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Musicians' Performances and Performances of "Musician" in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil

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Não fui feito pro trabalho, eu nasci pra batucar

I wasn't made for working, I was born to drum

—"Felicidade" (Happiness) by René Bittencourt and Noel Rosa

From rock hits like "Money for Nothing" to sambas such as "Felicidade," countless songs have lyrics suggesting that making music is antithetical to holding a job or doing work. Regardless of any ironic intent, such (self) representations are part of a discourse that obscures the labor necessary to become a musician and, especially, to support oneself as one.¹ Such notions are bolstered as the lives of music industry notables are commonly portrayed as glamorous and devoid of any real work—imagery that contributes to their star mystique. Even when the work-like aspects of their careers are addressed in media and popular lore, the low wages, long hours, and poor treatment these individuals may have endured are typically discussed with nostalgia for bygone days of paying dues on the way to the big time.

Missing from such triumphant tales are accounts of the many musicians who earn their living in local music industries without major label support, world tours, or international adulation. Between the proliferation of avenues for self-production and distribution and local worksites such as restaurants, bars, hotels, and weddings, there are perhaps more "proto markets" (Toynbee 2000) than ever in which professional musicians can ply their trade. Regardless of the creative and hard work they do, however, musicians who have not achieved star status are still commonly derided as hiding from serious labor and chasing dreams.

This article is about the work of being a musician in Salvador, Bahia, a culturally rich but economically challenged state capital in the Brazilian northeast. In this urban center of nearly three million residents, music making in the local scenes (Straw 1991:373) can provide income for people who face an extremely

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competitive employment market even for low paying jobs.² Bahia also holds a special place in the Brazilian imagination as the "heart of Afro-Brazil" (Carvalho 1999) and the home state of legendary musicians Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, and many others. With its world-famous carnival, a recording industry built upon local carnival music, and a growing number of music festivals, the possibilities for large-scale success in Salvador would seem immanent. Yet a majority of Salvador's musicians support themselves in relative obscurity, sometimes backing name artists on recordings and concert stages, but more commonly working in the hotels, restaurants, bars, and clubs that are patronized by residents and tourists, and that are, as such, central to the city's culture industries.

Theoretical and Ethnographic Concerns

My initial question is simple: how does a person make a living making music in Salvador? Answering it, however, touches on numerous attendant questions related to the organization of local music industries; musical and social knowledges; the politics of representation, aesthetics, and identity formation; and notions of cultural value. Such a consideration also raises questions for how scholars, performers, and consumers of music might understand musicians who are considered great or exemplary, and upon whom broader perceptions about musical sound and practice are often based.

My primary concern, though, remains with the ways in which local professional makers of popular music in Salvador create conditions of possibility to support themselves as musicians in a market that is deeply informed by the racialized and classed legacies of colonization, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the plantation system. In addition to shaping musical discourse and work conditions, this history is also at the center of how various interests in the tourism industry market the state to potential visitors, thus having an impact on the lives of most *baianos* (people from Bahia).³ Although developing competence in creating musical sounds is central to the complex of activities necessary to build a musical career—what I call "working to work"—my research suggests that these skills are defined by musicians, their audiences, and their employers in particular and politicized ways. Moreover, several years of fieldwork (and my own experiences as a working player) have demonstrated that survival as a musician demands both specific musical competences and the ability to make those competences known to key people. Therefore, my engagement with working to work at music in Salvador looks beyond developing "core competences" (Brinner 1995:77) for making music to examining how those skills are defined and represented by scene participants. I then explore how related discourses of good and bad music inform and are informed by the various forms of work musicians do to earn a living.

Musical working to work in Salvador resonates with Michel de Certeau's (1984) notion of "tactics"—the ways the less powerful improvise in quotidian practice to avoid being dominated by structures imposed by the more powerful. Tactics are an important response to the apparent totality of Michel Foucault's conceptualizations of power, yet their long-term implications and unintended consequences beg further inquiry. How might tactics have an impact on discourses they are used to avoid? What are their effects on the subject deploying them? I suggest that in addition to being central to how Salvador's musicians navigate their careers—how they respond to extant conditions—tactical working to work also informs musicians' identities and shapes the scenes themselves.

Foucault's response to critics—his notion of "technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves . . ." (Foucault 1988:18)—also begs consideration in relation to tactics. In bringing these two ideas together, several points of overlap and tension emerge. Both suggest potential sites of agency, yet de Certeau posits perhaps an overly optimistic view. Foucault, in turn, might be criticized for not liberating the subject from the discipline of modern knowledge in which "know thyself" has obscured "take care of yourself" because our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject" (ibid.:22). By placing Foucault's ideas in dialogue with de Certeau's, tactics emerge as quotidian moments when a subject does not deny self and acts, instead, to take care of himself or herself. Since I do not intend to separate taking care from knowing—self-care must be rooted in knowledge—and I want to be careful about assuming motivation, I posit tactics as acts not based purely on disciplined self-knowledge, and through which the subject is empowered, however briefly, to reject self-denial. Importantly, as a kind of technology of the self, tactics also contribute to self-knowing even as they might be guided by or stand in response to that knowledge. Further, tactics as discursive practices cannot be inert in terms of their effects on, for example, "technologies of power," which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends of domination . . ." (ibid.: 18). As the career pursuits of Salvador's musicians illustrate, tactics can be a source of agency, allowing working players to sidestep obstacles, and at times providing the means to challenge subjugating discourses. At the same time, these same tactics can also reify existing "regimes of values" (Guilbault 2007) and reinscribe extant power relationships.

A vital locus for these processes is working to work. In particular, performances of professional musical identities—my application of anthropologist Dorinne Kondo's (1990) notion of the "work self"—lay bare the politics and implications of tactics in relation to dominant musical values and the processes of securing and doing paid musical labor.⁴ Owing to the centrality of racial mix-

ing in discourses of Brazilian national identity, and Salvador's mapping as "the most African city in Brazil," I emphasize race in my investigation. Because of my concern with economic survival, the often overtly hierarchical class organization of Brazilian society (see DaMatta 1991) and the interrelationship between discourses of race, capital, and culture emerge as key points of engagement with which to underscore the material stakes for musical identities and music itself in Salvador. In a society that expresses its valorization of racial mixing and African-derived culture, particular (Eurocentric) mappings of cultural value, along with (racially informed) economic conditions and (economically informed) constructions of race, come together and weigh heavily upon ideas about what constitutes good musicianship, a good musician, and good music. My concern is how and to what effect professional musical identities are constructed in dialogue with these ideals within networks of Bahia's jobbing performers and their audiences.

My final theoretical interest lies with the networks themselves, emphasizing socio-professional formations and links between participants in a flexible labor market.⁵ The well-worn cliché "it's not what you know, but who" is very much at issue in Salvador in music and in daily life. In fact, *baianos* frequently remark on the importance of family and social networks for surviving lean times, receiving preferential or even reasonable treatment from public agencies and officials, and getting jobs.

