

The colonialities experienced by blacks: Reflections to break with colonial naturalizations in music training



<https://doi.org/10.56238/uniknowindevolp-003>

Daniel Silva dos Santos

Master in Music, in the line of research Music Education/Cognition, by the Federal University of Paraná-UFPR (2020-2022). Graduated in Music from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora-UFJF (2015-2019). He works in the position of music teacher of the municipal network of Juiz de Fora (2023-). He was a scholarship holder of an Academic Master's Degree from CAPES (2020-2022). She was a participant in the research group Formative and Cognitive Processes in Music Education-PROFCEM (2020-2021). He has publications in the areas of Music, especially in Music Education, and Education. Academic experiences in monitoring (2019), scientific initiation (2016-2017) and presentations of papers in scientific events. He works mainly on the following themes: music education, popular music, coloniality/decoloniality and ethnic-racial issues. Federal University of Paraná
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0861-1936>

Ana Paula Peters

Degree in History from the Federal University of Paraná (1994), specialist in Music History from the School of Music and Fine Arts of Paraná (1997), Master in Sociology from the Federal University of Paraná (2005), Degree in Music from the School of

Music and Fine Arts of Paraná (2008), PhD in History from the Federal University of Paraná (2013) and Bachelor in Museology from Claretiano (2022). Adjunct Professor at UNESPAR, campus Curitiba I - School of Music and Fine Arts of Paraná. Professor of the master's degree in Music of UNESPAR, line of research Music, Culture and Society and of the master's and doctorate in Music of UFPR, in the line of research Music Education and Cognition.

State University of Paraná

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4530-3000>

ABSTRACT

Considering the Brazilian social context between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and with the popular music of black influence as a background, the present work brings reflections on the need to break with naturalizations and discourses based on coloniality, still so present in the environments of music formation. Debating narratives that evidence the colonialities experienced by black musicians in the history of popular music can be the starting point for a decolonial action that promotes the expansion of perspectives in higher music education, especially avoiding the reproduction of colonialities.

Keywords: Decoloniality, Music Education, Popular music.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 NATURALIZATION OF NARRATIVES, COLONIALITY AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

By considering that the process of naturalization of a narrative can be directly connected to domination, making non-Eurocentric cultures invisible, reflections on modes of perpetuation and continuity of discourses are triggered. The Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (1992, 2005) discusses such issues from the problematization of the colonial period of the Americas and the developments exercised by this new pattern of power, since the hierarchical system imposed by the European colonizers, in which colonized peoples came to be classified as inferior, served to legitimize



domination and exploitation. This whole process has taken strong root in the Americas, establishing a colonial structure capable of being identified in the present day through coloniality. The colonial repression began to fall on ways of knowing, producing and signifying perspectives (QUIJANO, 1992, p. 13), being the genesis of a deep social imbalance based on racial identities, in the subalternization of the indigenous and the black.

This outcome of the history of colonial power had two decisive implications. The first is obvious: all those peoples have been stripped of their own unique historical identities. The second is perhaps less obvious, but it is no less decisive: its new racial, colonial and negative identity implied the stripping of its place in the history of humanity's cultural production. Henceforth they would be nothing more than inferior races, capable only of producing inferior cultures (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 127).

That is, this idea of race has a direct connection with the social classifications constructed from the perspective of domination, where "Europeans generated a new temporal perspective of history and resituated the colonized peoples, as well as their respective histories and cultures, in the past of a historical trajectory whose culmination was Europe" (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 121). A Eurocentric colonizing hegemony still extremely present in various environments, such as, for example, in the teaching of music in higher education institutions (PEREIRA, 2016, 2018, 2020; QUEIROZ, 2017, 2019, 2020).

