

Cafés with Music. New Cultural Practices and Musical Sociabilities in São Paulo at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century¹

Cafés com música. Novas práticas culturais e sociabilidades musicais em São Paulo no início do século XX

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a new cultural circuit was established in São Paulo, formed by a variety of mirrored cafés, elite coffee houses, singing cafés, modest bars, and obscure taverns. Expanding enormously throughout the city, this network revealed a modern nightlife entertainment and contributed to reorganize the leisure and free time for the urban population. In this new horizon, original experiences emerged, different patterns of sociability were tested, and other cultural practices were explored. This diverse set of businesses and leisure actively contributed to the development of daily musical practices, adding new elements to the modern sound culture in development. The press was attentive to this dynamic, leaving tangible traces of these modernizing practices in the city. This process of cultural diversification and musical dynamization produced

RESUMO

No início do século XX, se estabeleceu em São Paulo um novo circuito cultural, formado por uma variedade de cafés espelhados, confeitarias elitizadas, cafés-cantantes, bares modestos e tavernas obscuras. Expandindo-se extraordinariamente pela cidade, essa rede revelou modernas formas de entretenimento noturno e colaborou para a reorganização do lazer e do tempo livre da população urbana. Nesse novo horizonte apareceram experiências originais, foram ensaiados diferentes padrões de sociabilidades e se experimentaram outras práticas culturais. Esse conjunto diversificado de comércio e lazer colaborou ativamente para o desenvolvimento de práticas musicais cotidianas, adicionando novos elementos à moderna cultura sonora em formação. A imprensa estava atenta a essa dinâmica, deixando rastros palpáveis destas práticas modernizadoras da cidade. Esse processo de diversifi-

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particularities that still need to be better understood and discussed by historiography, usually unreceptive to listening to the past.

Keywords: Cafés; Musical Practices; São Paulo.

cação cultural e dinamização musical produziu particularidades que ainda precisam ser mais bem compreendidas e discutidas pela historiografia, geralmente silenciosa na escuta do passado.

Palavras-chave: Cafés; Práticas musicais; São Paulo.

OPENING DOORS

In the period that extends from the end of the nineteenth century to the first years of the twentieth, modern cities witnessed the emergence of a new scene of nighttime musical entertainment, which expanded rapidly. This process was closely related to central aspects of the modern urban life underway. In this emerging lifestyle, experiences of new temporalities were established “at every walk down the street”, as one faced “the varieties of economic, professional and social life at a fast pace” (Simmel, 2005, p. 578). The impact of these dynamics on people’s perceptions, sensibilities and sociabilities was immediate, and as so became a reason for concern and discussion at the time. In this scenario of profound changes, free and leisure time reached central importance and dimension in city life (Corbin, 1990). Tensioned between the systematic activity of urban work and the need to regulate new leisure activities with rules, institutions and associations, these practices simultaneously clashed with the spontaneity of more unregulated and informal entertainment experiences that flooded in cities (Thiesse, 2001). In those unprecedented times, subjective everyday experiences, both individual and collective, materialized in new relationships and practices in the physical and social urban spaces established under a new order. Among them were certainly the different types of cafés with a very particular sound culture and specific sociability practices. Although at an earlier time, this social and cultural phenomenon emerged with great vigor mainly in the nineteenth-century European metropolises, such as Paris and London (Braconnier, 2004). However, it quickly spread to other cities, such as Madrid, Seville, Barcelona, Rome, Naples and Berlin (Rodriguez, 2018; Turnaturi, 2001; Samper, 2001), and it was already a common practice in North Africa, whose tradition of drinking in proper places was old (Carrier, 1990; Lafi, 2005).

The city of São Paulo also experienced this movement intensely over the

centuries, perhaps at a faster pace imposed by the circumstances of its frantic and unrestrained expansion. A significant number of mirrored cafés and upscale patisseries, but mostly singing cafés, modest bars and obscure taverns, sprouted quickly around the city, introducing a series of new social practices. The habits surrounding these new cultural circles meant for their customers the concretion of modern urban life aspects, whose intensifying nervous tensions (Simmel, 2005) clashed with the slower and calmer traditional rhythm of the disappearing provincial town. In these businesses that multiplied across the city, music evidently acted to intensify the new ways of life, the central issue discussed in this text. In a period in which sound recording and diffusion technologies practically did not exist, these cafés worked also as a musical mediation, in addition to the cultured or popular ceremonial activities. In fact, at that time there was an explosion of several nighttime entertainment hubs, such as the numerous clubs and ballrooms, the various theaters with their popular shows, and a large number of screening rooms with their little orchestras or soloists. These places had their particularities of coexistence, relationships and listening, but they also maintained common practices imposed by the standardizing urban way of life in development. This new modernizing circuit served as a way of spreading musical genres that were already traditional in the city and those that were still breaking through at the time. This certainly had implications for the practices and sociabilities of musicians who performed music in these spaces.

