INTRODUCTION

Brazilian Popular Music, MPB, and Song Literature

Nineteen eighty-five was a year of jubilation and hope for Brazilians. The long-awaited transfer to a more democratic form of government took place, as the military regime that had ruled since 1964 gave way to a civilian administration.[1] The advent of the "New Republic" added a special historical motif to the annual carnival festivities, which were unofficially dubbed "the carnival of democracy," reflecting popular sentiment. The end of authoritarian rule was especially satisfying for the performing arts community because of the prospect of the definitive termination of censorship, which had begun to loosen its grip around 1978. Since the mid-1960s, numerous songwriters and musicians had been affected by institutional intervention in recording, performance, and broadcasting.

As far as popular music was concerned, 1985 brought other significant celebrations and commemorations. Early in the year, Brazil hosted the largest festival of popular music ever staged, the ten-day "Rock in Rio," with an impressive cast of Brazilian and international acts. This event signaled the ascendance of rock music as a major cultural force among Brazil's urban youth. The powerful presence of electric rock music stirred new debate about the quality, evolution, and directions of popular music and invited comparison with the production of previous decades. The musical values of new groups and their public sharply contrasted with the political involvement, lyrical prowess, and musicianship of the established figures of MPB. Later in the year, Gilberto Gil, a recognized star who bridges this generation gap, gave concerts commemorating his twenty years of involvement in popular music and made a record album marked by retrospection and awareness of new trends and values. The two most celebrated figures of MPB, Chico Buarque and Caetano Veloso, also

reflected, in contrasting ways, on shifts in cultural and political power as they completed two decades of composition and performance. From the presidential palace to the recording studio, 1985 was a year of celebrations and transitions, a time for reflection on the historical circumstances and cultural environment in which MPB developed.

The growth of rock music is the latest chapter in the history of urban popular music in Brazil. During the nineteenth century, the most widely practiced form of song was the *modinha*, or sentimental ballad. This form was first brought into vogue by the Brazilian poet Domingos Caldas Barbosa (1738–1800) in the Portuguese court in Lisbon. He authored and performed simple sensual songs, accompanying himself on the *viola* [steel-stringed guitar]. Barbosa originally called his compositions *cantigas*, a generic term for ballad or popular song, but the term *modinha*, from the diminutive form of *moda* [fashion/Portuguese song], became common currency. This performing poet's repertory also included *lundu*, a humorous and rhythmically accentuated song type derived from an Afro-Brazilian dance. When Napoleon's armies threatened Lisbon in 1808, the Portuguese court fled to Rio de Janeiro. This transfer prompted further cultivation of *modinhas* and *lundus* in Brazil. Schooled composers used these forms for voice and piano duets throughout the nineteenth century, with a bel canto style prevailing in the high-society salons. Around 1870, the *modinha* began to be adopted more regularly by popular musicians outside the salon context. The serenade was a common setting for its use. While the *lundu* was eventually absorbed into other forms, *modinhas* spread throughout Brazil and underwent a process of folklorization, entering the cycle of oral transmission. In the 1910s and 1920s, Catulo da Paixão Cearense (1866–1946) revitalized the *modinha* in Rio de Janeiro; he brought stylized rural variants to "nice" society, establishing the acceptability of the guitar as the instrument for accompaniment, and initiated a "backland vogue" in both song and poetry. Historically, the *modinha* is particularly important as a form of lyrical expression in Brazil because it was cultivated for an extensive period and was popular at all levels of society.

The distinguishing characteristics of Brazilian popular music began to take shape in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The song form *modinha* had taken root by the 1870s, when the stylistic originality of dance music in Brazil first became evident. Urban musicians adapted such European forms as the polka, mazurka, schottische, and waltz, infusing them with local notions of rhythmic organization. The abolition of slavery in 1888 led to greater interaction

between black and white musicians and the subsequent development of more-defined Brazilian styles. The first form to be recognized as a truly national genre was the *maxixe*, which achieved some notoriety in Europe in the early twentieth century (Béhague, "Popular Music," 27). As dance music, the waltz, or valse, was in use from the time of the arrival of the Portuguese court; by the end of the century it had become popular as a song type in the serenade setting, often indistinguishable from the *modinha* played in 3/4 time.

Another important local development in the 1870s was the *choro* or *chorinho* [little cry]. This designation was first given to the music of instrumental ensembles in Rio de Janeiro who played sentimental repertories. The basic instrumentation has survived until the present: guitar (6 or 7 string), *cavaquinho* [an instrument of Portuguese origin with four steel strings, akin to the ukelele], woodwind/brass instruments, and light hand percussion, usually the *pandeiro* [tambourine with taut skin]. The musicians were often joined by a singer for serenades. In the twentieth century, *choro* is known principally as instrumental music—its origins and early development may be compared with ragtime and the original jazz of New Orleans—but vocal varieties are not uncommon. In the 1920s, improvisation, virtuosity, and counterpoint became notable features of the *choro*.

The organization of yearly carnival festivities in the 1890s encouraged the growth of popular music in the cities. Polkas, marches, and other genres were used for street dancing associated with the prelenten fests. An important factor in the evolution of popular music in Rio de Janeiro, the political and cultural capital of the nation, was the postemancipation influx of people from rural areas. Their heavily percussive Afro-Brazilian folk forms, the *maxixe*, and the Brazilian tango contributed to the birth of the samba, the best known manifestation of Brazil's urban popular music. Samba began taking shape as a new urban genre after 1910 in Rio. The first composition to be designated by its composers as a "samba" ("Pelo Telefone" by Donga and Mauro de Almeida) was officially registered for the carnival of 1917. By the 1920s, the samba was as commonplace as the march during carnival season. The *escolas de samba*, or samba schools, recreational clubs that organize group participation in street parades, first appeared in 1928. It was not until the 1950s that the category of *samba de enredo* was made official; this is a song specially composed for the carnival season, which tells a story or explains the theme or allegory being represented by the school's float and costumed dancers.

In the 1920s, songwriters began using the samba "off-season" as well. Sambas not written for carnival were initially called "mid-year

sambas." The growing role of radio in urban culture contributed to increased interest in samba as an everyday form of expression. There is an important distinction to be made between this newer urban samba and more "primitive" forms closer to folk origins.