The naturalization of such aspects to a certain extent was also due to "a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by referring to the past, even if only by the imposition of repetition" (HOBSBAWM, 1997, p. 12). Sometimes this "invented tradition" (HOBSBAWM, 1997) is taken as a preservation resource that seeks to maintain ties with the past, referring to a thought of rescue or exaltation of what is, or was considered legitimate and valuable historically. There is a point to be problematized, especially if we consider that such naturalization may have been due to biases that "establish or legitimize institutions, status or relations of authority" or even using "socialization, the inculcation of ideas [sic], value systems and patterns of behavior" (HOBSBAWM, 1997, p. 17). That is, from such definitions, traditions can be constructed through a vision and/or conscious listening cut out, carried out from specific perspectives and/or realities that begin to be consolidated through a marked influence of power. When addressing reflections on historical aspects considering especially the predominance of narratives linked to domination, questions are raised about how an "official history" (LIMA REZENDE, 2015) can be reported not necessarily taking into account the polyphony of a society and era but following only a certain perspective. Thus, it is pointed out the indispensability of pondering some historically naturalized elements, starting from the assumption that considering the contexts in which they were elaborated is extremely significant, due to the need to break with notions that can carry with them reflections of a social environment founded on colonialism.



Bringing such reflection closer to the area of music, several bibliographies call attention to the fact that studies on the history of musical genres can end up solidifying and naturalizing certain aspects (AMADO, 2016; BESSA, 2005; CARMO, 2014; LIMA REZENDE, 2014) that carry with them traits capable of being interpreted as resulting from coloniality, originating from mechanisms of legitimation by power. Virgínia de Almeida Bessa, for example, uses the term "dominant listening" (BESSA, 2005, p. 10). For the author, often the "listening of the elites" is what usually prevails in studies that seek to reconstruct sound aspects of an era, even when dealing with issues related to popular music. It is a perspective directly linked to the groups holding power, to the layers of greater economic strength formed almost exclusively by whites, which when it becomes predominant ends up exerting influence on historical narratives and reinforcing the sovereignty of the dominating biases.

Considering the social context of emergence and establishment of genres of popular music such as Choro, dated between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is noticeable that the abolition of slavery in 1888, despite a very important step in history, did not represent by itself the end of the problems faced by black populations. In general, now free, other mishaps began to be faced by blacks who mostly did not have reasonable living conditions at the time and constantly suffered from strong remnants of a system of oppression. There was a migratory flow towards Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian capital at the time, where many blacks went in search of better life opportunities (PEÇANHA, 2013, p. 26), and thus, in the first decades of the twentieth century began to be formed large black communities, this being the background for many of the popular manifestations established at the time.

Even before abolition, several policies coming from the State carried with them discriminatory ideals that aimed mainly at reducing the presence of blacks, indigenous and mestizos in Brazilian society to stifle miscegenation and signal a "whitening" of the population. At one point there was the intention to "transform Rio de Janeiro into a kind of 'Paris of the Tropics', through efforts of urbanization, sanitation and, as absurd as one thinks, the 'whitening' of the city" (AMADO, 2016, p. 10). Jonatha Maximimiano do Carmo (2014) cites several aspects such as the fact that blacks have been placed as a model of opposition to the civilizing ideal preached by dominant groups, the continuous repressions of cultural manifestations of black communities, segregationist political measures such as the prohibition of the entry of "unwanted" immigrants (mainly including Africans) instituted in the Constitution of 1891, or even the existence of the official request for "exemption from color defect" required of mestizos to be able to assume a public office of greater importance at the time, this one still dating from the period of slavery in Brazil. All this based on a discourse that aimed at the modernizing ideal for Brazilian economic and civilizing progress, but that in truth was strongly supported by the racial identities built by the dominators and coloniality, reinforcing how discrimination against blacks was something very strong at the time. This exposed, it is understood that such a scenario cannot be left aside or treated in a superficial way in educational referrals in music



training courses, since such discriminations still reverberate in our society and affect cultural dimensions.