All those characteristics seem to indicate that the listening practices in cafés were quite informal, relaxed and fleeting, and therefore more difficult to capture. It so happens that the daily and weekly press—in permanent search for new facts—the burgeoning cultural criticism, the period's fictional literature and chroniclers not only were aware of this process, actively experiencing it, but left palpable traces of the city's modernization dynamics. Therefore, carefully scrutinizing this literary universe is the way to penetrate the aural world. This incredible process of cultural diversification and sound entertainment produced musical particularities and sensibilities that still need to be understood and discussed by historiography, which tends to remain silent when listening to the past is concerned. Examining aspects of this scenario present in São Paulo is important not only to better understand the process of cultural modernization underway in the city and in the country, but above all to learn how this varied circuit actively collaborated to the development of new musical and daily listening practices, adding new elements to the modern

sound culture under formation, which penetrated Brazilian's everyday life and their sensitivity and sound memory.

“THE SPLENDID CAFÉ GUARANY”

From June to August 1900, the traditional newspaper *Correio Paulistano* reported the occurrence of two parties at the well-known Café Guarany, located right in the center of the city on XV de Novembro Street. The first news in the month of June reported the successful opening of a new dining hall at the establishment. Dozens of people attended the event, which, to enliven the atmosphere, as highlighted by the columnist, had “music, electric light, etc.” (Café Guarany, 1900, p. 2). The August news reported on the party for the “foundation anniversary of the Café Guarany”, which was attended by a “crowd of people”. During this celebration, “the magnificent band of maestro Antão” played “a *zabumbar* (percussion-based music) until late at night”, cheering and attracting the great number of customers (Festa de Aniversário, 1900, p. 2). News like these began to occupy the new columns of periodicals dedicated to commenting on “The everyday life” of the city; name attributed, not without reason, precisely the name of the section in that newspaper. At the beginning of the twentieth century, daily newspapers presented an incredible variety of news somewhat new to an urban center that had just emerged from a relatively provincial stagnation. This picture of the local press was already an indication of a city modernizing at a fast pace. Amidst so much new information, the newspapers displayed in paid advertisements or opinion pieces precisely the formation of an original circuit of cafés, patisseries, bars and taverns in which musical practices always appeared prominently or in the background.

It was not without reason that the Café Guarany was featured prominently in the city of São Paulo's press and that is why it plays a central role in this article. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was probably one of the most active businesses of this type in the city. Many considered it “splendid and frankly the best public café in Brazil” (Opiniões, 1903, p. 3). Inaugurated in 1899, the place was open all day until the early hours and had a relatively long life, certainly surviving two decades. Its first owners were the Galician Severo Alonso Dominguez and “the friendly Faria” (Festa de Aniversário, 1900, p. 2). The establishment first served drinks and snacks and soon after would also sell cigars, newspapers and magazines. Weekly, the café sold tickets for theatrical, sporting and musical events. Transactions normally took place in the cigar shop, where newspapers, stamps and other trinkets were also sold. This trade

made the café a potential hub for prior discussion and expectations regarding cultural events and, later, for critiques of the shows at its tables. In the country's capital, this had been a common practice since the mid-nineteenth century.

A HETEROGENEOUS BOHEMIA

The Guarany in particular maintained this diversified practice and an evidently modern bohemian sociability. It closed in the early hours of the morning because, in addition to the usual bohemians, it also welcomed those who left the sought-after programs that took place in the theaters nearby. These dynamics were not uncommon. Back in the seventeenth century, the classic Café Procope in Paris inaugurated this practice, which then became widespread. Between 1688-89, this café set up shop next to the new *Comédie Française* and welcomed artists and spectators for meetings and conversations around a cup of coffee. At this time, the drink lost its exclusively exotic oriental character and expanded along with the establishments to serve it. Thus, the Parisian cafés were taking the place of the taverns dedicated to the unrestrained drinking of wine, as was more common until then (Braudel, 1995, p. 229; Leclant, 1969, p. 77).

Daily life at the Guarany was very dynamic, with a heterogeneous patronage and atmosphere, but with a certain predominance of a bourgeois character. Its clientele was composed of intellectuals, artists, students, journalists and politicians gathered at the place looking for the buzz and the busy atmosphere. The environment stimulated the exchange of information, allowed all kinds of contacts or simply favored a relaxed conversation, which did not look for “objective purposes, nor content, nor external results” (Simmel, 1983, p. 170); in other words, these circles brought together individuals to experience leisure and idleness, creating a very unique mode of social exchange (Agulhon, 2019, p. 27). Monteiro Lobato, a regular customer at the Guarany, described this exact scenario in a letter to his former college mate, Godofredo Rangel. He commented to his distant friend that the evening meetings held at the café took place “over draft beer” while “silently sucking cigarettes”, when people talked “about everything—except literature and art; and the only obligation is to say interesting things that make others laugh” (Lobato, 2010, pp. 24-25).

Although it had a relatively sophisticated atmosphere, the café also maintained a certain popular trait and its doors even became a kind of reference and meeting point in the city center area. Despite the somewhat refined atmosphere of the café, Lobato also noticed the more informal and relaxed face of the place.