Likewise, nearly all of my musician "collaborators" in Salvador stressed the importance of their scene contacts.⁶ Most also discussed the importance of maintaining particular professional reputations. The notion of musical reputation has been explored by several scholars including Julian Gerstin, who defines it as "the informal, consensual evaluations by which performers judge one another's competence and relate to one another in a social network" (1998:387). Certainly, this resonates with the comments of my collaborators in terms of how they get jobs. However, by thinking about professional identity rather than reputation alone, I seek to build on Gerstin's foundation to de-emphasize consensus, spotlight cultural politics, and better account for the multiple networks in which my collaborators are involved. Moreover, I am also interested in how identity performances shape reputations in and across scenes and how they inform immediate musical and professional interactions within them. Even more importantly, since reputation suggests a reading of a person's self by others, the consideration of identities shifts attention to the ways that tactics, technologies of power, and technologies of the self inform who musicians are, both in terms of how others know them and who they know themselves to be.⁷

In this way I bring ongoing concerns in ethnomusicology for cultural politics, subjectivity, and performativity together with growing interest in social capital, defined by sociologist Nan Lin (2001:25) as "resources embedded in social networks and accessed and used by actors for actions." My use of the

concept emphasizes how participants in professional music scenes are guided by certain understandings—for example, of good music and good musician—which serve as foundations for trust and cohesion and thus inform various outcomes related to the use of network resources.⁸

While a few ethnomusicologists such as Mark DeWitt (2009) and Burt Feintuch (2004) have applied the concept of social capital in music research, it offers additional potential for understanding the dynamics and micro-politics of music scenes. Further, by connecting social capital theory with performativity, I aim to bring nuance to social science methodologies that tend to treat networks without accounting for local cultural politics or taking expressive practice seriously.⁹

Since the people who helped with my research make music to earn a living, musical practice, social capital, cultural politics, musical values, and identity performance have very material consequences for them. The stakes are raised since the organization of musical work in Salvador mirrors what has been theorized as flexible labor in more conventional work sectors such as manufacturing. That is, musical employment is not typically fixed, long term, or even limited to a given job function. Rather, musicians, like other types of flexible workers, tend to be employed as needed, often performing different job tasks as required by their current employment situation. Flexible labor's advocates stress that employers earn better revenues with the efficiency and streamlined employee base it provides. Laborers, so the argument goes, also benefit from greater task variety, choice of employment, leisure time, and career mobility.¹⁰ Some of these claims accurately describe the work lives of my collaborators in Salvador. However, such conditions are never assured nor are they enjoyed equally among Bahia's musical workers; often, this idealized labor environment stands in sharp contrast to experience. Leaving these claims unproblematized can therefore contribute to longstanding misconceptions about the work habits of music makers, which sound remarkably similar to stereotypes of *baianos* in their references to hedonism and labor avoidance.

Mapping Bahia/Mapping Musicians

That residents of Bahia are often assumed to be lazy and averse to work is well illustrated by a souvenir that I was given on a recent visit. Almost certainly offered with a sense of irony, this miniature T-shirt bearing the Bahian Ten Commandments nevertheless speaks volumes about how Bahia and its people are mapped:

Os 10 Mandamentos do Baiano

The 10 Commandments of the Baiano (my translation)

1. Live to rest.
2. If you see someone resting, help him/her.

3. Love your bed. It's your temple.
4. Work is sacred. Don't touch it.
5. Love your work. Spend hours looking at it.
6. Rest by day for the strength to sleep at night.
7. Eat, sleep, and when you wake, rest.
8. Don't forget, work is health. Save it for the sick.
9. When you feel the urge to work, sit and wait. It will pass.
10. Never do tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow.

As a self-representation, the sentiments are indicative of the good humor and tranquility I have experienced in Bahia, and for which the state is widely recognized. Many locals embrace characterizations of their relaxed demeanor and pace of life as part of what makes their state appealing. However, questions remain as to who speaks for baianos, who profits from such imagery, and at what cost. Thus, while this vision figures into the successful marketing of Salvador as a tourist destination, it also perpetuates potentially damaging images of its residents.

As Kondo's ethnography (1990:57–75) illustrates, the very characteristics vaunted by a less powerful group might also be cited by the empowered as markers of inferiority and justification for hegemony. Thus, it was not uncommon for people from the more European and industrialized south of Brazil to point out how baianos do not really work, are always happy, and will use any excuse to have a party. Raising the stakes for such assertions are references to Salvador as the heart of Afro-Brazil, which leave little ambiguity as to how the city and its residents are racialized. Bahia's metonymic relationship with blackness also suggests that prevalent stereotypes of pleasure-seeking, labor-avoiding baianos who sing and dance at any opportunity are undergirded by enduring notions of naturally musical and lay-about black bodies.

Challenging such ideas can be difficult for a number of reasons, including their efficacy in marketing Salvador. Just as the lore of money for nothing might contribute to the appeal of a music career, images of laid-back, festive, smiling baianos certainly help attract visitors. Moreover, experience supports the PR: life in Salvador does seem relaxed, people are incredibly warm and hospitable, and festive events abound, as do baianos who dance and make music with remarkable facility.

But Salvador also suffers from high unemployment and poverty.¹¹ Moreover, many employed people struggle to make ends meet with the paltry wages they are paid. The challenges of low income and a comparatively high cost of living place additional importance on support networks—often composed of family and neighbors—as a necessity for survival.

Despite many such networks, housing is an ongoing problem. Homelessness is on the rise as people from the state's interior arrive daily searching for work opportunities, which are even more limited in rural areas. Such migration has been a driving force in the rise of Brazil's infamous *favelas* (slums). These areas,

which can be found between affluent areas and sprawling out from Salvador's center, are marked by crumbling infrastructure, lack of basic services, and, often, high crime. According to the city's principal daily newspaper, *A Tarde*, in 2005 more than 30% of Salvador's residents lived in favelas. The visibility of these areas, where a majority of the occupants are people with dark skin (see Bacelar 1999), likely contributes to stereotypes about Bahian attitudes toward work. Such assumptions are bolstered by the fact that in Salvador generally, and its poorer neighborhoods specifically, large numbers of people are regularly visible in public spaces, (apparently) not engaged in work activities.

This situation is more complicated than it might seem. In Salvador it is common for extended families to live together out of custom and as a means to pool resources. This is particularly important for poorer families whose members might face unemployment at any time. Owing to close living conditions, many of my collaborators spend considerable time socializing in public spaces. This, along with the abundance of public celebrations, can certainly give the (false) impression of a life unencumbered by work or worry. But as several of my Bahian friends told me, their smiles, laughter, and parties often keep them from crying.

The lifestyles and work habits of musicians can also be difficult to defend. Their eccentricities and extravagances are well documented, even glorified, and they seem to be spared the daily grind endured by people with more ordinary occupations. Yet, such perceptions are also likely based on superficial observations and even self-representations intended to create mystique. In societies invested in Western notions of capitalism, work as remunerated activity, or a Puritan work ethic, performers who cannot justify what they do based on financial gain or fame often find themselves susceptible to condemnation.

Such readings of musicians' work habits are, I believe, also related to the fact that much of their labor does not look laborious. In addition to "playing" on stage, a surprising amount of my collaborators' time, energy, and skill is directed toward doing very real work in what seem to be purely social situations. Despite appearances, it is during these moments that musicians create opportunities to make music and money through socio-professional networking and tactical performances of musical selves.

Tactics, Social Capital, and the Micro-Organization of Musical Work in Salvador

The stakes for this kind of working to work are especially high because professional music making in Salvador (and many other locations), in addition to being based on flexible labor, is largely informal. Nearly all of my collaborators work without contracts, are paid in cash, and find their jobs by word of mouth

and recommendation. In the upper echelons of Salvador's music industries, where there is more organizational formality, the vast majority of musicians I met still described themselves as "lenders of services." They work as sidemen/women earning fixed fee for each performance. As flexible labor proponents predict, many enjoy the freedom of not being locked into their job. This freedom, however, comes at the cost of minimal employment security in a capricious and competitive music market.

As a tactic of protection and, often, financial necessity, most of Salvador's professional performers seek to lend their services to several different musical formations, or "work nexuses."¹² For many, exclusivity is not possible, since most local ensembles do not earn enough money to fully support the musicians involved. Ensembles with major-label contracts, corporate sponsors, or patrons tend to be more stable in terms of membership, and are often busy enough to preclude the side musicians from extensive work with other artists. Yet, it is typical for musicians working with such formations to maintain outside connections if only to gird against job loss.

