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Latin American Music Review, Volume 38, Number 1, Spring/Summer 2017,
pp. 83-105 (Article)

Published by University of Texas Press



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MARTHA TUPINAMBÁ DE ULHÔA

*Southern Streams: Some Thoughts about Musicology
and Popular Music Studies in Latin America*



ABSTRACT: This article discusses some aspects of popular music studies in Latin America since the 1930s. It begins with a synthesis of the First Inter-American Conference on Musicology (Washington, DC, 1963), published in volume 1 of *Anuario* (1965), the predecessor to *Latin American Music Review*. It follows with commentaries on the concept of *popular* and an assessment of the contribution of pioneer musicologists Mário de Andrade (1893–1945) and Carlos Vega (1898–1966). Finally, proposals for future directions of Latin American music studies in musicology and ethnomusicology are presented. Sources were taken from the 2010 conferences of the following associations: the Argentinean Association of Musicology, the Brazilian Association of Research and Post-Graduation in Music, and the Latin American branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music.



keywords: Latin American popular music studies, Mário de Andrade, Carlos Vega, dialectic soundings, musicology of listening.

RESUMO: Este é um ensaio sobre algumas tendências dos estudos da música popular na América Latina a partir da década de 1930. Inicialmente, é feita uma síntese da First Inter-American Conference on Musicology (Washington, DC, 1963), publicada em 1965 no vol. 1 do *Anuario*, o antecessor da *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana*. Em seguida, são realizados alguns comentários sobre pontos frequentemente debatidos pelos pesquisadores atuais, em especial o conceito de popular, com espaço para uma avaliação da contribuição dos pioneiros, Mário de Andrade (1893–1945) e Carlos Vega (1898–1966), complementados por propostas para direções teóricas futuras dos estudos de música popular na América Latina em etnomusicologia e musicologia. As fontes para discussão foram congressos de 2010 da Associação Argentina de Musicologia, da Associação Brasileira de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Música, bem como da seção latino-americana da International Association for the Studies of Popular Music.



palavras chave: estudos da música popular na América Latina, Mário de Andrade, Carlos Vega, soando dialético, musicologia da escuta.



*Quem disse que eu me mudei? / Não importa que a tenham demolido: /
A gente continua morando na velha casa / em que nasceu.*

Who said that I have moved? / It does not matter that it has been demolished: / We carry on living in the same old house / in which we were born.

—Mario Quintana, *Antologia poética*, 1906–1994

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Latin American popular music studies have shown a diversity of approaches and interchanges among researchers, going beyond national borders to rethink and offer different approaches for the field. This music has been studied from the points of view of various disciplines, notably music, social history, communication (media studies), and literature. Multidisciplinary coexistence is healthy even when there is no intention to leave the disciplinary territory, as proposed by this article on the study of popular music from the perspective of musicology. Here, the notion of musicology stems from the aesthetic but does not ignore the historical. It is a notion that takes for granted a kind of listening, where music sounds lead to other familiar sounds. The latter lend part of their meaning to the former, the syntagmatic sound flow intermingling with its paradigmatic connections.

Even the hearing of something familiar is filtered through the accumulated experience of previous listenings. This process opens multiple communication possibilities, though is confined to the musical genre to which that practice is related. For example, when listening to music like Rachmaninoff's *Concerto No. 2* in 2015, it seems at times as if we are dealing with "film music" when really it is just the opposite. Instead, music by romantics like Rachmaninoff functions as a model for the soundtracks of Hollywood.

Listening to music—like writing history, interpreting literature, or analyzing style—operates in such a way that synchrony and diachrony intersect in the fleeting present time. This multidisciplinary digression goes to warn readers about what follows. This text is an attempt to reflect on the field of Latin American music studies from a very particular point of view, informed by my own readings and experience. The words of the poet Mario Quintana (1906–1994), used as an epigraph to this article, serve to recall the truism that we are historical beings. Our biographies, studies, and experiences emerge from whatever we do, no matter where we find ourselves. We are what we have learned to be, our view of the world influenced by our desires and biographies. Twenty years of practicing piano five or six hours a day, and learning by osmosis and repetition, have conditioned me. I tend to read and reread, familiarizing myself with academic literature in the same way I absorb musical repertoire with my daily piano practice.

Then, after some annual “revision,” while there is an opportunity to examine a broader spectrum, I usually end up agreeing with Quintana: concepts appear under different names, authors use different metaphors or distinct methodologies, but in many, many cases—much more frequently than one thinks—structural principles are more or less the same. However, every now and then an author appears to explain things in a special way. Recently, Reinhart Koselleck’s (1923–2006) writings drew my attention.

Koselleck (2002), in a book about the history of concepts, argues that they have a dynamic historicity, and change with time and in accordance with social changes. One of the concepts he dwells on is the concept of history, which he connects with several ideas, including those of progress and modernity. In fact, he argues that what we call modernity is nothing but an aspect of the discovery of the concept of history in the twentieth century.¹ I think that this formulation is enlightening, considering the number of times the word pops up, especially in Latin American popular music studies. While some use the term *modern*, others consider themselves *postmodern*, and all claim the need for historical contextualization. And, in fact, as an experiment, I passed the abstracts of papers from the 2010 conferences that I am using as sources here through “word cloud” software. The class of terms that encompasses *modern*, *modernist*, *postmodernist*, *modernity*, and *modernization* was the second most common, losing out only to *identity*. It is not that the concept of modernity as a perception of historicity was the same for everyone. Sometimes it meant being contemporaneous, at other times anachronistic, depending on the generation or even the period of life of the researcher.

Reading the leading scholar on conceptual history reiterated to me how much the musical process seems to have in common with the historical process, where known sonorities—the “space of experience,” according to Koselleck (1985, 2002)—are regrouped, changed, and resignified in new creative expressions to create the future, or “horizon of expectations.” When I got to this point, I understood why I was attracted to this “new” reading. Reading Koselleck points us toward reception theory (Jauss and Dahlhaus), Walter Benjamin (on experience), and, last but not least, musical style theory (Leonard Meyer), already in my reading repertoire. I return to this experiencing of temporality in the last section on a musicology of listening.