In contrast to the well-known intellectual salons attended by the local elite, he said that “no one understands why I gather every night at this circle, drinking draft beer in the Guarany instead of being in the elegant, *haute* salons talking about Bilac’s sonnets” (Lobato, 2010, p. 217). Journalist and writer Afonso Schmidt also patronized the place and left a more nuanced perception of the establishment in his personal records. He was impressed by it and precisely highlighted its popularity and varied activity, especially the nightlife (Schmidt, 2003, pp. 158-59). Reinforcing this less exclusive impression, singer Paraguassu (Roque Ricciardi) recalled that he stopped by the Guarany in the afternoon to drink coffee, make professional contacts and have an idle chat (Paraguassu, undated). Thus, the Guarany became relevant in the broader picture of the cultural circuit of public entertainment and may be regarded as a space for cultural mediation of new activities and burgeoning modern social relations, which brought together both the bourgeois aspect and the more popular and massifying characteristics in progress.

It is interesting to note how the spillover of these individual memories of the café into the collective memory of the city was almost instantaneous. Consequently, the eminently personal and subjective bases of those memories (Lowenthal, 1998; Ricoeur, 2007) were quickly incorporated into fictional or chronicle literature, thus expanding the social memory created around these new urban cultural practices (Assmann, 2011). From the outset, the environment of the Guarany served as a backdrop for small trivial stories that appeared casually around the city. At the beginning of the century, the “burlesque weekly newspaper” *O Garoto* reported a “monstrous attack” that had taken place at the Guarany. Seemingly serious and tragic, the story was a great mockery that eventually led to criticism of standardized consumerism, all of it absurdly concentrated in a delinquent’s pocket stuffed with products (Facadas! 1900, pp. 7-8). Jokes set in the café also appeared in different ways in the well-known magazine *Vida Paulista* (Um homem de..., 1905, p. 3 and Sentam-se dois bohemios..., 1908, p. 11). In the early 1910s, the writer and humorist José Agudo (José da Costa Sampaio) made reference to the Guarany in his work *Gente rica*. He critically said that it was “the café of prospective college graduates who daily expose to peaceful passers-by the irreproachable cut of their creased pants and belted jackets” (Agudo, 2021, p. 14). Agudo noticed the aestheticization of social practices that put together fashion and the café as elements of classification and social tension (Simmel, 2020, pp. 46-47). In other words, he identified a way of being in this café, which was related to a certain informed bourgeois spirit that characterized it as well as its patrons.

A QUICK TOUR TO CAFÉS AND PATISSERIES

This busy environment was not exclusive to the Café Guarany. A dynamic circuit of cafés, patisseries, taverns and bars with a diversified patronage and an evident public sense had been forming since the end of the nineteenth century (Bruno, 1954, pp. 1113-1158; Moraes, 1997, pp. 164-167; Martins, 2001, pp. 136-147 and 455-459). Until that time, none of them had a very clear commercial, social and cultural profile. They all served some kind of ready-to-eat food and assorted beverages, while functioning as a hub for social gatherings and varied cultural practices. Thus, they were mixed up in the foggy memories of the city. In a way, this form of coexistence in cafés was new in São Paulo and it expanded rapidly, like nearly everything that emerged in the city's scene at the time. Before the multiplication of these businesses, there were not many places in the city that served as centers for social mediation. And drinking coffee socially was still an uncommon habit, making the café scene somewhat rarefied in the city.

During the 1870s, following the flow of general changes in the city, some establishments with these cultural attributes began to steadily appear. The Café Europeu, inaugurated in 1876, had the exact features that justified the reference to the name. It was one of the first ones with this profile in this initial phase of new sociabilities linked to the weakly urban modern world emerging in the city. The cafés Java, Girondino and Americano, all located in the old city center, followed the path opened by the Europeu. Due to the influence of students from the Law School at Largo São Francisco, an "Academic Café" nearly always appeared somewhere in the city center. (Schimdt, 2003, p. 135). All of them were patronized by the local elite and travelers interested in a certain educated bohemian life (Raffard, 1977, pp. 16-17). Junius's memories demonstratively synthesize these dynamics. He recalled that, when he was a student at the Law School in the mid-nineteenth century, there was almost no nightlife in São Paulo. Yet his recollection of a visit to the city in the 1880s showed that the possibilities of entertainment had expanded. In addition to having "a superb coffee", one could also enjoy "a beer and dinner", attend conversation and "political discussion" circles and participate in games of "billiards, Boston and Voltairer (...)" (Diniz, 1978, pp. 17, 41 and 81).

The patisseries somehow rivaled and merged with the cafés, not only commercially, but above all as a hub of social coexistence for a cultural elite in search of a modernity that was still somewhat unknown. With a milder experience and a dreamlike, mirrored atmosphere, their activities were typically held

in the afternoon. However, some of them began to advance into the evening, extending their open hours. The most important ones were also concentrated in the old center area and became well known, penetrating the city's imagination, such as the patisseries Castelões, Brasserie Paulista, Paulicéia, Nagel, Fasoli and Hotel D'Oeste. Their presence fills São Paulo's press records and its chroniclers' nostalgic memories. Due to this panorama, perhaps somewhat immoderately for São Paulo, the existence of a "Republic of Patisseries" was modeled after the city of Rio de Janeiro (Martins, 2001). However, in the country's capital their presence was old, permanent and much more important from a social and cultural point of view (Karls, 2019).