The inhabitants of the *favelas*, Rio's hillside slums, practiced *samba de morro*, in which such traits as call-and-response and primarily percussive instrumentation are characteristic. This form is closer to *batucada*, a drum session or performance of a percussion ensemble featuring typically Brazilian membranophones and idiophones. These instruments include the *surdo*, or bass drum, which provides the fundamental binary pulse; a shallow snare drum called *caixa* or *tarol*; the previously mentioned *pandeiro*; the *tamborim*, a small metal hoop with a tight skin struck with a stick; the *agogô*, or double cone-shaped bell, also struck with a stick; the *reco-reco*, or scraper; the *ganzá* or *chocalho*, shakers or rattles; the howling *cuíca* or friction drum; and other assorted less frequently used items. The relatively simple patterns of these various instruments are coordinated, woven together, and overlaid to form a complex whole. *Batucada* may be performed entirely without singing and usually includes a *cavaquinho*, a small guitar, which, when strummed, forms another rhythmic pattern.

In contrast with the *samba de morro*, the variety originally known as *samba de asfalto*, practiced in the paved-street districts of the city proper, placed heavier emphasis on string instrumentation, melody, and lyrics. As the decades have passed, the two types of samba have tended to grow closer together, with *batucada* remaining constant as a percussion session. Out of the original *samba de asfalto* emerged the *samba-canção* [samba song] as an autonomous genre. With its slower pace and typically sentimental themes, this new form came to supplant the *modinha*. By the 1950s, *samba-canção* often bore close resemblance to the Cuban bolero and the North American–style ballad. The advent of the combinative terms *sambolero* (samba and bolero) and *sambalada* (samba and ballad) reflects the changes undergone by the more lyrical variant of the samba.

Several notable songwriters emerged in Rio de Janeiro in the early stages of the samba's development as a dominant and varied form of popular music. The most revered of these composer-lyricists is Noel Rosa (1910–1937). While he wrote engaging melodies, he gained the nickname "The Philosopher of Samba" for the wit, wisdom, contemplative character, and power of subtle social observation of his song texts. Rosa's inclusion in a recent series of pedagogical publi-

cations in Brazil, *Literatura Comentada*, is indicative of the respect his song texts have commanded over the years. Literary critic Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna has explored the controlled colloquial language of Rosa's sambas and noted similarities with the contemporaneous literary development of Brazilian Modernism (183–197). The combination of melodic and verbal agility in Noel Rosa was unique in his time. His legacy was an important point of reference for the poet-songwriters who emerged in the 1960s.

The "golden age" of the urban samba began in the 1930s. In the late thirties and in the forties, adulterated forms of Brazilian popular music became known in the United States largely through the film performances of Carmen Miranda. The word *samba* entered English dictionaries to designate the ballroom variety of samba music and dance. In Rio de Janeiro, increasingly important as the musical center of Brazil, other types of popular music made their presence felt. The single most important development in the urban market was the *baião*, a hybridization of several types of folk music of the Brazilian Northeast.[2] Accordionist Luiz Gonzaga's 1946 recording "Baião" is the prototype of this new genre. To create it, the composer drew on rhythms he observed in fifer bands and in the stroke of the *violeiros*, famed Northeastern bards who play *viola* during their exchanges of improvised poetry. The *baião* did not enjoy lasting success in Rio, but it became the mainstay of popular music in the Northeast (Tinhorão, *História*, 211). Rural themes and the Northeastern sound would resurface in later mainstream popular music, especially in the 1970s.

In the 1950s, the samba played by ballroom orchestras exhibited the heavy influence of North American big band music in instrumentation and stereotypical arrangements. Sambas for street carnivals continued to rely on the energy of percussion sections. Styles of romantic ballad also developed along class lines. Many lower-class composers associated with samba schools also consistently produced low-key vocal sambas, often strikingly poetic; rarely, however, could they enter the mainstream spheres of recording and performance. Much of the middle and upper classes followed North American or European popular music and, with respect to national production, favored crooners and the *samba-canção*. This form maintained traditional harmony, typically had a simple, catchy tune, and preferred emphatic, even quasi-operatic, vocal performance of sentimental, frequently melodramatic texts.

Across the decades of the twentieth century, the term *samba* has designated different cultural expressions in folk (rural) and popular

(urban) contexts. The word may denote types of Afro-Brazilian music, a characteristic carnival rhythm, dance forms, or social gatherings with music. Principally it refers to a type (genre) of popular music, of which there are several varieties. Samba may be performed by an individual vocalist accompanying himself on the guitar, by small ensembles with varying levels of instrumentation, by large percussion ensembles, or by full-fledged stage bands.

The Bossa Nova movement brought structural modifications to the samba, as well as innovations in performance style. Bossa Nova did not replace the traditional samba but offered a new alternative for the middle- and upper-class listening public. The prime agent of change was the guitarist and vocalist João Gilberto, whose presence began to be felt in the Rio music scene in the late 1950s. After participating in the sessions of other artists, Gilberto recorded his own *Chega de Saudade* (1959), an album that came to be regarded as the "Bible of Bossa Nova" (Medaglia, 75). In this collection, Gilberto interpreted well-known songs in his new way and introduced some wholly original compositions. Antônio Carlos Jobim, noted composer and another originator of the new style, used the term *bossa nova* in the liner notes of Gilberto's historical LP. In local slang, *bossa* meant a special skill, knack, or attractive quality; used in conjunction with *nova* [new], the term suggested "new wave" or musical novelty. In those same notes, Jobim noted how Gilberto had "in a very short period, influenced a whole generation of arrangers, guitarists, musicians, and vocalists" (D 50).

Bossa Nova altered several stylistic parameters, seeking dynamic integration of melody, harmony, and rhythm while de-emphasizing the vocalist as the center of attention. Instead of the traditional binary samba beat, diversified syncopation was used, and standard drum set became the norm. Gilberto complemented the rhythmic foundations set by drums and bass with syncopated plucking of acoustic guitar chords; he gave new life to the guitar, assigning it both harmonic and rhythmic roles. His particular fashion of execution was known as *violão gago*, or "stammering guitar." He created interplay by syncopating sung notes against guitar figures. Bossa Nova also introduced new patterns of harmony or chord progressions, frequently using the altered chords associated with jazz. Melodic lines were often sparse and chromatic, seemingly difficult or dissonant to the unattuned ear. A reserved, understated vocal delivery was characteristic. This approach contrasted sharply with the emphatic style of the *samba-canção*. In a general way, Bossa Nova favored refinement of "touch" over driving impact or "punch." Many of these new traits resembled those of the "cool jazz" of the

West Coast of the United States, which many young Brazilian musicians admired.

