrumentalist Bella recalled feeling a general sense of hostility and "not being welcomed" by certain spaces, and noted that men often became defensive when women drew attention to their lack of visibility.[166] She emphasized the personal resilience she had to foster as a means of persevering, noting,

> I've had to acquire a sense of self-esteem that was independent of what other people told me, of what they were trying to tell me, or of the exclusion itself that they tried to put on me. In fact, I think that force existed there, even if it wasn't stated, you know? In that sense, I don't know… if I were a little less motivated, or another person, another personality, maybe I would say "I don't want to do this, no, I'm not feeling well, bye." But in my case, I've really had a very strong relationship with music since I was very young and I've never thought about not doing it.[167]

As I will discuss later in this chapter, musicians such as Roman have organized alternative performance series as a means of addressing this phenomenon and forming supportive environments where women artists can find space to perform on a consistent basis.

Participants in the São Paulo scene also experience exclusion from the Brazilian university system, which for many musicians represented an entrenched institution that systematically denied access to independent practitioners and delegitimized their music.[168] This was particularly the case for practitioners from DIY backgrounds who did not formally study music in university settings. These same individuals often contrasted the independent scene's

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[165] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "Geralmente, é clube do bolinha. A cena durante um tempo foi muito clube do bolinha. Só homens. Então nesse... Essa coisa de colocar a gente do lado é meio assim, velada. E que hoje diminuiu, mas eu acho que diminuiu, Jimmy, não é por que realmente os caras acreditam nisso. Eu acho que é por constrangimento."

[166] Interview with Bella, July 4, 2018. "…não ser bem recebida."

[167] Interview with Bella, July 4, 2018. "Eu tive que adquirir um senso de autoestima que independesse do que os outros me diziam, do que tentavam me dizer, ou da própria exclusão que tentavam implementar para mim. De fato, acho que essa força existia ali, mesmo que não declarada, entendeu? Nesse sentido, não sei... se eu fosse um pouco mais desmotivada, ou outra pessoa, outra personalidade, talvez eu ia falar, 'Não quero fazer isso, não, eu não estou me sentindo bem, tchau.' mas para mim, eu realmente tenho uma relação muito forte com música desde muito pequena e eu não pensava em não fazer isso."

[168] Far and away the most significant academic institutional supporter of experimental music in São Paulo is the University of São Paulo (USP). For the most part, however, practitioners did not specify USP as the object of their frustration with academic institutions. Instead, they tended to direct their criticism towards the academy or the university system in general, although it is possible that many of them were in practice implicitly referring to USP.

drive towards egalitarianism, valorization of amateur production, and focus on direct action with the academic sphere, which they associated with hierarchy, elitism, and a tendency to overconceptualize musical production in a way that stifled creativity. Musician and organizational leader Carlos Issa summarized independent musicians' perceptions of academics succinctly, as "a kind of arrogant elite, who considers himself the owner of the truth, who considers himself a vanguard, the owner of certain secrets of sound, of practices, and—because there are many people in the academy who really are arrogant. Who don't accept this part of music produced in a more informal, more empirical way, that's forming itself at the same time that it's being played, that doesn't have a preliminary design."[169] This view was common among musicians with minimal contact with university music programs and played a major role in hindering more extensive collaborations between individuals from independent and academic backgrounds.

As a result of these experiences of exclusion, several musicians proposed a distinction between "academic experimental music" ("música experimental acadêmica") and "independent experimental music" ("música experimental independente"). Clarinet and saxophone player Rogério Martins, for instance, situated canonic understandings of musical experimentalism circulating within the university system as part of a broader process of discrimination taking place against marginalized groups in the Global South. Drawing attention to the co-opting of the term in academic discourse, he proposed a distinction between institutionalized experimental music and "third world" or "out of the center" musical experimentalism taking place in the São Paulo scene: "I always perceived this exclusion of the world, principally in favor of the European and North American world. I think there should be a 'Third World Experimental Music,' 'Out of

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[169] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "Uma espécie de elite arrogante, que se considera dona da verdade, que se considera uma vanguarda, e dona de certos segredos sonoros, assim, de práticas e—e porque tem muita gente na academia que é arrogante mesmo. Que não aceita essa parte da música produzida de um jeito mais informal, mais empírico, que vai se formando ao mesmo tempo em que vai tocando, não tem um projeto prévio."

the Center Experimental Music'—I don't know. The world, it's defined in all areas, right? Not just in music. Society, racial issues, gender… The world, basically, it's led by men. First, by men; second, by white men. First, by men. Second, by whites."[170] Martins asserted the potential of reclaiming institutional terms as a means of resisting these dominant assumptions and structures of power, noting, "So you start to look, you say, 'Gosh, but the world can be more than that, right?' And in reality, it is more than that."[171]

These concerns are not without justification. Many of the structural workings of the Brazilian academy do indeed exclude independent practitioners, who possess neither the institutional cultural capital of a degree nor the objectified cultural capital gained by emulating the model of the experimental canon.[172] Issa emphasized what he saw as a fundamentally exclusionary dynamic for those who did not know how to navigate the system, arguing, "If you don't master the place's codes, sometimes you're not well received. The academy gives off this impression. They have certain codes there and if you don't master them, there's no conversation—there's not much hospitality."[173] For the most part, the Brazilian university performance circuit offers little to no space for musicians who have not secured admission or whose music does not align with the institutional mission of university music departments.

At the same time, the reality on the ground paints a more complicated picture. To begin with, for those with access, the university system acts as a potentially powerful, if not impartial,

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[170] Interview with Rogério Martins, May 31, 2016. Martins: "…eu sempre percebi essa exclusão do mundo, pro mundo europeu e norte-americano principalmente, né? Acho que tinha que ser uma 'Música Experimental do Terceiro Mundo,' 'Música Experimental Fora do Centro...' Eu não sei. O mundo, ele é definido em todas as áreas, né? Não só na música. A sociedade, questões raciais, de gênero... O mundo, basicamente, ele é comandado por homens. Primeiro, por homens; segundo, por homens brancos... Primeiro, por homens; segundo, por brancos."
[171] Interview with Rogério Martins, May 31, 2016. "Então cê começa a olhar, cê fala, 'Poxa, mas o mundo pode ser mais que isso, né?' E, na realidade, ele é mais que isso."
[172] My use of the terms *institutional cultural capital* and *objectified cultural capital* follow Pierre Bourdieu, who discusses how cultural capital can become institutionalized in the form of institutional credentials such as a degree and objectified as a cultural good (1986:47).
[173] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "Se você não domina os códigos do lugar, às vezes você não é bem recebido. A academia da essa impressão. Eles têm certos códigos lá e se você não domina, não tem conversa—não tem muita hospitalidade."

source of financial support in a field largely devoid of such resources. In this context, the academy functions similarly to the *editais* in its capacity to selectively marginalize and sustain artistic endeavors depending on how they conform to its institutional mission. Vocalist Lílian Campesato, who also worked as an assistant director of the University of São Paulo's sound studies program NuSom, emphasized the support the Brazilian university system had given to certain experimental musicians, asserting,

> We speak so poorly about [the academy], but it's generous—up to a certain point, obviously. A lot of the time it's very easy to throw a stone at it—"Ah, the academy's bullshit, because it limits people." But I see many colleagues who make independent experimental music in the academy. Many. Many. So, c'mon, you're there, you're earning a scholarship, you have a breather to do things, because if you're outside, you're subjugated to the market. To the laws of "Well, how will I succeed?" What are the resources you'll use to succeed? We're always subject to the assessments of others, of other institutions and other authorities. So I think that to appoint the academy as the villain of the story, for me it doesn't make a lot of sense.[174]

While Campesato acknowledged the value of DIY-affiliated venues, in her mind, the kind of total independence professed by punk culture was impossible to truly achieve.

Furthermore, individuals with previous or current academic affiliations constitute a significant and active minority of the participants in the independent scene, and regularly collaborate with musicians with roots in independent genre cultures. The Ibrasotope experimental music collective, for instance, was founded by two individuals who studied music at the University of Campinas, one of whom would later enroll in the USP-ECA graduate program—the same department that members of the Vanguarda Paulista attended in the 1970s.

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[174] Interview with Lílian Campesato, December 2, 2015. "A gente fala tão mal dela, mas ela tem uma generosidade—até certo ponto, obviamente. Que muitas vezes é muito fácil você jogar uma pedra nela—'Ah, a academia é uma porcaria, porque ela limita.' Mas eu vejo muitos colegas que fazem música experimental independente dentro da academia. Muitos. Muitos. Então poxa, você está lá, você está ganhando uma bolsa, você tem um respiro para fazer coisas, porque se você está fora, você está subjugado ao mercado. Às leis de 'Bom, vou conseguir como?' Qual o recurso que você vai ter de conseguir aquilo? Então assim, a gente sempre está sujeito a uma avaliação do outro, de outras instituições e outras instâncias. Então eu acho que eleger a academia como vilã da história, para mim não faz muito sentido."

Far from fostering division, these individuals' efforts have played a major role in overcoming the entrenched tribalism between the academy- and DIY-affiliated subfields.

One of the major ways in which these individuals have bridged the gap between academic and independent music circuits is by appropriating the term "experimental music" not as a means of reinforcing a canon, but instead as a strategy of discourse to unite diverse creative practices in performance under the same conceptual roof. Ibrasotope founder and co-director Mário del Nunzio referred to experimental music as a "more of a strategic term" that "permits the approach and the contact, the exchange of views between people from different areas."[175] Fostering interactions between musicians from diverse backgrounds, especially individuals affiliated with university music programs and those with roots in independent music circuits, acted as a central motivation for establishing the collective in the first place. Del Nunzio emphasized the potential for cross-stylistic collaboration generated by the "experimental" moniker:

> Compared to the university environment, for instance, which is where I came from before, it's very different indeed. When we're in the university environment, our interlocutors are people from the same environment — as a result, they're people from the same kind of background. One of the things that we set out to do here, it was just, "No, there will be people from the university context, but let's also talk with other cells, people from other areas, people with different information, with different life experiences."[176]

Natacha Maurer, who co-directed Ibrasotope with del Nunzio, characterized the experimental label as a means to an end, as an "umbrella term" that facilitated the meetings of different individuals and genres.[177] Within this experimental umbrella, she asserted, "genres speak to each

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[175] Interview with Mário del Nunzio, May 24, 2016. "termo mais estratégico;" "…que permite a aproximação e o contato, interlocução entre pessoas de diferentes áreas."

[176] Interview with Mário del Nunzio, May 24, 2016. "E assim, comparando, por exemplo, com o ambiente universitário, que foi de onde eu vinha antes, é de fato bastante distinto. Quando a gente está no meio ambiente universitário, realmente os nossos interlocutores são as pessoas do mesmo ambiente—são por consequência, pessoas do mesmo tipo de formação e tal. Acho que uma das coisas que a gente se propôs a fazer aqui, foi justamente,'não, vai ter pessoas do meio universitário, mas também vamos dialogar de outras células, pessoas de outras áreas, pessoas com as mais diversas informações, com as mais diversas experiências de vida."

[177] Interview with Natacha Maurer and Marcelo Muniz, June 10, 2016. "…termo guarda-chuva."

other, which they wouldn't do if they were isolated. So, in the experimental there's free improvisation, noise, electroacoustic, there's—I don't know—multimedia, people who work with video, dance, circuits…"[178] In this context, the inclusive qualities of the term "experimental music" act as a source of strength. Rather than restrict performance, the all-encompassing tendencies of the label act as an important stimulus for the scene's creative network by facilitating cross-stylistic collaboration.

In the São Paulo scene, a diverse assortment of musicians and institutions has emerged as a means of addressing these obstacles. Due to both economic necessity and a general attitude that encourages participation in different subfields, individuals occupy multiple positions in the field of cultural production in order to realize their work and collaborate with others. Musicians organize events, institutional leaders perform with other musicians and disseminate self-published media, and non-specialist members of the listening public are occasionally invited to participate in concerts. The result is a creative and institutional chimera, in which participants continually adjust their roles in the field according to necessity and personal preference. It stands in contrast to the distributed models of cultural production forwarded by Bourdieu and Howard Becker, who emphasized the participational divide between artists, critics, producers, and the general public (Becker 1982:35; Bourdieu 1993:37, 77).

This multifaceted approach is motivated in large part by DIY attitudes and often modeled on the strategies of pioneering individuals in early punk culture. As discussed in Chapter One, DIY provides a powerful impetus for institutionally marginalized individuals to form independent circuits of cultural production, adopt roles for which they do not have formal training, and eschew the profit motive and organize events for reasons of community and

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[178] Interview with Natacha Maurer and Marcelo Muniz, June 10, 2016. "…se conversam gêneros que isolados, não conversariam. Então dentro do experimental tem improvisação livre, tem noise, tem eletroacústica, tem sei lá, multimídia, gente que trabalha com vídeo, dança, e circuitos…"

personal satisfaction. At the heart of the São Paulo scene's DIY-driven approach to cultural

production is a diverse constellation of independent organizations. I employ the term

"independent" as a means of characterizing institutions that are not directly controlled by the

state or a corporation and do not operate as a conglomerate, as SESC-SP does. The sustained

collaborative activity facilitated by these organizations has generated a wealth of interpersonal

interactions that has functioned as the engine of the scene's socially driven approach to musical

creativity.

*Figure 4.3: Voluntary donation box at Estúdio Fita Crepe. The inscription at the top reads, "Estúdio Fita Crepe SP is not an independent experimental music space! It depends on you! Contribute"; while the inscription on the bottom reads, "Now it's with you!" Garcia employs the term "independent" in this case not as a modifier of "experimental music," to differentiate it from "academic experimental music" (*música experimental acadêmica*), but instead to make the point that the space cannot thrive on its own, and is thus not "independent." DIY, in his mind, offered an important potential means of remedying this issue. June 6, 2016.*

The ensuing organizational dynamics have fostered the lasting production of experimental sound and performance in three primary ways. On a basic level, the scene's organizational leaders arrange concerts that would not otherwise occur. Musicians need events and space to perform, after all, and individuals such as venue owners and record label leaders conduct the necessary legwork to ensure that concerts happen fluidly and with regularity. Second, they do their best to ensure that the performance environments of these concerts are open-ended, with minimal restrictions on what musicians may choose to play. Finally, they shape the specific quality of the sounds that emerge from this open-ended creative environment by facilitating the meetings of musicians from disparate backgrounds. Without the scene's network of organizational leaders, the breadth of new sounds that arise from cross-stylistic encounters would diminish considerably.

Despite meaningful progress, however, the economic and institutional realities of São Paulo prevent organizational figures from creating truly egalitarian and long-lasting models for cultural production. In a stratified and hierarchical field, sustainability requires compromise, which in this case often entails engagement with those same structural forces that marginalize experimental cultural producers. In order to realize open-ended performance on a long-term basis, organizational incorporate a variety of different economic models for cultural production, ranging from market-oriented ventures to state-funded grants to the equitable distribution of spatial resources from fortuitous personal circumstances. In many ways, the strategies they employ epitomize the notion of the *jeitinho brasileiro*, a Brazilian popular cultural term that characterizes the impromptu tactics individuals employ as a means of circumventing otherwise impossible institutional or socioeconomic obstacles.[179] Those that fail to adapt—to *dar um jeito*,

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[179] For a discussion of the term *jeitinho brasileiro*, see Barbosa 1992:45; Stam and Shohat 2007:56; Stanyek 2011:3.

or "find a way" to make things happen—almost unfailingly face closure.[180] In this context, DIY acts as an important motivational factor and guiding ideal rather than a fully realizable aim.

In the rest of this chapter, I discuss four distinct strategies organizational figures of the São Paulo scene have employed as a means of addressing these obstacles and forming supportive spaces for collaborative experimental performance. In each case study, I investigate three primary issues facing organizational leaders: how they find space for performance and address logistical obstacles, how they foster open-ended collaborations between musicians from disparate backgrounds, and how they have dealt with recent sociopolitical and institutional challenges. Each of these approaches contains distinct opportunities for addressing structural obstacles but also significant challenges specific to their individual circumstances and strategic choices. I devote central attention to the ways in which these figures have confronted the devastating consequences of the developments that took place over the course of the "pre-" and "post-coup" period of the past five years (2014-2019). Some of these ventures have persevered in the face of these events, while others, due to both considerable financial and emotional strain on top of the generally limited duration of independent cultural production ventures, have reduced programming considerably or closed outright. The chapter is thus by necessity a snapshot of independent cultural production in an extended moment of economic and sociopolitical crisis, and the ways in which independent experimentalists have responded in turn.

Making Space

In a live music culture, performance begins and ends with space. For members of the São Paulo scene, sound is spatially situated, to be performed and enjoyed live rather than consumed

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[180] K. E. Goldschmitt has drawn attention to the "tactical nimbleness and flexibility" on which Brazilian independent record companies depend as a means of achieving success in the popular music market, whose participants, Goldschmitt notes, often characterize the business in terms of "guerilla warfare" (Goldschmitt 2019:112).

through headphones. While independent experimental musicians occasionally perform at nonprofit cultural institutions such as SESC-SP, members of the São Paulo scene mostly rely on small independent venues—bars, art galleries, small concert venues—as the primary locus of production. These venues typically do not promise participating musicians significant financial return. Practitioners often receive little more than free drinks and a share of cover charges, if there is a cover charge at all.[181] Yet what these spaces lack in economic reimbursement, they make up in ease of production. They facilitate as close to a seamless organizational process for experimental performance as one can find in the broader field of production in Brazil, often consisting of little more than an informal conversation with one of the directors and perhaps a submission of a music sample.

Over the course of the past decade, six independent spaces emerged that dedicated the majority or the entirety of their programming to experimentally oriented performance: Ibrasotope (2007-2018), Hotel Bar (2008-present), Centro Cultural Walden (2012-2014), Estúdio Fita Crepe (2014-present), Centro da Terra (2017-present), and Leviatã (2018-present). Since 2012, the venue Trackers has also hosted a monthly concert series, "Improvise!", in tandem with the Circuito de Improvisação Livre that has acted as an enduring space in the face of recent closures. The importance of these venues to the growth of the scene cannot be overstated. During their main periods of operation, they facilitated as close to a seamless organizational process for experimental performance as one could find in the broader field of musical production in Brazil. They also lent crucial stability in a field that has historically been characterized by uncertainty for experimental performers—a critical element for sustained dedication to creative risk. The venues have additionally furnished areas for developing individual and collaborative projects

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[181] Using free food and drink to compensate artists is common in the Brazilian independent music sphere. As Shannon Garland (2012) points out, this process is not without its contentious and problematic elements, and belies the structurally unequal nature of performance in cities such as São Paulo.

during the week, including workshops and audiovisual installations. Furthermore, they have provided space for socialization and discussion, thus functioning as a crucial point of encounter for discourse, collaboration, and the creation of a community grounded in shared musical interests. Their establishment functioned as arguably the most significant motivational factor in the contemporary "moment" for independent experimental music, as artists finally had a sustained network of spaces dedicated to the kind of unorthodox performances that did not always find an easy home at other independent institutions. Finally, because each organizational leader drew from relationships with different groups of musicians, the presence of multiple spaces exponentially broadened the network of backgrounds and creative practices circulating within the scene's collaborative network, thus acting as a key driver of the scene's social and stylistic diversity and diffusing control of cultural production beyond the hands of any single individual.
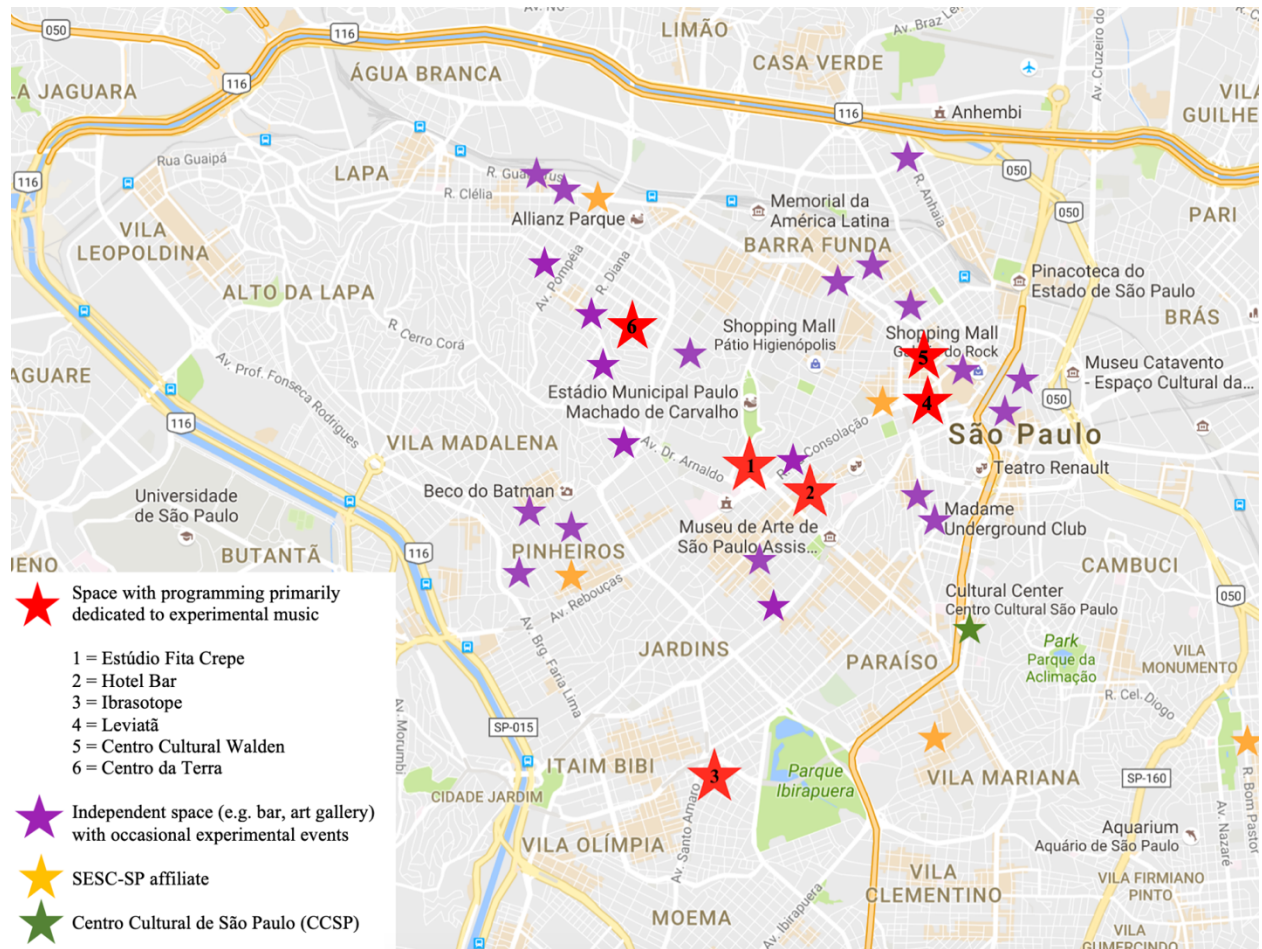
Figure 4.4: Map of the different types of institutions in the São Paulo scene frequented by members of the São Paulo scene.

The ease of scheduling and freedom of performance facilitated by these venues has not come without meaningful compromises on the part of organizational leaders, who have had to employ a variety of often costly strategies to maintain a sustained level of production. Few venues have been able to maintain a consistent level of production in the difficult period since the height of the recession and Rousseff's 2016 impeachment, while many have had to reduce programming for collaborative shows considerably or close outright. Although other spaces have emerged over the course of this time period, none, so far, have managed to reproduce the magnitude of cultural production that the scene enjoyed in previous years. At the time of this

writing, the spatial landscape of the scene remains in a state of flux, with uncertain consequences for its sustainability in the years to come.

In the remainder of this section, I examine the dynamics and challenges faced by the venue Hotel Bar. Founded in 2008 by Rogério "Cebola" Salles and his wife Luciana Sette, Hotel Bar forms part of a cluster of independent bars, clubs, and restaurants established on or just off the central street of Rua Augusta, north of Avenida Paulista.[182] While most of these spaces devoted their programming to styles with wide popular appeal, Hotel Bar would come to feature a more peculiar lineup of performers that contrasted with its peers' more conventional fare. Over the course of the past decade, the venue has quietly transformed itself into a thriving space that has been able to weather the tumultuous events of the past two years with surprising longevity and continues to provide perhaps the most consistent opportunities for performance on a day-to-day basis in the contemporary independent experimental scene.[183] Hotel Bar supports space for experimental performance via a hybrid business model in which the venue derives the majority of its financial return from its operations as a bar, while maintaining a core part of its space dedicated to experimental presentations regardless of profit.

Hotel Bar followed a circuitous route to its realization as a venue for experimentally oriented performance.[184] At the time of its founding, Salles and Sette used the space as a tee shirt shop for independent artists, many of whom, like Salles, hailed from the city's punk and skateboarding communities. Because several of these individuals also participated in musical acts, Salles and Sette periodically organized dual events where the artists in question would

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[182] Over the course of the 2000s, multiple performance venues emerged in the historically working-class neighborhood due to investment, low rents, and the area's convenient central location. Today, the street plays host to a variety of bars, restaurants, and clubs and acts as a center for the city's alternative nightlife. The changes in Rua Augusta over the past several decades and its emergence as an upscale destination for leisure activities has led Felipe Melo Pissardo (2013) to characterize the avenue as "the appropriated street." See also Mendes 2014.
[183] "Cebola" means "onion" in Portuguese.
[184] Salles characterized Hotel Bar as "an experimental bar." Interview with Rogério Salles, June 7, 2016. "O meu bar é um bar experimental."

showcase self-designed tee shirts and play a show. Over the next few years, the venue began to host an increasing number of performances, many of which showcased punk-affiliated musicians. At a certain point, the owners decided to convert the shop into a bar and restaurant and devote part of the space full time to performance. Today, in addition to co-running the bar with Sette, Salles acts as the primary facilitator of its weekly musical lineup.

The establishment features a curious spatial layout that shapes sound and performance on a core level. In the front, it presents much the same façade as any other restaurant or bar off Rua Augusta, featuring an open air seating layout typically filled with boisterous groups of friends. Across from the cash register, black chalk walls feature the abstract art of vocalist Jonathan Gall, a member of the band Auto and friend of Salles. On the weekends, customers stream onto the street and merge with neighboring restaurants, creating an undifferentiated sea of conversation and cigarette smoke as cars and street vendors pass by. Meanwhile, in the back of the bar lies a compact open air seating area with a single table, a few high stools, and room for no more than twenty-five individuals to stand (Fig. 4.5). Deep in the far corner lies the bar's tiny makeshift performance space. The space is awkwardly situated, wedged between the restrooms and the kitchen, with a large supporting beam bisecting the view of the musicians. At one point, Salles jokingly referred to it as the "cubicle."[185] Those who wish to have an unencumbered view of performances must cram in next to the musicians, whose equipment typically occupies about half of the space, while the rest of the spectators must either strain to see or content themselves with merely listening. Concerts start without introduction, usually around 8 p.m. It is common for attendees to mosey in and out of the backroom area to get a drink, smoke a cigarette outside, or speak with friends.

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[185] Interview with Rogério Salles, June 7, 2016. "…cubículo."

Figure 4.5: Hotel Bar's backroom stage. To the left are the restrooms and to the right is a semi-open kitchen. August 17, 2017.

Hotel Bar's distinct acoustic accoutrements evinced a range of reactions from across the spectrum of the São Paulo scene. The majority of musicians with whom I spoke embraced the venue's modest, occasionally chaotic spatial layout, with several affirming it as an ideal space for open-ended creative ventures. For these individuals, the space provides a sense of DIY-inflected intimacy that few other venues in the city can match. Members of the listening public can enjoy concerts at an arm's length from performers, while afterward, they can go up and strike up a conversation. Salles noted that some musicians were somewhat taken aback by the radical level of closeness the space facilitated, noting, "There are some who are afraid, or ashamed, because it's very intimate. Sometimes there are ten people watching the guy—it's face to face."[186] Its lack of pretension further de-emphasizes the need on the part of performers to strive for perfection, thus opening up new possibilities for experimentation. These dynamics

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[186] Interview with Rogério Salles, June 7, 2016. "Tem alguns que têm medo, tem vergonha, porque é muito intimista. Às vezes tem dez pessoas vendo o cara, é *face to face*, assim." Salles said the words "face to face" in English.

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have come to lend Hotel Bar a sense of ease and comfort that has helped the establishment become a center for discourse and the forming of social bonds that produce new creative collaborations in turn.

Not all members of the scene embraced these qualities, however. For those hoping to explore softer, subtler sounds, Hotel Bar's ever-present sonic background of conversation and kitchen clatter can feel limiting and frustrating—the polar opposite of the hermetic performance space that some other venues offer. This may have come about in part by design. Salles evinces a decided preference for the more anarchic, unpredictable energy of punk musical cultures, and encourages musicians to bring that out in their own shows, as I discovered firsthand when I performed a solo set at the venue in 2016. Some musicians welcomed these qualities. Drummer Alexandre Amaral, for instance, argued that Hotel Bar acted as a powerful creative stimulus for him "because of the space, because of the noise the place has… you can't do something more intimate—it has to be something more explosive, so I feel more at ease to try things out [*experimentar*], almost as if it were a rehearsal. Fita Crepe is more intimate—there you have to hold back your hand a bit, you have to play a little more… You can't explore things that you'd explore in a loud or noisy show."[187] In this context, the specific spatial and sonic qualities of the space act as a major shaper of performance in their own right, guiding experimentation in specific ways that privilege the expression of certain sounds but limit others.

The bar has maintained a consistent lineup of about two to six free concerts a week for over three years. The organization process is simple, consisting of a conversation a week or two before a scheduled concert, which Salles then posts on Hotel Bar's social media. Salles

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[187] Interview with Alexandre Amaral, January 26, 2016. "...por causa do espaço, por causa do barulho que tem no lugar ali... que você não pode fazer uma coisa mais intimista—tem que ser uma coisa mais explosiva, então eu me sinto mais à vontade para experimentar, meio que como se fosse um ensaio mesmo. O Fita Crepe é uma coisa mais intimista—tem que segurar um pouco a mão ali, tem que tocar um pouco mais... Não dá para você explorar coisas que talvez em um show tão alto, barulhento você exploraria."

highlighted the importance of avoiding extensive bureaucracy or excessive rules, which he considered hindrances to the creative environment he sought to provide. "The most important thing," he argued, "is for things to flow and get better every day."[188] Most concerts feature members of the independent experimental scene, though Salles also books independent artists from more mainstream genres such as rock or hip hop to fill out the schedule, particularly on weekends. Because of the performance area's diminutive size, smaller acts are more common than larger ones, although Salles is always open to filling up the room when a promising creative opportunity presents itself. During the winter of 2017, for instance, the bar featured a monthly concert series, "Segundatica," which brought together up to seven members of the independent experimental scene to play improvised sets.[189]

While the space does feature established acts from time to time, Salles declared a preference for bringing together individuals who do not collaborate on a regular basis, whom he gives free reign to do as they see fit. He particularly encourages artists to explore new and improvised material that they might otherwise be hesitant to play in a public setting. In conversation, he emphasized the creation of a "totally free" performance environment as a central goal.[190] As he asserted, "I'm not thinking about whether he's going to play loud, if it's good, if it's bad—so much that people say, 'What if you don't like it?' I always say, 'It's not just what I like, man.' The music that I listen to in my home has nothing to do with what I want to happen there. Otherwise it wouldn't be free. Or I would just be putting on stuff I like."[191] Salles

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[188] Interview with Rogério Salles, June 7, 2017. "Isso é o mais importante para as coisas fluírem e ficarem melhor a cada dia."

[189] "Segundatica" is a play on "segunda-feira" (Monday), so named due to the fact the event occurs on Mondays. Seven people is approximately the maximum number of musicians with equipment that can fit in the performance space.

[190] Interview with Rogério Salles, June 7, 2016. "…totalmente livre."

[191] Interview with Rogério Salles, June 7, 2016. "Eu não fico pensando se ele vai tocar alto, se é ruim, se é bom— tanto que as pessoas falam 'E se você não gostar?' Eu sempre falo assim "Não é só o que eu gosto, amado." A música que eu ouço na minha casa não tem relação com o que eu quero que aconteça ali. Senão não ia ser livre. Ou ia ficar colocando só coisa que eu gosto."

seemed to take pride in working with a range of artists, and emphasized the diversity of styles

and backgrounds of the musicians he brought to the bar. For him, seeing what these new

mixtures of individuals—or, in the case of solo performances, individuals on their own outside

the context of their everyday groups—came up with onstage constituted a central appeal of the

organizational process. As he noted,

> I generally don't schedule bands anymore. I'll put James there, I'll put Guilherme there, I'll put Ricardo there. The time is his—what he's going to do doesn't matter to me. And generally there are good surprises. I've had bad surprises, of course, but not in the experimental field. People always look for us thinking that it's a bar—for example, I can't… it's not a rule, but I'm not going to put on a person to play covers, Led Zeppelin songs, which I love, but the guy's only going to play Led Zeppelin for half an hour. That's not the idea. The idea is to show what new things the guy has in order to show what was inside of him. It opens the mind, it does something else.[192]

It is no exaggeration to say that Salles's actions in coordinating new encounters play as much of

a role in shaping the scene's distinctive sonic profile as the musicians themselves. In this context,

organizational practice not only acts as a prerequisite for performance, but also a type of indirect

creative practice in its own right.

For aficionados of experimental sound such as Salles, the aesthetic attraction of these

novel sonic configurations functions as an important means of compensating for the diminished

financial returns provided by their typically limited audience. More often than not, the

experimental performances at Hotel Bar are sparsely attended, with hardly ever more than ten

individuals in the back room at a time. Over the course of my fieldwork, it was common for

performances to draw no more than two or three attendees. This likely happens in part due to the

fact that the musicians who perform in the venue are often removed from the groups with which

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[192] Interview with Rogério Salles, June 7, 2016. "Na minha agenda eu não estou marcando nomes mais de bandas. Eu ponho lá James, eu ponho lá Guilherme, eu ponho lá Ricardo. A data é dele, o que ele vai fazer não me interessa. E geralmente tem surpresas boas. Eu tive surpresas ruins, lógico, mas não nesse campo experimental. Sempre muita gente procura a gente pensando que é um bar—por exemplo, eu não posso... não é uma regra, mas eu não vou botar uma pessoa para tocar cover. Músicas do Led Zeppelin, que eu amo, mas o cara só vai tocar Led Zeppelin durante meia hora. Eu acho que não é a ideia. A ideia é aflorar o que o cara tem de novo para mostrar o que estava lá dentro dele. Abre a mente, faz outra coisa."

they normally play. It is additionally possible that musicians' frequent use of sonic qualities such as harsh noise causes customers to stay in the bar's front seating areas, where a wall provides a buffer from the performances' ability to interrupt conversations.

Hotel Bar has been able to support these new musical encounters on an ongoing basis due to its implementation of a hybrid business model that balances shrewd entrepreneurship with a generous commitment to providing space for open-ended performance regardless of financial return. Despite facing chronic issues that plague owners of leisure establishments in Brazil, such as police harassment and declining customer purchasing power due to the recession, the bar is thriving and does not lack for customers. The financial returns provided by these patrons have enabled Hotel Bar to devote space to experimentally oriented artists regardless of whether they attract a large listening public. The resulting model of cultural production stands in marked contrast to the scene's other institutional leaders, who either by choice or circumstance do not engage with market forces on the same active and ongoing level.

Salles's dedication to providing space for independent experimental musicians is motivated on a basic level by a broader communitarian ethos that runs throughout the scene. As he asserted in conversation, "I'm always going to have a space for someone to play. I think it's super important for you to differentiate yourself from other bars, from other places. You're from another country, you know that that's rare in Brazil. You always see a guy aiming for profit, profit, desperation… we have this cultural space and now the results are beginning to come in."[193] Salles's belief in the importance of supporting an artistic community regardless of financial gain stems in large part from his own roots in punk culture and the influence of the DIY ethos, which emphasizes the importance of developing collaborative means of cultural

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[193] Interview with Rogério Salles, June 7, 2016. "Eu sempre vou ter um espaço para tocar alguém, eu acho isso superimportante para você se diferenciar de outros bares, de outros lugares. Você vem de outro país, você sabe que isso no Brasil é raro. Você vê sempre um cara visando lucro, lucro, desespero... a gente tem esse espaço cultural e agora está voltando os frutos."

production independent of the profit motive. His characterization of Hotel Bar as a "cultural space" is particularly apt. The establishment hosts just as many musical events on a per diem basis than major cultural institutions such as CCSP or SESC-SP, and does so with far fewer bureaucratic or creative restrictions. These qualities are not lost on members of the São Paulo scene, who cited the bar as a mercurial alternative to the city's public cultural institutions.[194] One individual even ironically listed an event at Hotel Bar as taking place at "SESC Cebola."[195] Though this statement was made in partial jest, it belies the central role the establishment plays for experimentally oriented musicians. In its own informal way, Hotel Bar does indeed function as an underground counterpart to the offerings of the mainstream field.

Is Salles's market-based strategy for cultural production incompatible with the egalitarian ethos he professes to follow? One should not dismiss the democratizing capacity of market-oriented cultural production initiatives if they are able to successfully apply their proceeds towards egalitarian goals over a sustained basis, as Salles has. Nor should one ignore the moderating potential of ideological stimuli such as the DIY ethos in motivating more communitarian forms of cultural production within an economic sphere driven by financial gain. Hotel Bar is not a faceless multinational conglomerate bent on profit at the expense of a moral compass; it is a small business that provides meaningful support to a musical community with limited resources despite little chance of financial return. Nor should one discount the fact that the establishment, unlike its institutional counterparts in the São Paulo scene, does not rely on the largesse of family connections or government bureaucrats to financially support performance

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[194] Percussionist Alexandre Amaral, for instance, characterized concerts at Hotel Bar as "something more laboratorial, more of an experiment… more like, 'Let's go there, let's try things we've never done before.'" Interview with Alexandre Amaral, January 26, 2016. "Geralmente quando é na Hotel, por exemplo, é uma coisa mais laboratorial mesmo, mais de experimento ali… mais assim, 'Vamos lá, vamos tentar coisas que a gente nunca fez.'"