Securing any paid musical work, let alone maintaining a multiplicity of work opportunities, is no easy task. Intense competition in nearly all of Salvador's work sectors leads people to explore various ways of earning a living—including music. For an undereducated baiano facing the choice of unemployment, low-wage manual labor, or the possibility of earning some money making music—something that s/he does recreationally anyway—even low-paid musical work can be attractive. Members of the middle and upper classes who earn their livings in other occupations also perform in public for pleasure rather than as a basis of income.¹³ Despite the fact that such part-timers are often nexus principals—the central figures in a musical formation—who hire my collaborators as support musicians, numerous full-time professionals noted that competition from so-called amateurs had impinged on their work opportunities and precipitated wage stagnation.¹⁴

With an abundant supply of musicians—many of whom are willing to work for minimal compensation—venue operators, producers, and ensemble leaders balk at paying competitive wages except to big-name performers. Venues commonly opt for lower-cost labor provided by new artists hoping to break in to the market, underemployed people seeking any kind of paid work, and full-time white collar/part-time musical professionals. While such performers might not draw an audience comparable to that of a star, their willingness to work for minimal remuneration helps minimize operating costs. Club owners are further motivated to hire part-time middle- and upper-class performers based on the assumption that they will have better social capital; in this instance, meaning the ability to attract a more affluent crowd than the typical workaday musician can draw.

With several notable exceptions, this assumption is supported by experience. Many of the full-time musicians who participated in my study are from working-class backgrounds and have networks populated primarily by people of similar financial means. My principal collaborator, Jorge Farofa, a percussionist who self-identifies as a member of the popular classes, often mentioned that few of his closest friends and family members could attend his performances because of the cost. Still, Farofa does have several friends with better financial circumstances. However, they generally turned out only for special events such as when he supported a big name artist. When Farofa's middle-class friends did attend his more quotidian performances, they tended toward short stays, spending little on food or drinks, and thus offering limited appeal to venue operators. Also limiting the social capital of musicians such as Farofa, at least from the perspective of venue operators, is the fact that a key segment of any professional musician's network of acquaintances is made up of other musicians who are likely (or assumed) to be working themselves during any given performance. Certainly this does not preclude their presence at colleagues' performances—in fact, such events were key sites for networking activities. However, I did find that Farofa's professional peers, like his more affluent friends, most commonly made short appearances at everyday performances. All of this further limits the desirability of hiring workaday players as opposed to better-connected or simply more-affordable performers.

Macro-Organization, Circuits of Musical Work, and Musical Genres in Salvador

Despite a widely noted trend toward falling wages, most of my full-time musician collaborators agreed that they could secure higher-paying jobs at certain times of the year. This is because Salvador's music scenes are marked by three musical/commercial peaks, two of which involve large-scale festivals: the *Festas Juninas* (June Parties) and carnival. These festivals each define broader circuits of seasonal musical work that last for several months. After each seasonal peak, the city's soundscape shifts markedly: related musical activity decreases and events oriented to the coming festival increase. In contrast, the other peak, New Year's Eve, does not signal a shift from one seasonal circuit to another. Rather, it is the commercial high point of a third circuit of work that continues throughout the year. In addition to different temporal associations, each of the three circuits I have identified features different musical practices, venues, and work conditions. While there is considerable overlap between the June Party circuit, the carnival circuit, and the non-seasonal circuit in terms of audiences and musicians, the differences between them—and especially the means by which the boundaries are defined—have important implications for Salvador's professional players.

The June Party circuit begins approximately one month after carnival. It gains momentum with an increasing number of events held in honor of the Catholic saints Antonio (Saint Anthony), Pedro (Saint Peter), and João (Saint John). Commemoration includes everything from intimate neighborhood celebrations to large-scale, multi-day festivals. These events are held throughout Bahia and several neighboring states, with the largest and greatest number occurring on or around June 24, the Festa de São João (Party/Festival for Saint John). The featured music and dance of the June Parties, and the music most commonly performed by my collaborators in the June circuit, is a regional genre known as *farró*.

Farró was popularized in the 1940s and 1950s by iconic performer Luiz Gonzaga and has experienced a resurgence in popularity since the early 1990s (Fernandes 2005; see also Crook 2009). In subsequent years, several varieties of the genre have emerged in various locations in Brazil. Nevertheless, it is most strongly identified as a northeastern (and, importantly, not specifically Bahian) music and dance practice.

While farró is rapidly gaining popularity in Salvador, and the June party circuit is becoming increasingly important in Bahia’s music scenes, both are still overshadowed by Salvador’s carnival and the musical practices that animate it—two local genres known as *axé* music and *pagode*. Because the music of the carnival circuit is so audible, Salvador’s scene is commonly reduced to it; I was told repeatedly that “Salvador is only axé and pagode.” For this reason, carnival music is often at the center of Bahian musical discourse, and it is of particular interest in my research.

Axé music is an umbrella term, and for a number of reasons, it is a contested one. People disagree about what is and is not axé, and several artists commonly classified as axé performers reject the label. Keeping the politics and problematics of genre definition in mind, the style(s) of music that have come to be known as axé today can be traced to Salvador during the mid 1980s. According to popular histories, it emerged as Bahian musicians mixed and localized several genres, including *frevo* from Northeastern Brazil, lambada, salsa, rock, and funk.¹⁵ Perhaps the definitive characteristic of axé is the incorporation of local rhythms, primarily samba-reggae, the signature groove of Salvador’s *blocos Afro*. These Afrocentric carnival groups were initially formed in the 1970s in response to the exclusion of dark-skinned baianos from several prominent carnival clubs. Axé’s appropriation of samba-reggae—in some cases, entire songs—and the unequal treatment for blocos Afro during carnival are ongoing topics of debate.

Despite disagreements over definitions, there are some points that at least suggest which artists and what music might be viewed as axé. A typical ensemble consists of a lead singer, electric guitar, bass, drum set, keyboards, a percussion section, and, often, a horn section and several backup singers. The music tends

to feature a driving beat—typically a variant of samba-reggae—that is conducive to dancing, as well as playful lyrics that invite mass participation during carnival parades.

A second genre that features prominently in the Bahian Carnival soundscape is known as pagode.¹⁶ This music, which is distinct from practices of the same name from Rio de Janeiro (see Galinsky 1995), gained popularity after the rise of axé. I have noticed a tendency outside of Bahia to conflate pagode and axé. For most baianos, however, the two are distinct genres that are easily distinguishable.

Although some critics might bristle at the association, pagode bears many similarities to Brazil's national music and dance, samba. Ensembles combine conventional samba instrumentation such as *cavaquinho* (four-stringed lute) and *pandeiro* (Brazilian tambourine) with electric guitars, keyboards, trap set, and horns. Pagode dancers utilize movements from the samba vocabulary, and songs feature what is for many a defining characteristic of samba: a strong accent on beat two of a binary measure.

Even so, assertions of too close a connection between samba and pagode can be met with resistance, usually based in criticisms of the latter music's quality. When ties are recognized, pagode is commonly derided as an impoverishment of samba. Without accepting this characterization uncritically, it is accurate to say that most pagode tunes feature a significant amount of melodic, textual, and harmonic repetition and simplicity when compared to more esteemed musics such as Rio samba, *bossa nova*, or the Brazilian urban popular music known as MPB (*música popular brasileira*). A typical pagode song is based on a continuous I–vi–ii–V–I chord progression, supported by heavy percussion and featuring playful lyrics that can be learned quickly and/or that describe choreography to be followed by the crowd. As in axé, this combination is highly effective for engendering audience participation. Pagode lyrics also commonly employ sexual double entendres—something also heard in some other more-valued genres. However, critics I spoke with described the lack of subtlety in pagode texts as particularly troubling. A final point raised by the genre's detractors is that several prominent pagode ensembles include scantily clad female dancers, further driving charges of the practice's banality and impropriety.