Bossa Nova also brought changes in attitude toward composition of text. Particular attention was given to the sonorous and rhythmic qualities of individual words and word clusters. Lyricists avoided the melodrama and tragic outlook characteristic of the *samba-canção*. In keeping with the privileged middle-class origins of most Bossa Nova writers, song texts tended to reflect the amenities of middle-class life, using a colloquial tone that corresponded to the speechlike mode of singing. Romance and nature remained as central themes, but lyricists tried to reinforce the reserved, intimate character of the musical experience in the words. The title of a later Gilberto album, *O amor o Sorriso e a Flor* [Love smiles and flowers], reflects the clichés of Bossa Nova texts. A classic example of understated pleasantries is the internationally known "Garota de Ipanema" / "The Girl from Ipanema" by Jobim and Vinícius de Morais.

Two of the most outstanding early Bossa Nova compositions are "Desafinado" ["Slightly Out of Tune"] and "Samba de Uma Nota Só" ["One Note Samba"] by Jobim and Newton Mendonça, which express a set of musical values and exhibit unique interplay between text and music. Augusto de Campos, noted theoretician and practitioner of concrete poetry, regarded this pair of songs as examples of isomorphism, which he defines as the "conflict of content and form seeking mutual identity."[3] João Gilberto's landmark 1959 recording included "Desafinado," in which the term *bossa nova* is first heard. The song presents itself as a sort of manifesto of the nascent Bossa Nova movement, whose melodic practices appeared "out of tune" in relation to traditional harmony.

If you say that I am out of tune, my love
You should know that drives me to these painful tears
If chosen ones like you can have a privileged ear
Mine is just the one I got from God above

If you keep insisting you must classify
How I now behave as antimusical
My argument will be, though it may be a lie,
That this is Bossa Nova
That it's very natural

What you don't know, what you've not even once suspected
Is that the out-of-tune they also have their hearts
I took your photograph with my new Rollyflex
Which revealed ingratitude in all your parts

So you just can't talk like that about my love
It's the greatest love that ever you will find, hear?
And you with all your music, dear, forgot what really counts
In the breast of those off key, off tune
Inside deep down, softly beating
In the breast of all the out-of-tune
You'll find that hearts are beating too (D 58)

Several strategies are at work in this composition. Its purposeful inclusion on the inaugural Bossa Nova album signifies a statement within the larger context of Brazilian popular music. Mendonça's lyric uses a commonplace romantic situation to comment on the evolution of popular song. The text depicts a proponent of the novel musical style coolly explaining to an uncomprehending sweetheart that this new behavior does not imply the absence of emotion. Structural details of the song are revealing. The words "out-of-tune" are first enunciated as the singer seems to lose the pitch; such correspondence of notes and words occurs throughout. As Gerard Béhague observes, the melody composed by Jobim and Mendonça complements textual meaning "by translating the idea of singing out-of-tune with unexpected melodic alterations (chromatic tones) strategically placed at the end of each verse, corresponding to the ending of each melodic phrase" ("Values," 442).

The reciprocity of words and music is even greater in Jobim's "Samba de Uma Nota Só." Mendonça's text again makes a statement about compositional practices by blending musical and romantic perspectives.

Listen here's a little samba built upon a single note
Other notes will come along soon but the base is one sole note
Now this other one's a consequence of what I've just now said
The same, I'm just a consequence of you I can't avoid

There's so many people all around who
Talk so much but tell us nothing or nearly nothing
Now the scale's used up and not a thing
I've done turned out to be of use and what's left is nothing

And I came back to my one note as I must come back to you
And I'll keep my one note singing to say how much I love you
Those who still want all the notes here: d e f g a b c
Always end up without any; stay with one, a single note! (D 59)

The melody of this deceptively simple piece remains, in fact, on a single note as the first couplet is sung. When a second note enters,

the lyrics make the connection by referring to "this other one." The bridge runs through two entire scales, while the lyrics speak of the futility of both loquacity and melodic excess. The text calls attention to the return of the one-note melody at the beginning of the second strophe, and the conclusion reinforces the implications of the bridge. Like "Desafinado," this modest "little samba" is mildly ironic, brief (1:35), and direct; no parts of the text are repeated, nor are any forceful statements made. "Samba de Uma Nota Só" is also a sort of manifesto that advocates economy and integration of words and melody. Both songs embody the ideal Bossa Nova aesthetic of subdued, subtle, and polished expression. Sant'Anna sees "Samba de Uma Nota Só" and "Desafinado" as examples of meta-language: "A language that comments on another, taking as the subject of composition, the composition itself, and not sentimentality or nature themes" (217). These two songs, indeed, make extratextual projections, but much of their ironic ingenuity arises from the traditional sentimental situation, that of a singer attempting to make his or her feelings understood by a sweetheart.

The most prolific of all Bossa Nova lyricists was Vinícius de Morais (1913–1980), who was instrumental in establishing and promoting the movement. He was one of Brazil's most respected Modernist poets and best-loved public figures. Vinícius had authored several song texts before publishing his first book of poetry in 1933, but twenty years would pass before he returned to songwriting. During those years he served in the diplomatic corps and achieved fame as a poet. In the 1950s, Vinícius became well known in the field of popular music. French director Marcel Camus' award-winning film *Black Orpheus* (1959), a re-creation of the Orpheus myth in the context of Brazilian carnival, was based on Morais' verse play *Orfeu da Conceição*. The film's sound track included the metaphorical song of fleeting happiness "A Felicidade" by Jobim and Vinícius. This collaboration cemented a prolific partnership in musical composition that had enduring influence. Vinícius and Jobim co-authored all the songs on vocalist Elizete Cardozo's 1958 album, an immediate predecessor to the definitive landmarks of Bossa Nova. In addition to "Chega de Saudade" ["No More Blues"] and "The Girl from Ipanema," the pair went on to compose such well known songs as "Insensatez" ["How Insensitive"], "Amor em paz" ["Once I Loved"], and "Ela é carioca" ["She's a Carioca"].