[195] The term "SESC Cebola" is a play on the nomenclature of SESC affiliates, which are named according to their location in the city or state (e.g. SESC Pinheiros or SESC Consolação, both of which feature the names of the neighborhoods in which they are situated).

space. For now, at least, Salles's DIY-driven strategy has enabled him, and the performers who occupy the space on a regular basis, a meaningful measure of organizational and creative autonomy.

At the same time, despite the very real benefits establishments such as Hotel Bar bring to the creative culture of the independent experimental scene, it is important to avoid overly sanguine appraisals of the model's sustainability. Salles's magnanimous approach represents very much an exception to the general trend in the Brazilian popular music sphere. The vast majority of business owners who host space for performers are not so generous. Relying on the goodwill of institutional leaders to devote profit from the sales of beer and prepared meals to performance space is not a viable long-term strategy for supporting the production of experimental performance. After all, who is to say that Hotel Bar will continue to lend space to less potentially profitable acts in the future if financial circumstances or Salles's personal preferences change?

Furthermore, even those institutions that profess to follow a DIY-inspired approach to cultural production often end up creating exploitative systems of remuneration that take advantage of independent musicians' willingness (or resignation) to accept reduced or nonexistent pay in exchange for participation in a supposedly anti-consumerist creative community. In Brazil, this phenomenon has become embodied in the system of cultural collectives known as Fora do Eixo. Fora do Eixo has achieved notoriety within independent music circles for using the DIY ethos as a justification for compensating performing musicians with a charge card that can only be used at its own venues, despite featuring concerts that draw often large paying crowds (Garland 2012:509, 2014:172). As Shannon Garland notes, this approach "undermine[s] the historical ideology and ethos of independent music production and circulation, one in which a structure of circulation is (or should be) constructed through informal

networks of social associations, themselves created dialogically through individual interest in shared musical exchanges and experiences" (2012:512). While none of the performance spaces in the independent experimental scene show signs of approximating this model, they operate in a field of forces fraught with the potential for financial compromise and the temptation to abuse participants' goodwill. In the end, the cards remain stacked against the emergence and perseverance of truly democratic initiatives.

The Independent Record Label

Running throughout the institutional matrix of the scene are the directors of **independent record labels**. Together with the leaders of performance spaces, record label owners act as the de facto *art-businesspeople* (to adapt Bourdieu's term; see 1993:77) of the São Paulo scene. In contrast to venue owners, however, the directors of record labels do not exert power via a fixed position in space. Instead, they are mobile, using networking and negotiation as a means of connecting otherwise disparate individuals and institutions in the broader field of cultural production in São Paulo. While the leaders of labels fulfill an important financial role in the scene by raising money for releases, they are primarily driven by social and creative motivations—by the opportunity to bring artists together onstage and create lasting representations of these encounters in the form of recordings. In this sense, they are atypical businesspeople, prioritizing symbolic and social capital over economic capital. Record label directors shape cultural production in the São Paulo scene both by releasing recordings and by negotiating and organizing concerts with performance venues. Labels thus perform a critical role in both the development and the consequences of live concerts.

The majority of the scene's independent label leaders operate according to DIY-informed principles derived in part from practices and discourses circulating within local punk cultures.

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Ângela Novaes, the founder and director of the independent record label Brava, provides a characteristic example of this stance. Novaes acknowledged basing her approach in large part on US hardcore punk record label Dischord, which was founded in 1980 by Teen Idles front man Ian MacKaye and continues to operate today. As she recalled, the founders of Dischord "created a model and… all right! You assemble the band, we print the albums, sell the albums, organize a tour, promote yourself and say 'fuck you' to the media, whether they like it or not. We're going to create a space, a mode of working, and this has to work for us. […] Nobody's waiting to get rich from this, or famous—nothing. It just has to be, at a minimum, enjoyable and autonomous."[196] In her mind, the DIY approach to cultural production played a central role in not only enabling artists to control the means of production, but also in generating more liberated performative environment onstage. "Nobody," she argued, "is telling people from record companies I know how you have to sound, how you have to dress, 'the cover has to have something, otherwise it won't sell.' Nobody. It's creative freedom."[197]

With the advent of inexpensive recording and distribution technology, institutions such as Brava have proliferated over the course of the past decade. Many independent labels share certain core characteristics with netlabels, such as the dissemination of music via online platforms such as Bandcamp and the frequent use of Creative Commons licensing (see Bodiford 2017; Galuszka 2012; Whelan 2017). They sell music at concerts in physical form as well, as CDs, vinyl LPs, and cassette tapes (Fig. 4.6). Considering the ease of internet listening practices and the supposed obsolescence of technologies such as the cassette tape, the presence of physical

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[196] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "…eles criaram um modelo de... beleza! Você monta a banda, a gente prensa os discos, vende os discos, faz turnê, promove e foda-se a mídia, quem está gostando ou não. A gente vai criar o espaço, o modo de trabalhar e isso tem que funcionar para a gente. […] Ninguém está esperando ficar rico com isso, ou famoso—nada. Então, tem que ser minimamente prazeroso é autônomo."

[197] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "Ninguém está falando para ninguém de selo nenhum que eu conheço, como deve soar, como você deve se vestir, sabe? A capa tem que ter tal coisa senão não vende. Ninguém. É liberdade criativa."

audio media may appear to be a curious novelty. For some individuals, they act as important means of recouping recording expenses. A more potent answer, however, may lie in the permanence of the physical recording, which interested parties can play, display, and exchange as gifts for years after recording sessions or performances. I discovered the latter phenomenon firsthand throughout my fieldwork, during which time a variety of musicians gave me cassette tapes, vinyl LPs, and CDs as gifts. Not a single individual, meanwhile, asked me to listen to their music online.

Figure 4.6: Dama da Noite Discos merchandise table, featuring vinyl records, CDs, casettes, and t-shirts. July 29, 2017.

These recordings contain meaningful personal ramifications for performing musicians. Although the primary locus of production in the São Paulo scene occurs onstage, the recording process allows at least some aspects of these performances to remain more than ephemeral. The resulting audio media thus enable musicians to resignify the social and temporal context in which they occur. Carla Boregas, founder of the one-person label Dama da Noite Discos (Lady of the Night Records), situated the importance of recording in direct relation to lived experience,

asserting, "I see records more as a materialization of moments, you know?"[198] In her mind, this

quality justified the substantial process of releasing a physical record, which she characterized as

"complicated" and "super expensive" in Brazil due to the need to send audio media abroad for

quality production and the 50% import tax accrued in the process.[199] Like many other

practitioners, Boregas emphasized the collaborative aspect of the process required to overcome

these obstacles. As she argued, "If people stay in their house playing by themselves, nothing's

going to happen. Other people's roles are fundamental. Someone who has a place, like Fita

Crepe, for example, or like Brava, which organizes events, you know? Everyone!"[200] Recordings

may exist on their own, but they function as products and resignifiers of the broader social reality

of the field of independent experimental production.

Independent record labels play an additional role in shaping the performance profile of

the scene by organizing live shows and facilitating the onstage meeting of diverse artists from

disparate points of origin. Ângela Novaes provides a characteristic example of a figure who

facilitates this type of occurrence. Originally from Belo Horizonte with a background in internet

radio, Novaes spent twelve years working at independent label Submarine Records, where she

collaborated with the label's founder Frederico Finelli. In 2013, the two co-founded the

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[198] Interview with Carla Boregas, June 30, 2016. "Eu vejo os discos mais como uma materialização de momentos também, sabe?"

[199] "…complicado;" "…super caro." Boregas laid out the multi-step process and the expenses accumulated along the way accordingly: "After the band records, mixes, then we send it out to get mastered and send it to a factory. But it always has to be abroad, because here there's just one factory, Polisom. The quality of the album is bad, the price isn't worth it. So we generally send it to the United States, which sends it to press in the Czech Republic. Then, after these albums [are made], in order to come here, there's the biggest problem, because if we send it by mail, there's an import tax." Boregas characterized the import tax, which is 50% for these types of transactions, as "the worst part" of the entire process. Such import taxes are common in Brazil, and are a major reason for the restrictive cost of audio equipment as well. Interview with Carla Boregas, June 30, 2016. "Depois que a banda grava, mixa, aí a gente manda masterizar e manda para a fábrica. Mas sempre tem que ser fora, porque aqui só tem uma fábrica, que é a Polissom. A qualidade do disco é ruim, o preço não compensa. Então, a gente manda geralmente fazer pelos Estados Unidos, que manda prensar na República Tcheca. E aí depois esses discos, para virem para cá, esse é o maior problema, porque se a gente manda pelo correio, taxa imposto." "A pior parte."

[200] Interview with Carla Boregas, June 30, 2016. "…se as pessoas ficarem só em casa tocando, não vai acontecer nada. É fundamental os papéis das outras pessoas. Uma pessoa que tem um lugar, igual o Fita Crepe, por exemplo, ou igual uma Brava que organiza os eventos, sabe? Todo mundo!"

production house Norópolis, which organizes shows for both Brazilian musicians and international groups such as Tortoise (USA). Soon after founding Norópolis, however, Novaes left the organization to found Brava due to a personal interest in "a different type of sound."[201] Since then, she has produced records and organized shows by musicians who favor a decidedly more anarchic sonic profile, drawing in large part from noise-inflected genres such as grindcore and open-ended practices such as free improvisation. Although she has primarily collaborated with experimentally oriented artists in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, she has also worked with prominent figures of the international punk vanguard, such as industrial rock icon Lydia Lunch.

As the director of Brava, Novaes regularly organizes live events that bring together individuals from different stylistic backgrounds for improvised concerts. While these events occasionally showcase established groups, they more often feature novel combinations of individuals that have rarely or never played together before. This was a conscious choice on the part of Novaes, who characterized the facilitation of meetings between artists and members of the public from different backgrounds as a central goal. Some of these events revolve around a series of collaborations with a core set of artists; one series, "Bugio Convida" (Bugio Invites), for instance, features a succession of freely improvised concerts with the bass-and-percussion duo Bugio (Alexandre Amaral and Marcilio Silva) and a succession of different musical guests from practices ranging from noise to experimental hip-hop. The most consistent and open-ended of these events is the concert series Silver Tape, which features a new combination of musicians on each occasion (Figs. 4.7 and 4.8).

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[201] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "…um outro tipo de som."

Figure 4.7: Poster for Brava's collaborative performance event Silver Tape. Image taken from http://www.brava.etc.br/ (accessed July 18, 2017).

Figure 4.8: Spectators watch Thiago Miazzo and Waldomiro Mugrelise perform during the collaborative performance event Silver Tape. Hotel Bar, July 20, 2017.

These events take place in wide range of locales, from core independent experimental establishments such as Estúdio Fita Crepe or Hotel Bar to more mainstream venues such as SESC-SP. Novaes stressed the importance of engaging with an open circuit of performance spaces, each of which contained distinct advantages that she felt she would be remiss to ignore, and emphasized the benefit of giving musicians an opportunity to play at some of the city's prominent cultural institutions. In addition to providing professional-grade performance space and ample financial compensation, these establishments also offered, in her mind, an important chance for practitioners to engage with a wider listening public who might not otherwise be exposed to their music. As she argued,

> It's precisely to get—you get a very different public in each place. At SESC, there are people, I don't know, the elderly, who buy tickets for two *reais* each*,* who buy everything and always go. Well, I've seen things that I've done there, where people sit, watch for ten minutes and leave cursing. But they bought the ticket because they wanted to see it, because it cost two *reais* and because they had, at least, the willingness to be there watching it.[202]

Concerts such as these represent a key means by which the São Paulo scene facilitates potential new collaborations and expands its social and spatial boundaries.

Realizing these performances depends on significant organizational savvy. Novaes relies on an astute capacity for negotiation and application on behalf of the label's affiliated musicians. Sometimes, this process is straightforward, requiring little more than a conversation. Such is the case with institutions such as Hotel Bar or Fita Crepe, whose leaders are friends with her and are already open to the kind of unusual sonic profile dominant among Brava affiliates. At other times, as is the case with larger institutional apparatuses such as SESC-SP, it requires a lengthy application process that most musicians are unwilling or unable to complete successfully on a

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[202] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "É exatamente pegar—você pega público muito diferente em cada lugar. No SESC, tem o pessoal, sei lá, terceira idade, que compra cada ingresso por dois reais, comprar em tudo e vai em tudo. Então, eu já vi coisa que eu fiz lá, que o pessoal senta, assistir dez minutos e sai xingando. Mas comprou porque quis ver, porque custa dois reais e porque teve, pelo menos, a disposição de estar ali vendo aquilo."

regular basis. Novaes's ability to achieve the latter is one of the primary tools that set individuals such as her apart and make her crucial to the scene's success.

The emotional power of these organizational actions arises from the interpersonal interactions at their core. Like other institutional leaders, Novaes characterizes the significance of the events she organizes first and foremost in social terms, as "encounters" between different individuals.[203] This generates a sense of community whose significance goes beyond the sonic consequences of what happens onstage. The resultant growth of the scene, she argued, "creates partnerships that are quite profound and eternal and really cool. I suppose that's the way the history of the universe has always been. Because there are people who see something rolling and they want to jump in and learn how to move the switches, just to be there. Because you see that he created something—he wants to belong."[204]

The attendant shift in social dynamics often generates unexpected consequences wherein previous understandings of aesthetics and style attain new semiotic connotations and signify meaning in new ways. Novaes asserted that while the development of the São Paulo scene had mostly changed the Brazilian cultural sphere for the better, she felt discomfort with the ways in which its expansion had changed the production and reception of the more marginal genres with which she had spent her career working. As she asserted, "I find that it creates some incredible, really cool things, but that… it creates a scene in the worst sense of the word. A scene in the sense of a fad, a trend. Unfortunately, something I never imagined in my life with experimental noise is that it, one day, would come to be in style."[205] At times, she appeared taken aback with

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[203] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "…encontros."
[204] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "…gera umas parcerias muito profundas e eternas e muito legais. Imagino que desde sempre a história do universo é assim. Porque tem gente que vê uma coisa rolando e quer pular dentro e aprende a mexer em botões só para estar ali, porque você vê que criou uma coisa—ele quer pertencer."
[205] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "Eu acho que cria umas coisas incríveis, muito legais assim, mas que... e cria uma cena com o pior sentido da palavra. Uma cena no sentido de um modismo, de uma modinha. Infelizmente, uma coisa que eu nunca imaginei na vida com o noise experimental é que isso, um dia, isso virasse moda."

what she had helped to create, likening it to a "little monster," although she emphasized that she welcomed its development.[206] Novaes's perspective signifies the presence of a perhaps inevitable tension that emerges when independent music circuits expand beyond their underground roots and their sonic profile becomes transformed and resignified by new groups of cultural producers.

These new interpersonal relationships also play an important creative role in the scene by shaping the onstage dynamics of performance and expanding the scene's aesthetic horizons. Like the leaders of performance spaces, record label directors are acutely aware of the different sonic palettes and performance techniques of their affiliated musicians, and arrange events with an eye towards developing new collaborative relationships. Because of their inclination towards the novel and the unexpected, these figures tend to favor permutations of individuals that contain the potential for breaking established standards of genre. Novaes characterized events such as Silver Tape in terms of their lack of affiliation with existing aesthetic or institutional models, arguing that the central objective she had in mind was "to not stay within any label, place—not anything at all."[207] In performance, this process results in a variety of novel sonic configurations related to, yet ultimately distinct from the conventional aesthetic palettes of individual artists.

This socially motivated approach to cultural production is ultimately motivated not by abstract intellectual interests or the accumulation of social or symbolic capital, but by personal satisfaction. The uncertainty of independent experimental events generates energizing experiences that challenge and stimulate participants in ways not afforded in established genres cultures. Novaes characterized these events as "an uncompromising experience, but in a good way—not in the sense of making just any kind of music, but in terms of not having to comply with a protocol, or play in a certain way, for a certain public, for such-and-such price. I find that this promotes a kind of enchantment, you know? You go, you arrive at a place and something

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[206] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "…monstrinho."
[207] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "Era não ficar em nenhum rótulo, nem de lugar, nem de nada."

completely unexpected is being played, by a person who invited you."[208] Therein lies the core appeal that justifies the thousands of often uncompensated hours record label directors such as Novaes put in as a means of realizing these fleeting events—the human element, and the sensations and stimulations that arise as a result.

Like many others in her situation, Novaes has found her commitment to facilitating events strained by the realities of the contemporary Brazilian economy. Due to decreased public and private resources for cultural initiatives and generally low financial returns provided by the events she organizes, over the course of the past year the frequency of collaborative concerts she organizes has diminished considerably. Although performance series such as Bugio Convida and Silver Tape continue to occur sporadically, the density and scale of Brava's productions pale in comparison to its earlier years. The recordings she puts out are even more scarce; at the time of this writing, it had been months since the label had released a record. For individuals such as Novaes, these developments are a regrettable yet inevitable consequence of the realities faced by independent cultural producers in a moment where Brazilian institutions are increasingly loath to lend support to initiatives that do not promise significant financial return. One does what one can in the face of precarity and uncertainty—which is to say much less than what one would like.

Yet the creative relationships Novaes has facilitated do not simply die in the face of diminished institutional resources. In several instances, the musicians she has helped to bring together continue to play at local venues that still lend space to independent experimental ventures, and in some cases have developed new collaborative projects in turn. It is these very relationships that represent both the promise of the scene moving forward in an age of austerity and authoritarian politics, as well as the lasting legacy left by independent organizations such as

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[208] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "...experiência descompromissada, no bom sentido—não no sentido de fazer música qualquer coisa, mas de não ter aquela coisa de cumprir um protocolo, de tocar de tal jeito, para tal público, por x valor. Eu acho que favorece esse encantamento, assim, sabe? Você vai, chega em um lugar e está tocando uma coisa que você nunca esperou, de uma pessoa que te convidou."

Brava and its contemporaries. Although their institutional life is generally short, the encounters they foster have proven resilient and lasting, and continue to grow despite increasing difficulties. Should the scene persevere in the face of Brazil's dystopian turn, it is the social bonds fostered by individuals such as Novaes that will hold it together, regardless of whether the institutions themselves continue in their present form.

The Intervention

For those facing exclusion from the independent experimental stage, the most effective long-term solution may only come in the form of an **intervention**, with the organization of new cultural production initiatives led by those who have been left out. Such was the conclusion reached by Natacha Maurer and Renata Roman, who organized the itinerant performance series Dissonantes. Dissonantes facilitates space for concerts led by a rotating set of women artists from various experimental practices at different venues throughout the broader São Paulo region. Other than a requirement that all the performers must be women or majority-women groups, its concerts are completely open-ended, with musicians free to do as they see fit, whether that involves improvised violin-accompanied renditions of sound poetry, expansive post-punk guitar textures, or distorted field recordings of the city soundscape.

Dissonantes arose in 2015, as a response to systemic under-representation of women experimental musicians, both in the São Paulo scene and the related genre cultures with which it intersected. At the time, a number of burgeoning projects oriented towards foregrounding the work and experiences of women artists had emerged: at the University of São Paulo, vocalist and postdoctoral researcher Lílian Campesato had established the research and discussion group Sonora.me, which addresses issues specific to the experiences of women experimentalists, and at Ibrasotope, Maurer produced the all-women concert XX (discussed in Chapter Two). After the

success of XX, Maurer and Roman resolved to work towards giving women a lasting space to perform and foster a more institutionally empowered collaborative community of women artists. Roman situated the initiative as a means of moving from critique to direct action. As she characterized their approach at the time, "So we're going to create—instead of criticizing the absence, we're going to create a space just for women."[209] Their ultimate goal was broader still: the achievement of a wholesale shift in the creative and personal profile of the city's network of independent experimental musicians. "Natacha and I," Roman recalled, "we felt the need to change the scene—not to stay at the university discussing the problematics. We wanted to touch a nerve. It's no use pointing fingers. We have to propose a solution. And the solution is to create the space that doesn't exist."[210]

The inaugural show of the series was hosted at the cultural space Espaço Cultural Bela Vista, with participants and attendees from across the scene's spectrum of practices. Its first performance, by vocalist and electronic musician Paula Rebellato, featured an collage-like configuration of subdued distortion and abstract electronic textures with echoes of post-punk and noise. The second, a collaborative performance by Maurer and Roman (Fig. 4.9), featured a more striking contrast in tone. As Maurer manipulated found objects on a self-constructed table outfitted with contact microphones, Renata released a series of field recordings she had made of the city of São Paulo, some of which were electronically transformed and others of which were entirely unmanipulated. The mood at the event was cheerful and lively, with those in attendance spending hours at the venue and, later on in the evening, a nearby Italian restaurant.

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[209] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "Então a gente vai criar, em vez de a gente criticar a falta, a gente vai criar o espaço só para mulheres."

[210] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "Eu e a Natasha, sentíamos necessidade de modificar a cena—não ficar na universidade discutindo a problemática. A gente queria mexer na ferida. Não adianta a gente apontar. A gente precisa propor solução. E a solução é criar o espaço que não existe."

Figure 4.9: Natacha Maurer (left) and Renata Roman (right) perform at Espaço Cultural Bela Vista during the inaugural show of the concert series Dissonantes. December 17, 2015.

Since then, Roman and Maurer have produced shows at a variety of venues, from independent cultural spaces to public cultural institutions to core experimental venues such as Estúdio Fita Crepe and Ibrasotope. In addition to featuring collaborative shows, the series also foregrounds solo performances by artists who normally play in established groups, which in part allows individual musicians to develop their own projects independent of patterns of exclusion often present on the independent experimental stage. To facilitate these shows, Maurer and Roman draw from personal relationships with institutions and organizational figures across the field of independent cultural production. This strategy shares certain core qualities in common with the approach of independent record label leaders, who, in the absence of an exclusive space to showcase artists, collaborate with the leaders of spaces and organize shows based on shared creative interests. Although the approach requires that Maurer and Roman must continuously negotiate with local venues, it also allows them a measure of adaptability in the face of near-constant institutional flux. This type of flexibility represents one of the most important

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organizational advantages held by collaboratively run affinity groups in comparison to fixed

performance spaces, and is one of the main reasons that such groups—including, among others,

Dissonantes and the Circuito de Improvisação Livre—have persevered in the face of recent

reductions in institutional support for experimental music.

In addition to expanding the range of spaces that welcome women experimental

musicians, Dissonantes has acted as a major motivational factor in the development of new

collaborative relationships, both in the organizational and creative realms. Although leaders of

the scene's performance spaces work with artists from a variety of backgrounds, their reach is

not comprehensive. As discussed previously, it is common for individuals to draw

disproportionately from genre cultures with which they have more personal contact, such as the

broad spectrum of punk-related practices circulating in São Paulo or the city's free improvisation

circuits. Dissonantes, by contrast, counts participants from a wider breadth of practices than any

single institutional peer, from Maurer, the director of Ibrasotope, to guitarist Aline Viera, the co-

director of the Curitiba-based DIY label Meia-Vida, to sound poet and violinist Flora

Holderbaum, who at the time of this writing is pursuing a PhD in sound studies at USP.

Although some of these individuals knew each other previously, before events such as

Dissonantes and its predecessor XX, few had shared the stage.

These encounters have resulted in an unprecedented level of collaboration across

previously unconnected vectors of creative engagement, thus forming the basis for the

exploration of a range of new sounds. Roman drew attention to the collaborative and creatively

liberating qualities the women-led environment of Dissonantes lent to its participants. "The

curious thing that happened," she recalled, "was that all the women who participated and who

before Dissonantes did—had projects with their partners and with other men, felt encouraged to

try out partnerships with other women producers or to try solo presentations."[211] Other musicians who had participated in Dissonantes confirmed the welcoming atmosphere of the concert series as a central element of its appeal. In this context, facilitating an inclusive all-women environment not only furnishes the basic spatial and organizational elements for performance, but also stimulates new creative configurations in turn. The relationships that have arisen as a result have proved lasting and durable in the face of often disastrous changes in the broader field of independent experimental production.

Dissonantes has additionally acted as a primary means of inviting new musicians into the independent experimental scene who might not otherwise have participated due to exclusion or lack of confidence. Over the course of my fieldwork, I spoke with multiple artists for whom the concert series provided crucial early space for showcasing nascent creative projects within a supportive environment. For electronic musician Gabriela Nobre, who made her debut in the seventh edition of Dissonantes in 2016, the experience acted as a central motivational factor in getting her work off the ground in the first place. "Obviously," she recalled, "I was unsure until the moment when I was doing everything, right? And what I found there were my friends, and, above all, a welcoming space among women."[212] Nobre characterized the dynamic for women musicians as "perfect, because you know that that's there to greet you."[213] These introductory encounters constitute a key element of the São Paulo scene's sustainability and a central means by which its creative network is renewed with novel perspectives and sounds.

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[211] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "O curioso que aconteceu foi que todas as mulheres que participaram e que faziam, que tinham antes do Dissonante projetos com seus parceiros e com outros homens, se sentiram encorajadas para experimentar parcerias com outras mulheres produtoras ou experimentar apresentações solo."

[212] Interview with Gabriela Nobre, December 6, 2018. "…obviamente eu estava insegura até aquele momento de tudo que eu estava fazendo, né? E o quê eu encontrei ali foram os meus amigos e, sobretudo, um espaço muito acolhedor entre mulheres."

[213] Interview with Gabriela Nobre, December 6, 2018. "…perfeito, porque você sabe que aquilo ali está ali para te receber."

It should hardly come as a surprise that Maurer and Roman's efforts have periodically experienced backlash. Roman recalled encountering subtle defensive reactions from men due to the series' exclusive focus on women. "Although no one speaks quite so clearly," she noted, "we know it's 'Ah, but does it have to be just women?' 'Ah, why?' 'Ah, come on!' Because in general, men—and this is in all spheres, not just when you're searching for a specific type of representation, which is what we were looking for with Dissonantes—have the tendency to dismiss the problem of women's lack of space. This is a constant. And when we claim a bigger space for us, they generally feel attacked. It's kind of a pain."[214] Roman's recollection of defensive reactions to criticism from men resonates with the testimonies of other women musicians with whom I spoke during my fieldwork; multi-instrumentalist Bella, for instance, recalled an instance in which a friend of hers publicly criticized the lack of women in programming at a major independent music space in Rio de Janeiro and immediately faced a "very violent" online attack in response.[215]

Perhaps the most ignominious instance of sexism the group experienced came in the form of a casual request by one of the independent spaces with which the group had been in contact. After reaching out to the venue, which showcases music from a variety of genres and occasionally lends space to the independent experimental scene, the affiliates of Dissonantes were hit with an unprecedented demand: in order to play, the group would either have to pay R$200 (about $55 in US dollars) or clean the entire space afterwards. Although avoiding payment to musicians is sadly common in the broader independent music circuit in São Paulo,

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[214] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "Tanto que apesar de ninguém falar muito claramente, a gente sabe que 'ah, mas precisa ser só mulher?' 'Ah, por quê?' 'Ah, que coisa!' Porque, de um modo geral, o homem—e isso em todas as esferas, não só quando se busca representatividade no meio específico, que é o que a gente estava buscando com o Dissonantes—tem uma tendência a negar a problemática da falta de espaço que a mulher tem. Isso é uma constante. E quando a gente reivindica isso, um maior espaço para a gente, de um modo geral eles se sentem atacados. É uma coisa meio chata."
[215] Interview with Bella, July 4, 2016. "…muito violento."

the venue's demands were unheard of. The reaction from certain group members, Roman recalled, was swift: "If it had been men, would they have asked them to clean up?"[216] The answer, perhaps predictably, is almost certainly not—upon mentioning the venue's request to men who participated in the scene, those with whom I spoke expressed shock and disgust at the very idea that a space would propose such a choice. Such was the ultimate conclusion of Roman and Maurer, who resolved to avoid engagement with the venue in future occurrences of the concert series.

In spite of these obstacles and in the face of increasing institutional precarity, Dissonantes continues to produce concerts for women artists. Although the series has experienced periodic hiatuses, its organizers have managed to maintain a steady presence in the São Paulo scene. At the time of this writing, Roman and Maurer were considering transforming it from an itinerant event series to a once-a-year festival for women experimental artists as a means of fostering collaborations on a more concentrated scale. Roman drew attention to the additional benefit the series had in raising the profile of women artists in the scene, thus creating broader repercussions in its broader institutional matrix. The project, she argued, "made a general change in the scene. Why? The guys who promoted other events now no longer have an excuse to ask where the women are. They're there. They played at Dissonantes. You understand? They're there. So they invite them more often. Today, if you look, in spite of the problems with the scene today, the problems we have with space, after two years of Dissonantes, in one year the scene already changed."[217] Participants with whom I spoke affirmed Roman's characterization; guitarist Nahnati Francischini, for instance, identified a greater "appreciation of women in experimental

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[216] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "Se fossem homens, eles iam pedir para limpar?"
[217] Interview with Renata Roman, July 8, 2018. "…deu uma mudança na cena de um modo geral. Por quê? Os caras que promovem os outros eventos já não têm mais desculpa para dizer onde estão as mulheres. Elas estão aí. Elas tocaram no Dissonantes. Entende? Elas estão aí. Então eles chamam mais. Hoje, se você olha, apesar dos problemas da cena hoje, que a gente tem problema de espaço, depois de dois anos de Dissonante, em um ano a cena já tinha mudado."

music" due to Maurer and Roman's efforts in taking women's work seriously in its own right rather than paying lip service to onstage diversity.[218] In other words, events such as Dissonantes represent more than moral victories—they contain lasting creative and social consequences as well, due to the organization of crucial institutional access for excluded women artists and the generation of new collaborations in turn.

The Experimental Festival

For a few extended moments of the year, organizational leaders facilitate festivals that bring a singularly high frequency of collaboration and cultural production to the São Paulo scene that far exceeds its day-to-day output. These festivals typically last between one and two weeks and feature a variety of events, including concerts, lectures, workshops, sound installations, free improvisation spaces, and roundtable discussions. Over the course of a single week, it is possible for these events to feature in excess of fifty separate activities. Because of the high amount of money and effort needed to produce these events, they do not represent a sustainable model for everyday practice. Yet their impact on the scene endures far beyond their limited duration. Due to their scale of production, participating musicians' wide range of origins, and the considerable amount of resources they muster, experimental festivals effectively concentrate the scene's everyday offerings and expand its geographic and stylistic reach beyond its immediate purview. This process plays a major role in forming new connections between disparate individuals and institutions, thus accelerating the development of the scene's rhizomatic creative network.

Over the past decade, experimentally oriented artists throughout Brazil have enjoyed a variety of opportunities for collaboration and conversation in festival environments (Fig. 4.10). Most were founded within the past decade, and as such have acted as primary drivers of the

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[218] Interview with Nahnati Francischini, June 25, 2018. "…a valorização das mulheres na música experimental."

independent experimental scene's recent development, both within and beyond the city of São Paulo. These events have taken place across the country, primarily in São Paulo (FIME, Bigorna, Música Estranha) but also in Curitiba (Perturbe), Rio de Janeiro (Antimatéria and Novas Frequências), and, in the case of ENCUN, a series of different cities that changed every year. They feature artists from both national and international points of origin; in 2016, for instance, FIME brought together musicians from sixteen different countries, from Mexico to Hungary to Vietnam.[219]

Festival	Location	Host Institution(s)	Director(s)	Duration [220]	Years of Operation	Featured Events [221]
Antimatéria	Rio de Janeiro	Various	Pedro Azevedo & Bernardo Oliveira	5 days	2018-Present	16 performances
ENCUN	(Rotating)	Various universities	Valério Fiel da Costa	4 days	2002-2016	55 performances, 4 workshops, 2 roundtables
Festival Bigorna	São Paulo	Estúdio Fita Crepe, Brava, Submarine Records	Ângela Novaes, Frederico Finelli, & Ricardo Garcia	7 days	2016	15 performances, 2 multi-day workshops, 2 lectures, 1 installation
FIME	São Paulo	Ibrasotope	Mário del Nunzio & Natacha Maurer	13 days	2009-2017	28 performances, 5 workshops, 2 roundtables, 8 "open space" sections
Festival Música Estranha	São Paulo	Various	Thiago Cury	3 days	2013-Present	13 performances, 1 workshop

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[219] Full country list of FIME: Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, England, Chile, Belgium, the United States, Spain, Argentina, Mexico, Bolivia, Hungary, Vietnam, Austria, Israel, and Sweden.

[220] The number of days in this column is the amount featured for the most recent edition of each festival in question, and does not include off days.

[221] The number of events in this column is the amount featured for the most recent edition of each festival in question.

Novas Frequências	Rio de Janeiro	Various	Chico Dub	7 days	2011-Present	23 performances, 1 installation, 2 workshops
Perturbe	Curitiba	Meia-Vida	Aline Viera & Gustavo Paim	3 days	2012-2015	19 performances, 11 installations

Figure 4.10: Table of Brazilian festivals that foreground experimentally oriented music.[222]

Festivals must draw from a dizzying array of funding sources in order to secure space and compensate musicians. Until recently, the most common and generous source of funding has been the Brazilian government itself. This category encompasses a wide range of institutions on the municipal, state, and federal level.[223] Because of the festivals' international scope, many also solicit funds from local affiliates of international arts organizations, such as the Institut Français and the Goethe Institut. Organizers also coordinate with private local institutions such as bars and clubs, many of which host events as part of the deal. Two festivals, Novas Frequências and Antimatéria, receive corporate sponsorship—and, perhaps not coincidentally, feature a higher concentration of musicians with more well-known profiles.

These sources of institutional support enable a scale of production and elevated financial compensation of musicians rarely encountered in the independent experimental sphere of cultural production, but do not come without significant costs. While institutional backers do not usually intervene in programming or prevent the production of controversial acts, they often require extensive application processes that restrict spontaneity and occupy months of time for organizers. As I will discuss later in this section, this acts as a major disincentive towards festival

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[222] For a more comprehensive list of festivals featuring experimentally oriented music that have operated in Brazil since 2000, see del Nunzio 2017.

[223] In 2016, for instance, Ibrasotope enjoyed backing from three organizations with municipal support (Galeria Olido, Prefeitura de São Paulo, CCSP), three organizations that receive state funding (PROAC-SP, Biblioteca Mário de Andrade, SESC-SP), and one institution with funds from the federal government (Praça das Artes, which is funded in part by an *edital* from the Federal Lei de Incentivo À Cultura, or Federal Cultural Incentive Law).

organization and prevents directors from directing their attention elsewhere. Compounding this difficult situation has been the steady decline in governmental support for the arts since the 2014 recession. As a result, multiple festivals have had to reduce programming or suspend future occurrences indefinitely.

Festival organizers foreground collaboration as an explicit objective in both promotional materials and informal conversation. Música Estranha founder and director Thiago Cury, for example, characterized the creation of a "meeting point" between individuals from diverse backgrounds as a central objective.[224] This process occurs during both scheduled events and informal downtime. Some organizers take pains to book space for open-ended activities where interested participants can meet and interact on their own terms in an unstructured setting. In 2016, for instance, FIME set up an area, "Free Space: Exchanges & Experiences" ("Espaço Livre: Trocas & Experiências"), in SESC Consolação explicitly for that purpose. Attendees and musicians alike were encouraged to take advantage of the space for whatever purposes they desired, from free improvisations to demonstrations of instrumental techniques to informal discussions. As a result of these meetings, festivals are able to act as a central impetus for the development of an emerging transregional and transnational community of experimental musicians whose reach extends beyond immediate local contexts. Because organizers often take pains to include individuals from different institutional backgrounds, such as the academy and the DIY spheres, it often results in bridging these social gaps as well.

The myriad opportunities and challenges of experimental festivals are aptly embodied in the Festival Bigorna (introduced at the beginning of this chapter). I had the opportunity to attend the festival in its inaugural—and, so far, only—iteration in June 2016. It was a collaborative affair in the making, conceived by Estúdio Fita Crepe owner Ricardo Garcia and organized in

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[224] Interview with Thiago Cury, January 18, 2016. "…ponto de encontro."

tandem with record label owners Ângela Novaes (Brava) and Frederico Finelli (Submarine Records). Over the course of seven days, the festival offered a diverse range of activities for interested participants, including multi-day workshops on instrument construction and sound art, lectures on studio recording and the history of experimental music, an interactive sound installation designed by Garcia and electroacoustic composer Rodolfo Valente, and a total of fifteen performances that took place in Fita Crepe's performance space and the adjacent city plaza. The festival's lineup featured a mixture of stalwart fixtures of the independent experimental scene and artists who rarely performed in the scene but whose music reflected its broad sonic profile. All of these events were free and open to all interested members of the public.

The Festival Bigorna arose as a result of a desire on the part of Garcia to expand Fita Crepe's day-to-day programming, realize performances on a grander scale than would be possible in the venue's compact concert space, and connect with members of the public without the inclination or the ability to attend the venue's concerts. Garcia additionally emphasized the importance of moving into the shared space of the city. Central to this effort was a push to organize an event in the neighboring Praça José Molina, a dilapidated city park long ringed by homeless encampments known for open air drug use. On a basic level, the park presented an opportunity for the festival's organizers to take advantage of an underused green space centrally located near the intersection of the busy avenues of Consolação and Paulista, provide a novel area for performance, and potentially even attract additional participants. Garcia, however, situated his objective in communitarian terms, as a means of transforming public space and making connections across entrenched societal divisions. As he recalled, "We live here with crack users. We can see that it's not a square yet—it's an area with green space that could be a plaza. There's a coexistence that resides here—there could be a coexistence with the people that

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live here in the plaza. That's been a desire of mine since the beginning."[225] As part of this endeavor, the festival's organizers took care to avoid actions that could displace the residents of the square.[226]

These efforts speak to an implicit civic mission that informs the ethos of the festival on a basic level. This inclusive attitude is perhaps best exemplified not by the festival's myriad performances, but instead by the hands-on workshops led by master practitioners. The Festival Bigorna featured two workshops: one on instrument construction and hardware hacking, led by musician Marcelo Muniz and multimedia artist Cadós Sanchez, and another on sound art, led by musician and sound artist Luca Forcucci. The events were multi-day affairs, and featured both introductory lectures and extended collaborative sessions in which attendees got to participate in the techniques in question and develop their own projects.