Despite the many criticisms of both axé and pagode, both genres continue to thrive as commercial endeavors. Axé and pagode also continue to animate Bahian carnival—a capacity for which they are praised regardless of any other caveats, and for which they are known nationally. In addition, the two practices have been cited as important expressions of Afro-Brazilian identity (Lima 2002; Henry 2008).

Axé and pagode are also central to Bahia's recording industry. In fact, many people credit axé as the driving force in propelling what had been a regionally

focused enterprise into the national spotlight (Hinchberger 1999; Azevedo 2007). Bahian carnival music is also well represented on local radio, especially in the months leading up to the event.

During this period, *axé* and *pagode* also become progressively more audible and visible in Salvador's live scenes. Usually, around September public *ensaios* (literally, rehearsals) in Salvador by the more prominent artists become increasingly frequent.¹⁷ A highly effective means for generating interest in their carnival presentations, these events often coincide with the release of new material, much of which was recorded during the off (June Party) season.

In contrast to the cyclical ebb and flow of *axé*, *pagode*, and *fórró*, genres such as samba, Brazilian pop/rock, bossa nova, MPB, and a variety of international popular musics maintain a fairly consistent profile in Salvador throughout the year. Rather than being featured at large-scale events like carnival or June festivals, however, such music is typically performed in a circuit of local bars, restaurants, and theaters that cater to much smaller audiences.¹⁸ Another important distinction is that the genres that are most central to the non-seasonal circuit are generally regarded as national or international, whereas the music of the seasonal circuits is mapped as regional (*fórró*) or Bahian (*axé*, *pagode*).¹⁹

An important aspect of this national/regional distinction is that the infrastructure for the production and distribution of pop/rock, MPB, samba, and even much *fórró* remains in the south of Brazil in what is known as the Rio / São Paulo Axis. With only a limited presence in the local recording industry and a lack of large-scale events, working in the music that dominates the non-seasonal circuit does not offer the same earning potential for Salvador-based performers as performing seasonal music, especially *axé* or *pagode*, does. Still, playing MPB, pop/rock, bossa nova, samba, and the like in the non-seasonal circuit offers local players better opportunities for more consistent in-town work.

With two seasonal circuits that offer potentially lucrative employment performing regional music as informed by the time of year, and a year-round circuit that provides more consistent albeit lower-paying jobs, the majority of my collaborators piece together their living by working with multiple ensembles, performing a variety of musical styles, and often moving between the different circuits in relation to the musical calendar. The importance of this kind of flexibility was emphasized by numerous musicians who insisted on their need to play, in their words, "everything" in order to live from music in Salvador.

Performing Musical Selves and Musical Values

However true to experience statements about having to play everything may be, I suggest that they, along with the self-characterization "I am a lender of services," are more than simple descriptions. I believe they are performances

of musical identities that help create opportunities in the professional scenes and that do important cultural work as part of a discourse that builds reputations and constructs what good music, good musicians, and musical selves are.

I must add that lenders of musical services who have to play everything or even many things are not free to play anything. Rather, each opportunity for musical work brings with it possibilities and liabilities in terms of pay, prestige, and pleasure. Thus, working musicians take a tactical approach to accepting offers, seeking new opportunities, and representing the work they do. The impact of this, furthermore, extends beyond the music scenes. The ideas about music, musicians, and selves that are shaped by broader discourses such as race and social class also shape the meanings of those very constructs through ongoing polyphonic processes.

Much of what musicians do to perform musical selves takes place on stages, in studios, and on recordings. Clearly, being part of what is considered to be a great performance can do a lot toward furthering a career. Furthermore, most people will find it unsurprising that participation in a performance judged to be inferior might create a lasting stigma. In building reputations, then, working players understandably seek to be seen and heard performing in situations that allow them to showcase their abilities—both for the public and, especially, for bandleaders, agents, and the like—and they try to avoid those that might cast them in a negative light.

This seemingly straightforward objective is complicated by several factors. As noted by Richard Faulkner (1971) and Richard Peterson and Howard White (1979), established professional musicians commonly engage in various strategies to exclude newcomers and protect their own jobs and those of their friends. Theorized by Peterson and White as the “simplex,” and known in Salvador as “mafias,” clique formation can limit outsiders’ opportunities for positive exposure. Questions of economics introduce additional challenges. For example, Farofa often noted that, regardless of need, working for minimal pay—and, especially, letting this willingness be known—could do serious damage to future bargaining power, even that of established players.

This points to the significance of the identity work musicians do without making musical sounds. Nearly all of my collaborators emphasized the importance of “being on the street”—maintaining visibility in Salvador’s social spaces—as a key aspect of their musical lives. In particular, seemingly casual conversations at neighborhood bars and before and after shows and rehearsals, while not looking much like labor or music, are vital to working as a musician. They also illuminate how musical values and musical selves are performed in Salvador.

After listening to and participating in numerous conversations with musicians about performances they had seen, music they had been listening to, the

activities of colleagues, and especially the musical work they had been doing, it became clear that speech about genre is key in articulating their musical selves. Specifically, the ways in which performers position themselves with respect to certain musics have profound implications for their employment opportunities. In numerous instances during my fieldwork, the ability to perform good music was conflated with being a good musician. The inverse was also widely accepted—that so-called bad music is played by bad musicians.

Musical Values and Racial Discourse in Salvador

Musicians' efforts to live from music in the context of local understandings of good/bad music and good/bad musicians are complicated by the fact that in Salvador the most lucrative musical work opportunities often involve performing genres that are commonly criticized for being impoverished, inferior, or simply bad, while the practices most widely esteemed for their musical quality—and those that are most strongly associated with (and often definitive of) good musicians—typically pay significantly less. I also suggest that musical values, conditions of musical work, and their stakes are marked strongly by legacies of European colonization and African slavery. Certainly, dominant understandings of what constitutes good and bad music are informed by local constructions of socio-economic class, themselves not separate from the sediments of colonialism and the plantation system. However, the complex interrelationships between class and race in a former slave port and plantation center that is populated by an African-descended majority, largely defined by its African heritage, and home to culture industries built around local Afro-Brazilian culture mean that, here, racial discourse is even more critical than usual in shaping the regime of musical values that inform musical work conditions. Further, just as understandings of musical quality are informed by racial thinking, notions of race can be shaped by performances and evaluations of music even as many *baianos*, especially members of the more privileged classes, continue to deny the existence of racial biases.

As I pursue this discussion, I should point out that like racial discourse in Brazil, evaluations of music in Salvador are matters of great complexity. My exposition here likely oversimplifies things and cannot account for many musical practices and the related opinions of various kinds of scene participants. Indeed, trying to address all of the city's popular music and each genre's place in any kind of clear hierarchy would be an enormous, if not impossible, task, owing not only to quantity and variety, but also to the numerous contradictions and exceptions that exist. Thus, my intention here is to describe what should be understood as a general inventory of prevalent tendencies of musical evaluation, and some of their implications for musical work and workers.

As noted by Marta de Ulhôa (de Ulhôa Carvalho 1995), aesthetic characteristics appreciated in much Western art music—for example, harmonic complexity, elaborate arrangements, internal logic, and serious, introspective poetry—have been given primacy in defining musical quality throughout Brazil. This was certainly my experience in Salvador, where practices such as samba, choro, bossa nova, and MPB are consistently privileged as exemplary of good music, regardless of—or perhaps because of—the fact that they are not necessarily the most commercially successful genres.²⁰ With the possible exception of samba, which has been transformed from a practice of the masses to that of the Brazilian nation (see Vianna 1999), each of these musics also has strong ties to the middle and upper classes, who as noted by Bacelar (1999) have historically looked to Europe and, more recently, North America as arbiters of cultural worth (see also Goldberg 2002).