For the remainder of his career, Vinícius de Morais was faithful to the style he helped to forge, producing upward of two hundred titles. In the sixties, he wrote some notable song texts with regionalist and social thematics, but for the most part the poet's musical lyricism

stayed within the bounds of widely accepted romantic topics. The time-honored themes of love, passion, exaltation of women and courtship, longing, and sadness at parting are dominant in his lyrics, as they are in his poetry. Vinícius himself said that he consciously applied his literary skills to his songwriting (Mello, 157). Sant'Anna corroborates that testimony: "Even though his song texts portray the cool talk of Ipanema, and Rio's colloquial speech, an undisguisable 'literary' tone always remains" (215). In addition to this polished diction, Vinícius had a very sure sense of sound, rhythm, and rhyme. His song texts were consistently refined from a technical point of view. In most cases he fit words to music previously composed, and his word choice for integration with melody is noted for its precision.

Vinícius also composed some music, recorded several albums, and made continual appearances on stage, singing his songs and often reciting his poems. The quantity and quality of his songs and performances, however, are not the only measure of his significance for contemporary popular music. His primary role is assessed by his effect on younger poet-lyricists and his impact on cultural values. As a leading observer of MPB stated: "Vinícius de Morais gave popular music status among the Brazilian arts. . . . Surely it was his influence—and he was perfectly aware of this—that encouraged the current generation to become music professionals, to have confidence in a field that would, after him, be respected as it had never been before."[4] There is no question that the mere presence of a widely respected poet and diplomat in the field contributed to popular music's enhanced prestige among both producers and consumers in the 1960s. Vinícius is an important transitional figure who brought a new "dignity" to songwriting. José Carlos Capinan, an active poet-lyricist of the 1960s and 1970s, states: "For the creative artists of my generation who became part of popular music, he was a bridge. He transformed something that was considered lesser—because of prejudices among artists in the field itself, as well as those of intellectuals and poets—into one of the most vivid and expressive areas of Brazilian cultural life of recent years: our popular music." In this eulogy, Capinan principally addresses himself to Vinícius' wide generational significance. When Capinan relates this general impact to his personal case, the importance of Vinícius for future lyricists is seen clearly: "Thanks to Vinícius de Morais, Bossa Nova lyrics broadened the meaning of 'song lyric' and gave everybody freedom. Vinícius really paved the way for lyricists. Perhaps, without Bossa Nova, I wouldn't have realized that poets were al-

lowed to write song lyrics, that this didn't imply a lower level" (qtd. by Mello, 154). For musical and extramusical reasons, then, Vinícius de Morais was a central figure in the Bossa Nova movement. He adapted verse to music and music to verse, helped to bring a new sophistication to the art of song, increased audience response to performed poetry, and provided general models of diction and expressiveness to be emulated by other lyricists. He created, in addition, an essential link between popular music and literature, a connection that would become increasingly significant in the sixties and seventies. Vinícius built a stage of musicopoetic communication in contemporary Brazil on which many figures would subsequently perform.

Vinícius represented the mainstream of Bossa Nova, popular vocal music performed in the intimate and controlled manner described above and typified in the style of João Gilberto. A branch of instrumental improvisation also grew within the movement. Such musicians as the Zimbo Trio, the Tamba Trio, and the virtuoso guitarist Baden Powell composed jazzlike pieces and explored melodies originally written for vocal performance. Several Brazilian vocalists, notably João Gilberto, were successful in the United States in the 1960s during a veritable explosion of Bossa Nova. The many North American interpretations of the "modern samba" tended to be of the instrumental variety. Having begun in jazz circles, the craze was manipulatively extended to pop music and audiences, where it soon met the fate of all fads. Despite the lamentable commercialization suffered in the overall musical sphere, Bossa Nova became a permanent part of jazz. A dozen of Jobim's tunes, in fact, became contemporary standards (e.g., "Triste" and "Wave"). In his unique study of Latin American music in the United States, *The Latin Tinge,* John Storm Roberts discusses in greater detail the impact of Bossa Nova and other later currents of Brazilian popular music in New York and around the country (170–175).

On the homefront, the international appeal of Bossa Nova was exploited by its leading critic, José Ramos Tinhorão. Emphasizing the links between jazz and Bossa Nova, he argued that the music of Jobim and his associates was a culturally estranged product that contributed to the alienation of the Brazilian public by turning away from the samba, the true tradition of the people, and encouraging adulation of North American values.[5] From the point of view of urban ethnomusicology, Béhague has noted how these objections are "ill-conceived" ("Values," 440). The governmental emphasis on progress and development in the 1950s led many educated Brazilians to

seek new art forms that would express their changing national identity. Whether elitist or not, Bossa Nova was a natural outgrowth of urban modernization and resulting class-stratified patterns of cultural production. The music emerged in the small clubs and apartments of the beachfront districts of Rio's south zone. The very character of Bossa Nova—intimate, soft, controlled—corresponds to the enclosed physical space in which it grew. Bossa Nova was made by and for middle-class citizens; as one samba musician from Rio's working-class north zone put it: "It's their samba."

From a musical point of view, the condemnations issued by Tinhorão and others are difficult to sustain. In his sociological analysis, Tinhorão regards Brazilian musicians' use of altered chords as nothing more than an emulation of the North American jazz idiom; he does not take into account the desire of educated musicians anywhere to diversify their work or to put new compositional ideas into practice. In a sarcastic response, Jobim pointed out that flat fives and sharp nines are not the exclusive domain of jazz composers, that Bach also used them. Furthermore, given its various stylistic parameters, Bossa Nova cannot ultimately be simplified as the crossing of samba and jazz, which is itself a fluid musical concept. That Brazilian musicians had contact with jazz is undeniable, but the results of this contact are purely Brazilian, a unique synthesis of rhythmic, harmonic, melodic, and performance-bound qualities. With regard to the ideology of Bossa Nova lyrics, many people shared Tinhorão's basic concerns, and there was some polarization over the issue, as seen below. Whatever controversies Bossa Nova may have provoked, it became enormously popular in a short time, at home and abroad, and left a lasting mark on popular music in Brazil. The capacity for diversification within the Bossa Nova framework accounts for its continued significance in the sixties and seventies.

The ascendance of Bossa Nova coincided with growing nationalism and activism in Brazil. In the early sixties, popular music, film, theater, and literature all became increasingly identified with a surge in political activity and socioeconomic awareness.[6] Dissatisfied with the apolitical, inconsequential, and frequently banal discourse of mainstream Bossa Nova, songwriters in Rio and São Paulo began to expand their perspectives and to express social concerns of local and national import. Composition of protest and topical songs gave rise to a trend known as *a linha conteudística* [the content line] in opposition to the original *a linha formalística* [the formalistic line].