The time frame discussed in this article ranges from the 1930s until the beginning of the twenty-first century. My closer involvement with the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, and the Grahamstown conference, with its call for a reassessment of the field, motivated me to write on popular music studies in Latin America. For the conference paper, I focused on the conflicting receptions of Latin American

(including Brazilian) music scholarship by an American and a British scholar (Ulhôa 2012). Here, I offer a longer, though far from thorough, review. First, I synthesize the First Inter-American Conference on Musicology (Washington, DC, 1963), published two years later in volume 1 of *Anuario*. Then, there are some brief commentaries on two conferences that took place in 2010, one of the Asociación Argentina de Musicología (AAM) and the other of the Associação Nacional de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Música (ANPPOM), as an introduction to a longer discussion of the Latin American branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM-AL) conference, in the same year. The major recurring points of the latter are discussed, especially the concept of *popular*, as well as an assessment of the contribution of pioneers Mário de Andrade (1893–1945) and Carlos Vega (1898–1966), complemented by proposals for future directions of Latin American music studies in musicology and ethnomusicology.

First Inter-American Conference on Musicology (1963)

An opportune starting point for analyzing the work of the pioneer Latin American musicologists is to examine the First Inter-American Conference on Musicology and publications related to it. The event took place between April 29 and May 2, 1963, at the Library of Congress, in Washington, DC, and was organized by the Inter-American Institute for Musical Research, founded and led by Gilbert Chase (1906–1992) in 1961 at Tulane University, New Orleans. A synthesis and some papers from the conference are available in the first edition of the trilingual publication (Spanish, English, and Portuguese) *Anuario/Yearbook/Anuario*, founded in 1965 at Tulane University, the headquarters of the institute until 1970. *Anuario* was superseded by the *Inter-American Yearbook for Musical Research* (1970–1975) and finally by *Latin American Music Review* (LAMR) (since 1980), these last two journals published by the University of Texas at Austin, under the editorship of Gerard Béhague from 1979 until his death in 2005.

The Inter-American Institute for Musical Research's Advisory Board comprised the most distinguished scholars on American music of the time, some of them still well known today, others forgotten in the muddy waters of academic canon formation. Representing Latin America were Carlos Vega (Argentina); Lauro Ayestarán and Francisco Curt Lange (Uruguay); Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo (Brazil); Andres Pardo Tovar (Colombia); Juan Bautista Plaza, Isabel Aretz de Ramón y Rivera, and Luis Felipe Ramón y Rivera (Venezuela); Andrés Sás (Peru); and Jesús Bal y Gay and Vicente T. Mendoza (Mexico). The largest number of board members were from North America: Mantle Hood, Irving Lowens, Albert T.

Luper, Alan P. Merriam, Charles Seeger, Carleton Sprague Smith, Lott M. Spell, and Robert Stevenson.

There were only seven articles presented at the conference, four of which were published in volume 1 of *Anuario*.² It becomes clear, looking at the titles of the roundtables and corresponding commission sessions, that the event was a working meeting about musicological resources, the history of music in Latin America, and musical monuments.³ The recommendations and the institute itself were part of a larger and earlier movement organized by the Inter-American Music Center, created in 1939 and directed by Charles Seeger beginning in 1941 (González 2009, 54–56).

The presentation text of *Anuario*, written by Chase (1965), highlights what he calls the “catholicity” of the model followed by the journal; this model was inaugurated by Curt Lange in the *Boletín Latino-Americano de Música*. *Anuario* and *Boletín* had the common goals of being equally hospitable to traditional musicology and to ethnomusicology, and of adopting the English translation of *Musikwissenschaft* as “musical research,” as opposed to the preferred North American translation of the term, “musicology.” The articles from the conference published in *Anuario 1* were the two by Francisco Curt Lange and Lauro Ayesterán on colonial music, one by Albert T. Luper on Mário de Andrade, and another by Carlos Vega on a medieval Provençal cadence present in Spanish art music and in Argentine “mesomusic.”⁴

The second volume of *Anuario* has an article by Charles Seeger (1966), which is a follow-up of his speech at the conference on modalities of musical critiques. The text discusses the functional and structural criteria used to talk about music in musicology. Through these criteria, he establishes a typology of music—tribal, professional, folkloric, and popular—adapted by various researchers in their preliminary conceptual considerations before describing and analyzing their object of study (e.g., Anthony Seeger, Phillip Tagg, Gerard Béhague).

This is not the place or the moment to have a detailed discussion about the whole article by Seeger, but I would like to examine two of what he called criteria extrinsic to music, which relate to the discussion about the study of popular music in Latin America. They are “political area” and “social strata,” because in the current discourse, identity and/or nationality and social class predominate both in papers and in day-to-day IASPM-AL discussion lists.

Regarding the political area, Seeger observes how the ethnomusicologists of the 1960s tended to accept the umbrella term *Western music* (in the singular) to talk about German, French, Russian, and Italian music as variants of a single type of European music. The idea of “our (national) music” was frequently found in the literature of the time. It is interesting that Seeger (1966, 8) continues his paragraph with a sentence that seems

to come out of many Latin American conference papers: “Sometimes it [our music] refers to one or another of the various kinds of music cultivated within national boundaries and, so, considered characteristic of the national *Geist* or *Gestalt*.” In other words, there is a tendency to naturalize commonsense extramusical concepts and use them in academic discourse. Seeger is talking about Europe and North America; if we exchange the countries for regions in Brazil, for instance, the same kind of problem will arise.