Signs left by various sources indicate that from the 1890s onwards there was a new and different wave of café, tavern and bar openings. In that decade, the scenario began to change rapidly with the gradual closedown of old cafés and the sudden emergence of new establishments with more varied characteristics. Interestingly, the names of some of the old businesses reappeared, as an evident way of appealing to memory in order to commercially reuse traditional names. In the opposite direction, the patrons of those who changed ownership and name but not location continued to call them by their old appellation. The case of the Café Brandão, located on São Bento Street, on the corner with São João Avenue, was very representative of this historical path and can therefore be tracked in the periodical press. Inaugurated in 1892, its owner was the well-known Portuguese merchant Souza Brandão. The good clientele, the food and the activities he developed made him relatively famous, such as the small bread roll that he baked and sold plenty and became popularly known as "*brandãozinho*". In 1912, the café was forced to close its doors and changed hands. The establishment then became Café Bauman, but patrons and the population insisted on calling it Café Brandão.

The new establishments were born with a different spirit. More suited to the world and to the practices of modern culture, many of them were owned by immigrants who had just arrived in the city, mainly Italians, Portuguese and Spaniards, as was the case with the Brandão and the Guarany. Several had a more varied and popular vocation, crossing over social and cultural boundaries. Many people began to patronize these establishments; it was no longer exclusively a certain elite during the day and educated bohemians at night. They became places for reunion with friends or professional meetings. The regular afternoon attendance could even convert them into a kind of office, as the newspaper *O Garoto* jokingly announced. The periodical opened the first page of some of its copies in an anecdotal manner, informing that its "office"

was at “Café Guarany’s corner table” (Escriptorio, 1901, p. 1)². As was customary, many cafés had their regular customers, who formed a kind of “microclimate” with their own stories, habits and language, establishing an exclusive spirit and emotional relationships.

In this new scenario, music certainly appeared as an important element of enthrallment and attraction. The role it played for the new dynamics of the social relations inside the cafés and for the artists’ everyday practices needs to be better understood. Both historiography and musicology have remained silent on the subject, imposing a silence of ignorance. However, by following the pace of expansion of cafés with their new habits and cultural mediations, some directions can be identified and pointed out.

CAFÉS WITH MUSIC

Returning to the Café Guarany, whose centrality helps to better understand the intricate panorama of the time, it can be said that music was present there, but it was not the main attraction. This means that people did not go there to listen to music. And research seems to indicate that musical performances did not take place regularly. Despite this, memories of musical groups playing at the café are recurrent and evoked in different ways. Afonso Schmidt recalls that at the back of the café there was “a stage with a railing around it. On this stage, the orchestra. Waltzes by Lehar and Strauss were popular” (Schmidt, 2003, p. 158). Paraguassu confirms that there was in fact an orchestra that played at night (Paraguassu, undated), and violinist Salvador Pugliese commented that his teacher played the violin in a “small orchestra at the Guarany on XV de Novembro Street” (Pugliese, 2006, p. 46).

The memories accumulated information about the circumstantial musical programs in these places. Junius says that the activities at the cafés were usually mixed with “passages from *Trovador*, *Guarani* or other compositions”. He recalls that he spent hours at the Café Americano drinking coffee and talking, accompanied by “pieces regularly performed by six Italian musicians” (Diniz, 1978, p. 81). All these foggy memories were probably related to the fact that musical performances had an irregular character, as the city did not yet have an established professional music circuit, not even a semiprofessional one.

The Café Brandão followed these dynamics of occasional attractions that alternated periods of more regular sessions. It featured instrumental concerts with pieces by Verdi and Strauss. The traditional Café Viaducto, located on Direita Street, had an orchestra for some time. Zequinha de Abreu played the

piano in the ensemble from the end of the 1910s to the beginning of the 1920s (Giffoni, 1986, p. 60 and Marcondes, 1977, p. 5). In 1905, the Café Central in Largo do Rosário invited “the respectable public” to the debut of “a first-rate orchestra” (Café Central, 1905, p. 3). The Bar Majestic on São Bento Street showcased on Thursdays and Saturdays an “English Quintet, formed exclusively by teachers” (Araújo, 1981, p. 311). Interestingly, the establishment published advertisements in English, highlighting that they served tea or dinner accompanied by its orchestra: “Luncheons. Dainty Teas. Dinners. Moderates Prices. English Cooking. *Orchestres at the Dinner*” (Bar Majestic, 1915, p. 8. italics mine).