2 INVISIBLE POSSIBILITIES IN MUSIC TRAINING

The developments of colonial thought have permeated naturalized by various aspects of society and over decades it is noticeable the presence of colonialities in the contexts of higher level of music education (QUEIROZ, 2017), strongly linked almost exclusively to the Eurocentric Conservatory practice established in the mid-eighteenth century (PEREIRA, 2016), ignoring or treating with peripheral importance other musical traditions. On the other hand, at times several works built in the dialogue between the fields of ethnomusicology and music education point to possibilities of adding new horizons, investigating different contexts of practices outside the Eurocentric conservatorial teaching (ARROYO, 1999; BLACKING, 1973; Green, 2002; NETTL, 2006), something that John Blacking defended as early as 1973 when he stated that "following the implications of his discoveries, and developing a method, and not a mere area of study, ethnomusicology will have the power to create a revolution in the world of music and music education" (BLACKING, 1973, p. 6). It is then understood that the Eurocentric teaching of music, although admittedly already established and systematized, is a cut, that is, only one of the various ways of doing, learning, and teaching music. As examples of the great cultural diversity sometimes invisible, we can cite the referrals of popular music described by Lucy Green (2002), processes of musical transmission of the Congado in which it is observed "more experienced congadeiros teaching boys by the very action of hitting the boxes; those who learn do so by interacting directly with those who know more, observing, experimenting with playing" (ARROYO, 1999, p. 171), still the example of Blackfoot singers¹ where "songs are learned – or were, originally – with supernatural spirits appearing in visions, in which they are sung once and have to be learned immediately" (NETTL, 2006, p. 24), among countless others. Given such multiple perspectives and perceptions about musical practices, it is emphasized that the problematization does not fall on the European musical manifestations per se, it is not a matter of excluding them totally from the educational referrals, but rather part of questioning the Eurocentric cultural hegemony still exercised in the spaces of higher education of music, at times institutionalized as "a culture of elites that aimed to create, in the tropic that stood as a country, a 'civilized' nation that, as such, needed music that played the same elitist role that such a phenomenon played in the nobility and the European bourgeoisie" (QUEIROZ, 2020, p. 158).

It is believed that the high hierarchy given to the Eurocentric bias in higher education of music, derived from coloniality, adds to the factors that make black communities and their cultures invisible, as exemplified earlier. So, as Luis Ricardo Silva Queiroz asks:

1 Native Indian Society of the United States (NETTL, 2006, p. 18).



How long, Brazil, will we sustain this colonial project of music education? How long, Brazil, will we perpetuate the musical epistemicides and the exclusion of cultural practices that weave our national identity? How long, Brazil, will we legitimize an elitist music teaching uncommitted to the problems that day-by-day haunt people disadvantaged by the colonially taught homeland to be exclusionary? (QUEIROZ, 2020, p. 155).

Starting from the fact that such questions about coloniality have also taken root in the educational sphere, and that there have been few changes in the curricular structures in higher music education in Brazil (QUEIROZ, 2020, p. 159), trying to establish a decolonial vision in music education emerges as a possibility to identify and break with naturalized colonial narratives present in curricula, methodologies and pedagogical practices. It is necessary to look for loopholes to go beyond the concepts and instruments already surrounded by colonialities (WALSH., 2009). Including, the article *Until when Brazil? Decolonial perspectives to (re)think higher education in music* (QUEIROZ, 2020) can be taken as a basis for reflecting actions that advocate the presence of decolonial thought in music education. Among the topics addressed by the author, it is recognized the possibility of working from the approach of reinterpretations of contexts, reconsidering the naturalized narratives and paying the utmost attention to the non-reproduction of colonialities both in the spaces of higher education and in schools.

As an exercise for the development of questions based on the decolonial perspective, the historical narrative of the musician Anacleto de Medeiros will be briefly mentioned here. Anacleto de Medeiros (1866–1907), black, composer, arranger and great organizer and conductor of bands and theater orchestras, is a constantly prominent figure in the history of Choro. He was a student at the Conservatory of Music of Rio de Janeiro and a frequent frequenter of choro circles, so he moved between the erudite and popular environments. In its trajectory, we perceive how "Brazilian music is definitely the result of the historical cultural connection between the various segments of society, encompassing ethnicities, social classes, traditions and modernities, in a constant dialectical process of exclusion and inclusion" (DINIZ, 2007, p. 14). The musician, practitioner of several wind instruments, is recognized as founder and master of important music bands in Rio de Janeiro (RJ), still exercising an almost pedagogical function in the propagation of Choro (AMADO, 2016, p. 4; LIMA REZENDE, 2015, p. 79). Having said that, it is possible to evidence the presence of legitimation mechanisms represented by patterns of European classical music. It is considered that one of the central points for the visibility achieved by him is in the transitional characteristic between the erudite and the popular milieu. The fact that the musician is part of and plays an important role in a large corporation, such as the band of the Fire Department, may have favored the legitimization of his name. In fact, representing a validation not only for Anacleto, but also for other black musicians who from their tickets in bands of public corporations began to be in a new position in the musical environment of the time (AMADO, 2016, p. 5). The fact that he was musically educated from the parameters and standards