Seeger also noticed this careless behavior regarding the criterion he referred to as classification by social strata. According to him, European academic disciplines considered “the populations of the Western World and its colonial extensions as one coherent, social class structure, its [1] primitive [tribal] minorities, [2] rural and [3] urbanized majorities and [4] wealthy, educated minorities forming four social classes, ‘low’ to ‘high’” (Seeger 1996, 8). In Latin America, one could say that social class and race are two extramusical criteria that not only intercross but also are frequently used both in academic and lay discourse about value and authenticity.⁵

Finally, Seeger also comments on how historical musicologists and ethnomusicologists use categories such as “folkloric” or “popular music” in an uncritical manner, frequently transforming functional categories into structural categories in the musicology jargon. Unfortunately, it seems that we have not advanced much. Fifty years later, in the keynote speech at the Grahamstown conference, Philip Tagg, one of the founders of IASPM International, describes the same behavior among popular music scholars. Tagg (2011) denounces what he calls “epistemic inertia,” where the musical terminology of the conservatory is naturalized and used as if it were universal and eternal.

2010 Conferences on Music (AAM, ANPPOM, and IASPM-AL)

Research on popular music appears in a few disciplinary association conferences (history, communication, and music). However, for this text I decided to focus on the two oldest “musicological” research associations in Latin America—as a sample of how popular music studies are situated in the larger academic scenario—and then on IASPM-AL. As a temporal axis in terms of contemporary literature, I chose 2010, considering that readings in preparation for this article began in 2011.

Concerning the 2010 conferences of the Asociación Argentina de Musicología (AAM), the Brazilian Associação Nacional de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Música (ANPPOM), and the Latin American branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM-AL), it is important to emphasize that their structure depends on the history of the institutions themselves. AAM held its first annual conference

in November 1987. There, all modalities of the “systematic study of music”—historical musicology, ethnomusicology, composition, and, since the late 1990s, popular music studies—were grouped under the “musicology” umbrella. In 2010, there were a reasonable number of articles about popular music (seventeen of the forty-seven articles, or 36 percent of the total), as well as research on colonial manuscripts, in a thematic meeting about music and ideology. Regarding the reach of the term *popular*, articles dedicated to so-called folk music were also considered pertinent. In the meeting, although Argentines predominated (thirty-one participants), there were participants from other countries presenting papers (seven from Chile, five from Spain, three from Brazil, and one each from the United States, Finland, and Uruguay).

ANPPOM was created in the following year, 1988, and had the support of the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), only four years after the establishment of the representation of music in that government body. At the time, there were very few people with PhDs in music in Brazil. CNPq and the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES) started to invest in doctoral degrees in all of forty-seven areas of knowledge, and in 1990 postgraduate programs in music were established; in 2012, there were thirteen music graduate programs (six at both master’s and PhD levels). The first ANPPOM conferences were organized into subareas, maintaining the following structure for many years: composition, musical education, musicology, and performance practices. In the 2010 conference, the 277 papers were grouped in nine subareas, showing a tendency toward specialization and fragmentation of the field.⁶ Among the papers, 36 (around 13 percent) explicitly referred to popular music, independent of the “area” of submission.⁷ By comparison, at least in the 2010 music conferences, the Argentines put greater emphasis on popular music studies than did the Brazilians: 36 percent of their papers at AAM were about popular music, versus 13 percent of their papers at ANPPOM.

If in Brazil there is a thin line that separates traditional music from “urban popular music,” it is not so in the IASPM-AL conferences. Since the one held in Santiago in 1997, conference topics have continued to attract a broad palette of subjects. There, themes of the papers ranged from “roots music” to various national genres (e.g., cumbia, samba) and varieties of pop and rock, including “progressive” practices. The latter involves popular music that uses compositional techniques originating in “academic” or *docta* music, as concert music is called in the Hispanic-Latin countries, or “erudite” or “classical” music as it is called in Brazil (Ulhôa 1998).

Apart from the conceptual question, which I take up later, there were other issues identified as common to popular music studies in Latin America. Of all the subjects broached, identity is still widely debated, in relation

to either nationality or region. Furthermore, the subjects of popular music and teaching, popular music and composition, the issue of interdisciplinarity in the area, and the relationship with technological media, in particular phonography, continue to appear in the conference programs. Due to a lack of time and space here, I restrict myself to the papers presented at the 2010 IASPM-AL conference.⁸

The Concept of Popular Music

The Caracas IASPM-AL conference was titled “Popular, pop, populachera—El dilema de las músicas populares en America Latina” (Popular, Pop, Vulgar—The Dilemma of Popular Types of Music in Latin America). As part of the description of the theme, the call for papers asked for a “definition of the fields, popular and mass, . . . in relation to music in the region, either in opposition to or in integration with concepts such as heritage, local culture, belonging and identity.”

These terms may mean many things. First, they recall Pierre Bourdieu’s writings on the cultural field, with positions of prestige or economic power to be conquered. Also, the allusion to *popular* could mean either belonging to the people or well-liked music, while the reference to the “masses” (*populachera*) could suggest either a relation to many people or mass production. Alternatively, *popular* could refer to heritage, associated with public policies of preservation or local culture, in opposition to global culture, and, also, cultural resistance. Finally, *popular* could indicate the theme of belonging and identity, related to recognition of collective and national value. In 2010 the dilemma of the researchers, not of the music, remained our limited mastery of words and questions of value, as Seeger would say, or our difficulty in defining our conceptual framework, to use Koselleck’s ideas.

Juliana Pérez Gonzalez (2010, 22), in a comparative study of twelve historical accounts of music from seven Latin American countries written at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, noted that the concept of popular music is recent and its current relevance is a peculiarity of contemporary historiography. For most historiographies examined by Pérez Gonzalez, folk and national music were synonymous, and practices associated with urban media (records, radio, and cinema) were not included.