The variety of activities was really a peculiarity of these establishments, with concert music being just another attraction. The Progredior’s advertising, for example, highlighted exactly this trait: “Restaurant. Billiards. Drinks. *Concerts*”. Inaugurated in December 1892, it was exaggeratedly considered by the press as “the first and most beautiful café-restaurant in South America”. The place described as elegant and refined included “a small stage for orchestra and piano, with a beautiful silk backcloth painted by Claudio Rossi, who was the decorator of the entire building” (Locaes, 1892, p. 1). Towards the end of that century, “that house’s sextet” performed miscellaneous concerts (Palcos e Circos, 1898, p. 2 and Salão Progredior, 1899, p. 2). In 1903, the “well-known teachers Rocchi and Castagnoli” continued to perform during the night “great vocal or instrumental concerts”. The bill for Saturday, November 21, showcased pieces by Strauss, Verdi, Puccini, among others, and the following day’s bill included Henrique Mesquita’s Batuque (Progredior, 1903, p. 2). In April of that year, the “Quarteto Albertini” presented a bill with “various excerpts by composers from São Paulo” (Quarteto Albertini, 1903, p. 3). Conductor Armando Belardi recalls that in the early 1910s the ensemble at the Progredior was composed of “good professionals from São Paulo”, and he himself would play “to enjoy the good sandwiches that the management offered the musicians” during breaks and also to drink the “great draft beer” (Belardi, 1986, p. 22). The conductor’s memories reveal how the professional relationship, even in the relatively elite circuit, was still quite amateurish and tentative. Everything seems to indicate that the café’s small stage and sextet became well known to the point that they also turned into the setting of fiction works. In his novel, journalist and writer Edmundo do Amaral describes the place as refined, made up of mirrors, round tables, waiters, drinks, which recalled “Paris at some point”. At the back of the salon there was “a higher platform, a six-people orchestra tuning the instruments” (Amaral, 1950, p. 23).

The commercial location of the Café Progredior had previously been occupied by the Confeitaria Paulicéia. The place was well attended at the time, and the music in the old patisserie already had a certain value, which the newspaper *Música para Todos* highlighted: “Cafés-concerts? The only one where good music was made, the Paulicéia, closed down because people stopped going there”. Then, the novel underlined the importance of the place for the musicians’ professionalization and survival, projecting at the same time its amateurism characteristic of the period. So much so that its closedown in 1897 would have left “distinguished and loyal artists such as the cellist Rocci and the violinist Martins in the lurch” (*Música para Todos*, 1897, p. 214)³. Nevertheless, patisseries at the turn of the century still played an important role in social relations and an incidental one in the musical culture of part of the society. At the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, it was possible to enjoy “tongue-smacking rounds of draft beer, to the sound of the Jungfrau waltz’s endless melody” at the Imperial Confeitaria Nagel (Moura, 1980, p. 287). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the well-known Confeitaria Fasoli featured an “International Sextet” directed by conductor Virginio Mazzi, which usually performed in the early evenings. The programming consisted of Verdi, Mascagni, Rossini and Puccini, followed by the appreciation of “ice cream (...) lemonade, orangeade, cashew appleade”. In addition, the ensemble offered its musical services for “balls, baptisms, weddings etc.,” which could be hired directly at the “shop at any time”. That same year the patisserie at Hotel D’Oeste also offered “an instrumental concert at 8:30pm” (Confeitaria do Hotel D’Oeste, 1903a, p. 5), whose program featured regular composers such as Puccini, Verdi and Waldteufel (Confeitaria do Hotel D’Oeste, 1903b, p. 2).

It was evident that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, concert music and European composers revered at the time prevailed in the program. The choice of musicians, ensembles and programming certainly revealed the upscale character of these establishments. However, a good part of the compositions performed formed a musical universe that was widespread throughout the city, reproduced in the theater programs, in the repertoires of bands and in certain popular taverns. Despite their cultured origin, various genres such as opera, waltz, polka or mazurka circulated in much broader social and entertainment spaces. Also, composers such as Verdi, Puccini, Strauss, Offenbach, Lehar, and Gounod had undeniable popularity, to the point of acting as a kind of attractive bait not only in elite cafés but also in other places where music was featured. Therefore, this musical universe clearly worked as entertainment for commercial establishments, and most likely the type of sociability present gen-

erated a distracted listening act, a product of such moment, of people gathering socially in a relaxed and disinterested environment (Simmel, 1983, pp. 170-71). Thus, music helped to develop a pleasant listening context, which was dedicated exclusively to entertainment. This means that the music therein exceeded in many ways the erudite social and cultural limits of “serious” concert music, going against the usual analyzes and understanding of the period, which generally petrify its social actions and cultural diffusion.

With the advancement of the twentieth century, bourgeois patisseries with a dreamlike atmosphere and cafés with mirrored walls began to decline rapidly, and we can say that the musical universe followed this course. Jorge Americano’s recollections (1891-1969) point out that these environments “with mirrors on both sides” that reproduced infinite images of the “crystal chandeliers” went on a certain decline. The reasons presented were precisely the introduction of some modern habits considered despicable, in which “draft beer took over and families withdrew” those places (Americano, 1962, p. 37). The chronicler identifies the agonizing transformation of the Confeitaria Paulicéia, associating it with alcoholic beverages and a somewhat decadent morality. But this was definitely not an exceptional case. The newspaper *Jornal do Comércio*, with the same censorious tone, complained that “in almost all the patisseries in the city” alcoholic beverages had become the norm, like the “disgusting absinthe”, which was usually accompanied by the “very modern jazz band orchestras” (Rago, 2004, pp. 399-400). Sylvio Floreal’s bohemian and critical eye also observed the change in the traditional Confeitaria Fasoli: “The spacious salon, always full of men and women, raves enthusiastically, cheered by the music always playing fidgety potpourris and bouncy jazz-band fox-trots” (Floreal, 2003, p. 97). The same type of complaint and censorship also reached the sophisticated Trianon Bar and Restaurant, located on Paulista Avenue’s pleasant belvedere. One reader’s lamentation was against the noisy and degrading atmosphere of the place, in which “fops and flappers” listened to a “noisy cabaret orchestra” that played music to be followed by “modern dances called *tango*, ragtime” (Rago, 2004, p. 399). The reference to a “cabaret” ensemble is clearly disdainful, and the dissatisfaction with the new choreographies considered indecent at the time is evident.