Although not prevalent until the middle part of the decade, instances of social criticism in song occurred as early as 1960. In 1962,

politicized students in Rio de Janeiro founded the Popular Center of Culture, which encouraged production and dissemination of "popular revolutionary art," including, of course, popular song. Similar activity developed in other urban centers. This often paternalistic activism was limited, centered primarily in university circles, but foreshadowed the growth of engagé music making in the course of the decade. Members of student organizations sought closer contact between the privileged south zone of Rio and working-class areas. Musical composition that would cut across class lines was an express goal, and performing samba composers were brought from "popular" neighborhoods to interact with students and the middle-class public. The Popular Center of Culture published three best-selling anthologies of socially oriented poetry, edited by Moacir Félix, *Violão de Rua: Poemas para a Liberdade* [Street guitar: Poems for freedom], a title that suggests the common interests of makers of poems and music during this period.

As debate about national liberation spread, there was heightened emphasis on the social function of poetry and song. For those involved in political mobilization, the measure of artistic value was the level of *participação*. In Portuguese this word means both informing and taking part in an activity, hence message-oriented art that participates in social process. Interest in social problems, especially those of the rural Northeast, also led to changes in musical material. Some young songwriters began to blend elements of the *samba de morro* in Bossa Nova frames. Others, led by Geraldo Vandré from the Northeastern state of Paraíba, incorporated some regionalist features into their Bossa Nova sound and used folk diction in texts. This kind of focus on the part of middle-class songwriters of the sixties most frequently expressed social commitment.

Popular music, like all sectors of Brazilian society, was affected by the right wing coup of 1964. The military imposed authoritarian rule, restricted democratic processes, repressed political opposition and grass roots organizations, and violated human rights. These developments sharpened sociopolitical awareness and motivated further protest, notably in song. Despite stricter application of censorship laws (in place since the 1940s), some forms of dissent were still tolerated. Social discourse in song was widespread by 1965. Committed artists began to gain larger followings, aided by the expansion of the music industry, which could service diverse interests. Protest through musical messages was but one symptom of general discontent with the military regime. Unable to control broadly based opposition, the military reacted by issuing the Fifth Institutional Act (AI-5) in December 1968. This decree was the legal instrument for

the establishment of a total dictatorship. As a result, Brazil suffered increased political violence, suspension of civil liberties, and harsher censorship. Overt protest and dissent were no longer permitted. Many citizens, including some leading songwriters, were harassed, imprisoned, formally exiled, or forced to flee the country.[7]

Soon after the coup, there was another important development in popular music: the emergence in mass media and resulting commercial success of *iê-iê-iê* (yeah-yeah-yeah), the local rendition of the electric pop music that was being popularized worldwide by the Beatles. Since the Elvis Presley craze of the late 1950s, there were imitations of rock and roll in Brazil, but these manifestations were occasional and not reflective of a significant trend. In 1965 an advertising firm capitalized on the interest in "youth music" and created a movement called *Jovem Guarda* [Young Guard] (Gomes, 97). This designation alludes contrastively to the *Velha Guarda* [Old Guard] of venerable samba composers and, perhaps somewhat ironically, to a prophetic phrase of Lenin.[8] Led by the charismatic vocalist Roberto Carlos, the exponents of *iê-iê-iê* sang teen-oriented songs of love and adventure to simple rock and roll accompaniment. The music was highly imitative in concept and practice, as indicated by the number of Portuguese versions of North American tunes (e.g., "Splish Splash"). The Young Guard successfully reached a mass audience through a carefully orchestrated scheme of promotion via television, attracting many consumers who followed Anglo-American popular music. Roberto Carlos went on to become a best-selling romantic crooner, achieved enormous popularity without class distinctions, and was crowned "The King" of popular music.

As far as Bossa Nova was concerned, participation, nationalism, and regionalism were prime concerns after 1964. Many, including Caetano Veloso in his earliest years in music, still cultivated the established style of Gilberto and Jobim, but the so-called second generation of Bossa Nova implemented various modifications. The success of the Young Guard, perceived by many to be an unmediated import, fostered concern with the authenticity or national character of popular music. Increasingly, songwriters and arrangers turned away from jazzlike configurations to draw on and stylize more traditional and rural genres. The early work of Gilberto Gil and Milton Nascimento are good examples of these practices. In many cases, only the characteristic instrumentation or syncopation of Bossa Nova was maintained. Some performers moved toward a more forceful manner of presentation, eschewing the self-effacing finesse of early Bossa Nova. More-aggressive performance approaches were

consistent with protest themes. Texts often focused on the urban working class, injustices in the interior, or the plight of the backlands. Urban middle-class musicmakers emphasized rural settings in lyrics and identified with the country as a whole through such musical means as the use of typically Brazilian instruments, the utilization of different regional rhythms, and the imitation of popular melodies. This folk or traditional orientation usually implied what might be termed cultural nationalism but did not always imply a committed political ideology. A good example is the series of "Afro sambas" co-authored by Baden Powell and Vinícius de Morais. These Bossa Nova compositions are inspired by the Afro-Brazilian culture of Bahia, thus contributing to the regionalist trend, but do not express, as a set, a committed ideology. The best example of protest and nationalism is the show *Opinião* [Stubborn opinion], which opened in Rio in late 1964. This event featured committed Bossa Nova alongside sambas and other songs by popular composers from the Northeast.

Perhaps the most important development on the popular music scene in the late sixties was the organization of songwriters' competitions. In 1965 television broadcasters in São Paulo began sponsoring these yearly festivals of Brazilian popular music. The city of Rio de Janeiro hosted the International Festivals of Song, with national and international finals. Songwriters and composer-lyricist teams were invited to submit unpublished works for evaluation by a panel of judges. Finalists performed their songs before a television audience or had a third party make their presentation. Awards were given for best songs, best lyrics, and best performances. Public reception was a factor in evaluation and awards; the audience consisted almost exclusively of liberal university-educated urban youth. In addition to wide exposure, winning participants could gain a recording contract. Most of the outstanding figures of Brazilian popular music of the sixties and seventies came into public view during these contests. In addition to Buarque, Veloso, Gil, and Nascimento, participants included such important figures as Geraldo Vandré, Edu Lobo, Paulinho da Viola, Jorge Ben, and Luiz Gonzaga, Jr. In spite of the commercial interests of sponsoring broadcasters and recording companies, the festivals were important in stimulating both textual and musical innovation (Miller, 235–243).