Hugo Quintana (2010), professor at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, came to the same conclusion. He reviewed the notion of popular music in Venezuela, observing how José Peñín’s 2003 definition of globalized urban music as being “for fashion” differs from the definitions employed in nineteenth-century newspapers by Ernst (1893), Rojas (1893), and Machado (1922). There, popular (related to the people) gets confused

with folkloric (folk, traditional). Later, other authors (Aretz and Sagredo) understood the term to be an adaptation from American “popular music.” Despite believing that it is high time for the academic community to arrive at a lexicographic agreement, Quintana seems to understand that the task of conceptual standardization is difficult. He added a definition of the term *popular* as globally and socially indistinct, since at the beginning of the nineteenth century, “tradiciones musicales más arraigadas son objeto de las más insólitas re-creaciones por parte de músicos provenientes de las más diversa[s] esferas sociogeográficas” (the more rooted musical traditions are the object of the strangest re-creations on the part of musicians from extremely diverse socio-geographic spheres) (Quintana 2010, 52).

Regarding identity, Katrin Lengwinat (2010, 32–37), a professor at Universidad de las Artes, in Venezuela, presented an article on Venezuelan music, a broad concept associated with the timbre of “harp, four-string guitar and maracas,” in a discussion about musical sonority. At first, the epithet was associated with the *joropo llanero*. However, from the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1952–1958) onward, it came to mean practically any type of popular commercial music, so long as it was played with the “harp, four-string guitar and maracas” (and the electric bass guitar). Using Alan Lomax’s analytical criteria of *Cantometrics*, Lengwinat demonstrated how so-called Venezuelan music moved farther and farther away from the *joropo*, such that the only remaining identifying element was its timbral hallmark.

Marita Fornaro, coordinator of the Musicology Department at the School of Music at Universidad de la República (Uruguay), dedicated a major portion of her paper to a criticism of the ideology of survival and aversion to the media of some of the first researchers of folk music. Those researchers (e.g., Vega, Ayesterán) considered folk music different from popular or mesomusic, because it was anonymous and exclusively orally transmitted. In the final part of her text, she traced the course of popular music studies in Uruguay from a theoretical point of view, and as an element used in the institutionalized education of musicians. Here, the concept of popular music became plural, encompassing “orally transmitted music, whether through the media or not” (Fornaro 2010, 49). Thus, as in other countries in Latin America, *músicas populares* are studied in Uruguay today from the viewpoint of both musicology and media studies.

Finally, making a bridge between the Vega school and English popular music studies, Diego Madoery (2010), professor of Argentinean musical folklore at Universidad Nacional de La Plata, presented the rationale for the category of “professional folklore.” He began with a synthesis of the history of folklore as the object of research and the creation of categories (anonymity, authentic, traditional, and oral) that allow us to differentiate “folkloric” cultural goods. Basing himself on Richard Middleton

(1990), he demonstrated a line of continuity between two types of “professional” folklorists: the academic researcher and the singer or composer of folkloric songs, with parallel and sometimes coinciding careers and repertoires. Carlos Vega is an emblematic example of the former and Atahualpa Yupanqui of the latter.

Mário de Andrade and Carlos Vega

As mentioned already, at various IASPM-AL conferences, starting with the one in Santiago in 1997, the definition of *popular* is a question that permeates several papers and discussions. An example from that particular event is provided by a presentation by Mareia Quintero Rivera (Puerto Rico and Brazil), later published in book form in 2000, about the debates on urban popular music in the Hispanic Caribbean and Brazil during the 1930s and 1940s. At the time, the term *popular music* referred to what many of us know today as folkloric (rural) music. Critics of urban popular music, such as Mário de Andrade and Alejo Carpentier, were concerned not only with the same issues as their European contemporaries—such as Adorno (the marketization of art) and Béla Bartok (the decharacterization of “authentic” folklore)—but also with issues such as racial heterogeneity and national integration. It seems that Andrade and Carpentier were exceptions among Latin American intellectuals with regard to their ideas about race and national identity (Ulhôa 1998). As Robin Moore (2010, 29) argues in his book about music in the Hispanic Caribbean, before World War II, evolutionist attitudes predominated in relation to the role of African cultures in the construction of national identity.

Furthermore, as Koselleck (2002) reminds us, concepts (and people as well) are historical; they change with time. This is especially true for general concepts with many meanings, such as popular music, as Juliana Pérez Gonzalez (2015) has demonstrated in her text about the use of the terms *popular*, *folkloric*, and *popularesque* by Mário de Andrade. The musical thinking of the mentor of Brazilian musical modernism changed throughout his life. He initially used *folkloric* and *popular* as synonyms; later, witnessing the changes that the record industry and radio induced in the meaning of the term, he criticized folklore studies for ignoring urban manifestations. Finally, in his later years Andrade made subtle distinctions within the popular, between *traditional*, *urban*, and *popularesque*.

Pérez González correctly identifies the term *popularesque* used by Mário de Andrade as an adjective that denotes music with popular traces (of the people, tradition), both in urban and semihigh art music (“light” music). This was not necessarily a pejorative term. Mário de Andrade used the term *submúsica* (submusic) (particularly in his later years) to refer to music he considered purely commercial (including the athletic virtuosity

evident in some concert music). In an unpublished article for the next edition of Mário de Andrade's collection of nineteenth-century scores, *Modinhas imperiais*, I identify the meaning of *popularesque* as "less pretentious." For Mário de Andrade ([1930] 1980), the *popularesque* in the *modinhas* refers to the use of musical elements of oral tradition: seven-syllable lines and xaya rhyming schemes, phrases with an undulating melodic contour, and a clear diatonic (without chromatisms) and syllabic style (one note per syllable).

Carlos Vega hesitated between the terms *popular*, *rural*, and *folkloric* a half century ago near his death in 1966 and even in the 1930s, when he started his project of collecting "traditional" Argentine music. Later, he developed his concept of mesomusic, which in an article published in *Anuario 1* he defines as "belonging to the whole population, circulating in high society salons as well as in the most modest rural backyards" (Vega 1965, 104). In that way, mesomusic stands as something close to the current concept of pop, as observed by Béhague (2012) in his article on urban popular music for *Grove Music Online*.