Actually, both the chroniclers and the press recognized in the heat of the moment the new cultural mutation taking place in the city in the “roaring 20s” (Sevcenko, 1992), which consequently implicated the entering of these establishments into another phase. In it, modern musical genres and ensembles, attended by their contemporary dances, took the place of ancient musical prac-

tices, that gentler listening to instrumental concert music accompanied by coffees, teas, cakes and low tone conversation. Again, it is Jorge Americano who hears that change with a somewhat melancholy tone: “Chopin, Italian popular music and opera, the Viennese operetta give way to French, German music (...) and American jazz” (Americano, 1962, p. 243).

SINGING CAFÉS

It so happens that the transformations in this period, in addition to being vertiginous, pointed to countless directions, therefore, there is not an exclusive path. The cultural and musical scene in this type of private—for public use, though—business was not limited to cafés “surrounded by mirrors, with dozens of tables and a chosen patronage”. As Afonso Schimdt reminds us, “there were various types of cafés, with different shapes”, among them, the “more modest ones in the alleys and on the streets of ill repute” (Schimdt, 2003, p. 135). In those establishments, the sensibilities and “sociability of common people, who have less time and money (...) necessarily take different forms” (Agulhon, 2019, p. 29) that need to be probed and understood from another point of view. They certainly established a dynamic game with more general cultural processes, influencing them and being instigated by them. However, their records are more subtle and resistant, making the “study difficult [but] captivating” (Agulhon, 2019).

One way to get closer to that sound universe is to track the establishments that used the name “singing café”, given the reference to the obvious musical activity in them. This was the case with the “Café-Chantant Giselda” or with the “Café-Chantant da Estação” which featured music performances a few days a week starting at 8:30 pm (Café-Chantant Giselda, 1903, p. 2). The suggestive French-inspired names made sense, as the most influential variant of cafés with music were the Parisian ones. Nevertheless, it was common for the name to appear in the press as a kind of adjective to derogatorily categorize an establishment. Without the specific registration of a name, the “singing café” thus became a negative qualification. This type of café multiplied across the city, producing an “epidemic [movement] of singing cafés”, all of them usually “patronized in their entirety by the idle and dangerous bohemian class” (Cafés-cantantes, 1899, p. 2). Despite the “singing” designation, research indicate that not all of them actually had musical activity. What is known, however, is that the sound manifestations took place daily, but were associated with commotions, uproars, disturbances and noisy conflicts (Lett; Offenstadt, 2003; Farge, 2009).

In fact, the term had been used in Paris since the 18th century; it expanded rapidly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, being commonly confused with the *cafés-concerts*. However, the singing *cafés* had more limited and popular characteristics, not entailing the shows and variety of the *café-concert* attractions (Concetta, 1992). The title also named the popular night *cafés* in Madrid, mainly in Seville, in which flamenco was sung and danced on stage (Veja, 2006; Plata, 2006). It also designated the Parisian *cafés* located mostly in Montmartre, which had small stages that featured singers and dancers. Of course, the multiplication of these *cafés* was also associated with the growth of the cities and the new modern sociabilities, in which bohemian activity appeared intimately linked to recent forms of entertainment and the conquest of nighttime. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Paris had been the main hub of these bohemian practices and their references expanded to other cities (Seigel, 1992; Kalifa, 2017). In the French capital, there was a certain cleavage between the more educated bohemian class and the *bas-fonds*, places for “muddy bohemians” as opposed to that “boutique bohemians”, exactly as *Folha do Brás* had identified them. However, from the end of that century onwards, and under given circumstances, there was a certain convergence, to the point of even establishing a privileged relationship between them (Kalifa, 2017, pp. 209-211). These apparently insurmountable separations and circumstantial approximations were related to the dynamics pertaining to urban centers, which in the nineteenth century produced areas classified as vicious and dangerous zones. This unstable balance imposed by the new urban life revealed tensions between virtue and vice, progress and retreat, individuality and collectivity, joy and sadness, good and evil, and, finally, the good and the bad aspects of the modern experience (Corbin, 2001; Csörgö, 2001; Simmel, 2005). At certain times, these elements would harmonize or even reconcile, just as many modernist artists were to attempt and succeed in doing. (Schorske, 2000, pp. 61-71; Seigel, 1992).