During these events the acronym MPB became a permanent part of contemporary Brazilian vocabulary. The festivals were designed to promote popular music of a national orientation and were clearly dominated by the sounds of Bossa Nova and derivative forms, such

as stylized regionalist compositions. The adolescent rock of the "escapist" Young Guard was shunned; one festival expressly prohibited the use of electric instruments. There was even a demonstration in São Paulo against the electric guitar, perceived as a symbol of Yankee imperialism. This bias would lead to some heated polemics and controversial incidents, as seen in the discussion of Caetano Veloso. The MPB festivals lasted until 1971, but most agree that the first four years were the most exciting and diverse and that increased commercialism and censorship made the later contests much less significant.

Two festival compositions that reflect both the stylistic changes in popular music of the sixties and the prevalent ideology of song are "Disparada" [Shot], by Theofilo Barros de Filho and Geraldo Vandré, and "Ponteio" [Strumming/fingerpicking], by Edu Lobo and José Carlos Capinan. These titles won first place awards in the second (1966) and third (1967) festivals of MPB (sponsored by TV Record), respectively. "Disparada" is a stylization of *toada-galope*, a genre of folk song from the interior of southern Brazil. The song, rubato, begins:

Get yourself ready for these things I will tell
I come from outback, might not suit you too well
I learned to say no, to face death without tears
Destiny, death, things were all out of gear
I live to set it all straight, hear? (D 90)

The remainder of the text is constructed largely with words used in cattle raising, such as "round up" and "branding," which symbolize exploitation, social injustice, and rebellion in the tale of the narrator. He also refers to his *viola*, emblematic of protest in both rural folk song and contemporary urban popular music. This typical string instrument is also symbolic of the committed stance in "Ponteio," whose title and refrain refer to a folk style of guitar picking. Musically, the song blends original ideas with elements of traditional rural music of the Northeast and of the interior of the state of São Paulo. The following selected verses reflect the preoccupations of the lyric voice, a *violeiro* who struggles against repression and envisions a day when change will come.

It was one, it was two, it was one hundred whole
'Twas the world coming down but not one single soul
Who knew that I strum, that I pick, that I sing
Who'd give me some money or love to me bring

. . . . . .

It was day, it was clear, it was almost one-half
It was songs with no strumming no talking no laugh
Violence and voices and folk guitar sounds
It was death in this place, in the world all around

. . . . . .

I know fully well that on one certain day
That day won't be long now, I hope and I pray
I'm certain, I tell you, that that day will come
So I'll say right away where I'm coming from (D 90)

With its reference to a day of reckoning, a symbolic time of social justice, this song text typifies that which Walnice Galvão has identified as a central paradigm of sixties' protest song. This analyst notes songwriters' preferences for epic tones over the lyrical in festival songs, and the frequency with which socially marginalized figures like folk bards, victims of drought, rural bandits, urban indigents, and the proletariat appear. She argues that the promise of a future of social transformation serves the function of absolving listeners of any responsibility in historical processes.

Whatever the validity of Galvão's observations, it is clear that the festival public generally preferred sociopolitical themes and paid close attention to the words of the songs being presented. One analyst has written that the festivals became a place to raise and debate issues publicly because of the military's suffocation of normal political activity (Meneses, 30). While an academic critic described the dominant process of composition of festival songs as finding a musical arrangement to reinforce a message (Favaretto, 9), a concerned entrepreneur complained that too many festival entries appeared to be poetry set to music and that songs tended to be judged more for their lyrics than for their musicality (M. Pereira, 41).

In addition to political content, there developed general expectations of quality in song text writing. Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda notes that the texts of songwriters who participated in the festivals show "cultured diction" and "literary quality." She attributes the public's desires for textual elaboration in song to the "inexpressivity" and inadequacies of poetry of the same period (36–37). Anazildo Vasconcelos da Silva, for his part, argues that the festivals replaced traditional poetry contests as forums for assessing the state of the art (*Lírica*, 78). This last claim perhaps exaggerates the case, but it is clear that these competitions were the stage for many implicit

"position papers" and, once dominant taste was challenged, for some of the most audacious songs of the period.

The festivals also provided a platform for the introduction of one of the most controversial developments in MPB of the sixties: a series of episodes and recordings known as Tropicália or *tropicalismo*. The goals and achievements of this artistic "Tropicalism" are discussed in detail in chapter 2. The brief but tremendously influential movement was spearheaded by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, both from the state of Bahia, who proposed creative openness and critical revision of Brazilian popular music in general. The music of the Young Guard was not rejected but rather incorporated into a flexible framework that included pop music, traditional samba and Bossa Nova, protest and sentimentality, kitsch and avant-garde poetry, folklore and modern technology. Tropicália opened the way for musical and poetic experimentation and diversification in MPB, for the wide spectrum of interests of the seventies.

Popular music of the 1970s formed a network of interrelated phenomena that grew out of samba, Bossa Nova, derivative regionalism, protest, the Young Guard, and Tropicalism. There was no organized trend or movement but rather a broad diversity and eclecticism within the repertory of individual artists. As the recording and broadcast industries continued to expand, MPB readily incorporated foreign and regional trends and forged new avenues of expression. Hybridization was common, as composers mixed and remixed Brazilian parameters—rhythms, patterns of harmony, instruments—with those of rock, blues, soul, funk, some discothèque, Jamaican reggae, and, to a limited degree, African music.[9]

Diversification did not come at the expense of long-established genres. On the contrary, instrumental *choro* and traditional samba were strengthened in the 1970s, as middle-class musicians and consumers alike showed renewed interest in those forms. Several factors contributed to the revitalization and growth of the samba. Increased commercialization of carnival in Rio and the opening of samba schools for public dances during the off-season attracted many new patrons, including many from the middle class. The record industry began to seek out venerable samba composers and performers of humble origins, several of whom gained due recognition. The most notable of these was Cartola, from the Mangueira samba school, who recorded his first album at the age of seventy. A series of younger performers reached mass audiences and the hit parade with their presentations and recordings of polished *samba de morro*, *samba de enredo*, and *samba-canção*. Among these new idols of samba were singer-songwriters Martinho da Vila and João Nogueira

and female vocalists Beth Carvalho, Clara Nunes, and Alcione, who made inroads by appealing to audiences at all levels of society. Samba is essential to the musical projects of several of MPB's leading artists, notably Paulinho da Viola. For their part, both Chico Buarque and João Bosco made several significant recordings within the genre, which should be heard as salient items of their individual repertories and of the broader scheme of samba music as well.