There is no doubt that being self-taught (like Mário de Andrade), Vega was profoundly influenced by his reading. In the introduction of a facsimile edition of *Panorama* (Vega 1944), Waldemar Axel Roldán comments on Vega's connection with the School of Berlin—the theoretical referential developed by Curt Sachs and Eric von Hornbostel, which also served as a model of systematic methodology for the formulation of Vega's *Fraseología* (1941). Indeed, all "sociological" explanation by Vega (I doubly highlight *sociological*) is today highly questionable, regarding either the arguments about retaining musical traces or the so-called social descent (the rationale was that dominant traces would be those from high culture imposed on the societies of the New World). When reading Vega and Mário de Andrade, the inadvertent reader may be uncomfortable in the face of the evolutionist ideas of their times. Several of us who were educated under the aegis of modernist nationalism have criticized this "reactionary" ideology. Fortunately, however, we have slowly managed to see through this "scientific" and ideological smokescreen.

During the 2010 Caracas conference, there was a session dedicated to Carlos Vega at which Héctor Goyena commented on how the Argentine musicologist started, in the mid-1930s, a systematic investigation of the origins of tango. The work, despite never being finished, was published in 2007, edited and revised by Coriún Aharanión (Vega 2007). Goyena warns us about the ideological views of Vega (and his adherence to the diffusionist thinking of the historico-cultural school of Vienna and the principle of "descent" of cultural practices—the same academic background as Mário de Andrade). Those views led Vega to determine the genesis of the *rioplatense* tango (the Spanish tango and, in particular, its Andalusian

variant, which were disseminated in South American shores mainly through Spanish theater and zarzuela) (Goyena 2010).⁹

In my research on the *lundu* dance, I draw on Vega, in particular on the historical part, which Goyena perceives to have been meticulously researched. In Vega I found empirical evidence related to the performance of *lundu* (*ondu*, *lundum*) in the theaters of Rio de Janeiro, Lima, and Buenos Aires in the first half of the nineteenth century. This is because he considered *lundu* an “ancestor” to tango! An inference like that might be rather distracting while reading Vega. Indeed, what is troublesome in Vega’s text is this search for origins and his diffusionist proposal that all cultural goods (excluding those of Native Americans) came from Europe (Ruiz 2015). In the case of the geographical area of influence of the so-called colonial binary meter (encompassing as “species” the *lundu*, *modinha*, *contradanza*, *son*, *milonga*, etc.), Rio de Janeiro (site of the Portuguese crown in the beginning of the nineteenth century) would have been a center from which Buenos Aires would absorb and retransmit (Vega [1944] 1998, 224, 230).

After leaving behind this obsession with origins, it is enlightening to identify the sources used by Vega to review or find them. Examples would be references in daily newspapers, or even the musical repertoire he uses for musicological purposes. Regarding the interpretation of the transits and cross-influences of musical genres, I tend to agree with the position, more accepted today, that acknowledges their links “through international commerce, technology, and shared history,” as noted by Moore (2010, 145) in the context of Caribbean popular music.

We listen to whatever we have learned to listen to, even if we try to deny this “mold” at some point in our lives. Furthermore, this process of learning is dynamic and continuous, and our environment of perception (our space of experience) and our conception of things (our horizon of expectations) are modified during this process. In my own research, I started to explore the musical sources of the nineteenth century in a more systematic way from 2001 onward, when I began to develop the Musical and Cultural Matrices of Brazilian Popular Music project. During this process, I, together with students involved in the project, started to notice that some concepts we were using were anachronistic, among them the notion of “popular” music itself, which started to be used only at the end of the nineteenth century. Our referential was tainted by the legacy of nationalist modernism and its emphasis on identitarian roots!

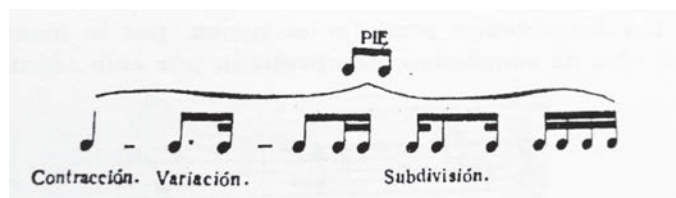
There were times during the research when I regretted this legacy. However, after some time, I am reviewing my own position. It is true that the discourses of both Mário de Andrade and Carlos Vega, authors I have studied more closely, are permeated with nationalist concerns and the need to construct a historical past for Brazilian or Argentine music.

However, I believe that, now that their ideology is sufficiently contextualized, it is time to review their writings, to critically reconstruct their musicological thinking.

For example, an aspect that has been studied by both musicologists and one that deeply interests me is the study of rhythm. In *Ensaio sobre a música brasileira* (Essay on Brazilian Music), Mário de Andrade claims that, for him, the most important aspect of rhythm in Brazil is the use of what in European notation is termed syncopation (*síncope*), which in this country became “more varied and free” (Andrade [1928] 2006, 26). Andrade explains that the tension between the European isometric rhythm structure and the rhythmic patterns derived from the Amerindian and African free prosody were to form what he appropriately calls “rhythmic fantasy.” That way, Brazilian melody, as in Gregorian chant, would be derived mainly from the accentuation patterns of spoken speech, and therefore would accept the “physiological determinations of *arsis* and *thesis*, whereas it (would ignore or purposely break with) the false dynamic doctrine of measure” (Andrade [1928] 2006, 27). In the flow of the non-metric melody, the accentuation would be guided by a “musical fantasy, pure virtuosity or prosodic precision . . . a subtle compromise between recitative and strophic chant” (Andrade [1928] 2006, 29).

In Vega, the rhythmic cell that became a characteristic representation of “syncopation” is the famous sixteen-eight-sixteen (ta-taa-ta or 1-2-1 minimum pulses), which is nothing more than a subdivision of what he calls the colonial binary foot (*pie binario colonial*), as shown in musical example 1.