Muniz and Sanchez's four-day workshop on instrument construction exemplifies the festival's inclusive mission. The event, entitled Luteria de Tráquinas (Lutherie of Trinkets), began with a brief lecture on techniques such as circuit bending and hardware hacking, culminating in a demonstration of the type of instruments participants might build. Over the course of the remainder of the workshop, participants were free to pursue any and all creative ends they saw fit to explore. While those in attendance were invited to bring supplementary materials, Muniz and Sanchez furnished all the tools necessary for full participation free of

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[225] Interview with Ricardo Garcia, June 6, 2016. "…a gente convive aqui com os usuários de crack. A gente vê que não é uma praça ainda, é um espaço de área verde que pode ser uma praça. Tem essa convivência que moram aqui—pode ter uma convivência com as pessoas que moram aqui com essa praça. Então isso era um desejo meu desde o início."

[226] One of the most controversial long-standing characteristics of the São Paulo cityscape has been the presence of open-air homeless encampments known for open-air drug use. One of these encampments, in the central city neighborhood of Luz, lasted for years and gained the moniker "Cracolândia" (Crackland; see Sandler 2007:472). In addition to providing a de facto space where users could consume drugs without fear of violent police retribution, in 2014 progressive mayor Fernando Haddad opened the *Programa de Braços Abertos* (Open Arms Program), which provided social services to those who frequented the site (Tófoli 2016:n.p.). Haddad's strategy stood in marked contrast to the infamously antagonistic approach of his successor, João Dória, who in 2017 undertook a campaign of forcible eviction and displaced hundreds of homeless city residents from encampments they had long occupied using methods such as razing buildings to the ground (Samora 2017:n.p.).

charge, including soldering irons, contact microphones, and electronic connecting cables. After the workshop concluded, participants were encouraged to take home any instruments they had constructed. Throughout the workshop, Muniz and Sanchez roamed from individual to individual, offering tips and pointers for best practices and suggestions for potential avenues of construction. Participants took full advantage of the opportunity and manufactured a wide range of innovative sonic apparatuses, ranging from transformations of traditional instruments such as guitars to extravagant contraptions that defied easy categorization. The event had a cheerful, spirited energy, punctuated by lively conversations and periodic blasts of glitches and feedback.

The creative bent of those present was decidedly exploratory in orientation, with most participants appearing interested in investigating timbral and textural possibilities unafforded by conventional instruments. One attendee demonstrated a typical attitude I encountered: after bringing a variety of items and testing each one by holding it up to a receptor, he settled on an electric razor. As he moved the razor across the receptor, he marveled at the various sounds it created, proclaiming with incredulity, "This is really cool—great for exploring many timbres."[227] Some, instead of building instruments with strings or keys that correspond to specific notes, chose to construct instruments with gradients of diverse physical materials that generated different timbres when touched with sound receptors. These workshops thus motivate amateur musicians to conceptualize musical creativity in a novel context outside conventional registers of sound focused on melody and harmony. Their most intriguing and compelling quality may lie in their ability to empower participants to make sounds from scratch that are theirs, and theirs alone. Regardless of the modesty of their instruments, the glitches and scratches that emerge can represent a powerful source of ownership and personal connection that acts as a fundamental motivational factor for participation in such practices in the first place.

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[227] June 24, 2016. "Isso é muito legal – dá para explorar muitas timbragens."

Figure 4.11. Marcelo Muniz demonstrates a self-constructed instrument during the Luteria de Tráquinas (Lutherie of Trinkets) workshop at Estúdio Fita Crepe while workshop co-leader Cadós Sanchez (far left), Estúdio Fita Crepe director Ricardo Garcia (third from left), and participants look on. Estúdio Fita Crepe, June 22, 2016.
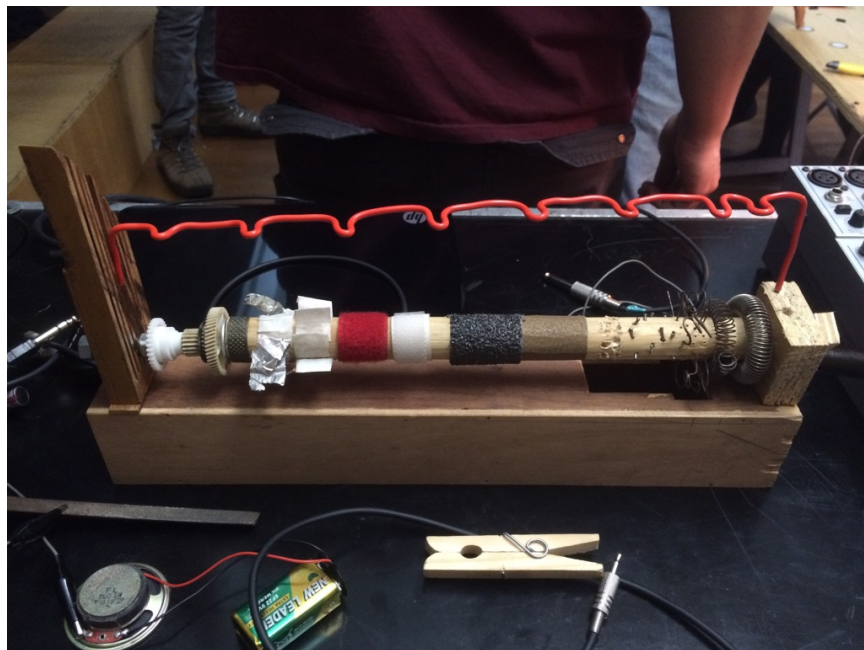
Figure 4.12. Self-constructed instrument made by Cadós Sanchez. The instrument generates sound when the performer holds a contact microphone (circular metallic apparatus at bottom left) against the various textures on the central cylinder, which spins when the rotor on the left is cranked by hand. The receptor generates different timbres according to the speed at which the

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rotor is spun and the specific physical texture against which it is held. Estúdio Fita Crepe, June 22, 2016.

Figure 4.13. Participants in the Luteria de Tráquinas (Lutherie of Trinkets) workshop begin constructing instruments using soldering tools and hardware hacking. Estúdio Fita Crepe, June 22, 2016.

Figure 4.14. Participants in the Luteria de Tráquinas (Lutherie of Trinkets) workshop near the end of their instrument construction. Estúdio Fita Crepe, June 25, 2016.

That these workshops, like all events of the festival, were free of charge was key to the

realization of their mission of inclusivity. Workshops occur throughout the scene on a regular

basis, and cover a variety of techniques and subjects ranging from sound poetry to the use of live electronic coding programs such as SuperCollider. Yet due to the considerable organizational efforts required on the part of directors and the extensive costs of purchasing materials, they demand significant financial investment. In order to make back their expenses, organizers must charge comparatively high participation fees, typically ranging from R$150-250 (about $40-65 in US dollars). As a result, many of the scene's workshops are sparsely attended. At cost-subsidized events such as the Festival Bigorna, however, the opposite is the case. Muniz and Sanchez's workshop, for instance, counted over fifteen individuals who stayed for the multi-day duration of the event. This vastly increased attendance demonstrates the considerable interest for these activities among the general public and their potential for inviting lay practitioners into the scene, but also exemplifies the very real obstacle of everyday costs.

To obtain the necessary institutional and financial capital for the festival, its organizers had to draw from public funding. The lion's share of the funds came from a competitive state-funded *edital* from the state of São Paulo cultural institution ProAC (Programa de Ação Cultural, or Cultural Action Program). Securing this grant required daily effort on the part of all three individuals involved in the organization of the festival, and occupied by far the majority of their preparatory time. They did not recall it fondly. Garcia, who also works with *editais* to keep his space Fita Crepe afloat, framed the process as "inhumane" and admitted losing sleep, while Novaes characterized it as "extremely frustrating and ball-busting," confessing, "It's very distant from what I want to do with my life."[228] Garcia admitted that the experience had left him feeling occasional doubts about the work he had to put in as an organizational leader because of the draining effect on his emotional and mental health. As he confessed in conversation during the lead up to the festival, "It gets to the point where you wonder if it's worth it, Jimmy, because it

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[228] Interview with Ricardo Garcia, June 6, 2016. "…desumano." Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "…extremamente frustrante e castradora;" "É muito distante do que eu quero fazer da minha vida."

consumes you in a way. I think if the people who played—the musicians—had even the slightest notion of what goes into production work, people would respect it a lot and they would really support the work of producers."[229] The arduous experience of organizing the festival motivated its name, Bigorna (Anvil), which Garcia argued acted as an apt metaphor for the "music forged in iron and fire" they sought to produce.[230]

The strict application requirements of the *editais* have the additional effect of stifling the kind of organizational spontaneity that characterizes the independent experimental scene's day-to-day operations. Organizational improvisation is antithetical to the ethos and structure of the *edital*, which require applicants to account for all activities and participants months in advance, with consequences for those who deviate from their pre-approved plan. As a result, directors have little to no flexibility to add new musicians or change programming on the fly, as is routine with events such as Silver Tape or the daily concerts at Hotel Bar. This results in an ironic contradiction: despite the fact that public financial support for festivals allows the realization of events and social connections that accelerate the scene's development, their onerous application processes restrict the kind of organizational independence that drives the scene's creative profile.

For individuals in this situation, the idea of autonomous cultural production can seem like a cruel joke. Garcia lamented the toll this process took on his emotional well-being, and referred to his circumstances as "independence without being independent."[231] The whole ordeal, he argued, "isn't healthy—neither for me as an artist nor for Fita Crepe as a space."[232] He tied the difficulties he faced as an artist and producer to systemic issues facing the country as a whole:

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[229] Interview with Ricardo Garcia. "Chega ao ponto de você pensar se vale a pena Jimmy, porque a coisa te consome de uma maneira. Eu acho que se as pessoas que tocam—os músicos—tivessem a mínima noção do que é um trabalho de produção, as pessoas iam respeitar muito e iam apoiar muito o trabalho dos produtores."
[230] Conversation with Ricardo Garcia, June 15, 2016. "…música forjada de ferro e fogo."
[231] Interview with Ricardo Garcia, June 6, 2016. "Independência sem ser independente."
[232] Interview with Ricardo Garcia, June 6, 2016. "Isso não é saudável—nem pra mim como artista, e nem pro Fita Crepe como um espaço."

"We live in a surreal situation. Many things have to change for this picture to change, and, consequently, for our picture in art and in music to change as well. So it's kind of difficult for us to think about the reality that we have today in our country—we feel that the culture of politics will get better, you understand? That's my objective—everyone working so that everything gets better, but it's really complicated. The outlook here in Brazil is difficult."[233] Only through collaborative effort, he asserted, could the scene transcend its current circumstances and ground itself in truly self-sustainable forms of cultural production.

In spite of these obstacles, organizational leaders still manage to preserve a certain core level of creative freedom throughout the festival process. The majority of the music presented at the Festival Bigorna was improvised, and artists themselves did not face restrictions on the specific types of sounds they could play during performance. This was a conscious choice on the part of the organizers, who took pains to specify the open nature of the performances in their grant applications and ensure that musicians felt just as comfortable as they would during a regular concert. As Novaes asserted, "It's still DIY, but with institutional cash. We got the money from the government to do it, but we did exactly what we wanted. We didn't have to invite any super-famous artists—we didn't have to. You know? They were the same people we always worked with."[234]

Novaes's unwillingness to force participating artists to make creative compromises in spite of the restrictions of the *editais* exemplifies the role organizational leaders play in ensuring the resilience of the scene's artistic ethos in the face of institutional limitations. Yet over time,

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[233] Interview with Ricardo Garcia, June 6, 2016. "A gente vive numa situação surreal. Então assim, muita coisa tem que mudar pra esse panorama todo mudar e, consequentemente, o nosso panorama na arte e na música mudar também. Então assim, é um pouco difícil a gente pensar na realidade que a gente tem hoje no país, a gente achar que a política cultura vai melhorar, entendeu? O meu objetivo é esse, tá todo mundo trabalhando pra que tudo melhore, mas é muito complicado. O nosso panorama aqui no Brasil é difícil."
[234] Interview with Ângela Novaes, June 29, 2016. "Ainda é um 'faça você mesmo' dentro de uma grana institucional. A gente pegou o dinheiro do governo para fazer, mas a gente fez exatamente o que a gente quis. A gente não precisou chamar nenhum artista superfamoso—a gente não precisou. Sabe? Foram as mesmas pessoas com quem a gente sempre trabalhou."

the weight of those restrictions often renders those efforts unsustainable. Such was the case with the Festival Bigorna, whose 2016 iteration remains its sole manifestation. One can identify multiple factors in this development: onerous state funding demands, declining public support for the arts, and the personal exhaustion experienced by its organizers, among other issues. Part must surely be attributed to the inherently capricious nature of independent cultural endeavors in an already tumultuous institutional environment. Given its fleeting nature, its most lasting impact may lie within the encounters it fostered over the course of those seven days—forged, as Garcia put it, "in iron and fire."

Concluding Thoughts: A Question of Luck

Does the São Paulo scene present a sustainable model for fostering collaborative creativity and independent cultural production? On one hand, its perseverance in the face of endemic structural obstacles would seem to validate the organizational strategy employed by its institutional leaders. I identify three primary factors common in these individuals' approaches that account for the scene's resilience and distinctive creative profile. The first is an active interest in facilitating encounters between individuals from different practices. Although the Brazilian popular music sphere is famously welcoming of stylistic mixture, entrenched genre cultures still exist, and in-person collaborations between disparate styles such as noise and free jazz remain rare. Conversely, as the individuals discussed in this chapter demonstrate, members of the São Paulo scene exhibit great curiosity for cross-stylistic collaboration and embrace the social and creative possibilities of such encounters. Organizational figures additionally succeed due to diligence and dedicated effort—because of the hours, weeks, and sometimes months of preparation necessary to connect disparate individuals, secure funding, and organize events. Finally, the scene persists due in no small part due to institutional leaders' generosity and drive

to share spatial resources. Without individuals such as Salles, Roman, Maurer, Garcia, and Novaes willing to dedicate space to performance and spend time securing funding and access to venues, independent experimental musicians might very well find themselves on their own.

Yet institutional precarity remains the scene's central reality. Despite the laudable efforts of the scene's leaders and the promising creative culture they have established over the past decade, their future remains tenuous and uncertain. Even after years of sustained growth, the potential public for the kind of performances featured in independent experimental concerts remains limited. Organizational leaders must continually hustle to secure the spatial and financial resources necessary for the high volume of performances the scene currently enjoys. Furthermore, even those who do succeed in navigating the field of forces in São Paulo often struggle with the personal costs. Even with concerted effort, the threat of collapse is ever-present. Events and venues close with regularity, and although new ones periodically emerge as well, one cannot count on specific performance opportunities staying available for any extended duration in the future. Given the bleak reality facing independent cultural producers in the wake of Brazil's recent turn towards authoritarianism and austerity, it is anyone's guess as to whether the scene will persevere or collapse in the years to come.

In the end, despite the very real gains facilitated by the efforts of institutional leaders, a certain core amount of the scene's development and persistence must be attributed to happy coincidence. Participants seemed to be aware of this reality, and often marveled at the effervescence of the contemporary "moment" for experimental production and reminded me of my good fortune in being able to witness it. Echoing a common attitude among participants, Carlos Issa emphasized the ephemeral nature of the scene, arguing, "It's an isolated moment. It's a question of luck. There's some luck going around. There's a social composition going on that could really disappear next year. So I find that, well, you've got to enjoy a lot of what's

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happening, really have fun, produce a lot. I think it will continue to grow, but I find it more relaxing to think that I'll have to go out and appreciate it and live it day by day, you know?"[235] Issa expressed these sentiments in 2016, but three years later, his words ring even truer than they did at that time. His valuation of the rarity of the São Paulo scene's contemporary situation is likely a prime driver of the common use of the word "moment"—a term that suggests an inherently temporary quality to the scene's success, reached as much by good fortune as by dogged perseverance. One has to enjoy it while it lasts.

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[235] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "É um momento isolado. É uma questão de sorte. Tá rolando uma sorte, assim. Tá rolando uma composição social que pode realmente desaparecer ano que vem e tal. Então, eu acho que, assim, tem que aproveitar muito isso que tá acontecendo, se divertir muito, produzir muito. Eu acho que vai continuar ampliando, mas eu fico mais tranquilo achando que tem que ir aproveitando isso e vivendo isso dia a dia assim, sabe?"

Chapter Four

Caostrópolis: Independent Experimental Engagements with the Brazilian Megacity

All of this provokes you. Because at the same time that you suffer—and you suffer physically in the city, both to breathe and to get through the heat, to catch the subway—you also have human warmth, which I feel very strongly. And as there's a lot of variety and cultural diversity in this experimental music that I'm working with, all of this becomes very contradictory. And at the same time, it's beautiful. Because that's part of how life makes you vulnerable, too. The city makes you resilient and vulnerable at the same time.[236]

– Flora Holderbaum

February 10, 2016. It is a sleepy, dreary Ash Wednesday afternoon in São Paulo. The city

is awash in shades of grey concrete and clouds, punctuated by bouts of light rain that cut through

the summer heat. The normally bustling city center has taken on a languid air, as its residents

stay home from work and recuperate from the hectic four-day Carnival that ended yesterday. Not

all have resigned themselves to a day at home, however. Across from the Biblioteca Mário de

Andrade, in the foyer of a modest shopping mall, a group of about fifteen men and women has

gathered for the annual post-Carnival event Bloco Ruído (Noise *Bloco*).[237] Most are dressed in

casual attire, although some have adorned festive accessories such as brightly colored masks and

face paint in the spirit of the season. Each participant has brought to the event an instrument of

their own construction, which they spent the past week assembling from scratch. Some are

simple, consisting only of a battery and a cheap three-inch speaker soldered together via partially

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[236] Interview with Flora Holderbaum, October 20, 2015. "Tudo isso é instigante. Porque ao mesmo tempo que você sofre—você sofre fisicamente na cidade, tanto para respirar, quanto para passar calor, para pegar metrô—só que você tem o calor humano, que sinto muito forte. E como tem muita variedade e diversidade cultural no meio mesmo que estou pesquisando, dessa música experimental, tudo isso fica muito contraditório. E ao mesmo tempo, fica bonito. Porque acho que isso faz parte do que a vida oferece de vulnerável, também. A cidade te deixa resistente e vulnerável ao mesmo tempo."

[237] *Bloco* (derived from the word "bloc") is a general term for a parading carnival group in Brazil.

exposed wires and clampers. Others are complex and absurd; one musician, for instance, has fashioned an instrument out of a used ketchup bottle, while another has appropriated a bottle of sunblock to serve as a makeshift mixer. An assortment of acoustic instruments rounds out the ensemble: a toy slide whistle, a vinyl record played by scraping a screwdriver along its grooves, and an Afro-Brazilian *xequerê* shaker. As they wait for the drizzle to subside, the group socializes and tests their instruments out (Figs. 5.1–5.3), generating a diverse din of squeals, rasps, and bits of casual conversation that cut through the urban soundscape.

The procession begins upon the first lull in the rain. A discordant clamor of sounds echoes off walls and closed shop doors as members of the parade set off through the open air shopping mall and down the walkways of the city center (Figs. 5.4–5.6). The group takes a circuitous route, passing a series of iconic fixtures of the downtown São Paulo cityscape: the extravagant baroque-styled Municipal Theater, the pedestrian overpass above the central Corridor Norte-Sul highway, the concrete walls of the Praça das Artes performing arts complex. Onlookers react to the group with bewilderment and smiles of amusement and often seem confounded by the spectacle. One bystander winces and covers his ear in reaction to an unexpectedly loud glitch as his friend bursts into laughter, while another woman simply stops walking and stares with a baffled look on her face. The procession ends at an open-air plaza, where a different group of musicians has informally gathered to play *samba batucada*, a traditional style characteristic of Carnival. As they enter the space, members of the Bloco Ruído begin casually dancing with the assembled spectators and gradually synchronize their playing with the underlying pulse of the samba, blending in with the assembled crowd.

Figures 5.1–5.3: Members of the Bloco Ruído test out their self-constructed instruments before the start of the parade. February 10, 2016.

Figures 5.4–5.6: Members of the Bloco Ruído march through the city center. February 10, 2016.

Public events such as the Bloco Ruído constitute a central means by which independent experimental musicians take the core performance practices of the scene beyond the immediate realm of the stage and into the shared physical space of the city itself. They exemplify the

diverse tensions and dynamics that characterize lived musical experience in the city of São Paulo—between the various sonic vectors and human actors in the contemporary urban soundscape; between traditional Brazilian styles and hybrid experimental sound; between São Paulo, the rest of Brazil, and the broader international sphere. How does the city affect the creative practice of independent experimental musicians? How do musicians employ action, rhetoric, and music as a means of engaging with its distinct features, forces, and challenges? What do musicians' reactions to São Paulo demonstrate about creative responses to the realities of contemporary urban Brazil? I contend that the city of São Paulo acts as an alternating source of tension, opportunity, and inspiration for practitioners, and centrally influences creative practice. Members of the scene negotiate their experiences with the city by representing urban experience in sound and onstage performance and by directly intervening in the physical space of the urban environment itself. These forms of musical expression epitomize the contradictions at the heart of musicians' experiences of São Paulo and act as an important means of developing critical engagements with urban space and sound. They ultimately serve to construct an alternative, countercultural understanding of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness) in the contemporary Brazilian public sphere.

This chapter discusses the connections independent experimental musicians have with São Paulo and the ways in which they employ music as a means of negotiating and mediating this relationship. The chapter begins by integrating a discussion of the city's distinct cultural history and spatial and sonic qualities with a consideration of its place in the broader Brazilian imaginary. I situate this within an analysis of the ways in which members of the scene conceptualize the city in contradictory terms. I then address the ways in which practitioners represent and respond to São Paulo in sound and onstage performance, focusing on four primary impressions of the city that shape creative practice: chaos, noise, intensity and aggression, and

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introspection and alienation. The chapter then addresses how independent experimental musicians move beyond the scene's performance spaces and directly engage with the urban space of the city itself. As a means of conceptualizing this phenomenon, I introduce the notion of the *material engagement* with the urban soundscape. I discuss two case studies: the field recording and sound mapping practices of musician Renata Roman, and the experimental Carnival performance of the Bloco Ruído. Running throughout the chapter will be a discussion of the ways in which independent experimental musicians' responses to the city present potentially egalitarian and communitarian means of engaging with the city's distinct concerns and challenges. The chapter concludes with a consideration of how these creative practices help to construct an alternative national narrative that embraces the urban qualities of contemporary Brazil and the diverse obstacles and opportunities that arise along with them.

City of Contradiction

If the face of the Brazilian nation lies in the beaches and forested hills of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, then São Paulo occupies a different realm entirely. In classic understandings of the nation, the city is a problem: it embodies the urbanness of contemporary Brazil, but urbanness is not a quality people like to associate with Brazil. In the minds of many commentators and citizens, *brasilidade* (Brazilianness)—a common term that K. E. Goldschmidt characterizes as "an idealized Brazilian essence"—lies elsewhere (2011:418). The canon of Brazilian popular song is rife with music that lauds the visual beauty, rich cultural heritage, and alluring ambience of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador da Bahia; musical depictions of São Paulo, on the other hand, are few and far between, and those that do exist are infused with deep ambivalence and rarely fail to mention the city's grittier qualities.

This unequal focus is reflected in the musicological literature, where only five scholars have contributed book-length studies of music in São Paulo in English (Burdick 2013; Cardoso 2013; Garland 2014; Gough 2015; Pardue 2011); the scholarship in Portuguese, while larger, also tends to disregard the contributions of São Paulo-based musicians.[238] This disparity may arise as a result of a long-standing bias in nationalist conceptions of Brazilian culture that certain regions are "more Brazilian" than others and therefore more deserving of scholarly and institutional attention.[239] It may also reflect a deeper exoticizing trend in depictions of Brazil that uphold the country's tropical image of beaches and bossa nova and downplays narratives to the contrary. Independent experimental musicians are thoroughly aware of these biases. Guilherme Granado, for instance, declared that "people are afraid of us" and asserted that São Paulo had been comparatively ignored by journalists for not having a "commitment to *brasilidade*" and refusing to conform to conventional understandings of Brazilian popular music.[240] Others in the scene echoed this perception. It is much easier to sell samba on Copacabana beach, after all, than industrial rock in an endless concrete jungle.

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[238] Of these studies, Daniel Gough's dissertation "Listening in the Megacity: Music in São Paulo's Cultural Policy Worlds" (2015) and Leonardo Cardoso's dissertation "Sound-Politics in São Paulo, Brazil" (2013) most fully engage with issues of music and its relation to urban geography and the urban experience. Gough's work introduces the concept of *listening heuristics*—what he defines as "instruments of public policy that, in the broadest sense, facilitate encounters between audiences and sonic practices" (2015:1). Gough argues that listening heuristics "organize disparate musical practices through the promotion of specific modes of engagement with sound," and explores a variety of instances in São Paulo's public policy world in which this manifests (2015:1). As a study largely concerned with issues of public policy and one that foregrounds listening, however, his work is tangential to my own, which focuses instead on active, direct engagements with the space and social dynamics of the city itself on the part of individual musicians. Cardoso's work, which investigates public policy and governmental institutions and their relation to city noise in São Paulo, is also relevant in a broad sense, yet ultimately tangential as well. In addition to these two book-length studies, Charles Perrone's article "Performing São Paulo: Vanguard Representations of a Brazilian Cosmopolis" (2002a) also engages with the ways in which music has acted as a means of constructing understandings of São Paulo; however, his analysis is mostly focused on lyrics of songs from the 1960s and 70s, literary works such as Mário de Andrade's *Paulicéia Desvairada* ([1922] 1987), and the works of Brazilian concrete poetry.
[239] McCann 2004:101. Charles Perrone draws further attention to the ways in which the "utopian" and "oft-romanticized" image of Salvador da Bahia contrasts with the "tough big-city demands of São Paulo" (2002a:72-73).
[240] Interview with Guilherme Granado, May 2, 2016. "As pessoas tem medo da gente;" "São Paulo não tem esse compromisso com a brasilidade."

Yet São Paulo's bleak stereotype belies a rich intellectual history and cultural diversity that have fostered a variety of innovative and challenging explorations in the realms of music, writing, and visual art. The city has been the center of the Brazilian artistic vanguard since the birth of *modernismo* in 1922, when figures such as Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, and Heitor Villa-Lobos gathered for the Semana de Arte Moderna (Modern Art Week).[241] Over the course of the ensuing decades, the city played host to a wide range of experimentally oriented cultural movements, including the avant-garde compositional movements of Música Viva (1939-52) and Música Nova (mid-1960s), Brazilian concrete poetry (1955-59), Tropicália, and the Vanguarda Paulista.

That the members of these movements chose São Paulo as a base of operation is no coincidence. Ongoing industrial and economic development and the continuous arrival of incomers from across the country and the globe have ensured that the city remains ever in flux, with the vestiges of its past quickly replaced by something new. As a result, tradition enjoys a less privileged status in São Paulo in comparison to other regions of Brazil.[242] This has generated an ideal environment for challenging established creative practices and fostering artistic innovation. Vanguarda Paulista member Luiz Tatit asserted that the city possessed a unique capacity for experimentation and attributed this to the fact that in São Paulo, "there's no commitment to the past."[243] Without these qualities, he asserted, it would not have been possible

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[241] Members of *modernismo* advocated multiple ideological and artistic projects, most prominent among which was a renewed conception of cultural nationalism framed through a valorization of cultural practices native to Brazil. Drawing from multiple avant-garde movements in the global sphere, including surrealism, futurism, and Dada, the modernists balanced a vanguardist emphasis on modernity and experimentation with a primitivist focus on the everyday lives and culture of the Brazilian *povo* (people), particularly its nonwhite population (Dunn 2001:14). Christopher Dunn argues that this ideological combination allowed the modernists to "delineate both the specificity and the universality of Brazilian culture" and notes that the resulting philosophical binary would prove to be a central issue of debate within the Brazilian cultural sphere for decades (2001:14-15).

[242] As *Vanguarda Paulista* member Luiz Tatit asserted, "São Paulo doesn't care about tradition. It's not that it doesn't have it—it's that tradition isn't important to São Paulo." Interview with Luiz Tatit, January 18, 2016. "São Paulo não liga para tradição. Não é que não tenha—a tradição não é importante para São Paulo."

[243] Interview with Luiz Tatit, January 18, 2016. "…não tem compromisso com o passado."

for the groundbreaking productions of Lira Paulistana to occur in the first place. Tatit

emphasized the singularity of the city and took care to distinguish its openness to invention from

what he saw as a less experimentally oriented attitude in historic centers of Brazilian musical

culture such as Rio de Janeiro and Salvador da Bahia. As he asserted,

> São Paulo isn't known for tradition. Nobody comes here to see a traditional aspect of the city—although they're there, of course. Every city starts somewhere. There's the *Pátio do colégio* and such. Every city has a beginning. But it isn't… it isn't valued here. In Rio, however, it's valued—it was the capital for many years. Bahia was the capital for many years as well. So that thing about tradition is much stronger there. The music has more roots, all of that. Well, here, what goes out is just that. The *Vanguarda Paulista*, experimentations all around, Arnaldo Antunes, a guy who's crazy about novelty all the time. That is to say, that's really *paulistano*. And the *paulistano* bias, it doesn't have a commitment to authentic samba, authenticity. Authenticity is beside the point.[244]

This attitude manifests acutely in the independent experimental scene, whose participants

feel unencumbered by an obligation to adhere to nationalized expectations about musical

creativity. Granado situated this feeling as a direct manifestation of the immediate urban context

of São Paulo and the distinct qualities of its diverse soundscape, arguing, "Nothing, aesthetically,

is sacred here. Obviously, there are people who deal with it—the people who play *chorinho*, for

example, *choro*, samba, there, yes, you're creating… we were talking before about rules. But on

a daily basis, you're being bombarded with everything all the time—and a lot of international

stuff too."[245] Artists such as Granado and Tatit exemplify the ways in which São Paulo-based

musicians perceive the unforgiving flow and tumult of the city, far from restricting cultural

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[244] Interview with Luiz Tatit, January 18, 2016. "São Paulo não é conhecido por tradição. Ninguém vem aqui ver um aspecto tradicional da cidade—embora haja, é claro. Toda cidade começou em algum lugar. Tem o pátio do colégio aqui e tal. Toda cidade tem um começo. Mas não é... isso não é valorizado aqui. Enquanto no Rio é valorizado, foi capital muitos anos. Bahia foi capital muitos anos. Então a coisa da tradição é muito mais forte lá. Então a música tem mais raiz, tudo isso. Então aqui, o que sai é isso mesmo. A vanguarda paulista, que são experimentações de tudo quanto é lado, sai o Arnaldo Antunes, que é um cara alucinado por novidade o tempo todo. Quer dizer, isso é bem paulistano. É o viés paulistano, não tem compromisso com samba autentico, autenticidade. Autenticidade não vem ao caso." The Jesuit institution known as the *Pátio do colégio* was the first building constructed in São Paulo, in 1554.

[245] Interview with Guilherme Granado, May 2, 2016. "Nada, esteticamente, é sagrado aqui. Obvio que, falando isso, existem pessoas que tratam—o povo que toca o chorinho, por exemplo, choro, o samba, ai sim, então, você está criando... a gente estava falando antes sobre regras assim. Mas no dia a dia, você está sendo bombardeado com tudo o tempo todo—e muita coisa internacional também."

production, as an ideal environment for radical reinvention. Orthodox *brasilidade* can be stifling, and São Paulo provides an environment where it is held in less reverent regard than the rest of the country.

Members of the São Paulo scene have a complicated relationship with the city. On one hand, musicians emphasized the difficulties and strains they faced on a day to day basis, ranging from socioeconomic concerns such as the city's high cost of living and inequality to the generally oppressive experience of navigating the urban spatial environment. The ubiquitous nature of transit and congestion, and the effect they had on the São Paulo soundscape, emerged as a consistent theme in conversations. These qualities leave many individuals with a perpetual sense of exhaustion, alienation, and stress. They are inextricable from the city's extreme and inescapable urban nature, which affects musicians' strategies for organization and performance on a core level. Leandro Archela, for instance, drew attention to the overpowering nature of this phenomenon, asserting that São Paulo "has an urban character on an almost oppressive level, in the sense that you become an extremely small being compared to the size of the city and what it represents."[246]

On the surface, these perceptions could apply to a variety of contemporary global megacities, from London to Delhi to Singapore. Yet while members of the scene acknowledged certain similarities, they took pains to emphasize the distinct qualities of urban experience in São Paulo. As musicians pointed out, São Paulo possesses neither the riches and highly developed infrastructure of cities such as New York or Tokyo, nor does it contain the natural beauty and opportunities for respite of Brazilian cities such as Rio de Janeiro or Salvador da Bahia, whose iconic beachside profiles and expansive parklands occasionally arose as a subject of longing

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[246] Interview with Leandro Archela, October 28, 2015. "…tem um uma característica urbana, num nível que chega a ser quase opressor, né, no sentido de que você se torna um ser extremamente pequeno perto do tamanho que a cidade é e do que ela representa."

among members of the São Paulo scene. The city is inexorable and relentless—a place where even silence, as one musician put it, "is an article of luxury."[247] These perceptions point to an understanding of a city whose stark profile stands alone, connected to yet ultimately distinct from its counterparts in the national and international sphere.

Yet for all its difficulties, the city also offers positive qualities that do not exist anywhere else in the country. As a result of being the country's major destination for internal and external migration for over a century, no urban area in Brazil matches the regional and international diversity of greater São Paulo (Caldeira 2000:41; Vasconcelos-Oliveira 2012), whose varied history is embodied in the global profile of the independent experimental scene and facilitates its idiosyncratic mixture of disparate musical practice. This theme came up repeatedly in conversation, with multiple practitioners likening the city to the "cauldron" of Brazil.[248] Combined with the city's sheer size, this affords musicians a wealth of opportunities for collaboration that stimulates the production of a variety of novel artistic projects and generates a frantic yet ultimately enriching creative profile that many individuals welcomed. Vocalist Juçara Marçal compared her experience making music in her home city of São Paulo to the experience of working in Rio de Janeiro and the Northeast, which she characterized as "more tranquil." In São Paulo, she asserted, "we do 500 projects at the same time—that's the only way we know how to work. We never manage to stop. Ok, there's that opportunity? Then let's do that too."[249]

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[247] Interview with Rodrigo Dário, October 22, 2015. "O silêncio aqui em São Paulo é um artigo de luxo."

[248] "…o caldeirão." Interview with Mauricio Takara, April 20, 2016; interview with Márcio Gibson, April 18, 2016. Other practitioners employed similar characterizations. Record label owner Ângela, for instance, likened São Paulo to "a blender" and "that crazy capital of South America," while Guilherme Granado expressed it perhaps most succinctly, declaring, "You are in a fucking melting pot of good shit. And bad shit too." Interview with Ângela, June 29, 2016, "um liquidificador;" "essa capital louca da América do Sul." Interview with Guilherme Granado, May 2, 2016. Granado, who speaks fluent English, briefly switched to English to say these words.

[249] Interview with Juçara Marçal, May 5, 2016. "...mais tranquila;" "A gente faz 500 projetos ao mesmo tempo—a gente só consegue trabalhar assim, não consegue ficar parado. Bom, tem essa possibilidade? Então vamos fazer isso também."

These qualities contain significant ramifications beyond the realm of music. Record label owner Frederico Finelli, who originally hailed from Belo Horizonte, argued that São Paulo's diversity, cultural richness, and breadth of opportunities had led to a more progressive and open-minded worldview. As he recalled, "I came to São Paulo because in Belo Horizonte I wouldn't have succeeded in doing, I don't know, a fifth of what I do now. It wouldn't have worked out. In Belo Horizonte, I had nowhere else to go, you understand. The scene, it's limited. Spaces are limited. The mentality is more limited, too."[250] For these reasons, even those who expressed a strong dislike of the city tended to acknowledge its useful qualities and the central role it played in facilitating the scene's distinct dynamics.

These attitudes reflect a broader trend in cultural and commercial representations of urban Brazil taking place over the past decade that foreground São Paulo and its emerging image as a modern and dynamic global city. K. E. Goldschmitt draws attention to a general departure among Brazilian cultural institutions from their historic emphasis on Rio de Janeiro in favor of an embrace of the diverse and cosmopolitan image of São Paulo (2019:105). This connotative transformation, they argue, centrally entailed a broader shift in the nation's "musical brand" in which the country's cultural industry foregrounded styles outside of the conventional national musical canon, such as hip hop and "indie" rock, as a means of taking advantage of the city's dynamic contemporary image (2018:3).

These opposing impressions of São Paulo—chaotic and cosmopolitan, relentless and emancipating, oppressive yet full of possibilities—ultimately generate an understanding of the city as defined by duality and contradiction. Independent experimental musicians often spoke of having a "love-hate" relationship with São Paulo, and resisted reducing the city to a single

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[250] Interview with Frederico Finelli, April 19, 2016. "Eu vim pra São Paulo porque em Belo Horizonte eu não conseguiria fazer, sei lá, um quinto do que eu faço. Não daria. Em Belo Horizonte, não tinha mais pra onde eu caminhar, assim, entendeu? O cenário, ele é limitado. Os espaços são limitados. A mentalidade é mais limitada também."

impression. Flora Holderbaum encapsulated a common perspective in the scene, asserting, "The city is, at the same time, fascinating and cruel. I was very much in love with the diversity here and, at the same time, tired."[251] This binary perception resonates with the lyrical testimony of previous musical chroniclers of the city; Tom Zé's 1968 hit "São, São Paulo," for instance, featured the chorus "São, São Paulo, what a pain / São, São Paulo, my love" ("São, São Paulo quanta dor / São, São Paulo meu amor"), and proclaimed, "In spite of all your defects / You are dear to my heart" ("Porém com todo defeito / Te carrego no meu peito").