During the decade of the seventies, the sound of the Northeast was increasingly prominent on a national scale. Many young composers and performers explored and expanded upon the vast system of traditional music of their region, especially the heritage of backland minstrels, known and respected for the lyrical and topical verse they improvise to the sound of the *viola*. Northeasterners who achieved recognition around Brazil include the Quinteto Violado, Dominguinhos, Raimundo Fagner, Alceu Valença, Geraldo Azevedo, Zé Ramalho, Djavan, and, in the eighties, Elba Ramalho. The repertory of such artists invariably includes the popular dance rhythms *baião*, *xaxado*, *xote*, and *arrasta-pé* and a hybrid form called *forró*. The typical instrumentation of a regional group includes accordion, *zabumba* [bass drum], and triangle, making the traditional sound comparable to that of Cajun music of Louisiana. During the seventies, electric instrumentation became increasingly common. Mixtures of *forró* and rock have yielded dynamic results, sometimes called *forrock*. Young musicians also favor *frevo*, a frenetic form of big-band march and the mainstay dance music of carnival in Recife, Pernambuco. Electrified forms of *frevo* grew in popularity in Salvador, Bahia, and mollified vocal varieties emerged, especially in the work of Moraes Moreira, who began as a member of the innovative samba-rock group Novos Baianos.

The easygoing music of the Young Guard was able to challenge the hegemony of Bossa Nova in the urban middle-class sector in the 1960s. In the decade that followed, simple rock and roll and subsequent kinds of rock were never lacking but remained a minority activity, in some cases associated with "underground," or alternative youth culture, in the so-called hippy fashion. A series of performing songwriters, notably Jards Macalé and Walter Franco, used rock in experiments inspired by the successes of Tropicalism. Stars of MPB like Veloso, Gil, and Nascimento included rock in their performances and recordings, but Rita Lee and Raúl Seixas were the most constant bearers of the banner of Brazilian rock. It was not until 1983, with the emergence of a new generation of young musicians, that rock became truly prominent.

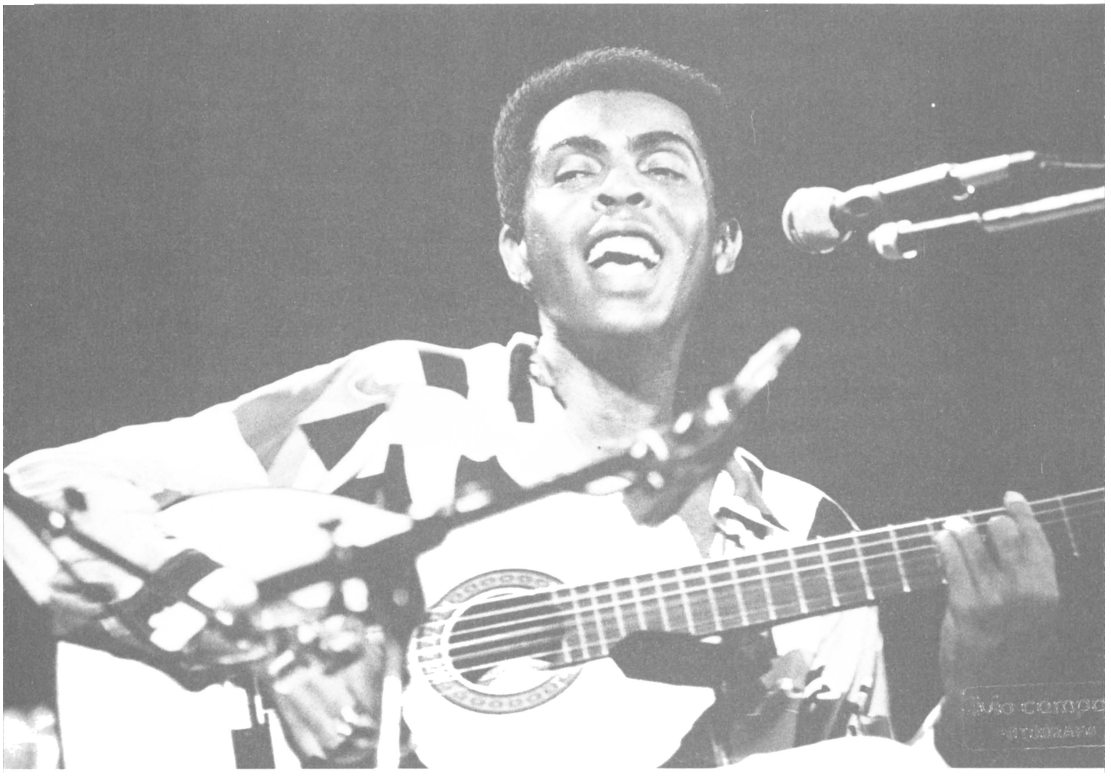
As for the discourse of MPB in the 1970s, protest and social com-

mentary in song were widespread in the context of an authoritarian society. The specter of censorship led to frequent use of metaphor and allegory in lyrics as means of resisting imposed silence. Chico Buarque and Aldir Blanc most effectively voiced political and sociocultural issues. Lyricists and songwriters also produced crafted texts that elaborated on behavioral, ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic questions. In addition to Gil and Veloso, such songwriters as the tropicalist Tom Zé, Northeasterners Belchior and Marcus Vinícius, rock artist Walter Franco, and, in the eighties, the unique twelve-tone composer Arrigo Barnabé experimented with the structures of sound and poetry, which led to the recognition of an avant-garde trend within popular music.[10]

The chapters that follow explore form and content, music and lyrics, performance and reception, and social issues and art in contemporary Brazilian song. The lyricism of the *modinha*, the contagious rhythms of the samba, the finesse of Bossa Nova, the distinct traditions of regions, the electricity of rock music, and original sonority are all present in the works of Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Milton Nascimento, and João Bosco and Aldir Blanc. Examining their repertories reveals the individuality and collective appeal of these artists, the particular ways in which each draws and builds on tradition and develops a distinctive musical personality.