During my fieldwork, I also noticed consistently positive evaluations of many international genres, including several such as rock and blues that, while not reflecting the harmonic complexity of, say, MPB, hold a degree of prestige, especially among members of the middle and upper classes, likely from ties to a metropole. Certainly the place of international music has been and continues to be a contentious issue in Brazil, and strong nationalism often contributes to assertions of the quality of Brazilian music in comparison to practices from other nation-states.²¹ However, the valorization of a variety of non-Brazilian genres such as rock, jazz, salsa, and blues, and the assumed skill of the musicians who perform these musics, was evident during my fieldwork during conversations with numerous local players who told me that they studied performers from America.²² In addition to the musicians who were students and fans of international music and performers, members of the middle and upper classes, both musicians and non-musicians, frequently expressed their appreciation for and active consumption of various international musics. Notably, while it was more common for members of the popular classes to tell me that they did not actively listen to international music or participate in related scenes, these same people (including Farofa, a self-avowed and devoted fan of Brazilian music) rarely if ever condemned such genres as bad music. As I will discuss below, this is a stark contrast to commonly expressed attitudes toward Bahian popular music.

Along with music that is valorized on the basis of its adherence to a more Western European art music-like aesthetic or for its cosmopolitanness, Ulhôa (de Ulhôa Carvalho 1995) also correctly notes that Brazilian music that can be claimed to exhibit “folk” authenticity is also more likely to be accepted as good. I would add that assertions of authenticity often become a means of validation for music that might otherwise be condemned as too simplistic. However, when practices are reclaimed in this way, they are typically subject to a discourse that limits them as quaint or even primitive. The validity and acceptance accorded

is qualified, in effect reifying Europeanness (i.e., Eurocentric notions of musical quality, refinement, and modernity) as the benchmark of cultural value.²³

In contrast, pagode and axé were typically cited by a variety of people as not being good music. In particular, both were regularly criticized for their lack of poetry, harmonic interest, and complexity of arrangement. This is not to say that other practices were not criticized along the same lines. However, owing to the importance of both axé and pagode in the local music industries, and the fact that Salvador's scene is so commonly conflated with them, strong opinions about these genres were especially common, expressed by musicians, industry personnel, and music fans with mantra-like frequency and consistency in the statement that Bahian music "*não tem letra*" (doesn't have good lyrics), "*não tem harmonia*" (doesn't have good harmony), and "*e não tem arranjo*" (doesn't have good arrangements).

Like musicians' narratives about playing everything, such dismissive commentary might also be productively understood as part of an identity performance rather than a simple expression of taste (Bourdieu 1984). In addition to frequent outright condemnations of Bahian music, many people qualified any involvement with it they might have. For example, I was often told that axé is fine for carnival or parties, but not worth buying or listening to at home. Responses about pagode were similar, but also gendered. Numerous men told me that while it was silly, disposable music, it was good for drinking and watching women dance. One young cab driver went as far as stating that in order for him, a dark-skinned baiano, to get girls, he had to be a *pagodeiro* (pagode participant), implying that he did not necessarily like the music but had to listen/dance to it for the sake of his social life.

That musical values in Bahia tend toward the Eurocentric is perhaps not surprising given Brazil's colonial history and Bahia's slave past. I would also expect that the class implications for music practice are also not surprising in a nation such as Brazil that is marked by tremendous economic disparity (see Treece 1997). What is especially salient in Salvador, however, is that along with Eurocentric notions of what constitutes good music and, indeed, upper-class identity, there are numerous resonances between the asserted failings of so-called bad music and characteristics that are not only viewed as low class, but also as specifically African derived. This tendency would seem to contradict Brazilian understandings of racial and cultural mixing (*mestiçagem*) that are emphasized in notions of the country's national identity as formed by the coming together of the best aspects of various races and cultures to produce a superior and uniquely Brazilian result. Despite the general embracing of this idea of hybridity, the most devalued musical practices are effectively viewed as musical others—others to aesthetic values deeply resonant with the standards of Western European concert music.²⁴ Moreover, even in a context that includes fluid racial identification and the rec-

ognition of extensive *mestiçagem*, the prominent (and often ambivalent) place of distinctly marked African-derived culture and people of visible African descent in Salvador often means that musical otherness is reduced to blackness. As much as so-called good music is assumed to benefit from some African influence, those practices that are most commonly viewed negatively are typically characterized using language that lines up tellingly with imaginings of African-descended people and Afrodiasporic culture. I noticed this in conversations with members of both the elite and popular classes, including both fans of these musics and their detractors. The subtext is that for many people in Salvador, too much discursive blackness, particularly in the context of a commercialized Brazilian music as opposed to a foreign genre or folk practice, is a bad thing.

This tendency became visible to me in a number of ways. For example, in addition to criticisms of *axé* music and *pagode* on the basis of harmonic, poetic, and formal shortcomings, negative traits commonly associated with other devalued musics were also defined by a large number of interlocutors with references to repetition, danceability, overt sexuality, and abundant percussion. Not only was this latter constellation of traits associated with music understood to be less good, but each characteristic was also used specifically to describe music as more Bahian and, most tellingly, more “Afro,” to use a local term.²⁵ A further indication of the place of racial imagining in musical evaluation is the fact that several other commercially popular and, importantly, non-Bahian genres, such as certain forms of *forró* and a wide category of music known as *brega* (see Araújo 1988), are not considered quality music due to banal lyrics or simplistic musical structure. Yet especially when speaking to non-musicians, these practices were rarely if ever condemned with the same vitriol that was a regular feature of commentaries on *pagode* and *axé*. In many ways indicative of a closed system, a primary point of distinction between the most harshly condemned music practices and those that were criticized more gently (and, in some cases, with a sense of ironic affection) was the respective strength of their discursive ties to Africanness as expressed through regional associations, sonic and movement conventions, and the racial mapping of participants.

More consistent with Brazilian understandings of hybridity is the fact that harmony, poetry, and complex arrangements, while typically cast as the opposites of danceable grooves, humor, sexuality, and percussion, are seen as able to coexist with them. Ulhôa (Tupinambá de Ulhôa 2007) notes that many listeners who express a preference for MPB also appreciate that it is often good for dancing. However, primacy is given to contemplative features, which, in a manner deeply resonant with the Cartesian mind/body duality, are nearly always emphasized in music that is viewed as unequivocally good. Suitability for dancing is an added but not necessary benefit, and is less commonly definitive of quality in-and-of-itself. And balance is ultimately what is at issue. Too much percussion, sexuality,

and dance overemphasizes the body and, as such, Africanness, and is typically viewed with less favor.²⁶ Too much complexity (i.e., mind, and therefore Europeaness) in terms of form, harmony, or poetry, while occasionally serving as the basis of critique for a single piece of music or perhaps for limiting the appeal of specific genres among certain audiences—for example, bossa nova was not popular among the working classes—rarely relegates an entire practice to the category of bad music.²⁷

The project pursued by Bahian singer Laurinha during my fieldwork in 2004–2005 illustrates local proclivities in musical mapping and racialization. Laurinha called her music *pop azeitado* (“oiled pop”), as a way to suggest that it was enhanced or even “hot.”²⁸ This connotation is common in many places in Brazil, but when explaining her project, Laurinha told me that *azeitado* was a reference to *dende* oil, a key ingredient in Afro-Bahian cuisine. Thus, creating *pop azeitado* involved adding heavy percussion playing local rhythms to classic songs from the MPB repertoire. The singer’s website states, “*a fusão do pop brasileiro com a percussão baiana é igual ao Pop Azeitado*” (“Pop Azeitado is the fusion of Brazilian pop with Bahian percussion”).²⁹ Laurinha’s aim, then, was to localize beloved music and to make it more suitable for dancing and large-scale parties without sacrificing the lyrical and harmonic interest necessary for it to be regarded as being of quality. In her view, and in a manner resonant with Gilberto Freyre’s ([1933] 1964) idealization of *mestiçagem*, *pop azeitado* was the unique and superlative result of combining the best aspects of MPB with Bahian (and more Afro) music practices. For many *baianos*, neither Laurinha’s approach for achieving this nor, as confirmed by her musical director, her descriptive language needed explanation.