EXAMPLE 1. Colonial Binary Foot (Vega 1944, 236).

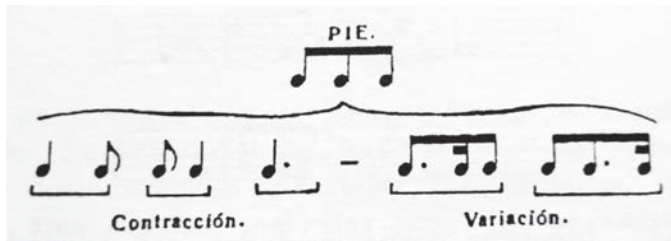


As mentioned earlier, Mário de Andrade links Gregorian chant with the metric flexibility of the melodic rhythm in Brazil. Similarly, I found Vega’s interest in medieval music very significant. At first I thought that his inspiration for the definition of the *cancioneiro colonial binario* (colonial binary foot) came from mensural notation and from notions of rhythmic modes. However, when we read Vega’s 1965 article about medieval cadences in *Anuario 1*, we find that he was interested in only the melodic

contour of the ends of phrases, the cadences proper, not in the rhythmic groupings of neumatic notation or sets of rhythmic pitches—the ligatures. In the case of the Provençal songs, these were long and short or short and long groups—the metric groupings that linguists commonly refer to as iambic or trochaic feet modes. Meanwhile, Carlos Vega considered the musical theory of the conservatory, which deals with the groups he decided to call two ternary feet of (compound) binary measure, to be “incoherent.” He then started to build a whole new nomenclature, which was articulated with his own theory but didn’t mention Flemish mensural notation or the relationship between French metrics and prosody.

However, regardless of terminology, the characteristics of the concept are all described therein. In *Fraseología* (Vega 1941) we see that even though the simple unit is “rhythmically indivisible,” its value can be subdivided. Any of the values of notation currently being used in written Western music—where the quarter note and the eighth note are the most commonly used values as measure pulses—can also be subdivided. Vega sees pulse as the smallest unit and calls its subdivision *contracciones*. This provides coherence to his nomenclature—which in musical writing is called a 6/8 (compound) binary measure (or a metric structure of six eights grouped into two compound pulses)—of the “ternary binome,” as each pulse works as a ternary division. However, in practice, Vega allows for the existence of the compound binary and the presence of trochaic (long-short) and iambic (short-long) poetic feet, as can be seen on page 164 of *Panorama de la música popular argentina* (Vega [1944] 1998), when dealing with the rhythmic system of the colonial ternary *cancioneiro* (musical example 2).

EXAMPLE 2. Colonial Ternary Foot (Vega 1944, 164).



Contributions of Latin American Music Studies to Musicology

As I am discussing popular music studies, I cannot fail to mention some of the ideas presented by Philip Tagg at the Sixteenth Biennial IASPM International Conference. Tagg is one of the association’s founders and an influential scholar in the Latin American branch. An invited keynote

speaker in Grahamstown, Tagg reviewed some of the principles and developments of the association, given that the conference was celebrating thirty years of IASPM. In a paper titled “Caught on the Back Foot—Epistemic Inertia and Visible Music” (2011), Tagg highlights two aspects that I think I should address here.

According to Tagg, musicologists working with popular music should not use inappropriate terminology as they do. They should even abandon the use of the musical score when working with recordings, which musicians and nonmusicians use to experience music on an everyday basis. Also, when analyzing music, Tagg considers it far more practical to use audio equipment with a counting function, instead of referring to a measure number in a musical score. Furthermore, the vocabulary used to identify musical structural elements should be reviewed, he argues. In an everyday discussion about music it would be more practical to talk about “spy chords,” for example, as in the James Bond soundtrack, which happen at x minutes and y seconds from the beginning of the song, as opposed to describing the same thing tautologically: “E minor major nine,” “a B major triad over an E minor triad,” “the chord on beat three of bar 57,” or even to describe it as “a clean Fender sound with slight reverb accompanied by vibraphone” (Tagg 2011, 10).

According to Tagg, another aspect of “epistemological inertia” within IASPM is the absence of studies about the “invisible music” of the cinema and video games. Tagg has more than twenty years of experience teaching music and the moving image as a discipline, together with his research analysis not only of sound but also of visual aspects of performance. His PhD dissertation and “manual” for his methodology of analysis were based on the audiovisual opening for the television series *Kojak*. All this provides him with the means to assert that this is a fertile line of investigation to resolve some of the epistemological problems present in popular music studies. There is no time here to discuss the merits of Tagg’s advocacy for what I call the popular analysis of music (as opposed to the analysis of popular music), considering that his interest in music and the moving image requires that he analyze film soundtracks, not restricted to one single musical genre. I think that for the purposes of this text, it is enough to highlight Tagg’s perception of the creative reality of current music students, not only in dealing with visible music (musical score and notation) but also in general terms, as they are in general experts in multimedia production. I revisit this point in my conclusions about the nature of musicology at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

With regard to musicologists who deal with popular music (in a more elastic sense than those discussed at IASPM-AL conferences), Tagg proposes two radical but perhaps necessary solutions. One leaves aside traditional nomenclature and the other drops the musical score itself:

Musicologists of the popular fall into the trap of epistemic inertia when, for example, they use the dualism TONAL-MODAL as if the “modal” tonality of styles like rock, blues or son were not tonal and as if works in the Viennese classical idiom, mostly conceived in the Ionian mode, were in no way modal. It just makes no sense. . . . Nor does it make sense when non-musos present claims of musical incompetence as excuses for avoiding issues of musical structuration. There are two reasons for rejecting this particular variant of epistemic sloth. One reason—the value of vernacular aesthetic descriptors and their potential for reforming musicology. . . . [The other is] that anyone can unequivocally designate any item of musical structuration that occurs in a digital recording. All you need is playback equipment and software featuring (as they all do) a real-time counter. (Tagg 2011, 10)