of European culture may have represented the necessary bridge for him to stand out in the official historical narratives that usually reinforced the dominant listening, it is worth emphasizing that in no way do we intend to diminish his contributions, on the contrary, we seek to emphasize how Anacleto managed to stand out in an extremely discriminatory social context, full of colonialities.

Thus, it would be possible to use the history of music to address narratives that evidence the mechanisms of legitimation faced by black musicians, after all, who has been telling the history of music in Brazil? Is it possible to find traces of coloniality in it? Do these traits continue to be reproduced in discourses and practices? Issues such as these need to be taken into consideration in a reflective and critical way in the formative processes, seeking the expansion of perspectives. Thus, instead of working only on the aspects considered important to academic systematization (melody, harmonica, rhythm, etc.), actions from the decolonial perspective would primarily address various sociocultural issues that can serve as a basis for the development of a denaturalization of colonialities and for the expansion of perspectives through the reinterpretation of historical narratives, contexts, practices and epistemes. All this also underlines the relevance that black populations had in cultural constructions throughout the American continent, translating into pedagogical perspectives that, when breaking with aspects of coloniality, begin to see aggregating possibilities in the great black cultural diversity present throughout the Americas and on the African continent. Popular genres of black influence reflect in abundance cultural traits born in black communities, offer sonic particularities that differ from those found in the tonal repertoires of European classical music, and above all can help us to broaden visions and listens forged by coloniality.

3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Non-impartiality in the construction of a historical narrative needs to be considered. Several of the aspects of coloniality were rooted in the scope of higher education of music in Brazil, and because of this it is pointed out the need to break with naturalizations and discourses based on coloniality, understanding that this is one of the ways to promote a broadening of perspective that could echo in pedagogical practices distanced from biases that only reproduce naturalizations from coloniality. It is with the discontinuation of such precepts that it is believed to be closer to treading a path for the consolidation of different visions, listening, methodologies and epistemes in the contexts of higher education of music. Debating about narratives and detailing contexts that evidence the colonialities experienced by black musicians can be the starting point for a decolonial action that gradually enables a break with the dominant vision and listening, promoting an expansion of perspectives and avoiding the reproduction of colonialities, in addition to generating possibilities of black representation and breaking prejudices. Calling attention in a reflective and critical way to how and why racial discrimination was acutely present in the contexts of emergence and consolidation of popular music



genres can sharpen the perception of how blacks were and continue to be represented, or not, in the higher education environment itself. By not considering such issues, one unconsciously ends up reproducing narratives loaded with colonialities, often leaving aside much of the cultural contributions of black populations to portray them only as enslaved.