Linguistic shortcomings, the most commonly asserted failing of *axé* music and *pagode*, were racialized on numerous occasions during my fieldwork as well.³⁰ In a manner reminiscent of the Bahian Ten Commandments T-shirt, the publication of a dictionary of Bahian Portuguese (*Dicionário de Baianês*) presents a particular imagining of local people and culture. Its many entries translate Bahian slang and various liberties taken by *baianos* in their rendering of standard Portuguese. Again, the *Dicionário de Baianês* (Lariú 1991) is embraced by many *baianos* with a sense of pride, play, and self-parody. And while poor grammar and pronunciation are also actively linked with low class position and poor education, the general acceptance of and frequent references to the challenges of understanding Bahian Portuguese in the context of Bahia’s racial mapping suggest the power of assumed homologies between blackness and improper speech. Comments made by friends further illustrate this. For example, a well-meaning woman from the south of Brazil told me that I would never learn to speak properly if I studied Portuguese in Bahia. In another instance, a Bahian engineer apologized for his “African” English in reference to his

lack of fluency.³¹ Finally, while I was out to dinner with a number of friends in Salvador, a dark-skinned member of the group lovingly teased another who also self-identified as black for his verbal eloquence by calling him a *branco* (white). While it is certainly not assumed to be the unique cause of poor language skills, as Freyre himself suggests, African influence is associated with deviations from the grammar and vocabulary of Continental and—for many Brazilians, I would argue—proper Portuguese.

In addition to subtle racialization of musical and textual characteristics, discursive links between local music genres and blackness can be quite explicit. For example, I was told on several occasions that pagode is music for “*pretos*” (a pejorative term for Afro-Brazilians). A fair-skinned Bahian taxi driver even described it to me as “without culture” and nothing more than “black people yelling.”

The racialization of axé music is somewhat more complex than that of pagode. Stated links between axé and blackness are less frequent, perhaps since many performers and a majority of the people who purchase admission into axé stars’ carnival *blocos* are middle class and fairer in complexion. As I noted, though, axé songs are typically based on the rhythm created and still performed by the *blocos afro*. Furthermore, Afrocentric texts are common. Most tellingly, the designation “axé music” refers to the Yoruba-derived term meaning life force in Afro-Brazilian cosmology. Following the arguments of dance researcher Danielle Robinson (2010) in her analysis of early twentieth-century ragtime dancing, I suggest that many of the critiques of axé are levied at its black-mapped characteristics, despite the fact that it is very much a hybrid practice. The larger issue in Salvador is that although such hybridity tends to be welcomed—and most Brazilian musics were described to me as combinations of African rhythm with European harmony—not all hybridities are regarded as equal.

Contradictions and Tactics of Musical Work in Bahia

The prevalent tendencies of musical valuation in the discursive heart of Afro-Brazil, and the likelihood that the best-paid jobs will involve performing music that is commonly demeaned for being repetitive, overly simplistic in terms of harmony, arrangement, and lyrical content, and—in the case of axé and pagode—too Afro, mean that local professional musicians are constantly working against dominant musical sensibilities. Adding to the challenge is the fact that assumed homologies between bad music and bad musicians are solidified by frequent commentaries by audience members, industry personnel, and many musicians suggesting that performing axé requires little skill, and that pagode musicians can barely play their instruments. Although economic need provides some cover for performers who work in devalued genres (as does stardom or

working with stars; see below), pay inequity among musical practices was often a sore spot. In one instance, a middle-class health professional from Salvador railed against the injustice in the fact that the (untrained) musicians who played *axé* and *pagode* earned more money and were able to achieve national and international notoriety, while those who had honed their crafts to perform quality music so often struggled to make ends meet. In addition to the implied opposition between art and commerce, this commentary also points to the tenacious specters of racialization and the mind/body duality, through references to "natural" (body) versus "cultivated" (mind) musicianship and the assertion that practices seen as elaborated or refined merit higher remuneration and respect.

Despite occasionally critiquing the epistemology of musical values in Salvador, most working players face the more immediate challenge of supporting themselves and their families. Thus, while some of my collaborators pushed back against dominant discourses, most make do with the resultant circumstances by carefully choosing the work they accept based on short-term need and, if possible, long-term implications. And they tactically represent their choices through performances that construct their work selves. As they do this, some actively participate in reifying certain musical hierarchies, and many perpetuate them less directly.

Regardless of how a musician positions him or herself with respect to the underpinnings of musical value and notions of good musicianship, nearly all are required to build their careers within the prevailing understandings of each. In addition to developing the right skills in the right styles, professionals often must strike a balance between working in lucrative but typically devalued musics and more esteemed but lower-paying genres. Equally if not more important is how they represent their approach to this tension between economic and cultural capital in their interactions with other players, industry personnel, and fans. This is because reputations—the ways in which other participants in the scenes perceive a musician's professional self—strongly determine the possibility of subsequent employment. Although numerous factors combine to inform each Bahian musician's identity, the musical genre with which he or she is most strongly associated is one of the most central.

Stories abound about performers (often unnamed players whom someone claims to know or know of) who were unable to find work in the non-seasonal circuit after losing a job with a high profile *axé* or *pagode* ensemble. In other instances, collaborators were more specific. For example, Farofa often referred to a drummer who toured for several years with world famous *Olodum*, and is now out of music after losing that job.³² In part out of concern for meeting the same fate, Farofa has turned down offers to work with prominent *pagode* groups. My interpretation—which was confirmed in numerous interviews and conversations with collaborators—is that the assumption exists that musicians

known for playing *axé* or *pagode* lack the skills to perform other genres, especially those regarded as quality music. Another implication is that any credibility that might be gained from working with an internationally known artist is not necessarily transferable from one scene to another—particularly if the artist is famous for performing a less-valorized music. Within a given scene, however, such recognition can certainly help a musician establish an identity as a skilled performer, although the circumstances leading to his/her departure can mitigate that marketability. A few collaborators even noted the possibility that musicians who are overly identified with non-seasonal (quality) music might have difficulty finding work in the seasonal circuits, further suggesting the particularity of what might constitute good musicianship within a given scene. However, stories regarding the difficulty of breaking into the upper levels of the *axé* and *pagode* industry were more commonly rooted in discussions of mafias and protectionism than in issues of perceived skill. While it might be easy to chalk this all up to increasing specialization among performers or the fact that many musicians who are dedicated to a particular genre or ensemble are often unable to practice other styles—a common situation if a performer is on tour or working with a busy high-profile performer—I was nevertheless impressed by the predominance of a directional understanding of musical versatility in a city where musicians have to play everything.