The clientele at these places had varied and complex origins, sliding between eccentric bourgeois, workers of all trades and the “dangerous classes”. (Seigel, 1992, p. 222). Investigating their traces is more costly and complicated, as the press has few comments about them. They did not usually occupy the central pages of newspapers, lodging themselves in the sections dedicated to police cases. Recollections are limited since their patrons barely wrote and read very little. So, they were rarely exposed in written memoirs. Their traces were more often than not deposited in oral memory, and so tend to disappear. In addition, there were all kinds of prejudice: social, cultural and musical, estab-

lishing a sort of silence curtain in the cultural scene and in historiography, although José Ramos Tinhorão addressed the issue in Rio de Janeiro (Tinhorão, 2005, pp. 135-147). Thus, the signs from the past offer a much more rarefied and opaquer panel, which, however, is not impossible to penetrate (Csergo, 2001, p. 150).

In many ways, this panorama was present in the city of São Paulo, but its tensions reached other levels and attributes. The remnants of an aristocratic and slave society still resonated as resentment, differentiation and discrimination. In addition, the small nineteenth-century urban hub with a deeply provincial, agrarian past underwent a rapid and unheard-of escalation of physical and demographic growth. These circumstances certainly produced a more tense and disturbing panorama that was much more exposed in the crime sections of São Paulo's periodicals. In addition to the press, the issue was also the subject of one or another chronicler, as is the case of Sylvio Floreal. He precisely revealed this obscure bohemia of bars and cafés in the 1910s and 20s, "where drunks and rowdies of the worst kind indulge in binges, pouring down glasses of *cachaça* (sugar cane spirit)". This marginal and rowdy bohemian *bas-fonds* spread through the city's many "dark and smelly alleys". The "unwelcome mob, which vegetates ignobly", moved through a "crowd of pestilential taverns" drinking to "forget their (...) pains" (Floreal, 2002, pp. 63-64).

However, as already underlined, this was a much more complex reality than the simple opposition between two polarized antithetical worlds. Paulo Cursino, for instance, pointed out that on São João Avenue there was an area that "didn't sleep" and had a heterogeneous and noisy bohemian atmosphere. In the old market's district, workers lived in nocturnal uproar, singing out special offers at the counters or on the streets. Down the road, there was a "nighttime activity" consisting of theaters, ballrooms and taverns that often "turned into a bacchanal" (Moura, 1980, pp. 96-97). Zequinha de Abreu is said to have played in some of the cabarets and ballrooms in the area (Giffoni, 1986, p. 60). Floreal also notices that there were other types of cafés and taverns with a "more polished clientele", located closer to the old center. The diversity and complexity were evident in them, with the influx of "big black men, mestizos, mulattos and foul-mouthed females" who coexisted alongside workers, such as "chauffeurs, carters, porters, waiters, former civil and plain-clothes officers" (Floreal, 2002, pp. 63-67). Even a curious category of nocturnal and noisy peddlers circulated around these cafés. "Truly unsung heroes", they moved loudly from cafés to taverns, chanting out their offers of peanuts, popcorn and cooked pine nuts to the bohemians seated at the bar tables (Floreal, 2002, pp. 113-117).

Guilherme de Almeida (1890-1969) also ran into a bohemian crowd comprised of mainly workers in the Santa Efigênia neighborhood. “[F]lorists, musicians, photographers, upholsterers, masseurs (...) who come to spend money (...) and smile (...)” circulated along Vitória and dos Gusmões streets, looking for those casual relationships with no end goal. In this “neighborhood that only exists at night, such as fear”, its visitors were “just good people who work during the day (...) and come at night to drink beer (...)”. The area was full of bars and cafés that offered “piano music and draft beer”. Some of these establishments had German features and a “pinging piano” was usually heard within them. Zequinha de Abreu even played at the Lâmpada de Inverno on Guaianazes Street, accompanied by a violinist known by the suggestive and priceless musical nickname of “Munheca” (wrist) (Giffoni, 1986, p. 60). At another bar, the German owner tried to avoid the usual racket and to impose some serenity on the environment by placing a large sign over the piano: “Singing in the premises is henceforth expressly prohibited without any distinction of people (the word “singing” is written in red)” (Almeida, 2004, pp. 26-27). The warning was obviously useless.

A little further away, close to Estação da Luz, bars and singing cafés multiplied. The Café da Luz was operating in this area *circa* 1900. It was a lowbrow establishment where a singer named Flora do Lago worked; according to her admirers, she “twittered like a cheerful nightingale” (Moraes, 1997, p. 172). In 1905, the Café Recreio da Luz featured the already famous “singer of Brazilian *modinhas*, Bahiano”, in a “great festival to benefit the applauded [musician]” (Benefício, 1904, p. 12). The café opened the previous year with a “musical and vocal concert with a varied and attractive program” (Recreio da Luz, 1905, p. 2).

The social rules and musical practices in these cafés and taverns were certainly different from those in the mirrored cafés. Paraguassu recalls that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, some more modest cafés usually kept “a small ensemble with a guitar, a *bandolim*, a flute or an accordion”. The payment for the musicians’ was simply “a sandwich, a beer. And we collected money from the patrons (...) which we shared at the end of the night” (Paragassu, undated), revealing an occupational amateurism that was commonplace in the musicians’ precarious and unstable professional panorama. Recollecting further, the singer says that in the old center area there were several cafés with music. The Gruta do Tesouro had a small stage where an ensemble with guitars and flute usually performed. The Bar Barão, on the other hand, was a meeting place for musicians, and therefore there was music playing

there occasionally. Finally, the Cascata had an ensemble formed by Canhoto and Zé Carioca, which sometimes featured Paraguassu himself.