These conflicting impressions of the city form part of a broader narrative in Brazilian popular music discourse that addresses the alternately beautiful and grotesque experience of everyday life in Brazil. Gilberto Gil and Torquato Neto's Tropicálist anthem "Geleia Geral," for instance, famously included the ironic lyric "brutality garden" as a means of evoking the contrast between traditional notions of Brazil's fertile lushness and the oppressive realities of the 1960s-era dictatorship.[252] As Christopher Dunn notes, this took place as part of a broader strategy in which the Tropicálists "purposefully invoked stereotypical images of Brazil as a tropical paradise only to subvert them with pointed references to political violence and social misery" (2001:3). These contradictory characterizations further evoke the commentary of noted Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta, who emphasized the tensions inherent in the rituals and everyday routines of Brazilian citizens, stating, "I want to see 'Brazil' as a drama where the beginning reappears at the end and where—in the dialectic of indecision, reflex, and paradox—the bandit can perfectly well take his place in the parlor even as the hero (a handsome, mustachioed owner of a coffee plantation, already thinking of establishing an industry) can lose his voice and move from being an anarchist and futurist 'cannibal' to being a beach-blanket

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[251] Interview with Flora Holderbaum, October 20, 2015. "A cidade é, ao mesmo tempo, fascinante e cruel. Fiquei bastante apaixonada por essa diversidade que tem aqui e, ao mesmo tempo, cansada."
[252] Scholar Christopher Dunn would later adopt this lyric as the title of his seminal study of Tropicália, *Brutality Garden* (2001).

revolutionary like most people" (1991:1). DaMatta used Carnival as a means of exploring this dialectic, but the opposition he identifies also aptly characterizes independent experimental musicians' conflicting experiences and perceptions of São Paulo. As I will discuss, the creative strategies these individuals employ as a means of negotiating the city's divergent qualities are similarly dual in nature.

Sounding the Megacity

Members of the São Paulo scene employ sound as a central means of mediating the city's complex, contradictory nature. Participants respond to both the general experience of navigating the city on a day-to-day basis, as well as the specific sonic qualities of the urban soundscape. Coined by composer R. Murray Schafer, the term *soundscape* refers to the total collection of sounds in a particular place (Hill 2016; Lam 2012:103; Schafer 1969:3; 1977:4, 7-8). Studies of soundscapes implicitly attune themselves to space and the physicality of acoustic environments, and the various dynamics that affect the perspectives and experiences of different listening subjectivities (e.g. Hill 2016; Smith 1994; Sterne 2015; Samuels et. al. 2010).[253] Some musicians mirror the city's acoustic profile in their own work. Others use music as a means of reflecting personal emotional reactions to São Paulo, and choose sounds that reflect these perspectives. Still others employ performance as a sort of "audiotopia," to adopt Josh Kun's term (see Kun

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[253] In cities, the dynamics of soundscapes are singularly complex. Schafer considered urbanization to have had an oppressive effect on the contemporary soundscape, which he asserted had reached an "apex of vulgarity" due to the ubiquity of industrial noise and deteriorated human social relations as a result (1977:3). These types of statements have led to criticism of Schafer's framework on grounds of personal bias; as Ari Y. Kelman notes, "Schafer's soundscape is not a neutral field of aural investigation at all; rather, it is deeply informed by Schafer's own preferences for certain sounds over others" (2010:214). Schafer's rejection of "noise" as a concept that stood in opposition to "sound" stands in contrast to the ideas of figures such as Cage, who embraced elements of noise (see Samuels, et. al. 2010:331-32; Schafer 1969:8, 1977:3). The question of how residents of cities negotiate these issues has remained a salient issue for studies of sound and its relation to urban design, which have become more finely attuned to the various sonic vectors of modern city space (Raimbault and Dubois 2005; Yang and Kang 2005). In order to address and better understand these new sonic realities, Schafer advocated re-orienting listening and composition toward a more complete consideration of the full spectrum of sounds in a given environment and developing notational strategies such as sound maps (in his words, "aerial sonography;" see Schafer 1977:131-33).

2005), in which music acts as a site for respite and escape from the challenges of the city. These reactions are as varied as the city's population itself, and create a portrait of urban experience in São Paulo that is defined by multiplicity and heterogeneity. At the same time, as I will discuss, it is possible to identify common elements that exemplify the distinct effect that the city has on its residents and the ways in which independent experimental musicians respond in turn. The sounded relationships that arise over the course of this process constitute a distinct form of collaborative engagement with the city of São Paulo, which acts as its own sort of omnipresent creative partner in its own right.

Investigating how music acts as a means of representing and responding to urban experience presents a series of analytical issues. Musical sound and performance are polysemic, and evoke different perspectives and emotional reactions in different people depending on individual history and context (Turino 2014). In some instances, examining this process is straightforward, particularly with songs whose lyrics explicitly engage with specific urban locales and narratives. Few would deny, for instance, the significance of Ben E. King's "Spanish Harlem" in constructing a romantic vision of midcentury New York City, or the role that Tom Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes's "Garota de Ipanema" played in popularizing a newly sophisticated, modern image of urban Brazil. With instrumental or non-lyrical works, however, determining the ways in which musicians mediate urban experience can be complicated and ambiguous. Without explicit verbal cues, it is difficult to separate incidental music-making that happens to take place in an urban environment from direct, deliberate engagements with urban experience itself. Such is the case with the São Paulo scene, whose performers almost entirely avoid the use of lyrics, yet employ music as a central means of engaging with the city's myriad facets. The difficulty of analyzing nonverbal musical engagements with cities may have contributed to the disproportionate amount of studies of music and urbanness that examine

popular song and largely pass over music without lyrics or titles that explicitly connote specific urban locales (e.g. Forman 2002; Krims 2007). Ethnography provides one potential means of addressing this issue. I employ interview data, personal experience from participant-observation, and an analysis of the scene's general sonic profile in order to elaborate the ways in which the nonverbal sonic profile of the São Paulo scene acts as a means of mediating this dynamic.

In the remainder of this section, I discuss the ways in which practitioners represent and respond to four central impressions of the city: **chaos**, **noise**, **intensity and aggression**, and **introspection and alienation**. The strategies of the musicians addressed represent a fundamentally different type of response to the urban experience of São Paulo than lyric accounts of the city presented in poetry or popular song. As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Five, the lyrics-based format of popular song offers significant potential for articulative precision, but contains fewer possibilities for visceral emotional expression than the type of unfiltered, open-ended approach to performance that characterizes independent experimental creative practices. For the members of the contemporary scene, a city that leaves such complex and immediate impressions on its residents as São Paulo cannot be satisfactorily represented in words. Theirs is a messier, multidimensional musical imagining of the city that embraces its collisions and contradictions and embodies them in musical sound.

Perceptions of **chaos** define independent experimental musicians' experiences of São Paulo. Practitioners consistently drew attention to the city's destabilized, anarchic nature, and the impossibility of truly making sense of its innumerable forces and features. This impression arises in part as a result of the city's varied physical makeup—its byzantine, omnipresent system of transit, its motley collection of dwellings and architectural styles, and the diverse mosaic of individuals and backgrounds colliding on the street at any given hour of the day. It also emerges as a result of the distinct São Paulo soundscape, both in terms of the hectic sounds of public

space (conversation, transit, construction), as well as the multiplicity of national and international musical styles circulating throughout the city. I refer to these sources of sound and the acoustic impressions they generate as they move through space as *sonic vectors*. These qualities led multiple musicians to characterize São Paulo as "an absurdity" ("um absurdo"), existing beyond the realm of total comprehension.

Two creative techniques employed by members of the São Paulo scene provide ideal means of addressing the city's chaotic elements. First, musicians' open-ended approaches to improvisation allow performers to incorporate a singularly wide set of sounds and gestures and take performance in a variety of unexpected directions in a way that reflects their experience of the anarchic São Paulo soundscape. These unpredictable sonic excursions allow the members of the scene to represent the city's alternating sense of volatility and possibility in an effective manner. The scene's minimally structured improvisatory approaches also enable musicians to embody the myriad sonic vectors of the city and the experience of navigating these forces in the social dynamics of performance. Percussionist Márcio Gibson provides a characteristic example of this process. In conversation, Gibson emphasized the fundamentally chaotic nature of the city, which he referred to using the term "Caostrópolis" ("Chaosopolis"). He likened the process of navigating the city's diverse challenges to an improvisation in itself, arguing, "Here, you have to improvise the whole day long to succeed—to eat, to sleep, to live. If not, you're on the street, easy."[254] Gibson asserted that this experience exerted a major effect on his own creative practice, which follows an open approach to improvisation and shifts unpredictably in concert according to the various changing dynamics of the performance.[255] São Paulo is not pre-composed, and the

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[254] Interview with Márcio Gibson, April 18, 2016. "Você tem de improvisar o dia inteiro, aqui, pra conseguir—tipo, comer, dormir, morar... Senão, você tá na rua fácil, aqui."

[255] The connection between improvisation and the strategies Brazilian citizens devise as a means of confronting difficult situations in everyday life is a well-established Brazilian cultural trope. Jason Stanyek emphasizes the ways in which "global projections of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness) are tightly bound to notions of the improvisative," particularly the idea of the *jeitinho brasileiro* (2011:3, 6). He draws further attention to a panorama of

strategies of figures such as Gibson epitomize the ways in which members of the independent scene negotiate this quality.

Furthermore, independent experimental musicians' prominent incorporation of sampling and collage aesthetics simulates the pastiche of the São Paulo soundscape in a way that the horizontal logic of conventional stylistic idioms would not be able to achieve. These approaches are especially effective in representing the city due to musicians' frequent incorporation of field recordings and industrial tones and textures that evoke its myriad overlapping sounds. They recall the efforts of earlier generations of cultural producers living in São Paulo who also employed techniques and aesthetics reminiscent of collage in order to convey a chaotic, multifaceted impression of the city and its residents. Mário de Andrade's 1922 collection of poems inspired by the city, *Paulicéia desvairada* (*Untapped São Paulo*, released in English as *Hallucinated City*), provides an early major example. Inspired by the rapid pace of urban development in the early twentieth century and the nationalistic avant-garde ethos of *modernismo, Paulicéia desvairada* employs a sequence of loosely organized poetic snapshots of the city that eschews linear narrative. The work embraces the city's chaotic qualities from the start; the opening line of the main section, for instance, delivers the iconic declaration, "São Paulo! commotion of my life…" ("São Paulo! comoção de minha vida…"; see de Andrade [1922] 1987:83). De Andrade further embodies the abundance of subjectivities in the emerging urban agglomeration of São Paulo with a montage of everyday speech from an assortment of characters from diverse backgrounds.[256] This pastiche aesthetic is further reminiscent of the

"improvisation-rich practices that manifest brasilidade within the global ecumene: soccer, favela architecture and design, cinema, music and dance" (Stanyek 2011:3). See also Barbosa 1992:45; Stam and Shohat 2007:56.
[256] Foster 2005; Perrone 2002b:22. Charles Perrone draws attention to the diversity of languages and idioms de Andrade employs in the text, ranging from the vernacular Brazilian Portuguese of the era to snippets of French, English, and Italian spoken by immigrants. He notes that these serve to "configure linguistic and ethnic multiplicity in the city" (2002b:22). See also Perrone 2002a. Luiz Ruffato's 2001 novel *Eles eram muitos cavalos* (They Were Many Horses) follows a similar strategy: using a variety of disparate literary styles, it depicts the lives and difficulties of sixty-nine working-class residents of São Paulo in a series of brief vignettes from the perspectives of each temporary protagonist. Leonora Paula draws attention to the ways in which Ruffalo's use of unconventional

vignette structure employed by Itamar Assumpção in his album *Beleleu, Leleu, Eu*, which narrates the impressions of a resident of São Paulo as he navigates the day-to-day hardships of living in the city (see Chapter One).

Members of the São Paulo scene additionally respond to the ubiquitous experience of urban **noise**, which defines their emotional and acoustic impressions of the city. Musicians drew particular attention to the clamor and congestion of city transit, which provided an ever-present background soundtrack to their performances and everyday lives. Noise has long been considered one of the city's major problems. Empirical studies decry the detrimental effects of urban noise in São Paulo as a major public health issue (Barbosa and Cardoso 2005; Moura-de-Sousa and Cardoso 2002), while governmental organizations such as the city's Programa de Silêncio Urbano (PSIU, or Urban Silence Program) enforce noise ordinances designed to minimize sounds ranging from *funk carioca* parties to Pentacostal church services (Cardoso 2013, 2017). These actions resonate with the views of figures such as R. Murray Schafer, who saw noise as sonic pollution and advocated its management and removal (Schafer 1977:3).

Independent experimental musicians do not shy away from these more grating qualities of the São Paulo soundscape, and often intentionally incorporate elements of noise such as distortion and feedback into performance. For these individuals, noise acts as a means of reflecting the urban soundscape, negotiating the emotional tension they feel as a result of having to listen it on a regular basis, and casting a critical light on its role in everyday life. The work of musician Renato Gimenez, who originated the performance project Noise City, provides a characteristic example of this strategy. Noise City employs aggressive sonic elements such as distortion, feedback, vocal screams, and loops on electric guitar, keyboard, electronics, and

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narrative constructs a pastiche of disparate experiences of marginality in São Paulo and brings a fresh, renewed focus on the "multidimensionality" of the contemporary global city by "engag[ing] the reader, imaginatively and actively, in the construction of a narrative that destabilizes rather than stabilizes discourses and forces of globalization" (2014:100-101)

found objects as a means of enacting urban interventions in crowded public spaces. While Gimenez often performs in conventional venues such as cultural centers in collaboration with other artists (Fig. 5.7), the project's most visceral form takes place on the street. It originated over the course of 2009 to 2010, when he and director MaicknucleaR released a short film, "São Paulo Noise City," of him performing in locations across the city such as bus stops and plazas.[257]

The film presents a bewildering spectacle. Gimenez's performances contain no pretense of melody or harmony, and exemplify the harshest side of the scene's often difficult acoustic profile. He adopts an unapologetic and confrontational stance, swaying to the pulse of distortion as passers-by stare in shock, disgust, and occasional amusement (Fig. 5.8). While many spectators seem put off, however, Gimenez welcomes the collaboration of those adventurous enough to participate, and some do. At one point, for instance, a child joins in the performance by hitting Gimenez's electric guitar with a drum stick. Some of the performances generate subversive audiovisual juxtapositions by taking place in front of cherished symbols of the city such as the São Paulo Cathedral (Fig. 5.9). This oppositional approach carries a certain amount of inherent risk. On two occasions, the film is interrupted due to the arrival of police officers, who shut the performance down under the guise of the city's noise ordinance (Fig. 5.10).

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[257] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtyDagA9Kz4.

Figure 5.7: Renato Gimenez (voice, mixers, and keyboard) performs with Rafael Frattini (chainsaw, hammer, chisel, and wood block) at Casa de Cultura Chico Science. Photo taken by Roberto Junior, September 25, 2016.

Figure 5.8: Renato Gimenez uses a bicycle wheel to generate distortion on his electric guitar at the Santana bus station. Screenshot from film "São Paulo Noise City," directed by Renato Gimenez and MaicknucleaR.

Figure 5.9: Renato Gimenez plays a heavily distorted electric guitar in front of the São Paulo Cathedral in the Praça da Sé. Screenshot from film "São Paulo Noise City," directed by Renato Gimenez and MaicknucleaR.

Figure 5.10: Three police officers force Renato Gimenez to stop playing at the Portuguesa-Tietê subway stop. Screenshot from film "São Paulo Noise City," directed by Renato Gimenez and MaicknucleaR.

Gimenez characterized the project as a way of drawing attention to the distinct sonic and spatial profile of São Paulo—"this confusion that we have, the chaos, the pollution, and all these things that characterize a metropolis."[258] Central to the effect of the work, in his mind, was the way in which its sonic profile blended in with the sounds of the city and obliged listeners to

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[258] Interview with Renato Gimenez, June 28, 2017. "…essa confusão que a gente tem, o caos, a poluição, e todas essas coisas que caracterizam uma metropole."

question whether what they were hearing was from him or from everyday noise such as transit. Gimenez acknowledged the hostile aspects of playing harsh noise in a crowded public space, but asserted that the performance's public qualities acted as a crucial means of forcing viewers to question everyday elements of the urban soundscape that they would otherwise take for granted. Why, he asked, was a public performance of noise strange, "but all that noise around you is normal?"[259]

Gimenez situated his incorporation of noise as part of a broader process of confronting the uglier aspects of urban Brazilian society in a way that softer sounds could not achieve. As he asserted, "We've got this corrupt process and all these things that move politics, that move our artistic expressions as well. We participate in all these political processes, whether we want to or not. As much as music sometimes seeks transcendence, things like that, it has this background. You'll always have that iron ball tied up in your carnal sphere, living in the city, receiving all these energies, these exchanges of energies."[260] As I will discuss in the second half of this chapter, projects such as Noise City represent an emerging type of performance in which musicians use public presentations as a means of developing direct material engagements with the city.

Independent experimental musicians' engagement with urban noise intersects with a broader reaction against the city's **aggressive, intense nature**. While these responses arise in part from reactions to the confrontational acoustic qualities of the urban soundscape, they also occur as a result of the more general emotional experience of feeling confronted or overwhelmed

[259] Interview with Renato Gimenez, June 28, 2017. "…mas todo aquele ruído que está ao redor é normal?" Given the institutional policing of noise in São Paulo—Gimenez himself recounted multiple instances in which police asked him for a permit—projects such as Noise City are not without risk.

[260] Interview with Renato Gimenez, June 28, 2017. "A gente ter esse processo de corrupção e todas essas coisas que movem a política, movem as nossas expressões artísticas também. A gente participa de todos esses processos políticos, querendo ou não. Por mais que vezes a música busca a transcendência, coisas assim, ela tem esse *background*. Você sempre vai ter aquela bola de ferro amarrada na sua esfera carnal, vivendo na cidade, recebendo todas essas energias, essas trocas de energias." Gimenez said the word "background" in English.

by navigating the city on a day-to-day basis. For instrumentalist Guilherme Henrique,
performance provides a crucial means of negotiating these feelings. Born and raised in São
Paulo, Henrique expressed deep ambivalence about its effect on his everyday life and general
well-being. "I have a love-hate relationship with this city," he confessed. "Much more hate than
love."[261] While he acknowledged the singular opportunities for collaboration and cultural
production the city offered, he emphasized the ever-present experience of violence and
aggression. São Paulo, he argued, is "an enormous paradox. I find it disgusting, I find it ugly, I
find it aggressive, and I think it affects me very badly sometimes, aesthetically, in my music. For
my part, I feel like defacing the city, destroying it, setting it on fire, tearing up the cars and
playing [*tocar*] the terror here."[262] These impressions epitomize a common understanding of the
city in which the experience of urban confrontation is inseparable from onstage musical
expression.

Henrique employs performance as a means of creating a space for both responding to and
escaping from these issues. Although his music does not explicitly mention São Paulo, the city is
front and center in his work from its very conception. Much of his music embraces grating
sounds and transgressive standards of self-presentation in order to directly represent his
experiences of urban intensity and aggression in an uninhibited and emotionally honest manner.
Henrique's solo act, Paralyzed Blind Boy, exemplifies this approach by assaulting the listener
with drone and harsh noise and featuring marketing materials that incorporate shocking imagery
and provocative song titles.[263] Henrique identified the music's more aggressive sounds as a

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[261] Interview with Guilherme Henrique, June 20, 2016. "Eu tenho uma relação de amor e ódio com essa cidade. Muito mais ódio do que amor."

[262] Interview with Guilherme Henrique, June 20, 2016. "…é um enorme paradoxo, assim. Eu acho ela nojenta, eu acho ela feia, eu acho ela agressiva e eu acho que ela me afeta de uma maneira, às vezes até muito ruim, assim, na questão estética da música. Por mim eu tenho vontade de pichar essa cidade, destruir, pôr fogo e revirar carro e tocar o terror aqui."

[263] Examples of provocative language and imagery Henrique has incorporated in his song titles include "Aesthetic of Alcoholism" (*Estética do alcoolismo*), "Methanol Cocktail" (in English), and "All the Waters are the Color of Drowning" (*Todas as águas são cor do afogamento*).

characteristic reflection of the feeling of "hate" he felt having to confront the city on a daily basis.[264]

Henrique's responses to the urban experience of São Paulo were not uniformly hostile. He also acknowledged using more reserved acoustic elements in concert as a means of providing a sense of respite from the ever-present feeling of confrontation he felt in the city. As he asserted, "With the more intimate things, it's an escape. In the end, I don't like it here, I hate São Paulo, I don't get along with the city."[265] His band Afro Hooligans, which mixes chaotic loops of whispers and industrial sounds within expansive electronic textures and drum-and-bass inspired beats, exemplifies this strategy and demonstrates the ways in which experimental sound can act as an "audiotopia" for escaping the ordeals of the city when actual physical escape is not possible.

Participants in the São Paulo scene complement their engagements with the city's intense and aggressive elements with subtler musical explorations that evoke its more somber qualities. These performances embody participants' feelings of **introspection and alienation**, and present an important counterpoint to the scene's more brazen and oppositional performance practices. Musicians employ four principal creative strategies in order to explore these experiences. First, practitioners' general avoidance of conventional harmonic progressions and steady rhythmic motifs generate a destabilized listening experience that leaves those who are not accustomed to paying attention to timbral and textural subtleties with little to hold onto at concerts. This creates a bewildering, ungrounded effect that mirrors feelings of urban estrangement and disorientation. It is reminiscent of the use of serialism by Vanguarda Paulista member Arrigo Barnabé, who

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[264] As Henrique declared, "In my aesthetic, with the more aggressive things I've produced, the hate is there. It's there." Interview with Guilherme Henrique, June 20, 2016. "Na minha estética, com as coisas mais agressivas que eu produzi, o ódio está lá. Está ali."
[265] Interview with Guilherme Henrique, June 20, 2016. "Com as coisas mais intimistas, é uma fuga. Enfim, eu não gosto daqui, eu detesto essa São Paulo, eu não me dou bem com a cidade.."

employed 12-tone compositional techniques in his own musical portrayals of São Paulo to similar effect.[266] Musicians heighten the emotional effect of the scene's largely atonal sonic profile by employing abstract musical structures that reject the logic of popular song in favor of static or disjointed temporal models. Participants additionally employ dull and colorless timbres from techniques such as distortion or feedback in order to generate a morose effect in the listener. These tones reflect musicians' often dark and gloomy impressions of São Paulo, as well as the iconic physical characteristics—concrete, clouds, drizzle—of the cityscape itself. Finally, practitioners who employ audiovisual techniques employ visual aesthetics such as dark, muted colors and fractured shapes and images that further reinforce these impressions of the city.

Fernando Falci's audiovisual project "Contrapontos" ("Counterpoints") provides a characteristic example of the ways in which independent experimental musicians combine these techniques in order to negotiate feelings of urban alienation. Created over the course of 2014 to 2015 using granular synthesis techniques of Falci's own design, "Contrapontos" features an abstract, procedurally-generated sequence of electronic tones, field recordings of the city, and visual symbols that become increasingly dark and agitated over the course of its fourteen-minute running time.[267] The piece begins with a blank white screen that becomes slowly peppered with simple colored abstract shapes and a series of soft halting electronic noises and percussive pulses (Fig. 5.11). As the video continues, the procedural generation of sound and images accelerates rapidly—the screen becomes saturated with hundreds of lines and shapes that darken its

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[266] Arrigo Barnabé's album "Acapulco Drive-In," on his album *Clara Crocodilo*, provides a characteristic example of the use of serialism as a means of evoking São Paulo. By avoiding the use of tonality, the song avoids conventional musical markers of stability such as a tonic, pitch sets that conform to a major or minor mode, or functional harmonies. Because the listener has no harmonic or melodic center to hold onto, this generates an effect of alienation and unease. Barnabé amplifies these feelings of discomfort through the vocalists' deliveries, which do not conform to any unified aesthetic and often employ sarcastic, aggressive, and vulgar intonations.
[267] Derived from the 1947 work of Hungarian physicist Dennis Gabor, granular synthesis substitutes the conventional wave form of audio signals with minute, overlapping "grains" of sound lasting 50 milliseconds or less, each of which possesses unique, separate qualities (Holmes 2016:354). The principles of granular synthesis were most famously incorporated by Iannis Xenakis, who proposed a model for using computer programs to compose using grains of sound (Roads 1988:11).

previously crisp canvas, while its gentle acoustic texture transforms into waves of feedback composed of compressed audio recordings of city transit. Over the course of the second half of the performance, manipulated images of the grey São Paulo cityscape rapidly punctuate the screen and the distortion transforms into waves of ambient white noise (Fig. 5.12). The mood of the piece is subdued—in performance, it is one of the softer works presented at the scene's circuits—yet at the same time profoundly tense.

Figure 5.11: Fernando Falci's "Contrapontos." Ibrasotope, September 25, 2015.

Figure 5.12: Fernando Falci's "Contrapontos." Ibrasotope, September 25, 2015.

Falci intended these impressions to mirror his own perceptions of the city of São Paulo, and developed the project as a reaction to his experience moving from Bristol, UK to São Paulo

in 2014 and the emotions of shock and disquiet he felt upon his return.[268] Falci emphasized the

duality inherent in the audiovisual, electroacoustic composition of the piece—between image and

sound, between synthetic tones and acoustic field recordings—and asserted that these mirrored

the contradictions at the heart of urban experience in São Paulo: its contrasting spatial qualities,

its vast gulf between disparate socioeconomic classes, the everyday reality of "those who ride the

bus and are always exposed to that sonic pollution, who don't have a helicopter to go home."[269]

Falci's work reflects an understanding of the city that emphasizes its complexity and

multidimensionality as a central reality and seeks to manifest those qualities in the contours of

creative practice.

Material Engagements with the Urban Soundscape

In addition to addressing urban experience in onstage performance, independent

experimental musicians musically engage with São Paulo through direct encounters in the urban

environment itself. I employ the term *material engagement* as a means of characterizing these

embodied encounters with city space and sound. My argument draws in part from Lambrous

Malafouris (2013; 2015), who coined the term as a means of emphasizing the embodied,

spatially situated nature of human cognition and the ways in which individual experience is not

isolated in the brain, but instead inextricably tied to engagements with the material world. Just as

Malafouris argues for an understanding of a "cognitive landscape in which brains, bodies, and

things play equal roles in the drama of human cognitive becoming" (2013:2), I seek to

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[268] As Falci put it, the inspiration for the piece came as a response to "that moment of return, of living in a quieter place abroad and I returned to the big city—what shocks me, what surprises me, what I have here that I'll have to adapt to now." Interview with Fernando Falci, April 12, 2016. "…esse momento de retorno, de estar morando num lugar mais tranquilo no exterior e voltei pra grande cidad—o que é que me choca, que me estranha aqui, o que que eu tenho aqui que agora vou ter que me adaptar."

[269] Interview with Fernando Falci, April 12, 2016. "…quem pega ônibus e tá todo dia exposto àquela poluição sonora mesmo de não ter um helicóptero pra ir pra casa."

investigate the ways in which public musical expression can function as a means of moving beyond the stage and fostering direct engagements with urban experience, space, and sound. For many members of the São Paulo scene, music acts as a critical means of developing an active, dialogic relationship with the city by both drawing from and feeding back into the urban soundscape. These individuals approach São Paulo as a living, malleable entity, to be engaged with on embodied and intimate terms. In so doing, musicians assume a level of agency vis-à-vis the structuring power of the city that mere representation does not afford. They also foster new personal relationships across disparate social boundaries, in collaborative and sometimes confrontational ways.

These material engagements with São Paulo resonate with the commentary of Michel de Certeau, who discusses the ways in which walking can act as a means of fostering individual agency and resisting the structuring power of contemporary urban environments in his seminal essay "Walking in the City" (1984:91-110). De Certeau likens the ambulatory act to speech, and argues that it functions as a transgressive, unconscious tactic of resistance that allows individuals to appropriate the physical contours of the city and negotiate relations between various subject positions in urban space (1984:98). This understanding of walking provides an ideal theoretical model for understanding the creative practices of independent experimental musicians, who employ techniques such as field recording and public performance as a means of appropriating urban space and sound and creating self-directed relationships across otherwise disparate social and physical boundaries. In so doing, they create alternative spaces within urban neighborhoods while also commenting on the urban aspects of those neighborhoods and the city as a whole. As I will discuss, however, in contrast to the protagonists of de Certeau's framework, independent experimental musicians' actions are fundamentally grounded in conscious thought and active aesthetic choice. These individuals are not passive participants, seeking to reflect an ongoing

urban drama—they are active, knowledgeable actors who intervene in the city soundscape and reinvent it on their own terms.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss two case studies as a means of investigating this phenomenon. First, I examine the work of sound artist Renata Roman, who uses field recording as a primary creative technique and means of engaging with the city. Roman samples sound from a variety of urban locales, and is the founder of the collaborative online project *São Paulo SoundMap*, which solicits field recordings of the city's different neighborhoods from individuals across São Paulo. I then address the annual post-Carnival performance of the Bloco Ruído, in which participants construct their own instruments and parade through the city center on Ash Wednesday. The case studies exemplify the ways in which direct, in-person engagements with the city of São Paulo enable new avenues of creativity that would not be possible on the experimental stage. They ultimately demonstrate a crucial means by which independent experimental musicians appropriate the distinct challenges and contours of São Paulo and reconfigure urban space and sound according to their own subjective experiences of the city.

Sampling the City

Renata Roman's primary muse and medium is the city. Born and raised in São Paulo, she performs regularly in the independent experimental scene as a solo artist and in collaboration with fellow musicians. In concert, she employs field recording, along with electronic mixing technology, to investigate a variety of unconventional areas in timbre and texture within a live improvisational context. Her performances present an abstract, understated sonic profile that avoids harsher acoustic qualities in favor of a series of subtle shifts in tone and texture. At times, the sounds of the city are instantly identifiable and it is possible to pick out distinct markers of the city soundscape: bells, birds, traffic, laughter. At other times, Roman manipulates her

recordings beyond recognition, into a series of abstract electronic tones and echoes of urban noise. Her engagement with the city is not loud and confrontational, but pensive—designed to provoke new ways of conceptualizing and engaging with urban sound and space.

Roman's adoption of field recording arose by accident as a result of an unexpected shift in the way she perceived the disparate sonic vectors of the city. Originally from a background in theater and radio production, she traced her engagement with urban sound to a moment in London waiting for a friend to exit work, when she began to notice the sounds of tourists passing by—the sounds of their steps, their conversations, the many languages they spoke. Roman characterized the experience as an "epiphany" that left her with a lasting desire to engage with the acoustic dimensions of everyday life long ignored by artistic hierarchies centered on the visual.[270] This shift in consciousness arose hand-in-glove with a more fundamental change in sensory orientation toward sound itself, which she characterized using familiar terms. As she recalled, "It was an opening of perception—a qualitative change there in my auditory perception, that has remained the same since. And then, as I'm used to saying, 'It wasn't me who chose sound, it was sound who chose me.' I don't have a choice anymore—it stole me, you know? It said, 'Mine, you're mine, you're going to work for me.' Like a pact, you know?"[271] For Roman, this intimate engagement with sound acts as part of a broader mission toward de-hierarchizing sensory perception and attuning others to the ignored dimensions of human experience that make up everyday life. Orienting oneself to sound, she argued, allows one to escape the "addiction of the image" and fosters a more egalitarian orientation toward the world in general.[272] As she asserted, "Of course, I have my preferences—there are sounds that I like to listen to more than

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[270] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "Epifania."

[271] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "Foi uma abertura de percepção, né—uma mudança qualitativa ali na minha percepção auditiva, que não mudou mais. E aí, eu costumo falar, 'não fui eu que escolhi o som, foi o som que me escolheu.' Eu não tenho mais alternativa, ele me roubou, sabe? Ele falou, 'meu, você é minha, cê vai trabalhar para mim.' Como um pacto, né?"

[272] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "…o vício da imagem."

others, but they have lost this category of valuation. Sound, in itself, is interesting. Every sound in itself is very interesting."[273] For an individual who seeks to engage with these elements of sensory experience, field recording provides an ideal means of capturing the sounds of a given environment and drawing listeners' attention to them in concert.

Roman's incorporation of field recording stands out in the scene for her prominent and consistent use of the technique, which she adapts into every one of her performances. In so doing, she joins a rich tradition of musicians, ethnographers, and urban geographers who have employed field recording to various ends over the course of the past century. Field recording as a creative technique has roots in early-twentieth century ethnographic field recording practices pioneered by ethnomusicologists, as well as the conceptual strategies of figures such as Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo, who offered a philosophical justification for including nontraditional sonic elements such as environmental sounds in musical composition (Cross 1968:62; Russolo [1913] 1986). By the mid-twentieth century, the pioneering figures of *musique concrète* and electroacoustic music began to employ field recordings as a means of incorporating the sounds of the environment into composition.[274] Beginning in the 1970s, R. Murray Schafer, in tandem with the emerging World Soundscape Project, advocated using field recording as a key means of highlighting the acoustic qualities of the environment (Schafer 1977:7-8). Today, sound artists and electroacoustic composers regularly incorporate field recordings into their works, as a strictly aesthetic practice (Demers 2010), a means of negotiating personal experiences with the physical world (Chattopadhyay 2014:49; Lane and Carlyle 2013), and as a way of constructing a sense of localized individual narrative (Anderson and Rennie 2016:222; Seaward 2015:299).

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[273] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "Claro que eu tenho as minhas preferências—tem sons que eu gosto mais de escutar do que outros, mas eles perderam essa categoria de valoração. O som em si é interessante. Qualquer som em si é muito interessante."

[274] Many of these figures did so as a means of engaging with urban noise; Pierre Schaeffer's 1948 work "Étude aux Chemins de Fer" (Study in Locomotives), for instance, incorporates recordings of trains at Paris's Gare des Batignolles station.

Scholars draw particular attention to the way that field recordings can facilitate heightened engagements with understandings and experiences of place (Lacey 2016:147; Stevenson and Holloway 2017) and attune listeners to the unnoticed acoustic elements of everyday life (Freeman, et. al. 2011; Prior 2017; Uimonen 2011:256). In cities, they form part of a wider constellation of practices such as sound walks that facilitate interactive, embodied engagements with urban space.[275] Roman's work intersects with these approaches but also reconfigures the practice of field recording in distinct ways that are attuned to the specific spatial and acoustic qualities of São Paulo, local political questions, and personal aesthetic considerations.

Roman employs a multistep process in order to incorporate field recording into performance. She begins by entering the city with a digital recorder. At this point, Roman does not concern herself with the eventual onstage result of her venture into the field. Instead, she immerses herself in the acoustic elements of public city space and records the various sonic vectors that strike her interest at a given moment. This facilitates an immersive, extended state of flow that can last for hours at a time. Roman takes her recorder with her wherever she travels, and often employs the technique as a means of mediating the experience of visiting a new place. After a 2016 artist's residency in Havana, Cuba, for instance, she incorporated field recordings into an album, *Oyé,* that reflected her experience living and working in the city. Upon finishing a field recording session, she condenses the raw sonic material into a more concise version (about 10% of the original, in her estimate), in a process she likened to mining for "treasures."[276] As she mused, "It's as if I were pounding on a rock or walking on the pebbles of the river for an hour to find that little nugget of gold, which are those recordings that I find to be unique. I like unique recordings. Of course, it's not always possible, right? A market won't have many unique

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[275] For an extended discussion of sound walks and sound maps, see Butler 2006; Freeman, et. al. 2011:272; Jeon, Hong, and Lee 2013; Paquette and McCartney 2012; Polli 2012; Stevenson and Holloway 2017.
[276] Skype interview with Renata Roman, August 7, 2017. "…preciosidades."

qualities. But if in that market I have, in my recording, a bit of speech that's really special, a composition that seems as if I did it, then that's the clip that I'll take."[277] While Roman generally strives to maintain a certain core set of sounds she feels is representative of the field site, she emphasized the importance of aesthetic choice in this process, noting that she rarely chose sounds that did not have some sort of intrinsically striking acoustic quality. She then adds this edited material to her bank of sounds, which includes hundreds of hours of field recordings.

When Roman prepares for a concert, she immerses herself in her acoustic library. In some of her performances, she seeks to convey her experience of a certain place by selecting sounds from a specific recording session; at other times, she does not discriminate according to location and instead makes choices guided by more instinctive aesthetic choices. Before each concert, she equips herself with a limited set of field recordings to play on her computer, in much the same way as a DJ might pre-load samples into a sampler or step sequencer. Her choice of recordings varies depending on her onstage collaborators, with whom she seeks to create a dialogue. Many of her performances are entirely composed of recordings, while others involve elements of audio manipulation via mixing programs. Throughout this process, Roman foregrounds direct engagement with sound itself. "My instrument," she asserted, "is sound. It's not even… People say, 'You play computer,' but no, if you think about it, the computer is just the resource I use to play my instrument. Because every sound landscape, it has its sonority, its timbre, its specificity, just as musical instruments have their own specific qualities."[278] The endless variety of sounds provided by the city soundscape ensures that every one of Roman's

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[277] Skype interview with Renata Roman, August 7, 2017. "É como se eu estivesse batendo na pedra ou andando nas pedrinhas do rio para uma hora encontrar essa pepita de ouro, que são essas gravações que eu acho que são singulares. Eu gosto de gravações singulares. Claro que nem sempre é possível, né? Uma feira não vai ter muita singularidade. Todas as feiras livres são muito parecidas. Mas se dentro dessa feira eu tiver, na minha gravação, uma fala que é muito especial, uma composição que parece que fui eu que fiz, aí esse recorte que eu vou fazer."
[278] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "O meu instrumento é o som. Não é nem… As pessoas falam, 'cê toca computador,' mas, não, se for pensar, o computador é só o recurso que eu utilizo pra tocar os meus instrumentos. Porque cada paisagem sonora, ela tem a sua sonoridade, o seu timbre, a sua especificidade, assim como os instrumentos musicais têm as suas especificidades."

performances, regardless of whether she incorporates editing or mixing, presents an entirely distinct acoustic profile that both mirrors her evolving relationship with the city and adds an important element of surprise and renewal to each concert. In this context, field recording not only facilitates embodied engagements with the city, but also enables practitioners such as Roman to expand creative horizons by appropriating urban space and sound as instruments in their own right.