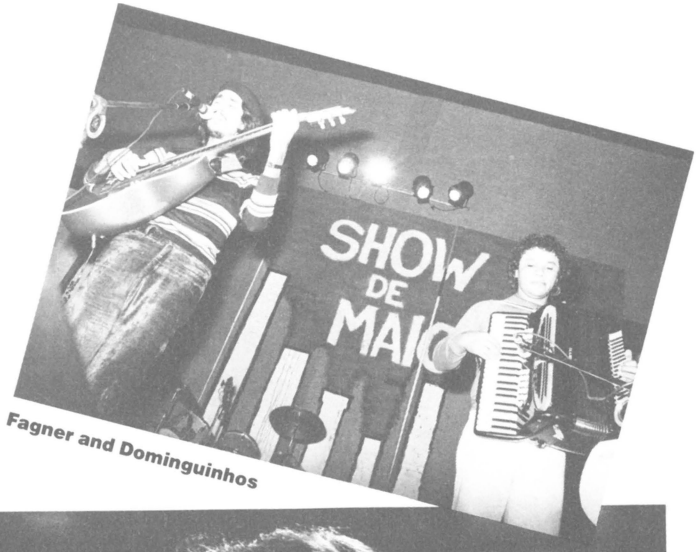
Left to right: **Bezerra da Silva, Alcione, João Nogueira, Beth Carvalho, Martinho da Vila**

Hermeto Pascoal



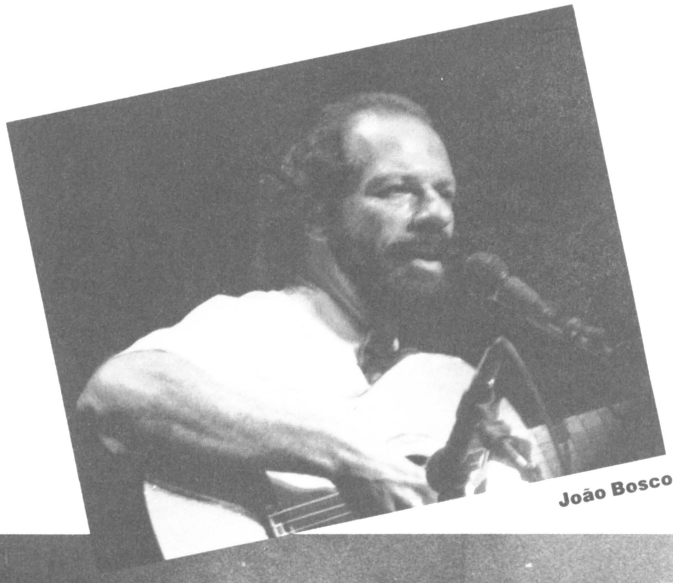
Gilberto Gil

Chico Buarque and Milton Nascimento



Fagner and Dominguinhos

Elis Regina

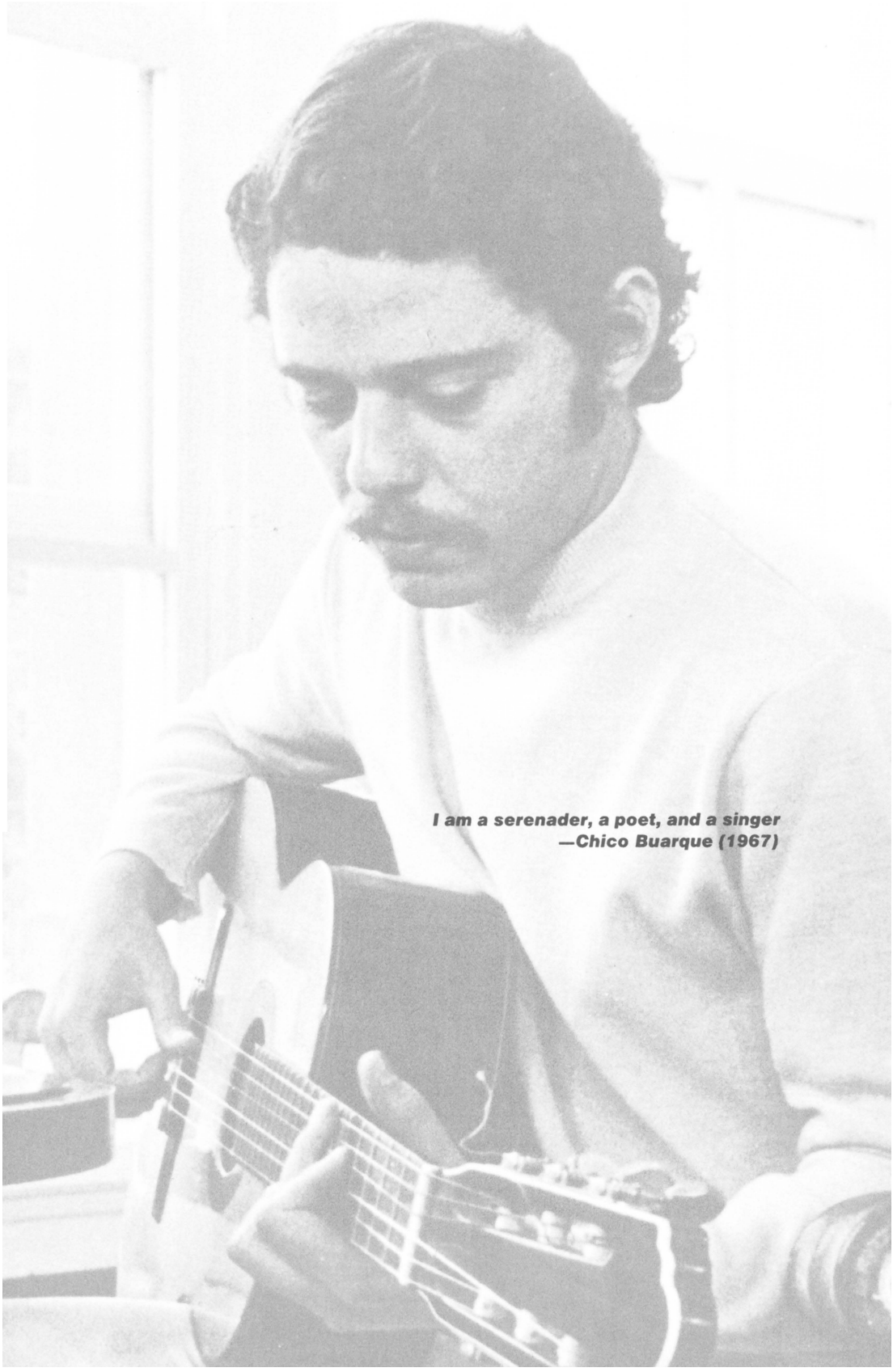


João Bosco

Milton Nascimento

Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Song

MPB 1965–1985



I am a serenader, a poet, and a singer
—Chico Buarque (1967)