Many members of IASPM-AL—in fact the majority, around two-thirds, according to the estimate of Juan-Pablo González (2001, 54)—are musicologists, as opposed to IASPM International, which is dominated by sociology and cultural studies. Thus, many of us necessarily find ourselves dealing with discographies, transcriptions, musical scores and analyses using computer programs, and so on. However, the deeper issues, the epistemological questions, as Tagg puts it, still need to be addressed. To finish this paper, I present two more general formulations, one regarding the ideological issue which permeates Latin American musicology, that of national identity, and a second formulation related to the means of musical transmission, which, as the literature clearly demonstrates, interferes with musical production and fruition. Both proposals are less radical than Tagg’s, but they touch on some of the aspects he discusses. At the same time, they update the concept of musicology by seeing music as a process (performance) and not a product (a musical score, a recording), and by seeing musicology as listening—a type of listening that is mediated by recording technologies and oral, written, and aural musical transmission.

Dialectic Soundings

In a paper presented at the AAM 2010 Conference on “Dialectic Soundings,” Alejandro Madrid criticizes postnational musicological studies in a way that seems relevant to ever-present identity concerns in the study of popular music in Latin America. Madrid (2010) carries out a historical revision of musicology as a discipline, stressing that as a political project it was created within a German nationalist perspective, remaining faithful to this creed “including after the arrival of critical cultural studies and the crisis of the national states at the end of the twentieth century”

(p. 19). After commenting on how types of music outside this great tradition (including that of the United States of the twentieth century) were marginalized by the very same German musicologists who refounded the discipline from 1930–1940 on, Madrid goes on to review the study of music in Latin America.

Many studies have criticized nationalist modernism in Latin America.¹⁰ Madrid comments on how some Latin American musicologists have questioned the ideological principles present in the musicology of the twentieth century, especially regarding essentialism, or its search for an integrating national identity through official projects (on this subject, see Turino [2003] and texts by Adalberto Paranhos at the IASPM conferences). However, it “is not enough to question the validity of historically localized ideologies, if we continue . . . to benefit the Nation-State as a unit of interpretation and perpetuate the essentialist point of view which has given origin to the ideologies we have been attempting to question” (Madrid 2011, 25).

Madrid proposes the concept of dialectic soundings as an alternative methodology by reinterpreting dialogues in the literature built on the notion of Walter Benjamin’s dialectic image. In formulating the concept, Madrid draws attention to the use of language, eschewing the use of the noun with the adjective in “dialectic sound” to favor the use of the verb, as in “dialectic soundings”—the English translation using the gerund as proposed by Madrid himself. The gerund is also used in Portuguese (*soando dialético*). This concern with nouns and verbs attempts to recover the linguistic precision that Charles Seeger, in 1966, said was necessary. As Madrid (2011, 28) says, the use of the verb instead of the noun draws attention to the actual process of sounding, breaking with the “linear way of understanding practices that give meaning to sound phenomena in order to understand them as part of dialogues that go beyond adjacent periods of space and time.”

I would like to highlight the appropriate perception of the nature of music as functional language (Seeger) and the need for lateral as opposed to literal thinking to understand it (Tagg). I would also further highlight Madrid’s contemporaneity when he involves himself in the environment of present-day performance studies. This shows that there are many musicologies, and in the following section I argue for still another way of understanding it.

The Musicology of Listening

On a number of occasions, I have mentioned that I use the term *musicology* in two ways: in its broader sense as the systematic study of music and in its stricter sense as the systematic study of a type of music. This characteristic of musicology, of prioritizing the aesthetic experience, starting the

investigation from music itself, explains in part how functional criteria used in the transmission of our objects of study become disciplinary descriptors. Music with an oral tradition is under the auspices of ethnomusicology, music with a written tradition is under (historical) musicology, and composers and sound scientists theorize about their own productions under the theory of music or the more recent denomination sonology (sound studies). Recorded urban popular music, however, because of its imbrication with the cultural industry, is in a sort of hybrid disciplinary limbo, where contributions from different fields of knowledge such as ethnomusicology, media studies, history, sociology, literature, and the like are brought together.

When musicology began as an area of systematic knowledge in the nineteenth century, and because it started to study its own Austro-Germanic musical tradition, people could “listen” to a musical score. Today, in the twenty-first century, after more than one hundred years of “aural” enculturation and the almost instant access to music on the Internet, listening is more and more materialized into sonority, and the multiplicity of music styles available makes the study field very complex.

A musicologist is in principle in search of sonority, although that sonority is always mediated by some kind of “intellectual technology,” an expression I borrow from the philosopher Pierre Levy (2001, 137) in his discussions on cyberculture and its relationship with human cognitive functions such as memory, imagination, perception, and reasoning. If technology has to do with using tools (material or mental) developed by man to modify nature, or applying knowledge for practical purposes, we could say that in music transmission there has been a history of intellectual devices used to build a shared repertoire of sounds put together and called “music” in the urban Americas: a musical score, a text, a performance, or a record, among others.

The fundamental presupposition is that the study of music is based on listening. This premise has some implications that can seem paradoxical on the one hand and obvious on the other. The first implication is that all music, even music from the past, is heard in the present, as Dahlhaus (1983) has argued. Second, when listening to music in the present, we relate it to all our previous musical listening (our space of experience, to use Koselleck’s concept), to the sonorities of the past, updating meanings already known or building new meanings by adding previously heard elements to new sonorities. This works similarly to psychoanalytic theory, as Maria Luiza Ramos (2000, 21–26) explains in her study about the metonymic/metaphoric game and its anchoring points (the *points de capiton*) in Lacan’s signifying chain. While the *point de capiton* in Lacan refers to places where expression meets content, the musical flow reminds me of another embroidery stitch, the backstitch, where the effect is a continuous

line, despite the many stitches. We pierce the fabric with a needle and thread, move the needle forward, and make another hole to bring the thread above the material. Returning the thread over the space covered, we once again pierce the fabric with the needle and thread in an up-to-down direction. We go back along part of the space already covered by the needle on the other side of the material and, once again, pierce back to the top of the material moving forward from the previous point. In the same way, the “musemes” (minimal unit of musical meaning) in a song, to use the terminology created by Philip Tagg, after Charles Seeger, refer to other musemes in other songs. They lend part of their meaning to the musemes mentioned first—there is a process by which the syntagmatic chain crosses with its paradigmatic connections.¹¹