REFERENCES

- AMADO, Paulo Vinícius. Apontamentos de leitura crítica sobre trabalhos historiográficos sobre o Choro brasileiro. In: XXVI CONGRESSO DA ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE PESQUISA E PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM MÚSICA, 26., 2016, Belo Horizonte. Anais do XXVI Congresso da ANPPOM. Belo Horizonte: ANPPOM, 2016, p. 1-10.
- ARROYO, Margarete. Representações sociais sobre práticas de ensino e aprendizagem musical: um estudo etnográfico entre congadeiros, professores e estudantes de música. Porto Alegre, 1999. p. 406. Tese (Doutorado em Música). Programa de Pós-Graduação em Música, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.
- BESSA, Virgínia de Almeida. “Um bocadinho de cada coisa”: trajetória e obra de Pixinguinha: História e Música Popular no Brasil dos anos 20 e 30. São Paulo, 2005. p. 263. Dissertação (Mestrado em História). Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo.
- BLACKING, John. How musical is man? London: University of Washington Press, 1973.
- CARMO, Jonatha Maximiniano do. A trágica e ambígua racialização do discurso musicológico brasileiro. Belo Horizonte, 2014. p. 142. Dissertação (Mestrado em Música). Programa de Pós-Graduação em Música, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.
- DINIZ, André. O Rio musical de Anacleto de Medeiros: a vida, a obra e o tempo de um mestre do choro. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2007. 144 p.
- GREEN, Lucy. How popular musicians learn: a way ahead for music education. London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2002.
- HOBBSAWM, Eric. Introdução: A invenção das tradições. In: HOBBSAWM, Eric; RANGER, Terence (org.). A invenção das tradições. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1997. p. 9-24.
- LIMA REZENDE, Gabriel Sampaio Souza. O problema da tradição na trajetória de Jacob do Bandolim: comentários à história oficial do choro. Campinas, 2014. p. 443. Tese (Doutorado em Música). Instituto de Artes, Universidade Estadual de Campinas.
- LIMA REZENDE, Gabriel Sampaio Souza. Narratividade e poder: sobre a construção da “história oficial” do choro. Música Popular em Revista, Campinas, ano 3, v. 2, p. 65-96, 2015. Disponível em: <https://econtents.bc.unicamp.br/inpec/index.php/muspop/article/view/13007>. Acesso em: 03 ago. 2023.
- NETTL, Bruno. O estudo comparativo da mudança musical: Estudos de caso de quatro culturas. Revista ANTHROPOLÓGICAS, Recife, v. 17, n. 1, p. 11-34, 2006.
- PEÇANHA, João Carlos de Souza. A Trindade da música popular (afro)brasileira – João da Baiana, Donga e Pixinguinha: redimensionamentos das contribuições das matrizes africanas na formação do choro e o samba. Brasília, 2013. p. 124. Dissertação (Mestrado em Música). Departamento de Música “Música em Contexto”, Universidade de Brasília.
- PEREIRA, Marcus Vinícius Medeiros. Traços da história do currículo a partir da análise de livros didáticos para a educação musical escolar. Revista da ABEM, Londrina, v. 24, n. 37, p. 17-34, jul./dez. 2016.



PEREIRA, Marcus Vinícius Medeiros. Possibilidades e desafios em música e na formação musical: a proposta de um giro decolonial. *Interlúdio*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 6, n. 10, p. 10-22, 2018.

PEREIRA, Marcus Vinícius Medeiros. Ensino superior em Música, colonialidade e currículos. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, Juiz de Fora, v. 25, p. 1-24, 2020.

QUEIROZ, Luis Ricardo Silva. Traços de colonialidade na educação superior em música do Brasil: análises a partir de uma trajetória de epistemicídios musicais e exclusões. *Revista da ABEM*, Londrina, v. 25, n. 39, p. 132-159, jul./dez. 2017.

QUEIROZ, Luis Ricardo Silva. Cânones da educação superior em música no Brasil e faces da colonialidade no século XXI. In: XXIV CONGRESSO DA ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE EDUCAÇÃO MUSICAL, 24., 2019, Campo Grande. *Anais do XXIV Congresso da ABEM*. Campo Grande: ABEM, 2019.

QUEIROZ, Luis Ricardo Silva. Até quando Brasil? Perspectivas decoloniais para (re)pensar o ensino superior em música. *PROA: Revista de Antropologia e Arte*, Campinas, v. 1, n. 10, p. 153-199, jan./jun. 2020.

QUIJANO, Aníbal. Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad. *Perú Indígena*, Lima, v. 13, n. 29, p. 11-20, 1992.

QUIJANO, Aníbal. Colonialidade do poder, Eurocentrismo e América Latina. In: LANDER, Edgardo (org.). *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perspectivas latino-americanas*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005. p. 117-142.

WALSH, Catherine. *Interculturalidad crítica y pedagogía de-colonial: apuestas (des)de el in-surgir, re-existir y re-vivir*. [s.l.], 2009. Disponível em: <https://www.maxwell.vrac.pucrio.br/13582/13582.PDF>. Acesso em: 03 set. 2021.