This in turn has numerous implications for networks, musical selves, and processes of working to work. For example, Farofa told me that he felt unable to recommend a particular guitar player for certain jobs because most scene participants knew him as an *axé* player. This musician holds a bachelor's degree in music and is, in fact, quite versatile. Yet, according to Farofa, the guitarist's (over)identification with a devalued music would elicit doubt among potential colleagues regarding his ability to adapt. This made Farofa unwilling to risk his own reputation by making a recommendation that he felt would be dismissed out of hand.³³ Although one seemingly obvious solution might be for musicians to avoid stigmatized genres, the organization of the local industry means that those players who focus on more respected music risk being unable to support themselves with the lower wages paid in the associated venues.

Thus, tactical flexibility remains key to survival and, as such, local music makers commonly endeavor to perform professional musical selves who play or are able to play music that is considered good. That the above-mentioned guitarist's career struggles were, at least in Farofa's view, less a matter of his overall skill than of his reputation suggests how important perceptions of musical selves can be for getting recommendations and audition opportunities. Readings of musical identities can also inform the conditions of musical employment and the creation of musical sounds once a job is secured. All of this points to another contradiction in Salvador's professional music scene—one common in many

labor sectors: demonstrable evidence of competence is necessary to secure a job, but the way to gain that competence is by having a job. Thus, the working to work that musicians do to create opportunities is crucial to their career success.

Tactical performances of musical selves in social situations can provide a means for musicians to sidestep potential weaknesses in their work experience through the ways in which they represent their knowledge of certain musics. Countless performers told me that while they did perform genres such as axé or pagode, they did so more for financial need than because of fondness for the music. This qualification was often accompanied with the rubbing together of thumb and fingers (the money gesture), statements about having to play everything, and self-identification as a lender of services. A few collaborators even stated that they did not necessarily play axé and pagode especially well, but that they found ways to render acceptable performances when called upon to do so. Thus, while I believe that many of these musicians do recognize that there are particular skills necessary to play Bahian music, I also believe that any willingness to admit a lack of familiarity can be linked at least in part to an investment in maintaining a professional identity distant from less prestigious practices.

The opposite tactic—self-aligning with discursively good music—was also common. Numerous performers were eager to discuss their connections to, knowledge of, and preference for more esteemed musical practices. I was especially struck by the frequency with which musicians who worked with established axé or pagode ensembles steered our conversations toward their parallel projects (*projetos paralelos*): musical involvements that were neither their main income source nor, in most cases, the groups with which they were most strongly identified. Performers often represented these side projects as their own, rather than ones to which they lent their services, thereby claiming both ownership and emotional investment. Most importantly, parallel projects were typically dedicated to respected genres. Thus, their mention in this context served to highlight both the musician's versatility and his or her competence in what is generally accepted to be good music. This discursive positioning, in combination with success on the bandstand performing axé or pagode, can also serve to reinforce the common notion that players skilled in quality music are capable of playing nearly any music.

As Kondo notes in her work, the ethnographic study of identity formation implicates the ethnographer in each interaction. It is likely, thus, that my mapping as a North American music scholar informed the ways that musical selves were presented to me. However, awareness of this can enhance understandings of musical identity performances (see Babiracki 1997). With that in mind, I played with how I presented my musical self, at times going along with the flow of conversation and on other occasions challenging it. Doing this helped me better understand the various perspectives expressed by *baianos*. In a few instances, when I destabilized

assumptions about the preferences I was expected to have based on whom I was assumed to be, certain collaborators became more willing to express views that differed from the dominant. This convinced me that Bahia's working players are highly aware of how they are mapped based on their opinions and involvements with different musical practices. If musicians presented themselves in particular ways to me, a visitor with little power to impact their ability to find employment, it is reasonable to infer that with careers at stake, professional players would represent their musical predilections and participation to colleagues with even greater care.

At issue is not the sincerity of their feelings about specific musics, but rather how and when such opinions are represented and to whom. I do believe that the epistemology of musical values in Bahia has been naturalized to a great degree, leading to the devaluation of music such as *axé* and *pagode* that does not conform to what I believe is a Eurocentric discourse of musicality. However, when my collaborators make music, they strive to do their best work and are enthusiastic about that aspect of what they do, regardless of genre. Further, when those who work with *axé* or *pagode* bands were in the company of their ensemble's leaders, management, or fans, they often spoke favorably about the music. In contrast, when these same musicians spoke with me—or when I heard them talk with performers who were either not affiliated with their *axé* or *pagode* nexus or who were their closest confidants within it—it was more common for them to discuss parallel projects, lack of fluency in devalued music, or distaste for those styles.

Performative distancing from devalued music during interactions between scene participants—rather than during interactions only with me—was most common and most illuminating in these kinds of safe spaces. Among the many instances that I witnessed, one exchange backstage at a multi-day music festival is especially illustrative. As Farofa, the rest of his ensemble, and various crew members waited to take the stage for their performance, the engineer who would be mixing the show complained about how he had suffered through several sets of *pagode* the previous day. Farofa shook his head and expressed his condolences, as if speaking to someone in mourning. While everyone had a good laugh, this discussion was quite serious. First, it established two strangers who would soon be working together as musically like minded. It created conditions for mutual respect through a cooperative performance of selves apart from less respected music and presumably more closely aligned with good music. Moreover, the engineer was able to position himself for any of the other musicians he was meeting for the first time, and through their laughter all were able to assert their own subjectivities and create professional solidarity based on distaste for a particular musical practice.

I also saw Farofa narrate his musical versatility and involvement with valued practices on numerous occasions. He often told stories—usually funny ones—about working with noted performers of genres such as *samba* and *MPB*. In so doing, he established himself as capable of performing such music, and reiter-

ated that he did so with the approval of experts. By invoking his social capital in this way, Farofa exerts his own authority based on the awareness that he might discuss the ensuing work with powerful players in the scenes. This can provide him with greater control over various aspects of a performance—and therefore his onstage presentation of his musical self—such as repertoire, mix, and arrangement choices, and it can help insure cooperation from other participants trying to make a good impression in service to their own networking efforts.

While establishing connections to particular people is a powerful means of creating a work self that commands authority, inspires cooperation, and generates opportunities for employment, this tactic's efficacy often depends on specific insider knowledge. References to genre, in contrast, have a much broader reach, since they are more easily understood by both musicians and non-musicians alike.

Stasis and Change in Musical Discourse and Performances of "Musician"

Since presentations of musical selves so strongly inform employment possibilities, the sound of performances, and treatment at work and in everyday life, it is likely that assertions of having to play everything, discussions of side projects, stories of working with respected musicians, and experiences performing prestigious genres will remain common in conversations with musicians in Salvador. Similarly, critiques of the musical merits of currently devalued practices such as axé and pagode, and qualifications of any attachment to them, will probably continue into the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, I have noticed some shifts in local speech about music. For example, working with an axé or pagode star can limit the stigma associated with performing the genre, because many people assume that the biggest acts hire the best musicians. Similarly, the experience of traveling the world with the most celebrated performers of Bahian music can garner a degree of prestige, especially for those players who can demonstrate how their musical perspectives have been expanded by virtue of their international experiences. Notably, many of the so-called best musicians working in the top axé and pagode ensembles established their reputations by performing other more valued genres, and they continue to do so when they can. Thus, respected musicians' practice of supporting themselves by performing less esteemed music has not necessarily destabilized the predominance of Eurocentric musical values. Yet it has led some to speak differently about local music production. Even Farofa recently told me that he now thinks of axé as "bad music that is well played."

Despite such changes, musical validation generally remains tied to practices that allow performers to demonstrate mastery of harmonic, formal, and textual complexity and refinement rather than their ability to get thousands of people

dancing. This continues to have important consequences for working players and is often reinscribed in their quotidian practice.