It may seem paradoxical, but listening is a process that is at the same time synchronistic and diachronistic. In other words, for music listened to in the present to have meaning, it needs comparison with other music (or sonorities) that belong to the repertoire we already know, independent of time or space. We say that a musician is “influenced” by certain genres or styles, not in a linear sense, associated with cause and effect, but in a back-and-forth sense, where the course of sound at the time of listening refers to other sonorities, which are already known (our space of experience). Those known sonorities belonging to our own repertoire lend parts of their meaning to what we are now listening to (our horizon of expectations, which helps the signification process of the present as well as our future possibilities for meaningful music making).¹²

In the case of musicology in Brazil, this process of carefully listening to sonorities, whichever they may be, even allows for the revision of a few myths constructed throughout the history of music in Brazil, starting with a reexamination of primary sources. Recent studies have allowed for a new perception of nineteenth-century music (Ulhôa and Costa-Lima Neto 2013), as well as colonial music (Budasz 2007; Lima 2010), for example. And, in the case of the study of twentieth-century music in Brazil, there are numerous dissertations and theses that recontextualize not only some musical practices but also the theoretical referential itself (Ulhôa, Azevedo, and Trotta 2015).¹³

Notes

Versions of this text were presented at colloquia at Cornell and Liverpool universities, as well as at IASPM conferences in Caracas and Grahamstown, South Africa. The precious time needed to write was made possible by a leave of absence from Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), spent at King’s College, London, with a grant from the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES).

1. As Hayden White summarizes in the book's foreword, "The aporias of modernism—in arts and letters as well as in the human and natural sciences—are a function of the discovery of the historicity of both society and knowledge" (Koselleck 2002, xiv).

2. The seven papers presented were (with short titles here) by Francisco Curt Lange ("Problemas fundamentales en la investigación históricomusical argentina y brasileña"), Robert Stevenson ("From Archive into Print"), Lauro Ayestarán ("Manuscritos del Convento de San Felipe Neri (Sucre, Bolivia) . . . en el Museo Histórico Nacional del Uruguay"), Charles Seeger ("The Modalities of the Critique of Music"), Albert Luper ("The Musical Thought of Mário de Andrade"), Carlos Vega ("Una cadencia medieval en América"), and Vicente T. Mendoza ("La música popular de México y otros países"). Clearly privileging the Southern Cone in terms of content, volume 1 of *Anuario* published the Lange, Ayestarán, Luper, and Vega articles.

3. The members of the commissions were Spivacke (Library of Congress), Ayestarán and Stevenson (Resources); Azevedo, Eugenio Pereira Salas (Chile), and Luper (History); Plaza, Sás, and Sprague Smith (Monuments).

4. *Mesomusic* meaning a music used by all, regardless of social strata. More on the concept appears later in this article.

5. See Sans and Lopes Caño (2011) for several essays by IASPM-AL members on musicology, value, and the canon.

6. The subareas were composition (25 papers), musical education (54), ethnomusicology (17) and popular music (21), music and interfaces: cinema (7), cognition (9), media (5); semiotics (2 papers), musicology and musical aesthetics (49), music therapy (2), performance (39), sonology (sound studies) (11), and theory and analysis (36).

7. In the case of ANPPOM, articles that were predominantly about oral tradition were not taken into account, as there was a specific session titled "Ethnomusicology."

8. Mário de Andrade's contribution either as a Brazilian mentor or as a critic of musical nationalism, musicologist, ethnographer, and theorist is, of course, more prominent in the ANPPOM conferences. For the record, it is worth mentioning that his archive, consisting of around thirty thousand documents, can be accessed at Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros, Universidade de São Paulo (<http://www.ieb.usp.br>). There, Professor Flávia Camargo Toni has coordinated many studies involving Andrade's musicology work, including the critique of his theoretical principles (re-created from his vast correspondence with various intellectuals and musicians, as well as his investigations, reconstructed from annotations in the books of his library, transcribed and organized by subject).

9. Goyena was one of the coordinators of the "Octava Semana de la Música y la Musicología" and of the "Jornadas Interdisciplinarias de Investigación," which took place between November 2 and 4, 2011, in Buenos Aires. Its theme was "La investigación musical a partir de Carlos Vega" (Musical Research from Carlos Vega Onward). He is also a coauthor of the 2015 book on Vega edited by Enrique Camara.

10. Of the Brazilians (as Madrid gives precedence mainly to Mexico and Cuba, making a link with Argentina for the purposes of the AAM conference), I make reference to the pioneering study by Ennio Squeff and José Miguel Wisnik (2001)

of the national and the popular in Brazilian music. At UNIRIO, my colleague Elizabeth Travassos (2005) has criticized essentialism and the search for roots in Brazilian music studies from the point of view of ethnomusicology and musical anthropology.

11. It seems, if I understand it correctly, that the diachronic aspect of the *point de capiton* has a linear effect; that is, communication acts retroactively, the sense of the first words being completed at the end of a phrase. In music this back-and-forth or up-and-down movement seems more fluid. Even a fragment can have meaning, depending what happens before and after it.

12. The discussion gains complexity nowadays, since sound reception in the twenty-first century is so frequently connected to images. I thank Claudia Azevedo for this observation.

13. Examples of recent graduate Brazilian scholarship on popular music in Portuguese can be searched at *Anais do SIMPOM* (<http://seer.unirio.br/index.php/simpom/issue/archive>).

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