The city of São Paulo looms large as the central player in the ensuing drama. Although the totality of Roman's work encompasses sounds from a variety of locales, her most expansive sonic engagement remains with the city where she resides and was born and raised. Her 2015 radio piece "Sampa" provides a characteristic example of the ways in which she uses field recording as a means of sampling the city and incorporating it—via careful selection, editing, and manipulation—into a framed, mediated commentary of urban experience in São Paulo (see Fig. 5.13).[279] She developed the work as a response to xenophobia and racism against recent immigrants and the often violent processes of displacement caused by gentrification in historically working class neighborhoods of the city.[280]

As a means of addressing these issues, throughout the work Roman incorporates collaborative recordings of what she referred to as the "sounds of the voiceless"—specifically, conversation and performances by marginalized individuals such as the homeless and recent immigrants to Brazil from Ecuador and Haiti whose experiences residing in the city are markedly harsher than those who immigrated from wealthier countries such as Japan or the United States.[281] In conversation, she characterized the conversations she chose to sample as the voices

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[279] A recording of Roman's "Sampa" can be found at https://soundcloud.com/atelie-sonoro.
[280] In São Paulo, collective occupations of abandoned or unused city buildings by poorer residents of the city are common, particularly in the city's working-class downtown neighborhoods such as Centro and República. Many residents living in such occupations face often violent forced eviction by property owners or city officials.
[281] Skype interview with Renata Roman, August 7, 2017. "…sons de quem não tem voz." Roman emphasized that those whose voices she sampled consented to being recorded and encouraged the project.

of "those who are in some way, good or bad, resisting this jungle that is São Paulo."[282] She also

integrated a recording of São Paulo songwriter Adoniran Barbosa's classic samba, "Saudosa

Maloca," which narrates the experience of an indigenous man's home being destroyed by

wealthy landowners, with a field recording of free improviser Rômulo Alexis playing his trumpet

as form of musical protest in front of a mass eviction site in downtown São Paulo.

     The work begins with an unmanipulated soundscape: the sounds of Matia Pascoale, a

recently homeless woman whom Roman had come to know, speaking of her experience seeing

sun "in every place" of the city, underlaid by the steady sounds of traffic and periodic screeches

from nearby birds. Roman abruptly shifts the scene to the magnified sounds of the characteristic

city drizzle, which she punctuates with sweeping electronic sighs and distorted distant dialogues.

Over the course of the piece, the sounds of city transit and conversation weave in and out of the

dense sonic texture, which alternates between minimally edited snapshots of city sound and

heavily manipulated textures in which the sounds of city life resonate as faraway echoes. There

are musical interludes as well: Barbosa's "Saudosa Maloca" saturated with feedback, church

bells, a horn cut and spliced into a loop set to the distant echoes of a locomotive as rhythmic

backing. In a reminder of the city's enduring status as a destination for migration, Roman bisects

the piece with a poignant sequence featuring an Ecuadorean immigrant to São Paulo narrating his

experience trying to preserve his musical culture, which is then followed by a loop of the man

singing one of his songs and an extended unedited recording of his group in live performance.

She also includes recordings of conversations between recent Haitian immigrants to the city

speaking in Haitian creole. The work ends with a distorted collage of the various types of city

sounds she has incorporated over the course of the piece—sharp electronic groans, brief snippets

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[282] Skype interview with Renata Roman, August 7, 2017. "dos que estão de alguma maneira, bem ou mal, resistindo nessa selva que é São Paulo."

of conversation, a baby's laughter, heavily manipulated horn and vocal melodies, and a murmur of feedback.

Figure (0:00–15:00):

Electronics	Electronic groans				Sharply dissonant edit of Adoniran Barbosa's samba "Saudosa Maloca"	
Other	Rain					
Music				Looped and manipulated old samba record	Spliced and looped horn → church bells	
Transit	Cars		Train on tracks		Extremely faint train on tracks fading in and out	
Conversation		Spliced and manipulated conversations	Unmanipulated conversations spliced together			Multiple unmanipulated conversations in Haitian creole spliced together
Individual speech	Pascoale speaking					

0:00   3:00   6:00   9:00   12:00   15:00

Figure (12:00–30:00):

Faint electronic groan→ murmurs and slides

Sharp electronic groans → whisper of feedback

Skateboarding

Church bells

Looped and spliced recording of the Ecuadorean immigrant singing → group performance of indigenous music

Spliced & looped electronic Irish-style pipes

Heavily distorted looped horn and vocal melodies

Cars in the distance

Cars in the distance

Multiple unmanipulated conversations in Haitian creole spliced together

Brief snippets of separate conversations fading in and out, becoming increasingly manipulated over time to the point of nonsense

Ecuadorean immigrant

Laughter and speech of a baby fading in and out

12:00   15:00   18:00   21:00   24:00   27:00   30:00

Figure 5.13: Sonic diagram of Renata Roman's "Sampa," sorted by the type of sound she incorporates in each section of the work.

Roman's work inevitably begs for a comparison with one of the most iconic musical testimonies to city life in São Paulo in the Brazilian popular music canon—Caetano Veloso's 1978 ballad "Sampa." On the surface, the two share much in common. Both works draw their titles from the eponymous moniker for the city ("Sampa" is a shortened version of "São Paulo"), both address the specific qualities of urban experience in São Paulo, and both convey an ambivalent attitude toward the city's complex qualities. Veloso uses a melancholic major-to-minor mode in the song's sighing vocal lines to evoke a subdued mood, which he reinforces with a slow, lilting samba rhythm reminiscent of the soft, steady patter of the characteristic city drizzle. The lyrics present a conflicted, disenchanted impression of the city rife with ambivalence and disillusionment, but also acceptance and appreciation.

You were a difficult start	*E foste um difícil conheço*
I push away what I don't know	*Afasto o que não conheço*
And he who comes from another happy city dream	*E quem vem de outro sonho feliz da cidade*
Quickly learns to call you reality	*Aprende depressa a chamar-te de realidade*
For you are the inside-out of the inside-out of the inside-out of the inside-out	*Porque és o avesso do avesso do avesso do avesso*
From the oppressed people in the queues, in the villages, the favelas	*Do povo oprimido nas filas, nas vilas, favelas*
From the strength of the money that lifts and destroys beautiful things	*Da força da grana que ergue e destrói coisas belas*
From the ugly smoke that rises, erasing the stars	*Da feia fumaça que sobe, apagando as estrelas*
I see your poets emerging from fields, spaces	*Eu vejo surgir teus poetas de campos, espaços*
Your forest workshops, your gods of the rain	*Tuas oficinas de florestas, teus deuses da chuva*

Veloso's phrase "o avesso do avesso do avesso do avesso*,*" ("the inside-out of the inside-out of the inside-out of the inside-out") has become a classic encapsulation of the city's paradoxical qualities; Charles Perrone notes that it evokes "unpredictability and the reversibility of identities" in the city (2002a:70). Veloso's testimony resonates with the conflicting feelings of

contemporary practitioners such as Roman, who laments the city's concrete profile and stark

inequality but also acknowledges its energy and cultural effervescence.

Despite their similarities, however, the creative strategies employed by Roman and

Veloso and the resulting ways in which they project urban experience in the city could not be

more different. Roman's work avoids the consonant aesthetic profile and horizontal logic of

popular song in favor of a collage of urban noise, conversations, and snapshots of live musical

performance. This pastiche aesthetic is ideal for reflecting the multiplicity of sounds and

subjectivities in the city soundscape, and resonates with the vignette structure of literary works

set in São Paulo such as Mário de Andrade's *Paulicéia desvairada.* Roman's incorporation of

field recording in "Sampa" also empowers listeners to directly engage with the living sounds of

the city in a more intimate and direct way than would be possible in a classic *canção* such as

Veloso's. She accomplishes this by foregrounding the subjectivities of those excluded from

Brazilian society and left out of the narratives of the cultural industry—individuals whose

experiences form part of the fabric of contemporary urban Brazil but whose stories would never

be featured on radio or television. At the same time, her judicious use of editing and electronic

manipulation allows her to present these acoustic snapshots in a way that moves beyond simple

representation and frames otherwise disparate urban sounds and experiences in a critical light.[283]

This allows her to assert the relevance of marginalized individuals' experiences in São Paulo and

prompt listeners to reconceptualize the way they view the city in turn.

In addition to employing field recording in performance, Roman also incorporates the

technique in collaborative works that facilitate broader engagements with the city beyond the

immediate realm of the stage. Her collaborative website SP Sound Map provides a characteristic

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[283] It is additionally significant that although Roman employs electronic manipulation in a variety of places in "Sampa," she doesn't manipulate the conversation with the Ecuadorean immigrants or Matia Pascoale; instead, she lets these individual speak for himself, minimally mediated by electronic techniques.

example. Created in collaboration with a web designer and hosted via the online creative platform Marvel App, SP Sound Map solicits field recordings of the city's different neighborhoods and maps each recording to the specific locale where it was made (see Fig. 5.14). The website presents itself as a means of facilitating "the discovery of the sonorities of our urban space," and challenges visitors to rethink the way they view the city.[284] Its website functions as an interactive social media platform where users can contribute their own acoustic experiences of the city of São Paulo and take part in an ongoing reconceptualization of urban space and sound. It is open to all—a potential contributor need only upload a field recording of a particular neighborhood to the streaming service SoundCloud, visit the SP Sound Map website, select the neighborhood, and include a link to their SoundCloud stream. Visitors to the site are free to explore the sonic profile of a variety of neighborhoods, ranging from central areas such as Ibirapuera park to outer regions such as the western neighborhood of Vila Sonia. The map features a similarly wide range of sounds. "Tuneis e movimentações da Lapa" (Tunnels and Movements in Lapa), for instance, incorporates the characteristic noises of city transit in the northwestern neighborhood of Lapa, while "Pássaros no parque" (Birds in the Park) creates a sense of respite by presenting the sounds of nature in Raposo Tavares Park. The overall effect is one of pastiche, and evokes the collage aesthetic of Roman's field recording performances, but on a larger scale. Rather than splicing different samples of the city within a single piece, SP Sound Map presents a collage of different urban experiences, organized side-by-side via acoustic cartography.

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[284] http://spsoundmap.com; https://ateliesonoro.blogspot.com/2012/06/sp-soundmap-e-um-mapa-sonoro-da-cidade.html. The site includes a series of questions to visitors designed to stimulate a reconceptualization of urban sound and space: "Have you ever thought about that? The nature of the sound of your street, your neighborhood, your place of work, the places you frequent? What delights you? What disenchants you?" "Você já pensou nisso? Como é o som de sua rua, de seu bairro, de seu local de trabalho, dos lugares que você frequenta? O que te encanta? O que te desencanta?" The website specifically frames itself as a means of facilitating "the discovery of the sonorities of our urban space" ("descoberta das sonoridades de nosso espaço urbano").

Figure 5.14: SP Soundmap's web application. Each marker on the map represents a field recording taken at that location. Screenshot taken by the author on July 10, 2017 from www.spsoundmap.com.

Roman embraces the diversity of sounds in the project, and frames it as a means of democratizing urban subjectivity, reconceptualizing urban space and sound, and re-orienting the hierarchy of senses that typically structure artistic production. She draws particular attention to the ways that field recording, in tandem with sound mapping, allows her to transcend conventional understandings—in her words, "clichés"—of São Paulo that have traditionally focused on its hub as the industrial and economic center of the country or, more recently, its image as a dynamic and cosmopolitan global city. As she asserted, "Normally, when you come to a sound map, you leave the cliché—that's the purpose of it."[285] Central to this process is an implicit challenge to conventional sensory hierarchy. By incorporating field recording in map form, SP Soundmap adds another dimension to the normally visually structured way of

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[285] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "Normalmente, aí, quando cê chega num mapa sonoro, cê foge do cliché—esse que é o propósito."

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conceptualizing a city and challenges users to think of urban space in deeper, more complex ways. It also allows participants to reclaim and shape the city on their own terms. Rather than consult corporate-produced, standardized maps by companies such as Google, interactive sound maps enable users to collectively shape notions of the city from the ground up.[286]

SP Soundmap forms part of a broader phenomenon of sound mapping that has taken place across the globe since the 1970s with the efforts of R. Murray Schafer, who advocated the development of notational strategies such as sound maps (in his words, "aerial sonography") as a means of re-orienting listening and composition toward a more complete consideration of the full spectrum of sounds in a given environment (Schafer 1977:131-33). With increasing access to internet technology in the 21st century, it became possible to produce interactive websites that mapped the various acoustic dimensions of cities via crowdsourced recordings. Today, sound maps exist of locations throughout the globe. The *Cities and Memory* project, for instance, features field recordings taken from over sixty countries, ranging from Los Angeles to Osaka to Dhaka.[287] Many of these projects enjoy considerable institutional support—the NY Soundmap, for instance, is run by the New York Society for Acoustic Ecology, while Seoul's Sound@Media mapping project enjoys funding from Seoul's Foundation for Arts and Culture.[288] These projects incorporate a grassroots approach to cultural production that avoids monetization or consumerist motivations in favor of a collective ethos oriented toward collaboration. They are guided by similar motivations to those of Roman, centered on challenging conventional understandings of

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[286] On the surface, Roman's effort resonates with the cartographic efforts of other underground scenes such as the noise scene in Japan, where fans have created maps of important locations such as record stores that enable other fans to navigate the otherwise obtuse underground network of circulation and cultural production in cities such as Tokyo. Novak's observation that a map "not only provides information to explorers, it helps them organize the social knowledge they already possess" resonates with projects such as SP Soundmap, which allows users to process and shape their understanding of the metropolis according to nontraditional criteria and factors (Novak 2013:67). At the same time, maps such as SP Soundmap differ crucially from those in the noise scene in their engagement with sound and push to move beyond conventional visual-spatial dimensions.

[287] See http://citiesandmemory.com/.

[288] See Waldock 2011:n.p.; http://som.saii.or.kr/about; http://www.soundseeker.org/.

urban space that prioritize the visual and drawing attention to less-commonly noticed elements of the urban soundscape (see Freeman, et. al. 2011:272; Stevenson and Holloway 2017; Waldock 2011). At the same time, despite their international scope, the egalitarian mission of global sound mapping efforts is undermined by a disproportionate focus on the cities of the developed world. The *Cities and Memory* project, for instance, is overwhelmingly concentrated in Europe and North America, and features a total of two recordings in all of Brazil (in Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre). This disparity largely arises due to unstable technical platforms, difficulties in securing financial support, and unequal access to the kind of technology necessary to participate in field recording in the first place. Roman's efforts afford the potential to reverse this directional flow of cultural production. In so doing, projects such as SP Sound Map assert the presence and relevance of cities such as São Paulo, make heard the myriad sounds and subjectivities of the world's peripheries, and create a fuller picture—or, more appropriately, soundtrack—of the contemporary world.

Field recording facilitates multiple means of negotiating urban experience that would not be possible to achieve in conventional performance venues. On a basic level, by forcing participants to enter the actual physical environment of the city and directly sample the sounds that arise, the technique enables embodied engagements with the urban soundscape that onstage performance does not allow. Field recording also affords a singular means of incorporating lived acoustic experience and drawing attention to the various disparate sonic elements of the city that are normally taken for granted, unnoticed, or maligned. This process ultimately enables participants such as Roman to move beyond conventional understandings of urban experience and re-orient listeners to marginalized subject positions. In a way, the technique anthropomorphizes the city by foregrounding its unseen acoustic dimensions—its living, breathing qualities that are lost in traditional visual representation. In the same manner that

walking in the city fosters spatial transgression (de Certeau 1984:99), field recording can act as a form of acoustic transgression that challenges the hegemony of the visual and provokes users and listeners alike to reinvent the way they conceptualize urban space and sound.

The consequences of drawing attention to these overlooked sounds and subjectivities are implicitly political. Roman characterized the potential for highlighting the presence of disenfranchised groups as one of the most significant qualities of the medium, and stated a desire to employ sounds that were "dialoguing with this moment" in performance.[289] She conceptualized her use of field recording as an inherently political act, asserting, "I can't do work that's too neutral."[290] This manifests throughout her body of work, as in, for instance, the extended testimony and performance of the Ecuadorean immigrant in "Sampa." In this context, the technique functions as an inclusive practice by foregrounding the (literal) voices of those living on the margins of contemporary urban Brazil.

Field recording also carries ramifications in the personal realm, where it enables more empowered individual relationships with the contemporary metropolis. By entering public city space, selecting sounds, and manipulating them in concert, individuals such as Roman are able to mediate urban experience on their own terms and take control of an element of the city—its ubiquitous soundscape—that many view as oppressive. These sounds represent lived experience, and their preservation and performance offers a crucial means of validating individual subjectivity in the face of overwhelming marginalization and anonymity. The democratic qualities of the medium, which does not require musical training (Roman, for instance, learned the technique entirely on her own) and is available to anyone with a basic smartphone, further reinforce its potential.[291] For Roman, field recording enables her to respond to the harsher

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[289] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "…dialogando com este momento."
[290] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "Eu não consigo fazer trabalhos que sejam muito neutros."
[291] Although many associate the possession of smartphones with privileged class positions, it is common across class boundaries in Brazil. As James Holston noted in 2013, "smartphone use is no longer a reliable indicator of class"

qualities of São Paulo, which she characterized as "stressful" and "a very hard city."[292] Field

recording, she asserted, "is a way of getting closer to the city. It's a way of appropriating it."[293]

Just as walking, in de Certeau's framework, enables urban residents to shape the city on their

own terms (1984:97-98), field recording empowers practitioners such as Roman to make the city

theirs in turn—to adapt, manipulate, and sound it back again according to their own subjective

urban experiences.

An Experimental Carnival

The festive cacophony of the Bloco Ruído provides an absurd contrast to the languid air

of Ash Wednesday. Founded in 2015 by musician and sound artist André Damião, the event is

one of a select few post-Carnival activities that seek to prolong the year's revelry. Most of these

events, however, feature conventional Carnival fare—various forms of samba, popular dance

music, rock. The Bloco Ruído presents an entirely different profile, united in festivity with their

post-Carnival peers but distinct in sound and mission. Instead of seeking to escape from the

struggles of everyday city life, its members embrace São Paulo's contradictory qualities and

stark urban profile. They do so not with the familiar rhythms of samba, but instead with the

unpredictable glitches of hardware-hacked instruments constructed with soldering irons and

found objects. These individuals foreground direct engagements with urban space and sound, and

use public performance as a means of intervening in the rituals, perceptions, and aesthetic

standards of contemporary urban Brazil.

(Holston 2013:n.p.). In 2016, for instance, 82% of Brazilian citizens aged 18-34 owned a smartphone (Poushter 2016:11).

[292] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "…estressante," "uma cidade muito dura." In our first interview, Roman became grave in tone and emphasized the words "muito dura" (very hard) as if to underline the seriousness of the characterization.

[293] Interview with Renata Roman, June 1, 2016. "…é um jeito de se aproximar da cidade. É um jeito de se apropriar."

The Bloco Ruído followed a circuitous route to realization from the halls of the academy to the city's independent creative communities. It began at the University of São Paulo's Escola de Artes e Comunicação (USP-ECA), where Damião was working on a master's project on mobile music. Mobile music practices involve the use of personalized listening technologies such as iPods or iPhones as a means of mediating the experience of moving through sounded environments (Beer 2010:469; see also Bull 2010:56). Scholars draw particular attention to the role these devices play in the cacophonous soundscape of cities, where mobile listening devices offer singular potential for individuals to push back against the ubiquity of urban noise and shape listening experiences on their own terms.[294] Damião characterized the Bloco Ruído as having emerged from a desire to push back against mobile music's consumerist focus on the use of mass-produced devices such as cell phones and re-situate the field within a more collaborative context.[295] Drawing from his experience constructing instruments from scratch using techniques such as hardware hacking, he resolved to adapt the self-directed, anti-consumerist practices of instrument construction within the collective milieu of Carnival.[296]

Damião accomplished this practical and conceptual transition by looking beyond the university circuit into the shared spaces of the city's DIY community. Over the course of the week before the parade, participants in the Bloco Ruído congregate at Garoa Hacker Clube, a

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[294] Atkinson 2007; Bull 2000:1-3; Bull 2007. David Beer pushes back against the assertions of scholars such as Bull, who assert that mobile listening technologies enable users to shape listening experiences on their own terms (Bull 2000:1-3). Beer acknowledges the potential for mobile music practices to "tune out" the urban soundscape, but asserts that total escape from city noise is impossible (2007:859).

[295] As Damião asserted, he wanted to "have more of an experience of sound in space and think more critically about the objects of musical creation." Skype interview with André Damião, July 15, 2016. "…ter mais de uma experiência do som no espaço e pensar mais criticamente sobre os objetos de criação musical."

[296] As he recalled, "My idea for the Bloco Ruído was to think as a *bloco*, as a Carnival *bloco*. But at first, specifically, there was the idea of thinking of the entire process as kind of an artistic work, thinking of an assembly, gathering people, everyone in the parade, all of this as a single thing. Only now my desire is that it stops being necessarily a work of art—that people keep doing it, thinking about it as a Carnival *bloco* and thinking of it less as a project of mine." Skype interview with André Damião, July 15, 2016. "A minha idéia do Bloco Ruído foi pensar como bloco mesmo, como bloco de carnaval, mas o primeiro especificamente, era a ideia de pensar todo o processo meio como um trabalho artístico, pensar um montagem, reunir as pessoas, todo mundo no desfile, tudo isso como uma coisa só. Só que meu desejo agora é que deixe de ser trabalho de arte necessariamente—que as pessoas continuando fazendo, pensar como bloco de carnaval e pensar menos como um projeto meu."

hackerspace located in the neighborhood of Pinheiros, in order to construct instruments from basic materials such as insulated hookup wires, secondhand speakers, capacitors, and batteries. Hackerspaces such as Garoa Hacker Clube exist throughout the globe; estimates of the current total of active spaces range from 700 to 1100 worldwide (Lindtner 2014:149). They function as collective spaces for individuals to collaborate on a variety of technological and artistic practices ranging from open source coding to welding to creative practices such as hardware hacking and circuit bending. Hackerspaces are grounded in the DIY ethos, and seek to facilitate collaborative learning that rejects the profit motive of conventional commercial circuits (Lindtner 2014:153; Rosner and Fox 2016:564). The Bloco Ruído's transformation from an authorial performance project created as a work of art to a collectively driven participatory event embodies a broader trend in the São Paulo scene in which practitioners adapt certain creative techniques and theories of performance circulating in the academy and mix them with popular practices within independent collaborative environments.

I had the opportunity to experience this process firsthand in February 2016, when I participated in the Bloco Ruído preparations and parade. I arrived at Garoa Hacker Clube on a Saturday afternoon during Carnival; upon entering, I discovered a seven-room complex with individual spaces dedicated to different activities ranging from musical production to 3D printing to cooking. The place had a buoyant air—participants delighted in testing out their makeshift musical constructions, and friendly conversations abounded throughout the building as people arrived from the city's various festivities. Over the course of the afternoon, we used a variety of materials to construct hardware hacked instruments from scratch (Figs. 5.15 and 5.16). In contrast to the leader-directed instrument constructed workshops held over the course of the year hosted by musicians such as Marcelo Muniz and Cadós Sanchez (discussed in Chapter Three), the environment at Garoa Hacker Clube was more strictly collaborative. Damião acted as an

informal go-to troubleshooter, posting basic diagrams on a whiteboard and addressing problems that came up, but individuals generally relied on each other for guidance.[297]

Participants constructed a wide variety of instruments over the course of the afternoon. Beginning hardware hackers such as myself employed insulated hookup wires and soldering irons to construct rudimentary circuits using basic materials such as batteries, transistors, capacitors, and speakers (Fig. 5.17). Advanced hackers employed circuit boards and found objects such as toys and ketchup bottles in order to construct more complex creations. These instruments generated an unpredictable variety of electronic glitches and feedback depending on the ways in which the various wires and parts touched. The process is often painstaking, especially to those unfamiliar with techniques such as soldering, yet can also be rewarding. Managing to make a basic circuit after hours of practice, and the volatile set of sounds that emerges, is an empowering experience for the lay practitioner. It is also enjoyable. The social environment at Garoa Hacker Clube contains a strong sense of community, and those with expertise are happy to help newcomers out.

For the Bloco Ruído, DIY accomplishes more than simply providing a space—it allows participants to re-conceptualize performance from an individualistic, authorial creation to a collaborative effort grounded in the collective. Both Garoa Hacker Clube and the events it hosts embody the DIY ethos's drive toward facilitating independent cultural production and developing alternative communities outside conventional commercial circuits. Furthermore, for those who incorporate found objects into their instrumental creations, it also enables direct engagements with the urban environment by allowing participants to appropriate the detritus of the city and sound back into the urban space from which their materials came.

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[297] For a detailed account of these techniques, see Collins 2006.

Figure 5.15. Participants in the Bloco Ruído use hardware hacking techniques to construct instruments from basic materials. André Damião stands at right; the author is seated at far left. The whiteboard at the top right features a diagram for a basic circuit. Photo taken by Rita Wu at Garoa Hacker Clube, February 6, 2016.

Figure 5.16: André Damião converses with a participant during preparations for the Bloco Ruído. Garoa Hacker Clube, February 6, 2016.
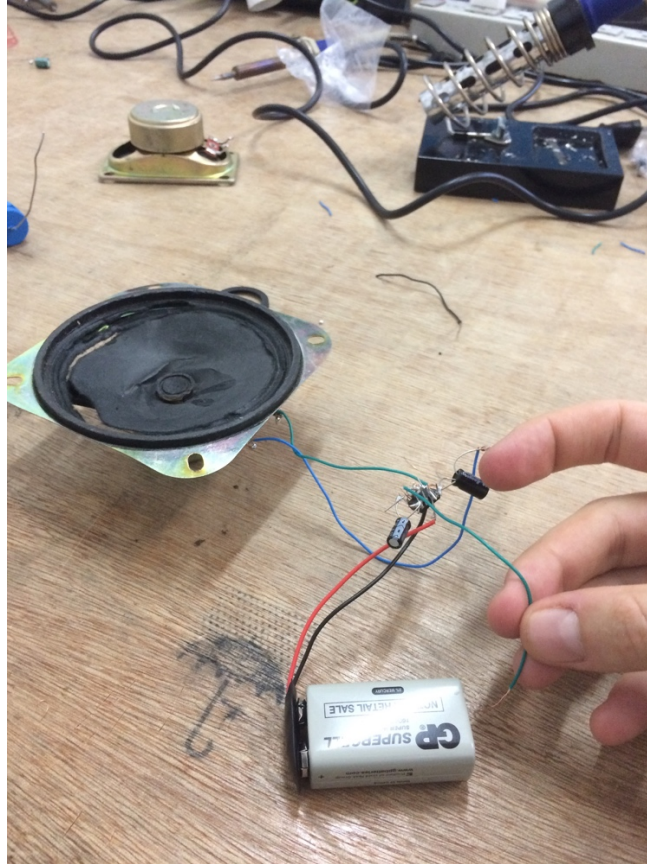
Figure 5.17: Rudimentary hardware-hacked instrument. The battery powers the speaker via the insulated hookup wires, which are soldered together and connected at the center via capacitors and a transistor. The unit generates glitches and feedback when the user touches the exposed sections of the wires to the battery and transistor. Garoa Hacker Clube, February 6, 2016.

Participants employ the Bloco Ruído parade as a means of enacting a critical material intervention in the interrelated acoustic and spatial qualities of São Paulo. Damião asserted that the Bloco Ruído functioned as a means of highlighting how the disparate spatial and sonic vectors of the city—its sharply varied architecture, the masses of people flowing in and out of public areas, the wide variety of sounds emitting from innumerable sources—affect one another. The parade, he argued, served as a means of moving beyond perceptual focuses on sound or space alone and forcing participants and spectators to "think precisely of the relation between the

two and how we influence it."[298] It accomplishes this process by interrupting and restructuring the conventional space and soundscape of the city. This happens in two complementary ways. As it travels through the city, the parade temporarily reshapes the urban soundscape by altering the acoustic qualities of the spaces through which it moves; conversely, by playing instruments in different spaces with sharply contrasting acoustic qualities (an indoor mall, an open air plaza, the street), the acoustic experience of those who participate continually changes as well. That the parade is moving is key to this effect. De Certeau emphasizes the two-way nature of movement in the city, which he likens to a type of "contrac[t]" between disparate subject positions and urban physical topography (1984:97-98). For the Bloco Ruído, movement evinces the static nature of single-site performance, and generates a dynamic in which experimental sound continually shapes urban space and the changing spatial qualities of the cityscape affect the experience of listening in turn.

These spatial and sonic dynamics contrast sharply with the experience of performing and listening on the experimental stage. Public urban space is fluid, unpredictable, and impossible to tune out, and lends singular potential to the acoustic possibilities of performance. These qualities are amplified in the area where the parade takes place, the city center neighborhood of República, which features a motley collection of buildings and architectural styles and an assortment of denizens ranging from suit-clad businesspeople to the homeless. This demands mindful interaction on the part of performers. For Damião, the Bloco Ruído's immersion in public urban space facilitated more conscious engagements with the qualities of the physical environment and the broader listening public in comparison to most experimental performance spaces, which he characterized as divorced from external context and composed of a "small

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[298] Interview with André Damião, July 15, 2016. "…pensar justamente a relação entre os dois e como que a gente influencia isso."

audience of the white middle class."[299] Marching through city space, in his mind, forced

musicians to interact with a wider set of individuals and consciously consider their surroundings

in a way that would not occur in traditional concert venues.

This context crucially includes the individuals moving through city space who might

otherwise be unable or disinclined to engage with this type of music. In theory, this generates a

more egalitarian form of experimental performance by offering greater possibilities for

interpersonal engagement that reach beyond the genre's traditional bounded public. This type of

participatory encounter has long been the mission of earlier experimental musicians such as Max

Neuhaus or Trevor Wishart and Friends, whose productions solicited the contributions of

audience members and the general public (Ballantine 1977:227-228). Yet the Bloco Ruído

presents a slightly different dynamic. On one hand, the parade presents a democratic vision of

performance that engages every individual within earshot and breaks down institutional barriers

that have historically restricted experimental music to a limited subset of the general population.

Damião characterized a central goal of the project as creating a space where "no one is the public

and no one is the performer at the same time—everyone is both."[300] This generates a temporary

yet significant form of mutual awareness between occupants of public urban space who would

otherwise ignore each other.[301] At the same time, the forced interaction between spectators and

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[299] As he declared, "In experimental music, electroacoustic music, concert music, you always have this neutrality of the space—that thing where you ignore the context where it happens. I find this quite common, and I think that electroacoustic music is the best example of this, of thinking about music in the laboratory, it doesn't make a difference if you're making music here in São Paulo or there in Vermont, it doesn't matter, it's the same music that's being made, the equipment is the same, and if you look for it the audience is the same, in the sense that it's a small audience of the white, middle class, right?" Skype interview with André Damião, July 15, 2016. "Na música experimental, eletroacústica, de concerto, você sempre tem essa neutralidade do espaço—essa coisa que você ignora o contexto onde acontece. Acho que isso é muito comum e acho que a música eletroacústica é o melhor exemplo disso, de pensar música no laboratório, não importa se você tá fazendo música aqui em São Paulo ou aí em Vermont, tanto faz, é a mesma música que é feita, os aparelhos são os mesmo e se bobear o público é o mesmo, no sentido de que é um público de classe média, branco e pouco, né?"
[300] Skype interview with André Damião, July 15, 2016. "…ninguém é público e ninguém é performer ao mesmo tempo—todo mundo é as duas coisas."
[301] Damião argued that this contained communitarian ramifications, asserting, "This is a precarious relationship, in the positive sense. Precariousness has no positive meaning, but what can be interesting about precariousness is this: it's you being there, trying to keep things alive. You can't hesitate, you can't stop paying attention, you have to be

musicians also generates an involuntary dynamic in which participants cannot opt out of the experience save by physically fleeing the scene. Like the city noise for which it is named, the Bloco Ruído makes no apologies for its presence and does not seek to justify its unharmonious acoustic profile. The result is a presentation that embodies the complex and conflicting forces and features of the broader Brazilian metropolis.

That the Bloco Ruído occurs in the form of a Carnival parade is no coincidence. In Brazil, Carnival is the characteristic public urban performance *par excellence*.[302] As in most of the country, Carnival in São Paulo occurs primarily on the street, where the city's disparate classes and populations come to wander and revel in shared public space. Although the Carnival festivities in São Paulo do not enjoy the same iconic status as those in Rio de Janeiro, Salvador da Bahia, or Recife, when the time comes it dominates the social and spatial landscape of the city just as much as in any other Brazilian metropolis. Scholars draw attention to subversion, inversion, and desacralization as primary elements of both the contemporary Brazilian Carnival and similar pre-Lenten festivals around the world (see Bakhtin 1984:8; DaMatta 1991:30-31). Roberto DaMatta characterizes Carnival in Brazil as a ritual that dramatizes the dynamics of Brazilian society, turns conventional hierarchy and everyday experience on its head, and temporarily creates a "special idealized world for the collectivity" (1991:22).[303] Central to this

there, struggling for your business [*negócio*] to operate, which I think is a great thing to think about. And there's also a precarious relationship between people, because everyone depends on everyone, right? You wouldn't go out alone, you go out because there's about twenty-five other people who are making it happen together. I find this to be a precarious relationship, when you depend on each other." Skype interview with André Damião, July 15, 2016. "Essa é uma relação precária, no sentido positivo. Precariedade não tem sentido positivo, mas o que poderia ser interessante da precariedade é isso: é você estar ali, tentando fazer com que a coisa fique viva. Você não pode vacilar, você não pode não estar prestando atenção, você tem que estar ali e lutando pro negócio funcionar, que acho que é uma coisa legal de pensar. E também existe uma relação precária entre as pessoas, porque todo mundo depende de todo mundo, né? Você não sairia sozinho, você sai porque tem ali umas 25 pessoas mais que estão juntas fazendo a coisa acontecer. Acho que isso é uma relação precária, quando se depende do outro."

[302] Carnival has roots in medieval and early modern European carnival celebrations, brought to Brazil by Portuguese colonists. These celebrations, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, created an alternative social space distinguished by the subversion of social norms and the inversion of traditional hierarchies such as the sacred and the profane, fantasy and reality, and the powerful and the powerless (1984:8).

[303] DaMatta further elaborates the ways in which this type of ritual ironically embodies the underlying values of Brazilian society, arguing, "Since ritual constitutes a privileged domain for manifesting what a society wants to have

process is the transformation of urban space, which functions as the de facto stage for the drama of Carnival. This metamorphosis is particularly powerful in São Paulo, where Carnival provides a welcome respite from the ubiquitous oppression of city noise.

In some ways, Carnival acts as the ideal setting for the Bloco's transgressive, idiosyncratic performance. Few question the presence of the bizarre during the general period of Carnival, and many welcome it as an alternative to the weight of quotidian reality. What might be sanctioned under the city's restrictive anti-noise laws at other times of the year is tolerated during the temporary permissive period of the festivities and their immediate aftermath. Carnival also provides an ideal social setting for the parade's spirit of collectivity and merriment. It is still a *bloco*, after all, and derives core appeal from the embrace of experimentation and play individuals experience over the course of preparation and performance.

Yet the Bloco Ruído is no typical Carnival parade. Indeed, at the same time that it selectively adapts traditional elements of the event, it also transforms certain core qualities in ways that fundamentally alter the ideological and aesthetic profile of Carnival. In so doing, the parade effectively inverts Carnival norms and calls into question the standards and assumptions underlying public urban space and performance in the broader Brazilian cultural sphere. Damião framed the Bloco Ruído as a means of reconceptualizing the standards and traditional participatory aspects of Carnival and appropriating the city soundscape. As he rhetorically asked, "How do we think of Carnival? What is Carnival? Who are we, this bunch of scoundrels, bearded, tattooed, who know nothing about how to samba but who like this, like the experience, like to occupy public space, to think of public space and the relation with sound, to envision

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recognized as perennial or even 'eternal,' it also emerges as a crucial domain for understanding the ideology and values of a given social formation" (1991:15).

other types of intervention? So I find that it's a bit anti-Carnival, in this sense. But it's the thought that you can enjoy urban space in other ways, too, right?"[304]

Damião's characterization of his collaborators is curious in its reversal of the conventional figures associated with Carnival, particularly the popular cultural character of the *malandro*, a common protagonist of samba lyrics celebrated for his charisma and savvy. As Marc A. Hertzman notes, in the early years of samba, the "clever, flashily dressed, womanizing, hustler figure" of the *malandro* exemplified a certain deft resistance to societal obstacles and police repression, and was closely associated with the black populations who pioneered early forms of samba and their precursors in related genres (2013:34). The *malandro* continues to be a central referent in contemporary iterations of samba, including their manifestations in Carnival, which often foregrounds such characters. Damião's characterization of the members of the Bloco Ruído, by contrast, undermines this image and replaces it with a figure more akin to a hipster or conventional São Paulo ethnic subject. He situated the Bloco as part of a decades-long tradition of unorthodox "anti-*blocos*" such as the 70-year-old São Paulo-based Bloco Esfarrapado (Ragged *Bloco*), whose members historically constructed their own costumes from materials such as old clothing and rags, with the aim of fostering greater levels of creative engagement than normally occurred during the festivities.[305] Like the Bloco Ruído, the Bloco Esfarrapado appropriates the refuse of the city, reconfigures it into something festive, and presents it in joyous form on the street.

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[304] Skype interview with André Damião, July 15, 2016. "Como é que a gente pensa carnaval? O que é o carnaval? O que é a gente, esse monte de moleque, barbudo, tatuado, aí, que não sabe sambar nada, mas que gosta disso, gosta da experiência, gosta de ocupar o espaço público, de pensar o espaço público e a relação com o som, pensar possíveis outros tipos de intervenção. Então, eu acho que é um pouco anti-carnaval, nesse sentido. Mas pensar que dá pra aproveitar o espaço urbano de outras formas também, né?"

[305] For more information about the Bloco Esfarrapado, see http://www.portaldobixiga.com.br/bloco-dos-esfarrapados/.