Other aspects of the scene have also been slow to change. Competition remains stiff and wages are not improving—at least not for non-stars. Many local players must choose between low-paying jobs that keep them working and the refusal of such work in hope of avoiding a loss of leverage when trying to negotiate a living wage. Complicating matters is a general perception that a good musician should always be working—even when most everyone knows how difficult it can be to find employment. Thus, local performers can feel pressure to take jobs in order to avoid being seen as undesirable, and they must be guarded about their need for work even as they seek it out.³⁴

Closing Comments

Music making in Salvador can be a viable source of income in a difficult economic climate. Yet in order to build and maintain their careers, Bahian musicians must perform music and their musical selves with great care. They must work hard to create new employment situations and keep those they have. They must choose tactically from the work that is available, and they must represent themselves as capable performers with particular knowledges to position themselves as desirable collaborators who deserve to be paid for making music.

That they do this in ways that are not necessarily recognized as work, often while smiling, can contribute to condemnations of their work ethic and bolster problematic assertions of increased leisure time and choice. In challenge to the claims of uncritical advocates for flexible labor and those who facily accept stereotypes of both *baianos* and musicians, I argue that survival as a music maker and a flexible worker depends on a breadth of knowledge and almost ceaseless labor. My research suggests that in many instances working to work is just as—if not more—crucial to earning a living as a musician as more conventionally conceived musical competences. This is because success and often survival depend not only on what and who you know, but also on how others know you.

The implications of this situation extend beyond Salvador's musical workforce and public perceptions of music makers. Ethnomusicologists commonly accept that the musicians and music we know as representative and of good quality might come to be recognized as such through a host of extra-musical social, cultural, and economic processes. Recognizing the importance of working to work, networking, social capital, and the construction of musical selves, however, pushes this perspective to an extreme. Could this all mean that artists such as Veloso, Coltrane, and Beethoven might not be simply makers of great music or even great musical creators, but also great performers of "musician"?

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Notes

1. Samuel Mello Araújo’s dissertation is notable for theorizing samba in Rio de Janeiro as an “acoustic labor . . . the expenditure of human energy on acoustic phenomena” (1992:43). Aimed at a better understanding of samba’s history, his formulation emphasizes the numerous interactions of various participants in musical practices in relation to time, notions of value, and (secondarily) capitalist relations (ibid.:44). My interest in labor and my use of terms such as work and employment focuses more tightly on what Araújo might call acoustic labor directed specifically toward the generation of income for music makers.

2. I use the plural “scenes” to emphasize Salvador’s overlapping, discursive, and variously delineated groupings.

3. I use the Portuguese noun “*baiano*” in reference to people from the state of Bahia. When discussing events, practices, discourses, and the like associated with the state, I use the English adjective, “Bahian.”

4. Following Kondo, I embrace Butler’s (1990:173) theorizing of performativity, in which “the essence or identity that [acts, gestures, enactments] otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporal signs and other discursive means.”

5. I use the term “socio-professional” to suggest the many entanglements between social and professional networks in Salvador.

6. I use the word “collaborator” instead of the more common “informant” to express respect for the many people—musicians, audience members, music industry workers, and various residents of Salvador—who have assisted me with my research, often through ongoing friendships, but also through formal interviews and casual, even one-time conversations. Further, with this term I aim to acknowledge the active role they, by virtue of our varied kinds of interactions, have had in shaping my understandings of musical life in Salvador as presented here (see also Guilbault 2007:15 and Kondo 1990). I do not mean to imply that I worked as a professional musician in Salvador, although I did play drums or percussion during numerous performances and rehearsals. Finally, although I spoke with several local scholars, we did not collaborate in the sense of co-conducting fieldwork for this project.

7. See De Nora (1995), Burford (2005), and McGuire (2008) for explorations of this idea in relation to important composers of Western art music. See also Stokes (1992), who addresses related concerns among Turkish performers of *arabesk*.

8. Trust and community cohesion are central to sociologist Robert Putnam’s (2000) important engagement with social capital.

9. Ethnomusicologist Ben Brinner’s (2009) study is a groundbreaking example of network analysis in research on expressive culture.

10. See Wood (1989), Bradley et al. (2000), and Strath (2000).

11. IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) estimates Salvador’s unemployment rate at 11.1%. Collaborators, however, were uniform in asserting that this number is much too low.

12. See Packman (2009).

13. For this project, “full-time musician” refers to anyone who identifies as such and earns most of their income or spends most of their time doing music-related work.

14. Preston (1992:40) also notes how nineteenth-century musicians’ wages in Washington D.C. were undercut by amateurs and part-timers.

15. See Guerreiro (1998, 2000), Azevedo (2007), and Henry (2008).

16. See Leme (2003).

17. As noted by Guerreiro (2000), the most popular artists of the carnival circuit are increasingly able to maintain performance schedules throughout the year. The vast majority of this work, however, is not in Salvador. According to my collaborators who worked with such ensembles, their visibility in Salvador, quantity of work, and income earned are greatest during carnival and the months leading up to the event.

18. In recent years, a summer festival has provided a large-scale venue for genres more typically heard in small clubs. I have also noticed increased amounts of this music during carnival.

19. See Vianna (1999) on the nationalization of samba and the “regionalization” of musics from other locales, a process that is supported today by Rio and São Paulo’s media industries.

20. Stroud (2008:6) links the term *música de boa qualidade* (music of good quality) specifically to MPB. He also notes that MPB typically represents a smaller market share than several other musical practices that are not as well regarded. Nevertheless, it is important to note that commercial success is not, in my experience, equated with bad music, and that numerous performers of quality music have been quite commercially successful. By way of contrast, I was told on many occasions (as a way to account for the widespread popularity of several less lauded practices) that the *povo* (common people) do not want good music.

21. See Magaldi (1999), Dunn (2001), Moehn 2001), and Stroud (2008:12–38) on debates over international music in Brazil.

22. On several occasions, musicians assumed to be from the United States were actually from Canada, England, or several other European countries.

23. See Bhabha ([1984] 1994), Butler (1998), Goldberg (2002), and Crook (2009).

24. See Levy (1987) on common assumptions among music scholars regarding Western music aesthetics. The tendencies she critiques inform my gloss here.

25. I thank Mark DeWitt and Ben Brinner for pointing out how in other contexts such hierarchies have different implications for race.

26. My sense is that *forró* avoids similar condemnations because it is constructed as less African and more caboclo, or European/Amerindian (see Crook 2009).

27. Numerous musicians expressed admiration for the skills necessary to perform Western Art music, even if they disliked the music. I never heard it mocked as bad.

28. I thank one of the anonymous readers for pointing out that “azeitado” carries this meaning throughout Brazil without any reference to *dende*. In a subsequent conversation, Laurinha’s musical director explained to me that in other parts of Brazil, the oil reference might conjure imagery of, for example, olive oil as the basis of enhancement. He was resolute, however, that in Bahia *azeitado* would be interpreted as referring to *dende*.

29. <http://tramavirtual.uol.com.br/artistas/laurinha> (accessed 8 August 2010; my translation).

30. See Fanon (1962).

31. I do not wish to suggest that the valorization of language skill is exclusively European or that it must be Eurocentric. Indeed, several scholars (e.g., Gates 1988 and Dudley 2003) have recognized verbal trickery, humor, insults, and double entendre as important values in numerous African-derived forms. However, in my many conversations about musical and lyrical quality, this notion of verbal mastery seemed quite distant from my Brazilian collaborators’ emphasis on poetry, which they often contrasted to, for example, pun-filled song texts.

32. I should note that in our interview Olodum’s musical director emphasized that the group performs “afro pop” and not *axé*, despite being commonly referred to as such.

33. Kingsbury (1988) discusses the risks of deeming someone musically “talented.”

34. Fredrickson and Rooney (1993) note that free-lance classical musicians in Washington, D.C., exaggerate their workloads to seem in demand.

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