At the same time, the Café-Cantante Grisella, located on Rangel Pestana Avenue, had very similar characteristics. It was patronized by “poor daily breadwinners” and had a small stage in the back where out-of-tune artists sang in a “screechy [voice] (...) well-known passages from Tosca, Traviata and other pieces”. As noted earlier, passages from operas and other concert music compositions were popularized and performed in more modest establishments. During the artists’ breaks, the “owner’s daughters filled in with their children’s songs”, keeping the sound agitation going at the place. The ensemble’s pianist was Grisella Lazzaro, who lent her name to the establishment and was just 14 years old. Her youthful beauty attracted admiring glances from the patrons, but in the end, she fell in love with the waiter Osvaldo Gennassani Martinez.

Interestingly, the phonographic industry portrayed, though only partially, this universe of popular cafés. A series of recordings were made in Rio Grande do Sul and Rio de Janeiro simulating the noisy and chaotic environment of these cafés. With comical and disorderly content, the titles drew attention precisely because of their tumultuous character: *Chinfrim em uma casa de chopp* (Brawl at a beer house, 1912), *Desordem em um café cantante* (Disturbance at a singing café, 1912), *Imitação de um café concerto* (Imitation of a café-concert, 1907), *Cena em um café* (Scene at a café, 1910) and finally the best known record, *Espetáculo em um café concerto* (Show at a café-concert, 1909), performed by Eduardo das Neves and Mário Pinheiro⁴. These recordings can certainly serve as a reference so as to project the sound universe of what was taking place in São Paulo, which is known only through written records.

CLOSING DOORS

As noted, the singing cafés and taverns, alongside the mirrored cafés and patisseries, contributed, in many ways, both to the invention of modern social sensibilities and experiences and to the development of new musical practices in São Paulo. The social exchanges and cultural connections that took place in this new nighttime entertainment circuit had an evident repercussion on musical and listening experiences. These establishments progress a step, albeit precarious and circumstantial, towards the professionalization of artists and, in tandem with it, towards a more autonomous musical practice, allowing for some emancipation from the conventions of concerts and of traditional community, religious or festive, popular hubs. At the same time, these environ-

ments worked as an active musical diffusion circuit before the overwhelming expansion of electronic communication media. The gentle listening present therein perhaps still echoed those older courtly practices in which music was merely an accompaniment to poetry, dance or salon conversations. However, it is much more likely that this distracted or tenuous reception linked to entertainment (Adorno, 2011, pp. 55-83), in which reading, conversation, drinking and eating materialized simultaneously, were a form of aural education, anticipating in a way the musical behavior and domestic reception of listeners mediated by machines and technology (Maisoneuve, 2009, pp. 138-142). Thus, this group of factors added another important element to the broader and more comprehensive horizon of the city's modern sound culture. The dynamics involved in it varied over time: sometimes this heterogeneous circuit achieved a visible and active cultural and musical role; at other times it acted in a more invisible and secondary way. What matters is that its cultural and musical experiences penetrated vividly into the city's everyday life and sound culture. Certainly because they dynamized and diversified the period's urban cultural panorama, promoting changes in the sensibilities and perceptions of the city (Corbin, 1990) and imprinting themselves on its memories.

Walking through this scenario that was establishing itself in São Paulo is important for several reasons. Firstly, due to its vertiginous growth, which presented a series of crises, tensions and unusual conflicts. In this expansion process, there was an incredible cultural invigoration that produced particularities and subjectivities that need to be better understood. Experiences with new sound sensibilities and musical sociabilities, as well as those related to free time, leisure, and entertainment, in which music was present, are aspects that still require methodical work and analytical attention. From this perspective, music in its human materiality constructed by everyday musical practices (Certeau, 1994) certainly played an important role that needs to be identified and understood. This means operating with a cultural history of musical practices that goes beyond the traditional perception of a historiography of music based solely on genres or merely on biographies. Finally, this is also an important step to understand and discuss the entering of the city and the country into a very unique modernity, one that was full of tensions and conflicts.

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NOTES

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² It is inevitable not to remember the song *Conversa de Botequim* (Bar Talk) by Noel Rosa and Vadico, composed years later (1935), which also refers to the bar as “our office”.

³ In this period, the term café-concert was used both for physical places that served drinks, food and that showcased music, and for the variety shows held in concert halls and theaters. Thus, a given establishment such as the Paulicéia and others could be called a café-concert. But the understanding that ended up imposing itself was the most common one,

regarding shows and the appropriate venues for them; in other words, a café-concert “is, above all, a show” (Pillet, 1992). See also Concetta (1992).

⁴ Records of *Chinfrim em uma casa de chopp Espetáculo em um café concerto* and *Desordem num café concerto* can be listened to at: Between Memory and History... (s/d).



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