The Bloco Ruído accomplishes this transformation in multiple ways. First, by performing on Ash Wednesday, it rejects the bounded temporal framework of Carnival and the fleeting nature of carnivalesque inversion. Ash Wednesday plays a crucial role in the delineation of Carnival in Brazil by ensuring that the festival exists within a finite, officially sanctioned period of time and by re-establishing the spatial and sonic hierarchies that characterize everyday life in Brazil. Although Ash Wednesday does typically feature sporadic performances, they are few and far between, and typically take place in prescribed areas such as parks or city plazas instead of the city street. Occupying the street on the day after Carnival rejects the implicit mandate to allow the city to return to normalcy and threatens the cultural-institutional system of legitimization that constructs the festival in the first place. The timing of the parade also ensures that the act attracts sharper attention than it would at the height of Carnival due to the dearth of competing musical acts. This generates a greater level of presence and critical observation that facilitates the parade's aim of forcing performers and spectators alike to view the city in a different light.

Furthermore, by incorporating self-constructed instruments that generate unpitched sounds such as feedback, the Bloco Ruído transforms the conventional sonic profile of Carnival from popular music with mass appeal to one that eschews even the most basic elements of melody and harmony and embraces harsh, dissonant qualities reminiscent of the city din. This reverses the conventional acoustic dynamic of Carnival and foregrounds a core element of the city that the annual festivities seek to temporarily suspend: urban noise. Instead of creating a space in which the harsher sounds of the city are avoided, the Bloco Ruído embraces them in performance and facilitates an environment in which participants and spectators pay greater attention to their presence. In so doing, the parade ceremonially welcomes and re-introduces the myriad acoustic qualities of the city soundscape. In the same way that Carnival functions as a

type of ritual to suspend reality and invert the dynamics and demands of everyday city life, the Bloco Ruído functions as a sort of "anti-ritual," meant to foster critical engagements with urban reality rather than open a door to fantasy.

Conclusion: Alternative Brasilidade

The performances discussed in this chapter could not happen just anywhere. They are intimately tied to the distinct qualities of space and sound in São Paulo, in all its conflict, complexity, and color. To view the work of independent experimental musicians outside of this context would remove an essential dimension of its being. By placing their experiences with the city as a central element of their work, practitioners foreground subject positions that have long faced exclusion from the national narrative. Their vision highlights the gritty and often difficult qualities of urban experience in contemporary Brazil as defining elements of the nation—different from the breezy, tropical image advanced in mainstream popular song, yet no less essentially Brazilian. In so doing, they demand São Paulo's inclusion in considerations of the Brazilian experience and expand conventional understandings of what constitutes Brazilian music itself.

Thus the participants in the contemporary independent experimental scene, in concert with the legacy of previous generations of innovative Paulistano cultural producers, reorient conventional national narratives and construct an alternative conception of *brasilidade* itself. Their understanding of the nation stands in opposition to both the classic image of beaches and bossa nova as well as newer cultural portrayals of Brazil that foreground São Paulo's effervescent, cosmopolitan image as a dynamic global city. Independent experimental musicians embrace the contradictions at the heart of contemporary urban Brazil, and use sound and performance as a central means of negotiating its myriad qualities. Their engagement with

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brasilidade emphasizes collision and contrast, and the many messy and unpredictable realities that arise as a result. The various musical articulations that emerge, and the city that gives them life, are all the richer for it.

Chapter Five

Post-Genre and the End of Song

These days in Brazil, you don't know what will happen tomorrow. We don't even know what will happen tonight, things are so out of control. So, given all that, it seems to me that if I try to work on a show today to present next week, this could sound like something premeditated—something really prepared, that no longer fits the moment, the instant we're living in. Whatever I thought yesterday might no longer work now. So that free improvisation thing gives you this mobility to keep things genuine. In the moment you'll say, "Alright, things have changed since the last time I rehearsed, but it's okay, because it's free, so I can incorporate the news that I just heard on the radio on my way here." For me, this is one of the most important things—the power for you to speak in real time. Because if it's from song, you'll have to go back home to write the song. Which I fucking love—I love song too, and I don't rule it out in any way. In another moment, I'll go back to song. But in this moment, in this place we're living in, I feel that this break is important because you're talking more directly with people, and you have that opportunity to really touch the spirit of that day.[306]

– Rodrigo Brandão

January 25, 2016. A rich hum flecked with feedback pulsates from the backroom

performance area of the independent cultural center Associação Cultural Cecília, where the band

Auto occupies the stage. Musicians Carlos Issa and Marcelo Fusco have constructed a desolate

texture suffused with a layered palette of electronic noise, garnished with a series of contrasting

thematic elements—slides, distortion, occasional brief electronic organ tones cut and spliced

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[306] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "No Brasil, hoje em dia, você não sabe o que vai acontecer amanhã. A gente não sabe nem o que vai acontecer hoje a noite, de tão fora de controle que as coisas estão. Então nisso, me parece que se eu tentar preparar um show hoje, para apresentar semana que vem, isso pode soar como uma coisa premeditada—uma coisa muito preparada, que já não condiz com o momento, com o instante em que nós estamos vivendo. O que eu pensei ontem, pode não estar mais valendo agora. Então a coisa da improvisação livre te dá essa mobilidade de manter a coisa genuína. No momento que você está falando 'Beleza, as coisas mudaram desde a última vez que eu ensaiei, mas tudo bem, porque é livre, então eu posso incorporar a notícia que eu acabei de ouvir no rádio vindo para cá.' Isso para mim é uma das coisas mais importantes, é o poder de você falar em tempo real. Porque se é uma coisa de canção, você vai ter que voltar para casa para compor a canção. Que eu acho do caralho, amo canção também, sabe, e eu não descarto de forma nenhuma, em um outro momento, voltar para a canção. Mas nesse momento, nesse lugar que a gente está vivendo, eu sinto que essa quebra ela é importante porque você fala mais diretamente com as pessoas, e você tem a oportunidade de realmente tocar o espírito daquele dia."

beyond the conventional tonal spectrum. Drummer Alexandre Amaral delivers a series of percussive cascades on the cymbals and tom-toms, while bassist Marcílio Silva peppers the foundation with surges of rich, grainy motifs. As the texture thickens, vocalist Jonathan Gall pierces the air with a guttural, unearthly cry, weaving a grotesque narrative in wails and howls.

Over the course of the seamless, twenty-five-minute performance, the band transits between a striking collage of sounds. Some are reminiscent of existing popular music idioms—at one point, a minimalistic electronica- and punk-inflected beat moves the performance forward at a relentless pace, while later in the performance, the instrumentalists briefly evoke the sounds of post-hardcore punk, complete with a short repeated iv-iii-I chord progression strummed by Issa on the guitar. More commonly, the texture assumes an abstract form without a discernible sense of melody, harmony, or forward temporal logic. The concert ends with Gall delivering a semi-pitched a cappella rendition of the traditional Irish ballad "The Parting Glass."

Figure 6.1: Auto (left to right, Carlos Issa, Alexandre Amaral, Jonathan Gall, Marcelo Fusco, and Marcílio Silva) performs at Associação Cultural Cecília, January 25, 2016.

One can imagine countless ways of conceptualizing the performances of groups such as Auto. The band's shared roots in the city's 1990s-era hardcore punk scene and their initial

recordings in that same stylistic vein suggest the presence of a shared punk essence. Yet like many members of the São Paulo scene with roots in local punk cultures, their music paints a different picture. Rather than adhere to the voice-and-accompaniment structure of their earlier works, the band has adopted an abstract sonic profile, between or beyond the boundaries of established genres. At any one of their mostly improvised concerts, it is possible to discern sonic and performative elements from a wide variety of styles, ranging from free jazz to post-rock to noise. To encapsulate their music within a single genre category or an existing structural format such as song would be antithetical to the spirit of free exploration that informs their approach to performance, as well as the broader creative ethos circulating throughout the São Paulo scene.

Musicians such as the members of Auto employ an idiosyncratic attitude oriented towards the reinvention of established stylistic and formal structures. What are the conceptual and creative dynamics of this attitude? How do they relate to recent sociopolitical developments? How do these distinct creative practices transform dominant modes of symbolic expression in the Brazilian cultural sphere? The reinvention of symbolically dominant standards of genre acts as a defining impetus in the São Paulo scene and a central motivational factor in practitioners' pursuit of creative freedom. Independent experimental musicians contest and transform these standards by engaging in open-ended collaborations with individuals from disparate stylistic points of origin and drawing from attitudes that challenge and broaden the aesthetic frameworks of existing genre cultures. These creative and conceptual orientations form part of a broader transformational process in the Brazilian popular music sphere that has taken place over the past half-century in which experimentally oriented musicians have sought to radically reinvent the formal standards of popular song. They constitute a key means by which members of the São Paulo scene respond to ongoing sociopolitical concerns and form more inclusive creative communities.

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which independent experimental musicians'

creative strategies contest established aesthetic structures and feed back into the broader cultural

sphere. I concentrate on musicians with experience participating in popular and independent

genre cultures who seek to transform the standards of established stylistic practices. In the first

half of the chapter, I discuss how genre standards and the formal framework of popular song

have come to occupy a symbolically dominant place in Brazilian musical culture. I further

address the strategies that experimentally oriented musicians within and beyond the São Paulo

scene have employed to contest these standards. In the chapter's first case study, focusing on the

work of the band Auto, I address how independent experimental musicians consciously leave the

format of popular song as a means of fostering more egalitarian creative relationships. Then,

concentrating on the performance series Carta Branca (Carte Blanche) and the 2018 album

Outros Barato, I examine how musicians from popular styles have begun to eschew song forms

in favor of open forms of improvisation in order to form more immediate ways of responding to

Brazil's recent resurgence in authoritarian politics. I conclude with a consideration of the ways in

which these strategies transform the creative norms of the popular and experimental spheres.

Beyond Cultural Cannibalism

In Brazil and the international sphere alike, musicians' strategies for performance have

long been structured by symbolically dominant standards of aesthetics and form. As Pierre

Bourdieu argues, dominant institutions and groups establish certain structural elements of

expressive culture over time as legitimate or natural (1991:50-51). The general public, in turn,

embodies preferences for these symbolic elements via the unconscious tendencies and

proclivities of the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1991:51). In other words, individuals are inclined to support

performances whose qualities seem to naturally fit within dominant symbolic frameworks. Judith

Becker's notion of the *habitus of listening* provides an instructive means of understanding how this occurs on a perceptual level (2010:130). As Becker argues, individuals "listen in a *particular* way, without thinking about it, and without realizing that it even is a particular way of listening. Most of our styles of listening have been learned through unconscious imitation of those who surround us and with whom we continually interact" (2010:130). These habits develop in response to established symbolic frameworks inculcated by forces specific to time, place, cultural context, and individual history (Becker 2010:130).

In the realm of music, these symbolically dominant frameworks manifest perhaps most acutely in the form of the aesthetic norms of established genres. When musicians incorporate specific elements of sound and performance, they engage with a host of expectations that arise from negotiating the boundaries of pre-existing stylistic idioms. These expectations do not exist in a vacuum, but instead are socially developed and maintained, and function as an integral part of broader cultural formations that shape everyday life.[307] They affect musicians' creative strategies on a core level; as Fabian Holt notes, genre acts as a "fundamental structuring force in musical life" that contains deep "implications for how, where, and with whom people make and experience music" (2007:2). This is a central fact in Brazil, where classifications of genre affect musical practice in numerous ways, from radio stations and record companies' support of musicians in the popular music market to whether a piece of music receives institutional backing in the university system. Achieving sustained success as a musician in the Brazilian cultural

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[307] Andrew McGraw draws attention to the mutable yet authoritative nature of generic frameworks, which he argues are "not given, discretely defined categories but are socially constructed through discourse and are understood relativistically through their relationship with other forms; the redundancies of style and canon help to give genre a sense of fixity. Once defined, genres then begin to shape perception, suggesting a kind of top-down listening that situates a work within a particular field of meaning. Listening through genre, certain patterns and connections will be heard, even invented, to confirm a work's inclusion in it while contradictory information may be downplayed or ignored" (2013:91).

sphere thus entails situating one's productions within the context of established stylistic idioms and drawing from the institutional and popular support that arises along with them.

In addition to shaping the aesthetic contours of the popular music market, genres carry meaningful connotative weight that can discourage radical reinvention. Stylistic idioms matter most because they represent more than music—they are the sonic embodiments of culture and social memory. Not for nothing does UNESCO consider the preservation of certain genres of music to be a key part of its ethical mission of safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.[308] Because of these connections, many musicians and cultural authorities consider the maintenance of the core symbolic elements of historical genres to be an ethical imperative. This impetus is particularly strong in traditional genres that have faced erasure and appropriation, as is the case with marginalized groups such as Afro-descendant and indigenous populations. Such has been the reality for decades in Brazil, where defending established stylistic practices against transformation has long functioned as a way of maintaining racial and national identity.[309]

Despite established stylistic idioms' symbolic dominance, individuals possess the power to contest their influence and establish alternative modes of musical expression, with distinct structural frameworks that resist conventional categorization.[310] These transformational endeavors can carry significant risks. In the realm of popular music, the symbolic elements of

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[308] See UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) 1982 "Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies." World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, July 26–August 6. http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/12762/11295421661mexico_en.pdf/mexico_en.pdf; UNESCO 2010 "Intangible Heritage." Theme accessible at http://portal.unesco.org/culture/.

[309] The drive to maintaining core sonic and performative elements of genre practices has been viewed as an ethical imperative in Brazilian musical culture since the era of *modernismo*, where individuals such as Mário de Andrade argued for the defense of Brazilian styles of music against external forces such as the global popular music market. It has been a constant theme in Afro-Brazilian musical cultures, which have long faced appropriation by non-black artists. Many black Brazilian musical movements, such as *samba-pagode*, have situated the preservation or re-appropriation of Afro-Brazilian musical styles as a central goal. See de Andrade [1928] 1972; Galinsky 1996; Harvey 2001; Stroud 2008.

[310] Multiple scholars have advanced this argument; see, for instance, Fulcher 2007; Heller 1995; Swartz 1997:1-14, 229. While Bourdieu allowed for the transformation of symbolically dominant forms of expressive culture, he tended to emphasize the ways in which symbolic domination is perpetuated rather than challenged (see, for instance, 1991:50-52).

established genres, including, as I will discuss, the voice-and-accompaniment structural framework of popular song, enjoy a measure of legitimacy—and thus institutional and popular support—not afforded to experimental performance. Furthermore, in a cultural sphere where popular styles often act as powerful vessels for identity, those who radically transform the core structural elements of these established creative languages run the risk of being perceived as disrespectful. To subvert the collective habitus of listening that treats certain sonic configurations as natural and others as unappealing or even offensive is a seditious act. This risk is amplified in the case of performances that not only reject established aesthetic-structural frameworks, but also embrace harsher sonic elements such as noise.

Independent experimental musicians' creative and discursive engagement with genre provides a notable contrast to the approaches of experimental composers such as John Cage, who infamously disdained interactions between popular genres such as jazz and more "serious" compositional endeavors as "rather silly" (1961:72). Such has been the tacit perspective adopted in canonical scholarship on musical experimentalism, which mostly addresses engagement with art music traditions and largely overlooks the transformational potential of popular forms and genres. In São Paulo, by contrast, independent experimental musicians conceptually situate genres and forms circulating in the popular sphere as core symbolic and practical components of their approach to creative practice—as much a part of their creative *habitus* as techniques derived from improvised practices and art musics. This manifests in part due to the minority position composers occupy in the scene as a whole and the preponderance of experience members have participating in independent and popular genres such as hip hop or punk. It also occurs as a result of the central place popular genres and forms occupy in the symbolic fabric of national expressive culture. To make music in Brazil today is to situate oneself in the context of symbolically dominant frameworks of aesthetics and form, of which popular genres constitute

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arguably the most significant component. Regardless of whether one embraces, rejects, or shrugs one's shoulder at these standards, their presence is unavoidable.

One potential avenue for musicians to contest stylistic constraints is to embrace the mixture of genres. Fabian Holt proposes the notion of music "in between genres" as a means of analyzing musics whose practitioners consciously blur and confound genre boundaries, drawing attention to the ways in which these individuals emphasize complexity, hybridity, and "polymorphous semantic textures rather than distinct categories" (2007:159-160). Holt's term aptly characterizes the stylistic terrain of the contemporary global popular music sphere, where it is common to mix or blur the lines between diverse generic frameworks. As discussed in Chapter One, the impetus towards hybridity has long been present in the Brazilian popular music sphere, where cultural cannibalism has provided an effective means of valorizing stylistic mixture as a core element of the Brazilian creative ethos. Such is the approach favored by innovative popular musicians who have achieved mainstream success, from the era of Tropicália through the contemporary wave of artists affiliated with the "New MPB" moniker. Yet the stylistically hybrid productions of musicians who have become associated with the "cannibal" label present a fundamentally different approach to the contestation of genres than the more abstract, improvisational practices favored by members of the São Paulo scene. For these individuals, the hybridizing impetus of cultural cannibalism may act as a starting point that informs their approach to creative practice but does not act as the prime conceptual motivational factor behind this endeavor. To characterize their performances as manifestations of *antropofagia* might be accurate on a basic level but would not fully explain the scene's more radically transformational tendencies.

I identify three interrelated perspectives with regard to the transformation of genre that motivate independent experimental musicians' performance practices: rejectionist *anti-genre*

outlooks that spurn the idea of stylistic categorization, inclusionary *pan-genre* approaches that

welcome the overt incorporation of disparate practices, and *post-genre* attitudes that sanction the

inclusion of idiomatic markers but repudiate their authority to dictate the terms of creative

practice. Those who adopt anti-genre perspectives tend to reject the act of classifying musical

performance on principle and emphasize the indefinability of their musical productions.

Musician and DIY record label Meia Vida co-founder Aline Viera, for instance, demonstrated a

characteristic attitude in response to my having asked her what the "proposal" of her music was.

She asserted that her performances were "Underground, really, you know? It's not possible to

define it." In this context, "underground," like the strategic use of general terms such as "music"

or "sound," acts as a useful stand-in for that which is impossible to categorize.[311] This type of

rejectionist approach is, of course, not unique to the São Paulo scene; musicians from a variety of

experimental and underground music cultures have exhibited similar attitudes (Atton 2011:330;

Lewis 2008:402-403; Novak 2013:115-119; Skeltchy 2017). Derek Bailey famously employed

the term "non-idiomatic improvisation" as his preferred means of characterizing the practice of

free improvisation (1992:xii). A few members of the São Paulo scene from free improvisation

backgrounds employed this characterization as well in conversation, although they tended to

downplay the importance of such labels. George Lewis documents the ways in which members

of the AACM had to confront institutional demands based on "racialized genre categories [that]

increasingly came to be seen as illogical and untenable" (2008:402-403). Lewis situates their

work in implicitly anti-generic terms, as "an act of perpetual becoming, and assertion of mobility

that can take one anywhere at all, beyond the purview of genre or method" (2008:xl). The

attitude has manifested in perhaps its most oppositional form in the discourse of Noise

musicians, who, like members of the São Paulo scene, have tended to reject the act of generic

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[311] Interview with Gustavo Paim and Aline Viera, January 22, 2016. *McNally: "E qual é a linha de vocês? A proposta de vocês?"* Viera: "Underground mesmo, sabe? Não dá para definir, entendeu?"

classification on principle. Noise, in their minds, "is always emergent and endlessly new, too new even to define. It is distinguished by its incommensurability with all standards of musical beauty" (Novak 2013:118). As David Novak notes, this strategy shares much in common with "antiart" projects of the modernist avant-garde, which rejected the act of categorization with the aim of "keep[ing] emergent forms of expression from being subsumed into the dialectics of historical categories" (Novak 2013:118).

Yet as Novak observes, the act of rejecting categories inevitably itself creates new classifications, albeit in oppositional form (2013:119). To develop a set of creative ideals aimed at opposing established aesthetic structures is itself a generative act, with its own set of implicit boundaries created over the course of discourse and performance. No symbolic element of expressive culture exists in isolation, and even those who seek to reject established stylistic structures end up establishing new paradigms as a result. In this sense, independent experimental musicians' anti-genre conceptual ideals may have the unintended and ironic consequence of establishing a new set of alternative (anti-)stylistic standards.

In contrast to those musicians who rejected the use of generic classifications, some participants in the São Paulo scene embraced the *pan-genre* qualities of their productions and the various stylistically marked sounds they incorporated into performance. For these individuals, the purposeful inclusion of specific stylistic idioms was something to be celebrated, as evidence of the putative flexibility, richness, and open-mindedness of their approach to symbolic difference. This inclusive attitude contains certain core elements in common with the Tropicálist impetus, forwarded by Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso in the wake of the 1967 TV Record Festival, toward creating a "universal sound" (Dunn 2001:65). It also shares more in common with the rejectionist anti-genre stance than it may initially seem. If musical performance is oriented, at least in theory, towards including all stylistic idioms, then it is also impossible to

encapsulate it in specific generic terms. This fact was not lost on certain members of the São Paulo scene, for whom the "experimental" moniker acted as a useful way of bringing together disparate genres not despite, but *because* of its indeterminate meaning and its polysemic qualities. Guitarist Douglas Magalhães encapsulated a common view of the term's dual relation to established stylistic standards, musing, "I think the experimental naturally becomes a genre that serves the purpose of categorizing that which doesn't have any genre. Or something that's a meeting of genres."[312] As discussed in Chapter Three, the nebulous generic qualities of the experimental label relate to its frequent use as an umbrella term to facilitate cross-stylistic collaboration. In the mind of musician Bruno Hiss, this connection was clear. For him, the experimental "is a genre that doesn't define anything, really. Experimentalism is the one thing that requires a certain openness to not doing things in the more institutionalized way that other genres do things."[313] In this context, the negativity of the experimental moniker acts as an important conceptual impetus that enables practitioners to repudiate generic standards so that they may then reconfigure them in experimental performance.

Between these two ideals is the third and perhaps most appropriate way of characterizing the conceptual orientation of the scene with regard to genre—a perspective in which generic standards are neither revered nor anathema, but beside the point. This post-genre perspective arises as a result of a desire to move beyond the standards and rhetoric of genre without rejecting elements of established stylistic idioms that may prove creatively useful. Electronic musician César Zanin provided a characteristic example of this attitude. In conversation, Zanin asserted the fundamental irrelevance of stylistic categorization to his approach to creative practice. "The

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[312] Interview with Paula Rebellato and Douglas Magahães, March 14, 2016. "Eu acho que o experimental naturalmente se tornou um gênero pra categorizar o que não tem gênero. Ou algo que é uma junção de gêneros."
[313] Interview with Bruno Hiss, March 21, 2016. "…é um gênero que não define nada na verdade. Experimento, a única coisa que ele requer é uma certa abertura de não fazer as coisas como outros gêneros fazem de uma forma mais institucionalizada."

one who creates genres," he asserted, "as incredible as it seems, isn't the artist, right? The artist creates music, creates art. And the critic—or the person who receives the art—ends up seeing genres."[314] Percussionist Marcio Gibson, one of the most prolific collaborators in the São Paulo scene, went a step further, acknowledging the influence of certain lineages of music on his development as a musician but ultimately rejecting long-term engagement within specific genres as a fundamentally limiting creative endeavor. As he argued,

> There are things that, if I use them, will fit into any piece of music. But if I've used it a lot and I've already done that a lot, what am I offering to the music? Like, I'm not collaborating with music itself, with music in general, you know? With history. I'm not going there anymore. If I get stuck, there are things I can put in any place that I know will work. Like, if you get a 12, a 12 by 8, and you come out accentuating… Anything, put in the tempo there, a 12 by 8, I don't know, a [*mimics drum rhythm*]. And if I get a 5 by 4, like this, [*mimics drum rhythm*], it'll work too. But fuck, if I've been doing it for half a year, come on, man—like, throw it away and try to look for something else. Otherwise, man, I'm going to keep repeating myself, repeating, and I won't be progressing. I won't be developing, going to other places that I've never been before if I always use the same thing.[315]

Gibson embodies these values in his own freely improvised performances, whose symbolic configurations change markedly depending on the myriad individuals with whom he plays.

The complex possibilities and challenges of the post-genre orientation are perhaps most acutely embodied in instances in which independent experimental musicians transform instruments with strong symbolic connections to iconic Brazilian styles. These metamorphoses carry significant symbolic weight and afford members of the São Paulo scene the opportunity to

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[314] Interview with Cesar Zanin and Mariana Cetra, December 20, 2016. "Quem cria gêneros, na verdade, por incrível que pareça, não é o artista, né? O artista cria música, cria arte. E o crítico—ou a pessoa que recebe essa art—acaba enxergando gêneros."

[315] Interview with Marcio Gibson, April 18, 2016. "Tem coisas que, se eu for usar, vai caber em qualquer música, assim. Mas, se eu já usei muito e já fiz aquilo muito, o que que eu tou trabalhando pra a música? Tipo, eu não tou colaborando com a música em si, com a música em geral, sabe? Com a história. Eu não tou caminhando mais. Se eu ficar preso, ali, tipo, tem coisa que eu posso tocar em qualquer lugar, assim, que eu sei que vai funcionar. Tipo, se pegar um 12, um 12 por 8, e sair acentuando... Qualquer coisa, colocando dentro da velocidade, ali, uma figura de 12 por 8, sei lá, um [*mimics drum rhythm*]. E, se eu pegar um 5 por 4, assim, [*mimics drum rhythm*]. Vai funcionar, também. Mas, porra, se eu tou meio ano fazendo, chega, cara—tipo, joga isso fora e tenta ir buscar uma outra coisa. Senão, meu, vou ficar me repetindo, repetindo, e, tipo, não vou tar progredindo, não vou tar me desenvolvendo, indo pra outros lugares que eu não fui ainda, se eu ficar usando sempre a mesma coisa.

reinvent established performance standards of the Brazilian popular and folk musical canon and expand notions of acceptable engagements with national musical tradition. Multi-instrumentalist Maurício Takara's piece "Cavulção," which features a prepared *cavaquinho* (acoustic ukulele-type guitar iconic in samba), caixa snare drum, and various mixing equipment, provides a characteristic example. Before performing, Takara assembles the cavaquinho by attaching receptors to the base of the guitar and placing a single hairpin in the frets (Fig. 6.2). In concert, he alternates between striking the strings with a thin *repinique* drum stick, plucking the hairpin at regular rhythmic intervals, and playing brief semi-melodic motifs on the strings with his fingers. He then employs the mixing equipment to record, loop, and distort what he plays on the cavaquinho through speakers, which in turn provides a basis for further improvisation on the cavaquinho and snare drum. Takara employs multiple means of augmenting the harmonic and melodic focus of the cavaquinho and exploring the timbral and textural possibilities of the instrument. The hairpin transforms the cavaquinho's bright, precise sound into a series of tinny, distorted tones that hover around certain pitches and hit multiple overtones when struck; the effect is similar to the buzzing tones created by the bottlecaps at the head of a *mbira* thumb piano. Takara magnifies this effect by striking the instrument's strings with the flexible *repinique* drum stick, which generates a series of percussive tones reminiscent of the sounds of a Brazilian single-string *berimbau.* He further manipulates these sounds through the use of mixing equipment, which samples and loops the sounds of the cavaquinho so that over time its semipitched sounds become transformed into a series of dark echoes. Over the course of the concert, the melodic fragments fade to the background and are replaced by the contrasting symphony of acoustically and electronically distorted tones, thus reinventing the familiar sonority of the *cavaquinho* and conceptually transforming it from a purely melodic and harmonic

instrument into a semipitched tool of percussion in which pitch is but one of several relevant sonic elements.

Figure 6.2: Maurício Takara plays the prepared cavaquinho with a repinique drum stick (left) and a hairpin in the frets (right). Takara's apartment, April 20, 2016.

For Takara, these adaptations serve as a testament to the flexibility of the instrument and the myriad ways previous generations of innovators have shaped it over time. "In reality," he asserted, "the cavaquinho originally comes from the Portuguese island of Madeira, and there it was played in a completely different way, so when it became a Brazilian tradition it was already the fruit of a—every tradition, really, is the fruit of an evolution."[316] Not all, however, reacted to his modifications with open arms. He recalled one instance in which a traditional samba player approached him after a concert and proclaimed his admiration for the piece but declared, "If you go where I live playing cavaquinho like that, they'd want to kill you!"[317] Takara acknowledged this point of view, but called it "totally conservative" ("totalmente conservador"). In his mind, instruments such as the cavaquinho and its associated traditions represent starting points from

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[316] Interview with Mauricio Takara, April 20, 2016. "Na verdade o cavaquinho já é um instrumento que vem lá da Ilha da Madeira, português, que era já tocado de uma forma totalmente diferente e esse jeito que virou a tradição brasileira já era fruto de uma... toda tradição na verdade é fruto de uma evolução."

[317] Interview with Mauricio Takara, April 20, 2016. "Se você chegar lá onde eu moro tocando cavaquinho desse jeito, vão querer te matar!"

which the musician should feel free to depart and explore new sonic possibilities rather than a

bounded set of proscribed techniques. As he declared,

> There are people who—nothing against it, but there are people who just like to maintain
> this tradition and try to reach it in the highest perfection in the world. That kind of thing
> never interested me, although I really like studying music like that. And that was always
> a battle for me. Like, I went to study with professors and such and there came a time
> when I said "No, it's all good, I think that I already have sufficient material here to create
> my own study, you know?" Nor do I want to play drums as well as [American
> percussionist] Steve Gadd, who's like an icon, nor do I want to play the cavaquinho like
> the best samba player, you know? I… I just want to understand the instrument as
> completely as possible, you know? After that I want to develop my own technique on top
> of it.[318]

For Takara and his contemporaries, circuits such as the independent experimental scene provide

crucial space where individuals can feel free to innovate on and invert the canonic elements of

traditional Brazilian styles and forms with minimal fear of reproach.

From the perspective of the post-genre standpoint, the idiomatic structures of genres

represent points of departure—useful means of furnishing raw symbolic material for creative

practice rather than cultural authorities with the legitimacy to limit the contours of experimental

performance. It is emblematic of a broader cultural logic prevalent since the mid-late twentieth

century, typically situated in the theoretical frame of postmodernism, in which the collective

symbolic elements of established traditions become divorced by happenstance or symbolic

violence from their original sociocultural contexts (Clarke 2018:415-416; Schmelz 2014; Taylor

1997:151). There are, to be sure, elements of artifice and cliché in these attitudes, which

represent in part claims of stylistic colorblindness. To insist on the unclassifiability of one's

music is to evoke a certain stereotype, common in the contemporary popular music sphere,

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[318] Interview with Mauricio Takara, April 20, 2016. "Tem gente que—nada contra assim, mas tem gente que gosta
de manter essa tradição simplesmente e tentar chegar ela na maior perfeição do mundo. Isso nunca me interessou,
assim, apesar de eu gostar muito do estudo de música. E isso foi uma coisa que sempre foi uma batalha também pra
mim. Tipo, eu ia estudar com professores e tal e chegava uma hora que eu falava 'Não, tudo bem, acho que aqui eu
já tenho um material suficiente pra criar meu próprio estudo, entendeu?' Eu não quero também tocar bateria igual o
Steve Gadd, que é tipo um ícone, e não quero tocar o cavaquinho que nem o melhor sambista, sabe? Tipo... eu
só quero entender o instrumento mais completamente possível, sabe? Depois disso eu quero desenvolver minha
própria técnica em cima dele."

among musicians who proclaim the timeless and innovative qualities of their own creative vision while remaining ignorant of the very real power dynamics that continue to marginalize musicians from disadvantaged backgrounds, from whom popular music genres are all too often appropriated.[319]

Independent experimental musicians are not unaware of these issues, particularly concerning questions of appropriation, and often tread carefully in performance when evoking genres with strong associations with specific cultural traditions to which they do not have personal connections. The work of multi-instrumentalist Bruno Trochmann, the originator of the solo act Para Leila Khaled (For Leila Khaled), exemplifies one such approach. In concert, Trochmann employs electronics and a prepared Lebanese *buzuq* lute as a means of mixing improvised melodic elements drawn from *maqam* within a distorted abstract sonic texture. Inspired by a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine who became known for her participation in the hijacking of a TWA flight from Italy to Israel, he developed the project as a result of a years-long interest in Arab music and culture and a personal affiliation with leftist, anticolonial politics. To negotiate this dynamic, Trochmann adopts a stance in which he treats the musical traditions from which he draws with esteem but not total deference. He acknowledged that he had no formal background in Arab musical traditions and that his use of Arab musical referents could be construed as appropriation, noting, "This isn't mine, you know? I have to proceed calmly and with respect."[320] At the same time, he tempered this stance by emphasizing the equally important merits of not being creatively restricted by stylistic

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[319] Robin James cites Taylor Swift and US DJ Diplo as characteristic examples of this attitude, and ties this "hate for genre provincialism" to broader "post-racial" and "post-identity" ideals forwarded by white musicians that ignore racialized dynamics of cultural production. See James 2017:21-22.

[320] Interview with Bruno Trochmann, December 3, 2015. "Isso não é meu, sabe? Eu tenho que ir com calma e com respeito."

boundaries, arguing, "I can't go with so much respect that I don't—that I become paralyzed."[321]

For musicians such as Trochmann, generic signifiers of external cultures deserve respectful consideration but also act as points of conceptual and creative inspiration that performers may work and rework according to their own creative impetuses.

In certain instances, sounds with strong connotative ties to marginalized Brazilian cultures, particularly those associated with Afro-diasporic or indigenous cultural practices, seemed tacitly off-limits to practitioners who did not hail from those specific cultural backgrounds. Musicians' treatment of the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé provides a characteristic example. In the majority of performances I attended, sounds tied to Candomblé were absent, even in the midst of dense sonic textures that brought together a wide range of stylistic references. Conversely, instrumental and vocal references to Candomblé abounded in the practice of the small number of musicians in the scene with personal connections to the religion. As I will discuss later in this chapter, for those who were themselves practitioners of the religion, these references often contained considerable emotive power that could enhance feelings of presence, interconnectedness, and mutual respect in concert. Other musicians incorporated sounds from Candomblé due to feelings of shared Afro-diasporic heritage. Such was the approach taken by trumpetist Rômulo Alexis and percussionist Wagner Ramos, the two members of the duo Rádio Diaspora, who at the time of this writing are working on a project that incorporates musical material from the religion into performance. Because the two musicians are not themselves practitioners of Candomblé, however, they resolved to work collaboratively with those with insider knowledge so as to facilitate mindful rather than careless engagements with the religion and the broader tradition it represented. As Ramos noted, "You have to be careful to

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[321] Interview with Bruno Trochmann, December 3, 2015. "Eu não posso ir com tanto respeito que eu não—que eu fique paralisado."

treat it with respect."[322] Whether conscious or unconscious, these decisions speak to the existence of limits on musicians' expansive rhetoric of sonic heterogeneity. For most musicians, not just any sound is fair game to incorporate in concert. Practitioners seem to be aware of the political connotations and cultural histories of certain genres and adjust their own creative decisions accordingly.

In spite of these potential issues, post-genre ideals can still contain meaningful ramifications for creative practice. Attitudes that value the transcendence of genre, even if that goal is ultimately unachievable, play an important role in conditioning cross-stylistic collaboration. George Lewis draws attention to the liberational possibilities of the post-genre orientation, arguing that it contains the potential to help musicians assert artistic flexibility and authorize creative explorations in a cultural sphere that often restricts artists based on genre markers tied to identity markers such as race (2007:63-65). For members of the São Paulo scene, the stance serves to liberate musicians from the structuring power of genre cultures so that they may collaboratively determine new avenues of creativity on the experimental stage. One cannot reach out to individuals from other backgrounds if one does not consider the act of looking beyond stylistic norms to be an intrinsically worthwhile endeavor.

The End of Song

Genres manifest in symbolically dominant structural configurations, with specific formal elements that affect musical production and reception on a core level. In the majority of global popular stylistic idioms, this form is song: specifically, a voice-and-accompaniment texture centered around the interpretation of melodies and lyrics by a vocalist. To engage with popular music is, by and large, to engage with media created and disseminated in song forms. It would

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[322] Interview with Wagner Ramos, December 17, 2018. "Tem que ter cuidado para tratar com respeito."

not be much of an exaggeration to say that the scholarly and journalistic study of popular music

is mostly synonymous with the study of song. This is not without reason. The lyrics- and

vocalist-centered format prevalent in song-based genres provides an accessible and easily

consumable form of expressive culture that drives popular stylistic idioms' mass appeal and that

almost anyone, regardless of access or previous knowledge, can engage with on at least a basic

level. With the notable exception of jazz, which enjoys its own rich tradition of song, those

genres of popular music that eschew reliance on song forms face limited publics and similarly

limited considerations in the scholarly realm.

If song is taken for granted as the default structural form in the international popular

music sphere, it assumes even greater prominence and symbolic power in Brazil, where popular

song (*canção popular*) occupies a central place in the canon of national expressive culture and

enjoys an iconic status as the country's musical tradition *par excellence*.[323] Scholars of popular

music in Brazil have adopted idealistic appraisals of the form that have played a major role in

sustaining the lionized status of popular song in the collective national consciousness.[324] Today,

scholarly discourse on Brazilian popular song is dominated by the works of a trio of songwriter-

scholars—Arthur Nestrovski, José Miguel Wisnik, and Lira Paulistana affiliate Luiz Tatit—

whose publications, aimed at both academic and popular audiences alike, have played a central

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[323] This occurred in large part due to the ongoing phenomenon of twentieth-century Brazilian musical nationalism, in which political leaders employed Carnival festivities, radio, and nationally broadcast events such as the Festivals of Popular Song (discussed in Chapter One) to present song-based genres such as samba and MPB as fundamental constituent parts of the national cultural patrimony.

[324] Beginning in the 1960s, these individuals (e.g. Galvão [1968] 1976; Schwarz 1970) began to theorize the idea of Brazilian popular song as a distinct form within the broader tradition of Brazilian popular music and develop methods of analyzing its structural and symbolic elements. This coincided with a concurrent emergence of examinations of popular song in French scholarship, most notably in the work of Edgar Morin (see Morin 1965; Tatit 2002:33). This occurred at the same time as the advent of the iconic Festivals of Popular Song and a concurrent growth in the Brazilian recording industry, which invested large amounts of resources in supporting the careers of singers and songwriters in song-centric genres such as bossa nova and MPB. Charles Perrone draws attention to the ways in which this period saw literary critics begin to approach song texts as "an important branch of poetic expression. Certain songwriters came to be considered not just as 'poets of popular music' but as the best young Brazilian poets. They were likened to the ancient troubadours who blended words and melodies in compositions for performance" (Perrone 1989:ix).

role in helping to situate popular song as a fundamental element of Brazilian national artistic culture.[325] Tatit in particular has played a central role in not only arguing for the centrality of popular song in Brazilian cultural discourse, but also theorizing its structural elements through the introduction of a model for analysis of Brazilian popular songs focused on analyzing the interplay of melody, lyrics, and intonation.[326] His model frames popular song as a fundamentally individually directed pursuit, driven by a single figure: the songwriter (*cancionista*).[327] While collaborating musicians are not irrelevant in this framework, they are fundamentally secondary members of a supporting cast with limited ability to shape the symbolic power of popular stylistic idioms.

These standards have long contained significant ramifications for the strategies of experimental musicians with origins in song-based popular and independent genres. Over the course of the twentieth century, popular song became thoroughly incorporated into the collective habitus of listening to popular music in Brazil. Today, one regularly encounters it in casual conversation, where its legacy is a point of great pride among serious and casual fans of popular music alike. Those who produce music that circumvents or subverts the structural framework of popular song, including the individualistic performance model of the *cancionista,* also implicitly

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[325] Tatit's characterization of popular song as an integral part of the country's "sonic identity" aptly captures the tenor of these studies (Tatit 2004:11; see also Perrone 1989:ix). Works by these authors that have shaped dominant scholarly discourse on Brazilian popular song include the following: Nestrovski 2005, 2008, 2009; Tatit 1986, 1994, 1996, 2002, 2004, 2016; Wisnik 1989, 2004; see also Mammì, Nestrovski, and Tatit 2004; Mariz 2002; Motta 2016; Naves 2010; Napolitano 2001; Perrone 1989; Tatit and Lopes 2008. They have also written articles for widely distributed newspapers such as *Folha de S. Paulo*.

[326] Tatit 2004:126. As Tatit asserts, for most of the twentieth century, song acted as an "autonomous artistic form" distinct from instrumental and erudite music, with its own set of discrete aesthetic and formal parameters situated on the meeting point between music and spoken language, represented respectively in songs by melody and lyrics (Tatit 2002:33). Tatit's model situates other musical elements such as timbre, texture, and harmony as fundamentally secondary elements of popular songs' symbolic power. The model is not without problematic elements. Conceiving of "song" as an autonomous unit marked mostly by lyrics, melody, and intonation ignores the many disparate and contradictory qualities songs can contain. This is particularly true in more experimental songs, which tend to eschew neat syntheses of lyrics, melody, and musical elements in favor of techniques such as fragmentation, collage, irony, and incomprehensibility. Allan Moore, for instance, argues that this approach assumes that certain areas of musical expression, most notably harmony and timbre, are "dispensable" (Moore 2010:389-90).

[327] This argument was forwarded most succinctly in Tatit's *O cancionista: Composição de canções no Brasil* (1996).

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question the form's symbolic integrity and thus challenge a cherished form of expressive culture

at the heart of notions of *brasilidade*. As a result, artists who have chosen to radically reinvent

the qualities of popular song and move beyond its melody-and-lyrics-based structural framework

have historically found themselves bereft of financial and institutional support. Such were the

circumstances faced by Caetano Veloso, whose highly experimental 1972 album *Araçá Azul* was

a major critical and commercial failure.

In the face of these issues, as the ability to electronically manipulate sound became more

affordable and widespread, more musicians gained access to the basic creative materials needed

to transform the structural framework of popular song.[328] At the same time, the individualistic

model of the *cancionista* became complicated by the prevalence of studio production, in which

the various sonic qualities of songs were modified, mixed, and transformed far beyond their

original acoustic forms, either by the songwriter, producers, or both in tandem. Today, although

individual musicians and groups continue to act as the de facto ambassadors for popular music

performance, studio-based collaboration is commonplace in a variety of popular genres.[329]

For some chroniclers of the traditional singer-songwriter model of Brazilian popular

song, these developments represented a sea change. Such was the perspective suggested in 2004

by musicologist and journalist José Ramos Tinhorão, one of the country's most well-known and

traditionalist commentators on popular music, who declared that "song has ended" (*a canção

acabou*) in an interview with *Folha de S. Paulo*.[330] "Today," he proclaimed, "it is all collective,

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[328] By the 2000s, with the advent of the Internet and more affordable forms of electronics, incorporating these approaches had become standard elements of musical production in both the mainstream and independent popular music spheres (Moehn 2012:11).

[329] Frederick Moehn draws attention to the ways in which "New MPB" artists such as Lenine and Marcos Suzano, despite having achieved success as individual songwriters and performers, nevertheless employ extensive collaboration and the use of electronic techniques throughout the creative process (2009:283; 2012:26, 70-71).

[330] "A canção acabou." In "Era Uma Vez Uma Canção," Interview with José Ramos Tinhorão by Pedro Alexandre Sanches, August 29 2004, *Folha de S. Paulo,* http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/mais/fs2908200404.htm.

with electronic resources."[331] These comments gained greater prominence later that year, when popular singer-songwriter Chico Buarque echoed Tinhorão's statements in another interview in the same newspaper. In the conversation, Buarque, who had risen to prominence along with Gil and Veloso during the 1960s Festivals of Popular Song and continues to be one of the most significant and well-known songwriters in the country today, characterized song as a "phenomenon of the twentieth century."[332] These statements, disseminated in the country's most widely circulated publication, constituted major news in the Brazilian cultural sphere. Between Tinhorão and Buarque, the notion of a threat to the integrity of popular song became firmly established in the broader popular conversation. The implicit question lingered: What had happened to the musical patrimony of Brazil?

For some, the supposed demise of song presented neither a problem to be solved nor a tragedy to be mourned, but instead an intriguing creative opportunity. Such was the perspective adopted by Tom Zé, who in 2006 released the lyricless experimental concept album *Danç-êh-sá: Dança dos Herdeiros do Sacrifício* (*Danç-êh-sá:* Dance of the Heirs of Sacrifice). Zé conceived the album as an explicit creative response to Buarque's comments, and included the subtitle "(Pós-canção) 7 caymianas para o fim da canção" ((Post-song) 7 *caymianas* for the end of song) on the album cover.[333] As a means of reinforcing this idea, he employed the invented word *caymiana*, likely derived from the name of iconic twentieth-century Brazilian songwriter Dorival Caymmi, instead of "song" to refer to the album's tracks.

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[331] "Era Uma Vez Uma Canção," Interview with José Ramos Tinhorão by Pedro Alexandre Sanches, August 29 2004, *Folha de S. Paulo,* http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/mais/fs2908200404.htm. "Hoje é tudo coletivo, com recursos electro-electrônicos."

[332] "A canção, o rap, Tom e Cuba, segundo Chico," Interview with Chico Buarque by Fernando de Barros e Silva, Dec. 26 2004, http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrad/fq2612200408.htm.

[333] In conversation, producer Paulo Lepetit verified this, and recalled how they wanted to respond to "purists" (*puristas*) such as Tinhorão. Interview with Paulo Lepetit, March 17, 2016.

Zé enacted the album's "post-song" concept by incorporating a collaborative, studio-based creative approach and purposely eschewing the traditional structural elements of popular song.[334] The album is entirely devoid of sung melodies or lyrics, and epitomizes the precise practice that Tinhorão characterized as "collective, with electronic resources."[335] Instead, the album foregrounds rhythmic patterns, collage aesthetics, and timbral subtleties, weaving a series of minimalistic semi-melodic motifs from a striking mixture of traditional Afro-Brazilian religious music, electronic music, popular Brazilian genres such as samba and *forró*, nonsense vocables, and recorded noise. Working in tandem with producer Paulo Lepetit, Zé created a bank of samples sorted by timbre (Fig. 6.3), which they matched to specific keys on a keyboard and then mixed on the computer. The effect is upbeat and bizarre—simultaneously reminiscent of the various constituent genres from which it draws thematic inspiration, yet entirely distinct in form from the structural frameworks in which these genres have traditionally been performed.

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[334] In conversation, producer Paulo Lepetit spoke of Zé's motivation transform the elements of song as a conscious decision, recalling, "So he took a bit of that catchphrase [*mote*] and said 'Let's radicalize here—it's not going to have lyrics, there are only *iê, iô, pá, pá, pá*, onomatopoeia, that kind of thing.'" Interview with Paulo Lepetit, March 17, 2016. "Então ele pegou um pouco esse mote aí e falou "Vamos radicalizar aqui—e não vai ter letra, só tem aquelas iê, iô, pá, pá, pá, onomatopeias, esse tipo de coisa.'"

[335] Zé was likely aware of Tatit's scholarship on song; in his 1998 song "Estéticar," for instance, Zé included the line "Now go ahead and lick me, inter-semiotic translation" ("Ora vá me lamber tradução inter-semiótica") which may have addressed semiotic analysis practices that Tatit developed in books such as *Musicando a semiótica* (1998).
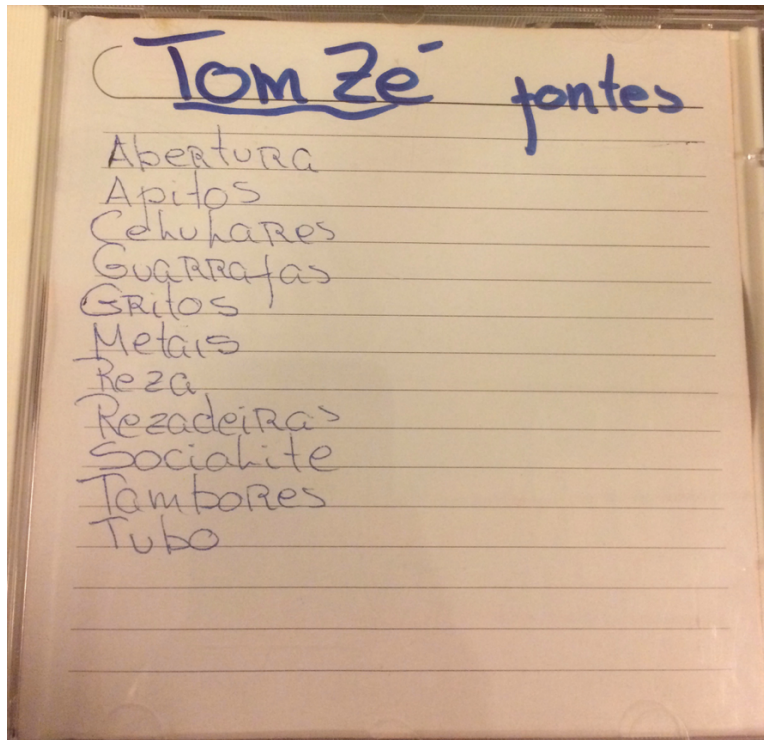
Figure 6.3: Bank of samples used in Danç-êh-sá, *compiled by Tom Zé and Paulo Lepetit. From top to bottom, the sample titles read "Opening," "Whistles," "Cell Phones," "Bottles," "Cries," "Metals," "Prayer," "Mourners," "Socialite," "Drums," and "Pipe." March 17, 2016.*

In addition to allowing him to formally experiment with the structural elements of popular song, Zé's creative choices also enabled him to critique Brazilian song traditions' exclusionary history. Zé argued that he avoided the inclusion of lyrics because he wanted to have the instruments and rhythms reflect the "discourse without words" contained in the music of voiceless and marginalized black Brazilians "before they were transformed into words" (Nunes 2007:n.p.). To emphasize this connection, each of the tracks includes the name of a revolt by slaves or indigenous Brazilians: the third track, for instance, "Triú-trii… - Revolta Malê 1835" refers to the revolt of the enslaved Malê Muslims in Salvador da Bahia in 1835.[336] Zé was originally inspired to enact this critique in response to a 2005 quantitative study by MTV Brasil

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[336] To further underscore this, the liner notes state that "80% of the rhythms and instruments on this album are African."

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that shed light on a "disinterested" ("desinteressada") and "vain" ("vaidosa") youth generation that preferred conspicuous consumption to conscious social action (Nogueira 2006:n.p.). The title "Dance of the Heirs of Sacrifice" reflected his desire to pay homage to previous generations of black and indigenous Brazilians, whose "sacrifices" under slavery and colonialism built the modern nation of Brazil that contemporary youth (the titular "heirs" to these sacrifices) enjoy (Nogueira 2006:n.p.). Taken together, the album presents a musical embodiment of Zé's conception of the nation of Brazil: complex, diverse, and in great cultural debt to the sacrifices of those who labored for centuries in anonymity. Furthermore, the album's collaborative creative approach undermines dominant understandings of popular song by challenging the authorial figure of the *cancionista*. Instead, Zé and his associates forward an alternative, yet no less essentially Brazilian understanding of musical creativity: one grounded in collaboration rather than individual authorship, consciously attuned to the voices of those who have been left out of the collective conversation on national expressive culture.

Zé's efforts received a far different financial and critical reception in the Brazilian popular musical sphere than had previous iterations of experimental song. Rather than face backlash or commercial failure, *Danç-êh-sá* enjoyed modest success in the market and was hailed by journalists for its invention and wit.[337] Whether one attributes this to a general increase in openness to experimentalism, the increasing prominence of instrumental genres in the popular music sphere, or the emergence of independent creative communities oriented towards unorthodox sound, it was clear that public attitudes towards popular music creativity had become more accepting of reinventions of dominant structural frameworks than in previous generations.

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[337] *Globo*'s Lígia Nogueira, for instance, called the album "really fun," while *Diário do Nordeste* reporter Henrique Nunes celebrated Zé for his "iconoclasm" and bold creative tribute to Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage (Nogueira 2006:n.p.; Nunes 2007:n.p.). Part of the album's modest success in the market in comparison to *Araçá Azul* may have arisen from the fact that it periodically incorporated rhythmic themes that provided an accessible counterweight to its avoidance of melody, harmony, and lyrics.

Popular song remains a central issue in the São Paulo independent experimental scene. Musicians regularly brought up song in conversation as a dominant element of the broader cultural sphere with which they inevitably engaged, whether via experimental reinterpretation or conscious rejection. Guilherme Granado summed up a typical attitude regarding song, musing, "Brazil still has a lot—we have an absurd respect for song, Brazilian culture… Song is a really important thing."[338] This is not to say that all participants viewed popular song as negative; indeed, most participants who addressed the matter expressed great affection for the country's various song traditions. Yet at the same time that they confessed to enjoying iconic songwriters such as João Gilberto or Caetano Veloso, individuals also expressed a consistent desire to forge new territory in the realm of creative practice and not be limited by the form in concert.

In addition to coming up in informal conversation, the subject of song has also been a matter of debate in media forums. In 2015, for instance, the online electroacoustic journal *Linda* published a series of articles and interviews discussing the potential qualities of "experimental song." The discussion was spearheaded by theremin player Julia Teles, who wrote an article posing a simple question in the title: "Experimental Song, What Is It?" ("E a canção experimental, o que é?").[339] This formed part a series of articles discussing the various possibilities for experimental song, touching on subjects such as works by previous experimentally oriented Brazilian popular musicians such as Walter Franco and Tom Zé, as well as related genres such as sound poetry (Camarinha 2014; Holderbaum 2015; Teles 2015). This discussion occurred at the same time that a concert of "experimental song" took place in the nearby city of Campinas, hosted by NME, the same organization that publishes *Linda*. In conversation, Teles emphasized her own doubts about the nature of experimental song, noting,

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[338] Interview with Guilherme Granado, May 2, 2016. "O Brasil ainda tem muito—a gente tem um respeito pela canção absurdo, né, a cultura brasileira... a canção é uma coisa muito importante."

[339] Teles 2015. Like others who have written about Brazilian popular song, Teles drew from Tatit's writings on the medium, which remain central.

"It's difficult to define, really, especially because what's experimental and what's not? If I take a guitar and play some Tom Jobim, it's not experimental, but if I play a harmony from another song and play and sing another, it is. I don't know."[340] The point, she said, was to ask questions and open new avenues of discussion, and work out the potential answers to these questions in tandem with like-minded individuals.

Teles's questions about experimental song form part of a broader phenomenon in the São Paulo scene in which musicians employ the improvisational milieu of the independent experimental stage as a site for reinventing popular song's structural elements. I identify two broad interrelated tendencies in this endeavor: instances in which artists reconfigure the structural and symbolic qualities of popular song while still maintaining certain core elements of the form, and those in which musicians reject the voice-and-accompaniment configuration of popular song and seek to move beyond its framework on a more comprehensive level. The degree to which they do so, moreover, varies widely from person to person and from performance to performance, with considerable ramifications in the connotative power of the sounds they generate onstage.

Members of the São Paulo scene who remain tangentially engaged with song forms tend to employ performance practices that evoke or adapt qualities of song but reconfigure them in ways that challenge its structural integrity. They employ creative techniques such as the incorporation of vocables, the juxtaposition of existing melody and lyrics with highly experimental instrumental textures, and improvised lyrics. They also engage in studio production and work with pre-composed elements of performance on a more consistent basis. In conversation, they sometimes acknowledged being informed in part by song structures in

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[340] Interview with Julia Teles, June 13, 2016. "…é difícil delimitar, mesmo, até porque o que é experimental, o que não é? Se eu pegar um violão aqui e tocar um Tom Jobim, não é experimental, mas se eu fizer uma harmonia de outra música e tocar e cantar outra é. Eu não sei."

performance. This was the approach favored by Granado, who proclaimed a love for song and confessed to thinking of song structures when he engaged in his own improvisational performances.[341] These same individuals also were more likely to incorporate purposeful references to established creative movements in shows and develop conceptual pieces that refer to these intertextual relationships. Vocalist Marcela Lucatelli, for instance, professed great affection for the post-Tropicália era of experimental song, as well as the verbal reconfigurations of movements such as sound poetry and Brazilian concrete poetry, and situated "deconstruct[ing]" and "playing with" the form as a central creative impetus.[342] "Maybe it's not song," she asserted, "but then again, it is. A lot of it also comes from this desire to expand, because the sensation we have is that things expanded in one moment and now they've hardened. You'll see that what's going on in Brazilian popular music, what you see in the media is something very, very poor. If you think about all the experiments that were done, it's… it's cute, it's OK, but… but it's important that there's more wealth, right? More threads going on."[343] For artists such as Lucatelli, reconfiguring the constituent elements of the form also functions as an important means of challenging the norms of the broader cultural sphere from which it exerts influence.

Other members of the São Paulo scene more explicitly reject the voice-and-accompaniment configuration of popular song and seek to move beyond its framework on a comprehensive level. These musicians' abstract performances feature a greater emphasis on texture and timbre over melody and harmony, avoid the inclusion of lyrics, and are almost

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[341] Interview with Guilherme Granado, May 2, 2016. "Eu adoro canção. Quando eu estou improvisando eu estou pensando em canção."

[342] Interview with Marcela Lucatelli, August 8, 2017. "…desconstrução;" "brincar com essa forma."

[343] Interview with Marcela Lucatelli, August 8, 2017. "Talvez não seja canção, mas então é. Vem muito desse desejo também de expandir, porque a sensação que se tem é que as coisas se expandiram num momento e agora se endureceram. Você vai ver o que que está acontecendo na música popular brasileira, o que que se veicula na mídia é uma coisa muito, muito pobre. Se você for pensar tudo os experimentos que foram feitos né, é... É bonitinho, é ok, mas, mas é importante que se tenha mais riqueza, né? Mais vertentes aí rolando."

exclusively improvised live in concert. For these individuals, the structural framework of popular song is inherently incompatible with the spirit of open-ended exploration. Cesar Zanin, in a characteristic example of this perspective, situated the idea of experimental song as a contradiction in terms. "Between song and experimental music," he argued, "there is an abyss. It's impossible for you to be popular, in the sense of the structure of song, and experimental at the same time."[344] It is important to note that individuals who consciously rejected popular song did so not because of a dislike of song-based genres or a belief in their inferiority, but because of a personal interest in moving beyond the limited creative scope of the framework. These viewpoints are not indicative of social divisions or lasting rifts between individual artists, but instead are representative of the diversity of beliefs and approaches to performance in the scene.

In the following sections, I investigate the potential social and political ramifications of independent experimental musicians' decisions to reinvent established genres and song forms. I focus particularly on how collaborative improvisation fosters creative avenues, communitarian dynamics, and forms of social commentary not possible within existing generic frameworks or the traditional framework of popular song. I first address the ways in which participants from independent genres have shifted to open-ended improvisation as a means of democratizing performance and leaving behind the hierarchical voice-and-accompaniment structure of song. Then, concentrating on the itinerant improvisational performance series Carta Branca and the studio album *Outros Baratos*, I investigate the ways in which members of the scene from popular genres participate in free forms of improvisation as a means of fostering more immediate and direct ways of responding to recent developments in the political sphere. I integrate these discussions with a consideration of how as part of their efforts in reinventing the structural

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[344] Interview with Cesar Zanin and Mariana Cetra, December 20, 2015. "Entre a canção e a música experimental há um abismo. É impossível você ser ao mesmo tempo popular, no sentido de estrutura de canção, e experimental.

framework of popular song, these artists also reconfigure in turn the genres and cultural traditions from which they came.

From Song to Sound

The abstract turmoil of an Auto concert generates a tense and volatile air in the vicinity. In concert, its members generate an unpredictable sonic profile characterized by expansive tonal contrasts and stark dissonance, punctuated with crackles of feedback and focused rhythmic energy. Although they occasionally incorporate pre-established themes or motifs, their performances are principally improvised, and vary widely from venue to venue and concert to concert. Its members are among the most active collaborators in São Paulo and regularly perform with musicians from a wide range of backgrounds, thus acting as central conduits through which the inventive musical currents of the scene flow.

In this section, I employ the performance practices and conceptual orientations of the band Auto as a means of examining how independent experimental musicians renounce song forms outright and pursue the wholesale reinvention of the standards of genre. I attribute this process to two phenomena: first, a shift to collaborative improvisation, both within and outside of the group, and second, a conscious move away from the voice-and-accompaniment structure of popular song. I characterize the resulting sonic shift onstage as a *democratization* of song, which both draws from and contributes to the broader ethos of egalitarianism running through the São Paulo scene. It constitutes a key means by which members of the scene embody the social and political principles by which they wish to live in the framework of musical sound itself.

Attending an Auto concert wasn't always such an unpredictable experience. The band was founded in 1996, by members Carlos Issa (guitar and electronics), Marcelo Fusco (drums

and electronics), Marcilio Silva (bass), and US musician Jonathan Gall (vocals), all of whom had experience participating in the city's various punk circuits. They were joined soon after by drummer Alexandre Amaral, who had engaged in the city's punk scene as well but also had experience with other genres such as free jazz. In the immediate years after its founding, the group followed the creative and operational model of 1990s-era hardcore punk bands, using rehearsals to compose short (less than two minutes) voice-and-accompaniment songs with pre-written lyrics, with the intention of performing them at punk venues and releasing them on albums via DIY labels. Their initial recordings betray the band's origins in local punk culture and largely follow the sonic model pioneered by international bands such as Minor Threat and Brazilian groups such as Mercenárias. In concert, the band rarely incorporated improvisation and employed little of the stylistic fluidity that characterizes their present-day efforts.

This changed in 2000, when Auto entered a decade-long hiatus during which time Gall left for his native United States and the various band members pursued their own separate projects. When Gall returned in 2010 and the band members reunited, their interests and performance practices had changed on a fundamental level. While they continued to draw inspiration from DIY principles, they were no longer interested in engaging in pre-composed, song-based formats. Instead, they decided to explore new directions in the milieu of collaborative improvisation. Issa attributed this change in large part to the changes in the popular music landscape that took place over the decade, including the general move away from song forms, as well as greater interest in experimentation among the band members themselves. As he recalled,

> A lot of things happened in those ten years in music—song began to become more abstract, improvisation, other equipment… I managed to put together my own equipment. I only had a guitar without a pedal, with nothing. I plugged it directly into the amp, I started to test out other things that interested me beyond punk rock songs—more experimental things. And then when Jon came back and we got back together everyone had kind of gone through that—through that explosion of sonic language. Everyone was

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testing various things out, with other equipment, getting out of the realm of rock composition. So it was easy—we got together still a bit addicted to the first phase trying to write songs. We made several and we listened and said "Wow, this is really boring rock, it's not even worth listening to." They were good, but it was kind of uninteresting. Everyone already wanted more things happening—more sounds, more madness, more disease, more atmosphere, various things happening.[345]

Issa's reminiscence of this transformation also aptly characterizes the broader shift in musical preferences and tendencies that led to the larger-scale emergence of the São Paulo scene, which is largely composed of musicians who began their careers in song-based genre cultures but moved towards more open-ended collaborative techniques over time.

These changes set the stage for the band's shift towards improvisation and concurrent move away from fixed genres and song forms. Soon after their reunion, the members reduced rehearsals and began to almost exclusively play in concert. Although they continue to release albums from time to time, the heart of their creative approach lies in the realm of onstage performance, which bears little resemblance to their recordings. As Amaral recalled, "It didn't make much sense to rehearse. We recorded the album, had themes there, but never played the same themes. Every show was different from one another."[346] Amaral's resistance to the notion of rehearsal resonates with the practice of free improvisers, many of whom eschew rehearsal as incompatible with the improvisatory spirit.[347] Occasionally, the band still chooses to incorporate

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[345] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "Nesses dez anos aconteceu muita coisa na música—essa canção começou a ficar mais abstrata, a improvisação, outros equipamentos... consegui me equipar. Eu só tinha uma guitarra sem pedal, sem nada. Eu ligava direto no ampli, assim, eu comecei a testar outras coisas que me interessavam além da canção de punk rock—umas coisas mais experimentais. E aí quando o John voltou e a gente se reuniu todo mundo meio que passou por isso, por essa explosão de linguagem sonora. Todo mundo foi testando várias coisas, com outros equipamentos, saiu desse métier da composição de rock, assim. Então, foi fácil—a gente se encontrou ainda um pouco com vício da primeira fase tentando fazer canções, assim. A gente fez algumas e a gente escutava e falava 'Nossa, isso aqui tá um rock chato, não dá nem para escutar.' Eram boas, mas estava meio desinteressante. Todo mundo já estava querendo mais coisa acontecendo—mais sons, mais loucura, mais doença, mais atmosfera, várias coisas acontecendo."

[346] Interview with Alexandre Amaral, January 26, 2016. "Não fazia muito sentido, assim, ensaiar. A gente gravou o disco, tinha ali os temas, mas nunca tocava esses temas igual. Cada show era diferente um do outro."

[347] As David Borgo notes, "Free improvisers, in general, share the view that technical and improvisational accomplishments are best arrived at through in-context development and experience rather than through isolated training. The idea of 'rehearsing during playing sessions, however, is less common because, as the term implies, the 're-hearing' of musical details to perfect a musical gesture, formal section, or complete performance runs counter to the aesthetics of improvisation" (Borgo 2005:24).

pre-composed material or even repeat material from previous concerts; however, most of the time their shows are entirely or almost entirely improvised. At heart, the band's focus remains on maintaining the ability to respond to each other and their own performance instincts in the moment.

For Auto, the transition to improvisation created an ideal creative environment for exploring new musical directions and moving beyond delineated genre boundaries. On a basic level, this occurs due to the band members' commitment to supporting open-ended exploration in performance. Being able to go where one feels and follow the impetuses of one's body in a supportive environment lends itself naturally to the generation of new idiomatic configurations, and the music of Auto is no exception. The value of individual liberty onstage arose as a constant theme in conversation, and seemed to constitute a central element of their experience of exploring new stylistic areas. As Issa asserted, "You can really do something different every day, and it's a… it's as if it's a great big laboratory, that doesn't need any definition in terms of sound."[348] This orientation towards independence, in his mind, played a key role in allowing musicians to take crucial creative risks and make, as he put it, "those crazy mixtures of genre, of category, of equipment."[349] Issa's sentiments were shared by other members of the band, who tended to employ characteristically post-generic discursive strategies that repudiated terms of stylistic categorization. As Amaral asserted, for instance, the music they made was impossible to classify—driven by an "instinctive" approach to performance practice.[350] Although the members of the band do not consciously seek to move beyond generic frameworks, leaving behind the

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[348] Interview with Carlos Issa, August 9, 2017. "Você pode realmente fazer uma coisa diferente todo dia e é uma... é como se fosse um grande laboratório, assim, que não necessita nenhuma definição sonora."
[349] Interview with Carlos Issa, August 9, 2017. "...essas misturas malucas, de gênero, de categoria, de equipamento."
[350] Interview with Alexandre Amaral, January 26, 2016. "…instintivo."

trappings of style is an inevitable side effect of this phenomenon, in which established genre

standards become a footnotes in the perceptual matrix of performance.[351]

Auto's members are further motivated by the alchemical creative reactions generated by

ongoing onstage collaboration, both within and beyond the immediate context of the band.[352]

Like their companions in the broader São Paulo scene, members of Auto interact with each other,

perform with other individuals from different backgrounds, and subsequently feed back into the

group anew, bringing new experiences of performance to the stage for the next concert. For

Amaral, his companions' discrete individual preferences and backgrounds centrally shaped his

experience as a musician and provided a chief appeal for participation in the band. Auto's

creative practice, he asserted, "is very chaotic, its whole process, bringing all five of us together.

Every individual has a different taste. It's really chaotic, and this brings something good to the

music that's created there. There are a lot of inexplicable things that happen there [onstage]."[353]

Gall referred to collaboration as the "biggest success and the biggest challenge" of his experience

as a musician, and emphasized the ways in which it enabled the experience of "expanding your

vision as an artist."[354] The novel generic combinations that arise as a result of these encounters

are at heart socially driven, motivated first and foremost by human interaction. The band's

performances thus aptly embody the rhizomatic nature of creativity of the scene, discussed in

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[351] That improvisation can act as an impetus for leaving the constrains of genre behind is by no means limited to Auto and their companions in the São Paulo scene—as Graeme B. Wilson and Raymond A. R. MacDonald note, participants in a variety of improvisatory genre cultures, particularly those linked with free improvisation, have often come to view improvisation as a "post-genre musical process" (Wilson and MacDonald 2012:559; see also Biasutti and Frezza 2009).

[352] Using a data set of performances that took place between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2017 at events sponsored by the institutions Ibrasotope, Hotel Bar, Improvise!, Dissonantes, Estúdio Fita Crepe, and Brava, Issa collaborated with 40 other musicians, Gall collaborated with 31, Amaral collaborated with 17, Silva collaborated with 10, and Fusco collaborated with 5. Issa was one of the most prolific collaborators in the scene. As noted in the introduction, because this data set only uses performances sponsored by four institutions that occurred over a limited period of time, the total number of collaborations these individuals participated in is much larger.

[353] Interview with Alexandre Amaral, January 26, 2016. "...o Auto é muito caótico, assim, todo o processo dele, de junção dos cinco ali. Cada um tem um gosto diferente. E é bem caótico, e isso traz uma coisa boa para a música que é criada ali. Tem muita coisa meio que inexplicável ali."

[354] Interview with Jonathan Gall, November 3, 2015.

Chapter Two, in which performers generate new sounds—and consequently new stylistic

amalgamations—as a result of extensive interpersonal collaboration.

Auto's band members are able to successfully negotiate the potentially tricky dynamics

of improvisation by drawing from extensive experience playing together and employing intuitive

strategies for resolving the collision of disparate sounds within a cohesive and inclusive

narrative. Over the course of the past two decades, they have become finely attuned to each

other's actions and exploratory tendencies onstage, and have developed a shared vocabulary of

techniques and responses they use in the moment to achieve an effective conversation in

performance. Members of Auto trust each other on a core level, and feel confident that they will

feel supported and mindfully responded to rather than ignored. These strategies allow musicians

to create new stylistic mixtures in productive rather than combative ways in concert. Amaral

characterized the connection and communication the band members had as "perfect" and

asserted that it allowed them to overcome the difficulties they occasionally experienced as a

result of having to adjust to playing in unfamiliar venues or using new equipment.[355]

Auto's improvisatory turn generated a radical shift in the structural framework of their

performances, in which the band abandoned the song-based voice-and-accompaniment texture of

their earlier years in favor of an open and abstract form. They accomplished this by consciously

subverting, circumventing, and rejecting outright the traditional constituent elements of the

individualistic model of the *cancionista*: by engaging in collective improvisation instead of

relying on pre-composed material, foregrounding live performance instead of recording,

emphasizing the exploration of texture and timbre over melody and harmony, and using collage

techniques that subvert the horizontal logic of through-composed melodies. The band's most

dramatic structural shift with regard to the conventions of song manifested in the radically

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[355] Interview with Alexandre Amaral, January 26, 2016. "…perfeita."

different vocal approach Gall employed in concert. Rather than incorporating pre-written lyrics set to tonal melodies, he abandons conventional verbal logic entirely, choosing instead to explore the timbral possibilities of the voice—groans, wails, improvised clusters of half-words and vocables. When he does incorporate sung lyrics and melodies, they emerge unpredictably and last for brief periods of time, more like samples or parts of a collage than an extended song text. In conversation, Gall highlighted the embodied nature of his approach to vocal performance as a key element of its appeal, and asserted that it enabled him to signify deeper, "more instinctive" levels of meaning and personal expression than would be possible with more conventional vocal techniques.[356] Gall's shift from verbal expression to the more purely timbral registers of the voice also allows him to strip away the traditional elements of popular song—melody and lyrics—leaving only intonation in its most visceral and exposed form. This permits him to engage with his band mates not as a separate singer of lyrics supported by instrumental accompaniment, but instead as a more general creator of sound operating within the same symbolic framework as his collaborators.

These changes were motivated by a mindful decision to reject the structural framework of song. Issa, in particular, was especially explicit about his desire to move away from song-based forms, which he characterized as implicitly hierarchical and incongruous with the ethos of egalitarianism the band sought to embody in their approach to creative practice.[357] Today, he asserted, the band operates with the attitude that "everything has the same value. Even when Jon sings a cappella by himself, he also enters this horizontal perspective, really balancing and letting

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[356] Interview with Jonathan Gall, November 3, 2015.

[357] "The construction of song," Issa asserted, "is always vertical. There's the instruments at the base level, then next there's the vocalist a bit higher, and then there's the Odyssey that's told in the lyrics by the vocalist. There's that life —there's that experience of life that enters the lyrics that the vocalist sings, and the instruments, they're at the base. There's that step. There's a hierarchy—I see a hierarchy in song." Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "A construção da canção é sempre vertical. E tem os instrumentos numa primeira base, assim, aí depois tem o vocalista um pouco mais alto, e depois tem a Odisseia que é contada na letra pelo vocalista. Tem aquela vida, tem aquela experiência de vida que entra na letra que o vocalista canta, e os instrumentos eles são base. Tem esse degrau. Tem uma hierarquia—eu enxergo uma hierarquia na canção."

everyone have the same vote. All sounds are worth a vote, you know?"[358] Issa emphasized the

creative benefits of the band's decision to "abstract" (*abstrair*) their approach to performance

and stop engaging with song forms, arguing that it allowed "everyone to do things—Marcilio,

Alê, Fusco, John, and me. Everyone's writing things, and the whole business seems to get richer,

right? There are more ideas inside the sound."[359] He drew further attention to what he viewed as

the social benefits of this shift, which he asserted had led to a dynamic in which "everyone does

what they want at the time they want and how they want."[360] Issa's emphasis on collaboration

and inclusivity implicitly refutes the authorial model of creativity forwarded by the iconic figure

of the *cancionista*, as well as the broader individualist norms of performance common in the

more mainstream areas of the Brazilian popular music sphere.

Are these comments a product of convenient post-hoc reflection or are they

representative of some broader current running through the band and the broader scene as a

whole? It is not particularly surprising, after all, that Issa, as an instrumentalist, would be

especially interested in leaving the voice-and-accompaniment setting of song. Yet although his

companions in the band did not express the same explicit theorization of the departure from

popular song as he did, they echoed his sentiments with regard to the importance of engaging

with one another on equal terms and their preference for the band's contemporary phrase over its

earlier years. Gall, for instance, emphasized the personal ramifications of his departure from

singing pre-arranged lyrics in favor of open-ended improvisation, which in his mind allowed him

to feel "really present and really listen and speak with attention."[361] Engaging in freer, more

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[358] Interview with Carlos Issa, February 4, 2016. "Tudo tem o mesmo valor. Até quando o John faz uma a capela sozinho, também entra nessa perspectiva de horizontal, de realmente equilibrar e deixar todo mundo como o mesmo voto, assim. Todos os sons valem um voto, sabe?"
[359] Interview with Carlos Issa, August 9, 2017. "Todo mundo faz coisa, o Marcílio, o Alê, o Fusco, eu, e o John. Então, tá todo mundo compondo e o negócio parece que fica mais rico assim, né? Tem mais ideias dentro do som."
[360] Interview with Carlos Issa, August 9, 2017. "…todo mundo faz o que quiser a hora que quiser e como quiser."
[361] Interview with Jonathan Gall, November 3, 2015.

abstract forms of performance, in his mind, generated feelings of possibility and novelty not possible to achieve within the practices of song-based genres such as punk rock. "What really interests me," he mused, "is not knowing what's gonna happen. I've had bands where we played the same songs over and over and its gets old, you know? I don't want to make the same drawing all the time."[362]

This mentality reveals an approach to creative practice in which the dynamics and underlying principles of performance embody core social values and ways of orienting oneself to the world. For Auto, the decision to leave the structural framework of popular song in favor of more open-ended, non-hierarchical forms of performance mirrors—and helps to foster in turn—a more inclusive social ethos in addition to its creative benefits. It suggests a conceptualization of improvisation not only as a laboratory for transcending established standards of form, but also as a democratizing force rooted in egalitarian social terms.[363]

Speaking in Real Time

A casual observer to the Carta Branca (Carte Blanche) concert series might be forgiven for anticipating a consonant mix of popular genres occupying more or less the formal vein of *canção*. Many of the musicians present have extensive experience playing in song-based styles: MC Rodrigo Brandão has spent more than a decade participating in São Paulo's hip hop scene, vocalist Tulipa Ruiz has achieved acclaim as a solo performer and songwriter in the New MPB vein, and drummer Pupillo first became known for his work with the *manguebeat* band Nação

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[362] Interview with Jonathan Gall, November 3, 2015.
[363] The idea that performance contains the potential to not only represent, but actively enact, vital principles of social interaction and organization shares certain basic elements with other creative cultures; Steven Feld, for instance, draws attention to the ways in which the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea embody different types of social relationships and interactions with the environment within the structural modes of musical performance, while Simon H. Fell identifies similarly inclusive impetuses in the practice and discourse of British experimental musicians such as Cornelius Cardew and free improvisation pioneer Derek Bailey (Feld 1984:403; Fell 2015).

Zumbi. Other participants, such as keyboardist and electronic musician Guilherme Granado and clarinetist and percussionist Rogério Martins, are harder to stylistically pin down, and transit between a range of creative practices within and beyond the aegis of the São Paulo independent experimental scene. What emerges from the improvisational milieu fostered onstage is not the voice-and-accompaniment structure of popular song, but an entirely more unpredictable entity— a shifting, mutant sound that gathers and resituates the various constituent parts of the genres from which the musicians hail in a volatile metamorphosis.

This section addresses the ways in which musicians from popular song-based genres engage in open-ended improvisation as a means of departing from the authorial creative model of the *cancionista* and developing more immediate ways of addressing contemporary sociopolitical concerns. My analysis centers on an extended creative relationship between the musicians Rodrigo Brandão, Guilherme Granado, and Rogério Martins, who participated in an ongoing series of improvisatory performances with artists from a range of stylistic backgrounds. At the time of this writing, the musicians had worked together for almost two years, playing at a variety of venues across the institutional matrix of the São Paulo scene. I concentrate on two manifestations of this project: the in-house residency Carta Branca, hosted at Estúdio Fita Crepe in August 2017, and the 2018 album *Outros Baratos*, in which the three musicians collaborated with fourteen other artists on an improvised LP.

As a means of conceptualizing this phenomenon, I propose the notion of *popular improvisation*: the act of engaging in unstructured or minimally structured forms of improvisation while also incorporating prominent symbolic elements of popular genres. While the participants in popular improvisation do not shy away from abstract or difficult sonic configurations, they also embrace more consonant sounds, many of which evoke established styles in overt ways. The commonplace presence of lyrics, samples, and extramusical references

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lends considerable connotative power to performances that can be accessible to specialists and casual listeners alike. These qualities distinguish popular improvisation from more structured improvisatory frameworks developed in individual genres such as jazz, as well as "non-idiomatic" forms of improvisation practiced in genre cultures dedicated to free improvisation, whose practitioners often view explicit quotations or extended stylistic markers as limiting.[364] Popular improvisation also contains *populist* qualities as a result of its inclusion of more consonant sounds and the potential it affords practitioners to explicitly respond to contemporary sociopolitical questions. In the case of the musicians examined in this study, it affords a measure of expressive freedom in both the creative and discursive realms—a critical means for contemporary cultural producers to develop new creative languages and react to what they see as disturbing trends in the social and political spheres.

The project emerged in the midst of a tumultuous political environment in early 2017. At the time, the country's recession endured unabated, austerity programs continued to devastate the budgets of cultural institutions, and the fallout from Dilma Rousseff's impeachment had shaken the country's left wing on a fundamental level. Brandão had recently returned from a collaborative project in New York City and was struck by the recent developments. Although he had extensive experience as an MC in São Paulo's hip hop circles, he found himself motivated to move beyond the genre's songlike structural framework. "When we came back," he recalled, "this whole scenario that's happening in Brazil had already started to take place. So I started to understand—I said, 'To do rap today, in the same format and structure of song, with a pre-recorded beat, with a defined map, seems to me something that's right for a time where things

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[364] David Borgo, for instance, acknowledges the occasional value of incorporating recognizable stylistic signifiers in order to "produce either a pronounced disjuncture in the music or a type of stylistic pastiche," but argues that "overly specific musical gestures can stifle group creativity. For instance, if a musician initiates a pronounced idiomatic gesture in a freer improvised setting, perhaps something with a strong tonal or metric character to it, it can have the effect of limiting the options available to others" (2005:187).

are happening in a very urgent rhythm.' I began to understand that. I said, 'Wow, I need to find another form of expression that isn't that of rap, of song,' in order to be able to have more of a dialogue with what's happening nowadays."[365] Improvisation struck him as a natural way of engaging in this type of conversation, particularly less structured forms of improvisation without delineated rules or frameworks. After communicating with Granado and Martins, both of whom Brandão had known for some time, the seeds of the project that would yield Carta Branca and *Outros Baratos* were sown.

The consequences of this creative decision are implicitly political. To consciously disengage from song is to reject the formal backbone of Brazilian musical culture and the primary expressive medium in which cultural producers have negotiated socio-political discourse since the advent of radio. Furthermore, the milieu of open-ended improvisation enables musicians to respond directly to contemporary issues in a maximally immediate and unmediated context free from external institutional interference. Musicians can feel empowered to speak their mind and engage in commentary that might not find support in a widely distributed album; likewise, audience members can attend the events with the knowledge that the artists they come to see will likely perform unencumbered by institutional censorship. These dynamics afford closer and more engaged forms of interpersonal interaction than would be possible within the conventional creative structure of song-based genres. Brandão characterized the experience in intimate terms, as "a special, spontaneous, and genuine moment" for all those involved.[366] Rather

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[365] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "…quando a gente voltou, já tava começando a acontecer todo esse cenário aqui, que está rolando no Brasil. Aí eu comecei a entender—falei assim, 'Fazer rap agora, no mesmo formato de canção, de estrutura, com o beat pré gravado, com um mapa definido, me parece uma coisa muito pronta para uma época onde as coisas estão acontecendo em um ritmo muito urgente.' E comecei a entender isso. Falei 'Nossa, eu preciso achar uma outra forma de expressão que não seja esse de rap, de canção,' para conseguir dialogar mais com o que está acontecendo hoje em dia."
[366] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "um momento especial, espontâneo, e genuíno."

than responding to a fixed text determined beforehand by a removed *cancionista*, the musicians' creative decisions and emotional experiences are mediated by embodied co-presence.

In concert, the musicians' minimally structured creative approach yields a series of lush, circuitous sonic textures that incorporate a variety of connotative markers. Some are transient and subtle—a trumpet flourish reminiscent of Miles Davis's album *Bitches Brew*, brief percussive pulses of samba, soft waves of feedback. Those that involve vocal utterances more often evoke concrete extra-musical figures and phenomena. In the concert detailed at the beginning of this dissertation, for instance, Ruiz launched into a pitch-perfect rendition of the cry of a tropical bird, while Brandão delivered an extended spoken riff on Racionais MC's iconic hip hop song "Artigo 157." At times, Brandão directly engages the audience; in the end of the opening show of the residency, for example, he moved around the room, pausing in front of each audience member to pronounce the phrase, "É guerra contra os que rebeldem" ("It's war against those who rebel"). In other moments, the group explored more abstract sonic configurations beyond the purview of any discernible idiom. Each concert presented a different kaleidoscope of sounds and subjectivities, simultaneously mystifying yet also intimate and familiar.

Like the members of Auto, the three core participants in Carta Branca mediate the potentially volatile emergent dynamics of free improvisation by drawing from mutual trust and a shared set of communicative dynamics specific to the group. Granado spoke of a "musical language" that the trio had developed over multiple years playing together that enabled them to negotiate the inherent unpredictability of the form towards productive rather than conflicting ends.[367] These interactive relationships constitute a crucial form of structure for what are otherwise mostly open-ended performances. Brandão drew attention to the importance of balanced communication in this process, which he asserted generated "a great sense of freedom,

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[367] Conversation with Guilherme Granado, August 1, 2017. "…linguagem musical."

which at the same time is connected with that thing of you being free to do what you want—but it's not anything, because it has to be harmonious with that energy that each person is contributing to at that time."[368]

In contrast to some of the scene's more strictly free improvisations, the group does incorporate minor elements of pre-established material that shape the narrative structure of performances in important ways. This manifests most prominently in the form of textual material that Brandão brings to each show. This material encompasses a variety of sources: in the concert discussed at the beginning of the dissertation, for instance, he incorporated the Portuguese-language version of the Patti Smith book *Just Kids* (*Só Garotos*), printed-out lyrics from other songs, and poetic material of his own design (Fig. 6.4), while in another show he brought copies of the lyrics to Gilberto Gil's song "Tempo Rei" (Fig. 6.5). He typically avoids laying out any pre-determined order in which he will engage with the texts, preferring instead to employ them as raw lyrical material to quote as he sees fit in the moment of performance and as general conceptual stimuli for his own spoken word improvisations, which occasionally play off the themes in the texts. During the recording of the *Outros Barato* album when he shared the studio with Juçara Marçal and Tulipa Ruiz, the texts functioned as a shared point of thematic reference around which the three vocalists grounded their otherwise open performances.

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[368] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "…um sentimento de liberdade muito grande, que ao mesmo tempo, ele está ligado com essa coisa de você está livre para fazer o que você quiser—mas não é qualquer coisa, porque tem que está harmonioso com aquela energia, com o que cada um está contribuindo naquela hora."
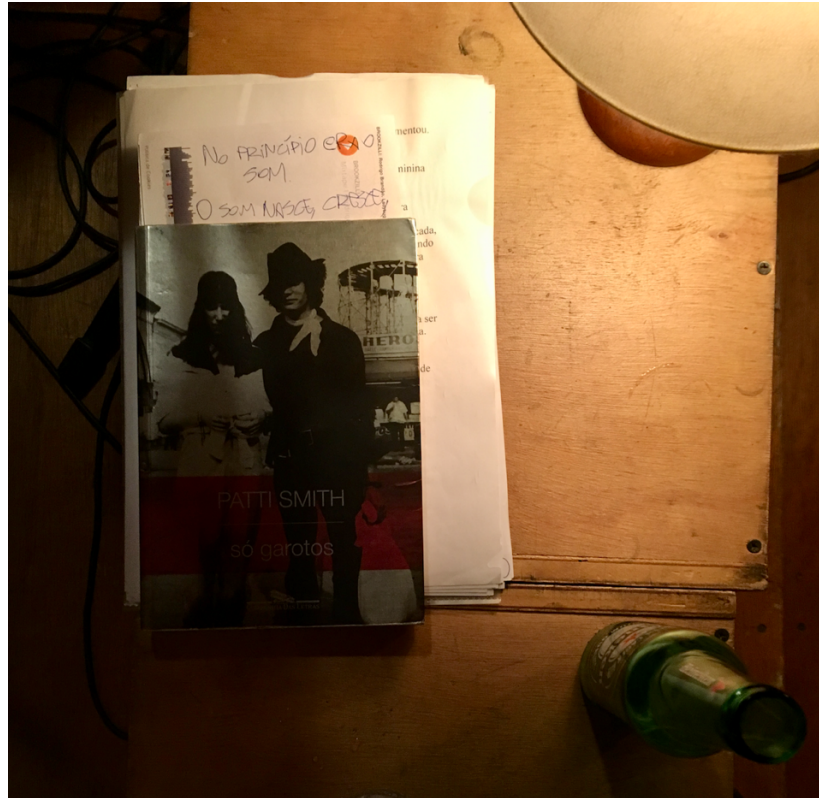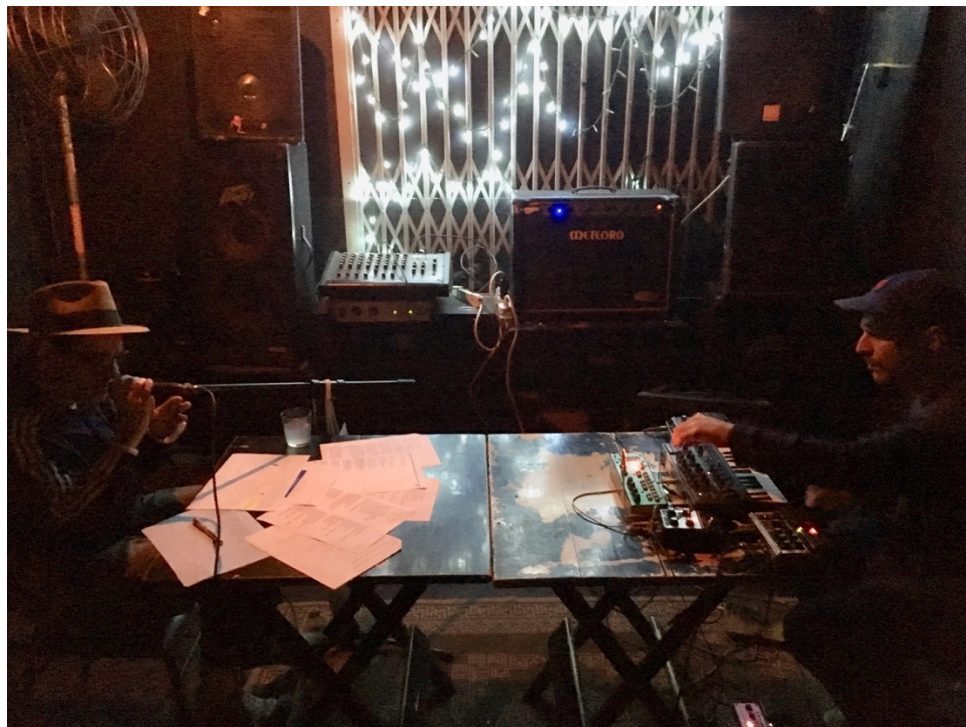
Figure 6.4: Rodrigo Brandão's texts: Patti Smith's Just Kids (Só Garotos) *and a mixture of lyrical material by Brandão and other artists. Estúdio Fita Crepe, August 15, 2017.*

Figure 6.5: Rodrigo Brandão (left) and Guilherme Granado (right) perform. Brandão has the lyrics to Gilberto Gil's "Tempo Rei" in front of him. Hotel Bar, June 27, 2018.

These creative approaches were motivated by a conscious decision to leave the structural framework of popular song. While Brandão confessed to appreciating the medium, he felt that its removed and individualistic approach no longer afforded a sufficiently appropriate response to the challenges of the moment. As he asserted,

> These days in Brazil, you don't know what will happen tomorrow. We don't even know what will happen tonight, things are so out of control. So, given all that, it seems to me that if I try to work on a show today to present next week, this could sound like something premeditated—something really prepared, that no longer fits the moment, the instant we're living in. Whatever I thought yesterday might no longer work now. So that free improvisation thing gives you this mobility to keep things genuine. In the moment you'll say, "Alright, things have changed since the last time I rehearsed, but it's okay, because it's free, so I can incorporate the news that I just heard on the radio on my way here." For me, this is one of the most important things—the power for you to speak in real time.[369]

Brandão stressed the importance of developing new creative forms as a key element of this endeavor. "How," he asked, "are we going to respond to this effectively without using the same methods that they're using? Because if I don't want to become the same as whoever's acting arbitrary, I can't be arbitrary either."[370] In his mind, the times called for a deliberate "break" from song in favor of more direct and immediate forms of interpersonal engagement.[371] This attitude suggests the presence of a perspective in which the specific formal nature of creative practice constitutes an essential element of

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[369] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "No Brasil, hoje em dia, você não sabe o que vai acontecer amanhã. A gente não sabe nem o que vai acontecer hoje a noite, de tão fora de controle que as coisas estão. Então nisso, me parece que se eu tentar preparar um show hoje, para apresentar semana que vem, isso pode soar como uma coisa premeditada—uma coisa muito preparada, que já não condiz com o momento, com o instante em que nós estamos vivendo. O que eu pensei ontem, pode não estar mais valendo agora. Então a coisa da improvisação livre te dá essa mobilidade de manter a coisa genuína. No momento que você está falando 'Beleza, as coisas mudaram desde a última vez que eu ensaiei, mas tudo bem, porque é livre, então eu posso incorporar a notícia que eu acabei de ouvir no rádio vindo para cá.' Isso para mim é uma das coisas mais importantes, é o poder de você falar em tempo real.
[370] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "Como a gente vai reagir a isso de maneira eficaz, sem usar os mesmos métodos que eles estão usando? Porque se eu não quero me tornar igual a quem está agindo de maneira arbitrária, eu não posso ser arbitrário também."
[371] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "…quebra."

conscious creative commentary. Rather than developing oppositional content in the form of a protest song, the strategy advocated by Brandão and his partners foregrounds a more comprehensive re-evaluation of the creative languages individuals employ as a means of addressing contemporary issues. To address the urgency of the moment, in other words, one had to improvise.

Yet the musicians' departure from song is not total. The Carta Branca musicians do not enact a comprehensive elimination of the narrative structure of the form so much as a remix or reconfiguration—a hybrid framework that integrates abstract textures with explicit lyrical utterances structured by the logic of collage and pastiche. They are able to do so thanks to the presence of multiple vocalists with extensive improvisational experience who are able to effectively incorporate extended narrative material on the fly within the nonverbal textures constructed by their instrumentalist collaborators. The sonic fabric they weave onstage contains key remnants of the structural framework they seek to leave behind that contain considerable connotative power. For Brandão, the lingering presence of song was inevitable due to the musicians' shared history of participation in the form. As he noted, "In the end, even when we depart from song, the language of song informs the improvisation. Because, like it or not, we learned the format of song."[372] The resulting sonic configurations are both reminiscent of popular song but also fundamentally distinct from the individualistic model described by scholars such as Tatit. These dual qualities constitute a core element of popular improvisation that shapes the expressive effect of the concerts on a basic level.

In some ways, the musicians' approach recalls the 1970s-era disengagement from popular song enacted by experimentally oriented popular musicians such as Caetano Veloso and Walter

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[372] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "No final das contas, até quando a gente sai da canção, a linguagem de canção informa o improviso, sabe. Porque queira ou não queira a gente aprendeu o formato de canção."

Franco during the harshest period of the Brazilian dictatorship. As discussed in Chapter One, these artists employed techniques such as collage, incoherence, and the deconstruction of melody and lyrics as a means of circumventing censorship and expressing resistant reactions to the regime without engaging in explicit commentary. Their strategies resonate with the performances in the Carta Branca concert series, whose amorphous pastiche of abstract textures and concrete narrative qualities can recall iconic experimental songs such as Veloso's "De palavra em palavra" or Franco's "Xaxados e perdidos." At the same time, the lyrical content and performance model employed by Brandão, Granado, and Martins differs from the post-Tropicálist critical framework in key ways. Rather than incorporating experimental techniques as a means of disengaging from explicit commentary, the Carta Branca musicians foreground direct critique and impassioned modes of presentation within their broader experimental project. This occurs in part due to the greater discursive liberty afforded to contemporary artists, who do not (yet) face the same type of censorship enacted during the dictatorship. It also takes place due to the conscious creative shift they employ—the group's collective decision to participate in open-ended improvisation within supportive collaborative creative environments where artists are encouraged to speak their mind and address pressing issues in frank ways.

Central to this effect is the presence of narrative fragments of lyrical discourse that allow for complex intertextual references and sociopolitical commentary not afforded within the more nonverbal sonic configurations of the São Paulo scene. The track "Bebo Tempestade," off the *Outros Barato* album, provides a characteristic example. The piece centers around a polysemic repeated verbal motif, "I go to the street and drink the storm" ("Eu vou pra rua e bebo tempestade"), which grows in intensity with each repetition. Brandão integrates the verbal refrain with more extended improvised commentary:

| I go to the street and drink the storm | *Eu vou pra rua e bebo tempestade* |
| In the name of everyone who's escaped | *Em nome de todo mundo que está fudido* |

Physically, psychologically, morally, financially, spiritually	*Física, psicológica, moral, financeiro, espiritualmente*
All of those who are excluded, ignored, underestimated	*Todo aquele que é excluído, ignorado, subestimado*
Everyone who has the feeling that they're talking to the walls	*Todo mundo que tem a sensação de que está falando pras paredes*
Who doesn't fit in the box	*Quem não cabe na caixa*
[…]	*[…]*
But even so, even so,	*Mas mesmo assim, mesmo assim,*
I go to the street and drink the storm	*Eu vou pra rua e bebo a tempestade*
Everyone who's here with me	*Cada um que está aqui comigo*
For all the spirits who made this happen here	*Por todos os espíritos fizeram isso aqui acontecer*
For all the forces that are here to strengthen me	*Por todas as forças que estão aqui a me fortalecer*
Apart from thanking them	*Além de agradecer*
I go to the street and drink the storm	*Eu vou pra rua e bebo tempestade*

As Brandão's delivery intensifies, the instrumentalists escalate their playing in turn, generating an increasingly complex and chaotic set of punctuated sonic vectors sharing little in common with the pensive, meandering texture that begins the track. In addition to capturing some of the oppositional, active spirit of the contemporary moment with which the musicians seek to engage, the refrain cites an apt source—the final lyrics of Chico Buarque's iconic 1973 song "Bom Conselho" ("Good Advice"), which Buarque wrote at the height of the military dictatorship. This sort of reference allows the artists to both situate themselves in dialogue with the iconic masters of Brazilian popular song and the oppositional spirit that has long defined their creative ethos, while at the same time furnishing an new structural framework that affords more immediate and experimental forms of expression.

The vocalists' lyrical improvisations also enable them to incorporate cultural references that evoke Afro-Brazilian culture, particularly the religion of Candomblé. References to spiritual tenets central to the religion such as *axé* and the *orixás* are common in their performances. In some instances, this includes words from the Yoruba-derived liturgical language of the religion; in the *Outros Barato* track "Kolofé Iya Agba," for instance, vocalist Juçara Marçal incorporates

the eponymous title as a refrain, which roughly translates as a salute to ancestral mothers or female *orixás*.[373] Some of the participants in the project also asked for the blessing of the *orixás* before shows as a means of preparing themselves for the immersive moment of performance.[374] These forms of spiritual engagement arose in large part due to strong personal ties held by some members of the project, several of whom had participated in the religion for some time. In conversation, both Marçal and Brandão situated their connections to *orixás* as a central element of their experience performing music. Brandão, for example, asserted, "For me, music is an *orixá*. And when I stand before this *orixá*, which is the music, no other kind of altered state of consciousness is necessary."[375] These actions and references reflect the presence of a distinctly Afrological conceptual orientation among certain members of the São Paulo scene in which improvisation and creative freedom are not incompatible with explicit references to established tradition. While this is subtly present from time to time in some of the scene's instrumental performances, it is foregrounded to a more overt degree in projects that incorporate explicit verbal commentary.

Brandão and Marçal are able to integrate these complex extended narrative references within an open-ended improvisational framework by employing techniques drawn not from sung melodies or rapped verses, but from spoken word. Spoken word affords practitioners a great deal more performative freedom than the regimented structure of rap or melodic song-based genres, particularly in terms of its rhythmic delivery, which by design does not hew to delineated frameworks furnished by a beat or chord progression. As a result, vocalists are able to invent

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[373] "Kolofé" is a common greeting or salute in Candomblé and Umbanda ceremonies. Variations on the words "iya" and "agba" typically refer to mother figures, both in terms of worshippers' female ancestors and female *orixás*. See Capone 2010:60.

[374] Brandão likened the practice to "cleaning the environment, putting everyone… you know, letting things cool down and getting everyone ready to dive in together." Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "…limpar o ambiente, colocar todo mundo… sabe, abaixar a poeira e colocar todo mundo pronto para mergulhar junto."

[375] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "…para mim, que a música é um orixá. E que quando eu estou diante desse orixá, que é a música, nenhuma outra espécie de alteração de estado de consciência é necessária."

more complex verbal narratives on the fly than they might be able to in a more constrained rhythmic setup. The unpitched, rhythmically free vocal style of spoken word also effectively integrates with the more abstract textures constructed by the group's instrumentalists, who change directions frequently and typically do not linger on any distinct beat for an extended period of time. Brandão and Marçal temper the potential amorphousness of this texture by adopting a decisive style of delivery that cuts through the instrumentalists' often complex creations and provides a narrative backbone to performances that complements its lack of delineated rhythmic or melodic qualities.

Spoken word thus functions as a key means of negotiating the vocal dynamics of popular improvisation, which requires certain creative adjustments to accommodate its hybrid form. For Brandão, the more open-ended approach of spoken word offered distinct discursive and creative possibilities not possible within other improvisatory vocal practices such as freestyle rap, which he considered an essentially different type of practice. As he recalled, "So I came back here and all of this was going on. And I understood—I said, 'Wow, rap isn't the thing anymore. Now it has to be a more direct affair—more action and reaction.' And then it hit me—I said, 'Well, spoken word, it's really open to this, it already has something to do with free improvisation.'"[376] Brandão further emphasized the ways in which spoken word facilitated a departure from established generic frameworks without enacting a total disengagement. "I think that what we're doing now," he asserted, "is to hip hop just as free jazz is to traditional jazz. Because it has something of a theme, but it also has a slightly freer form and a space for you to improvise outside of the theme. I'd connect them that way. At one point, I even thought to call the album

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[376] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "E aí voltei pra cá e já estava rolando tudo isso. E aí eu entendi—falei 'Nossa, não é mais a coisa de rap agora. Agora tem que ser um negócio mais direto, mais ação e reação.' E aí eu me toquei, falei 'Poxa, a coisa de Spoken Word ela é bem aberta para isso, já tem relação com a coisa de improvisação livre.'"

'free rap.' But I said 'No, that's very reductionist. It's really—it leaves little room for people's imagination.'"[377]

Brandão's integrative attitude, shared by his collaborators, embodies the post-generic creative orientation at the heart of the São Paulo scene. It reflects a perspective that values the aesthetic markers and creative techniques of established genres while also resisting the act of generic classification as essentially limiting. This attitude contains certain core elements in common with both the radically rejectionist ethos of free improvisation and the agglomerative logic of cultural cannibalism, but ultimately adopts its own path—one that seeks to enact a conscious break with existing stylistic frameworks while still valuing their considerable symbolic power.

Concluding Thoughts: The Popular and the Experimental

By engaging with popular genres and forms, independent experimental musicians reorient the transformational gaze of musical experimentalism and complicate the broader distinction scholars have historically drawn between popular and experimental practices. Traditional narratives of Brazilian popular music tell of a storied lineage of song-based genres— samba in its various forms, bossa nova, Tropicália, *axé*—whose practitioners mix various idiomatic elements in innovative ways yet remain within conventional structural frameworks. Members of the São Paulo scene provoke a reconsideration of this narrative and challenge the symbolic dominance of elements that have long defined the Brazilian popular music sphere: the individualistic and heroic figure of the *cancionista*, the hierarchical structure of popular song, the

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[377] Interview with Rodrigo Brandão, June 29, 2018. "Eu acho que isso que a gente está fazendo agora, está para o hip hop assim como o free jazz está para o jazz tradicional. *[McNally: Faz sentido.]* Sabe, porque tem uma coisa de um tema, mas também tem uma forma um pouco mais livre e o espaço para você improvisar, fora o tema. Eu relaciono. Eu até, em determinado momento, cogitei chamar o disco de 'free rap.' Mas eu falei não, isso aí é muito reducionista. E muito, deixa pouco espaço para a imaginação das pessoas."

familiar textural configurations of long-established genres with deep ties to cultural heritage, the role of live performance and improvisation, the value of being unsettled. They also challenge the traditional purview of musical experimentalism, whose practitioners and chroniclers have often ignored the forms of established popular genres as irrelevant or antithetical to the experimentalist impetus. The musicians discussed in this chapter occupy a space in which engagement with popular forms is not only acceptable, but a core element of the experimental ethos. The resulting creative orientation opens the door to a host of inventive musical directions not normally considered within the purview of musical experimentalism, and with it, a range of new perspectives on creativity and culture in turn.

This multifaceted approach to cultural production inevitably encompasses contradictory perspectives and practices. Yet contradiction may in fact be a natural quality of this process and a key element of its appeal. The creative orientations circulating within the São Paulo scene contain multitudes, and cannot be encapsulated within any single conceptual roof. Indeed, resisting unified narratives—including, crucially, the neat divide between the popular and experimental spheres—constitutes a core element of the exploratory creative ethos that motivates independent experimentalism in São Paulo. Furthermore, foregrounding contradiction and multiplicity may indeed represent an appropriate expressive strategy for confronting the grotesque realities of contemporary Brazil, where established forms and sounds are routinely co-opted by dominant institutional players for often insidious ends. In an era where popular song no longer acts as a vehicle for protest, established genres such as samba provide the soundtrack to far right political campaigns, and experimental musics often linger in the halls of co-opted cultural institutions, developing new creative languages that confound the symbolic contours of mainstream musical discourse may constitute an especially apt response to the times. For the

musicians in this study, at least, it has become increasingly clear that something in the national

cultural fabric must change.

Conclusion

Experimental Citizenship

We speak another language. They say representation. We say experimentation. They say identity. We say crowd. They say control the periphery. We say hybridize the city. They say debt. We say sexual cooperation and somatic interdependence. They say human capital. We say multi-species alliance. They say horse meat on our plates. We say let's ride the horses to escape the global slaughterhouse together. They say power. We say potential. They say integration. We say open source.[378]

I encountered these words posted on a wall of the public cultural institution Funarte on May 19, 2016, in the wake of Dilma Rouseff's impeachment. Normally a placid venue with art installations, rehearsal spaces, and the occasional concert, at that moment the building overflowed with well over a hundred individuals as part of an ongoing nationwide sit-in protesting the recent political developments. Artists, activists, and progressively minded citizens filled the hallways and rooms, discussing the events and creating signs with slogans such as "Fora Temer" ("Out With Temer") and "Periferia Contra o Golpe" ("Periphery Against the Coup"). Outside, the crowd spilled out into the entrance way and garden as the informal leaders of the protest stood by the gate and answered questions to passers-by. Members of the independent experimental scene were there, too—in a dimly lit concert hall bathed in red and blue light toward the end of the building, Carlos Issa played a solo set on electronics as individuals moseyed in and out of the back of the hall. Over the course of the show, feedback

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[378] "Falamos uma outra linguagem. Eles dizem representação. Nós dizemos experimentação. Eles dizem identidade. Nós dizemos multidão. Eles dizem controlar a periferia. Nós dizemos mestiçar a cidade. Eles dizem dívida. Nós dizemos cooperação sexual e interdependência somática. Eles dizem capital humano. Nós dizemos aliança multi-espécies. Eles dizem carne de cavalo nos nossos pratos. Nós dizemos montemos nos cavalos para fugir juntos do abatedouro global. Eles dizem poder. Nós dizemos potência. Eles dizem integração. Nós dizemos código aberto."

and harsh noise from his performance filtered into the atrium, mixing with the ambient noise of

the city and the assembled crowd.
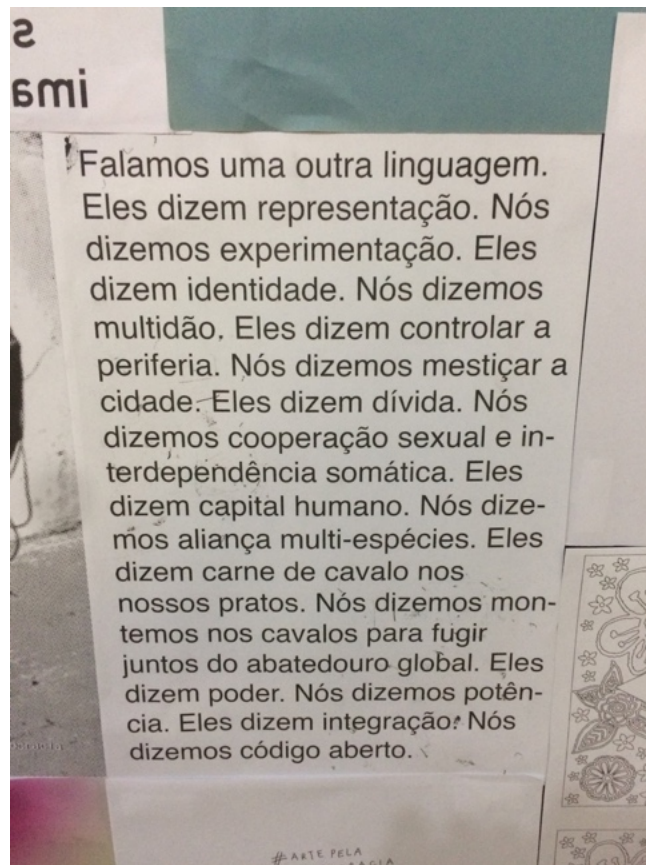
Figure 7.1: Flyer posted on the wall of the cultural institution Funarte during the 2016 Ocupa Funarte event. May 19, 2016.

Figure 7.2: Carlos Issa performs a solo set at Ocupa Funarte. May 19, 2016.

Figures 7.3 & 7.4: Demonstrators in the halls and the outside garden of Funarte during Ocupa Funarte. May 19, 2016.

The demonstrators were reacting to the decision of newly proclaimed President Michel Temer, who had eliminated the National Ministry of Culture as one of his first acts in office, as well as the antidemocratic way he had assumed power. In the ensuing weeks and months, the mood in the city became increasingly volatile. Protests against the new government became a regular occurrence, as did violent breakups of the events by the police. Social divisions between the country's right and left wings continued to deepen.[379] Within the social milieu of the independent experimental scene, declarations of "Fora Temer" came to regularly preface concerts and conversations. The collective state of mind expressed to me by several performers vacillated between fury at the brazen nature of the power grab, worry about what would happen to the cultural sphere in which they had carved out a space, and cynicism at the predictability of the situation. The country had seen authoritarianism before, after all. Despite these feelings,

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[379] Political polarization in Brazil had grown since Rousseff's 2014 re-election campaign and corresponded to social divisions along a variety of markers, including gender, geography, income, sexuality, religion, and race. Rousseff's impeachment and Bolsonaro's election exacerbated these divisions considerably. See Do Vale 2015; Muggah 2018.

members of the scene continued to arrange concerts, participate in political events, and organize opportunities for collective action. Resistance was the order of the day.

These events represented a moment of defiance. Over time, however, as the new political reality set in, the oppositional mood became colored by pessimism and anxiety. Although the Temer administration eventually reinstated the Ministry of Culture, cuts to state support for the arts that had provided crucial economic lifeblood to the scene continued unabated. With the election of right-wing mayor João Dória later that year, the city of São Paulo found itself dominated on the municipal, state, and national levels by political apparatuses dedicated to comprehensive programs of privatization and austerity. Natacha Maurer summed up the situation succinctly: Culture in São Paulo, she argued, "has been sold for scrap."[380]

These developments were compounded by the country's rapid rise in open support for authoritarianism. This occurred in both the political and cultural spheres; the 2018 São Paulo Carnival, for instance, saw the debut of a reactionary *bloco,* Bloco dos Porões do DOPS (*Bloco* of the DOPS Basements), named for the torture chambers of the secret police during the 1964–85 dictatorship.[381] By the time that Bolsonaro won election in October 2018, the country's authoritarian turn had reached its apotheosis, with dark and uncertain consequences looming on the national horizon. As of the time of this writing, the feeling among members of the scene was apprehensive. The sense of cautious hope I saw in 2014 and 2015 had faded, replaced by a perception that the entrenched powers that had historically dominated the country had won out yet again. Only by the grace of good fortune and sustained dedication, it seemed, would they persevere in spite of these obstacles.

In the wake of these developments, it can be tempting to view musical experimentalism as a superfluous pursuit, tangential at best and self-indulgent at worst in comparison to the

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[380] Facebook conversation with Natacha Maurer, January 26, 2018. "a cultura em SP tá sucateada."
[381] DOPS stands for Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (Department of Political and Social Order).

immediacy of the issues facing contemporary Brazil. City and state cultural institutions have tacitly adopted this position, devoting fewer and fewer resources to experimentally oriented performances. Why risk the wrath of the new reactionary government, which has repeatedly criticized the country's left-leaning artistic communities, only to showcase difficult sounds that few will likely pay to see?

I believe that this attitude could not be farther from the truth. In a cultural sphere that promotes conformity over heterodoxy, adherence to authority over dissent, and individual competition over collective action, the collaborative orientation of the independent experimental scene represents precisely the kind of transformational impetus needed in this pivotal moment. Independent experimental musicians have adopted this stance and continue to organize new events and organizations oriented toward uniting artists from different points of origin. Far from being incidental, these initiatives offer crucial space for modes of expression that resist the false harmony of the cultural industry and channel the spirit of the present. In this context, the Funarte poster's claim of "speak[ing] another language"—that of experimentation rather than representation or reproduction—may offer a timely manifesto for artistic opposition.

The nature of this experimental language is democratically oriented and implicitly resistant. To reject the authority of established creative languages and reinvent the symbolic qualities of expressive culture is to challenge a host of restrictive values that dominate contemporary Brazil and the international sphere alike. In developing open-ended models of performance that welcome unexpected and often difficult juxtapositions of sound, independent experimental musicians dare to imagine more inquisitive ways of being in the world, oriented toward questioning the status quo and forcing listeners and performers alike to step out of their comfort zone and consider the possibility and value of unfamiliar means of personal expression. Furthermore, by creating collaborative spaces and welcoming these types of expression,

participants challenge entrenched norms that have historically prevented dialogue between individuals from different backgrounds. Although the community they have developed over the course of the past decade is not entirely free from hierarchy or divisions, it represents an important step forward toward a more collective and egalitarian cultural sphere.

The resulting creative and organizational model is not confined to the loose boundaries of the São Paulo scene. Indeed, its distinctly collaborative orientation can be found throughout the international sphere, where cultural producers in a variety of local contexts from Bogotá to Tokyo pursue similar creative configurations across traditional artistic boundaries. Many of these local manifestations of independent experimentalism inform and intersect with creative communities such as those in São Paulo, whose participants sound back out into global experimental networks in turn. In the years to come, due to sustained in-person encounters and increasing virtual interconnectivity, one might very well see the bonds between these geographically disparate musical cultures continue to grow, with lasting consequences in the creative, cultural, and hopefully political realms. To make experimental music today is to situate oneself within this complex emerging global network.

Independent experimentalism's most significant potential may thus lie in its ability to offer alternative means of situating the self within the fabric of society. The musicians at the heart of this study provoke a timely reconsideration of the value and purpose of experimental creativity—not simply as a means of challenging established artistic norms, but also as a way of reorienting contemporary global citizenship. The relationships and shared experiences they have generated, and the new ideas and ways of interacting that they engender in turn, are testaments to this inquisitive and collaborative orientation. Together, they venture into the unknown.

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