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Filmography

Ciudad chicha, dir. Raúl R. Romero and Omar Ráez Jiménez. 2007. Peru. 47 mins. Documentary.

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Chimarritta, *see* Chamarrita/Chimarrita

Choro

Choro or *chorinho* is a Brazilian instrumental musical genre that appeared in Rio de Janeiro in the early twentieth century and continues to be played a century later, retaining its main characteristics. Its continuous history has given *choro* an important role in Brazilian music, and since the 1970s there has been an impressive growth in the number of *choro* groups and musicians, especially among young musicians.

Origins and Emergence

During the second half of the nineteenth century the word *choro* had three meanings: (i) it referred to a specific musical ensemble, also called *trio de pau e corda* (wood-and-string trio), consisting of one guitar, one *cavaquinho* (a small, four-string guitar, similar to the ukulele), used together to provide the rhythmic-harmonic basis, and one instrument to play the melodies, usually a flute; (ii) it was used to denote the characteristic style which these ensembles used to play European dances, especially polka; (iii) it was used to refer to the festive family gatherings at which this music was played. These three meanings of the word characterized the formative period, before *choro* became recognized as a musical genre.

The origin of the use of the word *choro* in Brazilian music is disputed. In Portuguese, '*choro*' literally means the act of weeping, and according to Tinhorão (1974) there is a connection between this and the melancholic properties often ascribed to the main melody of *choro* as a consolidated genre and to its contrapuntal second voice, as well as of the improvised descending bass lines of the guitars, the so-called *baixaria*. Against

this, Almeida (Mariz 1983) argues that *choro* derived from *xôlo*, the name given to the dancing parties of the African slaves on Brazilian farms. For Vasconcelos (1977), however, *choro* could be a simplification of the expression *charameleiros*, which refers to the members of *charamela* old bands, often formed by African slaves. In Neves's view (1977), *choro* could be taken as a corruption of the word *chorus*, meaning instrumental ensemble. The same author also mentions Mozart de Araújo, for whom the word refers to the loose and tearful way of playing adopted by the ensemble.

During the nineteenth century various popular dances originating from Europe spread throughout the Americas – dances such as *tango*, *habanera*, *schottische*, *mazurka*, *waltz* and *polka*. Some of them gradually acquired national and regional aspects, due to the blending with local cultural traits. In Brazil, the fusion of genres such as *modinha* and the Africa-derived *lundu* resulted in new genres such as *tango brasileiro* (Brazilian *tango*), *maxixe* and *polca-lundu*, each of which was later to play a part in constituting the *samba*. The polka, however, became so popular that the word was sometimes used to label almost all other dances. These dances were played basically by three instrumental formations: the military and military-like brass bands, the *pianeiros* (popular piano players) and the *choro* ensembles.

The first *choro* ensembles appeared during the early stages of the process of urbanization which took place in Brazil in the second half of the nineteenth century, when a new social class emerged, consisting of bureaucrats, laborers and foreign company workers. There was 'not much social discrimination' (Tinhorão 1998, 195; authors' translation), a situation that allowed multiethnic participation in social life. This lower-middle class, which wished to attain the conditions of the European bourgeoisie (*ibid.*), promoted gatherings (mainly family ones in the home) that included music performances of the aforementioned European songs and dances, which were played on the guitar and *cavaquinho*. Alongside this amateur practice, these ensembles were also hired to perform for private parties and balls.

The introduction of the flute to the *choro* ensemble is attributed to Joaquim Callado (Joaquim Antônio da Silva Callado Jr., 1848–80), a renowned flautist who was very much in demand at *choro* gatherings. In the 1870s in Rio de Janeiro Callado formed the 'Choro Carioca,' a group that is considered the very first *choro* ensemble. The composition of the first *choro* piece, 'Flor amorosa' (Loving Flower), is also attributed to him. As the *choro* flautists were usually the only musicians able to read music and frequently took the

role of soloist, they felt responsible for the musical development of their partners. Many playful provocations occurred, when the soloist challenged the other instrumentalists to adapt to the rhythmic changes and modulating melodies.

The *choro* style also became an ingredient in military brass band music and in piano music. Performances of military brass bands had taken place since the early nineteenth century (Binder 2006). The bands played for official events in city squares as much as for carnival balls. Such events 'were rare opportunities for most of the Brazilian population of the larger cities to hear some kind of instrumental music' (Tinhorão 1998, 182; authors' translation). The most remarkable of these bands was the Banda do Corpo de Bombeiros do Rio de Janeiro (The Rio de Janeiro Fire Brigade Band), founded in 1896 by the composer and arranger Anacleto de Medeiros (1866–1907). Medeiros is considered a father of Brazilian musical arrangement and his musical style mixed brass band music and *choro*. His best-known works are the schottisches such as 'Três estrelinhas' (Three Starlets) and 'Iara.'

The piano was very popular among the Brazilian urban middle class throughout the nineteenth century. The pianists' repertoire did not consist only of European classical-romantic music, but of Brazilian popular dance music as well, as sheet music publishing was a very active business at that time. Consequently, there arose a new kind of pianist, the so-called *pianeiro*. This term was often used in a pejorative sense, instead of the term *pianista*, which referred to a performer of traditional European repertoire. The *pianeiros* gradually became professional by performing at parties and private balls and in theaters and music halls. Among them, two of the most important are Ernesto Nazareth (1863–1934) and Chiquinha Gonzaga (Francesca Edwiges Neves Gonzaga, 1847–1935), both considered pillars of the *choro* as a genre. Nazareth's music has fine pianistic writing, and he wished his work to be considered art music. The best-known pieces from his extensive work are 'Odeon' and 'Brejeiro,' two milestones of the early *choro*. On the other hand, Gonzaga's music tends more to dance and an informal style. His best-known works are 'Ó abre-alas,' (O Open Wings), 'Atraente' (Attractive) and 'Gaúcho (Corta-jaca).'

The Consolidation of *Choro*

During the modernization period of the early twentieth century Brazilian urban spaces were transformed and with that new forms of entertainment were developed, provided by theater, cinema, radio and the recording companies, mainly in provincial capitals but particularly in Rio de Janeiro. It was in Rio

in 1902 that the Fire Brigade Band, under the baton of Anacleto de Medeiros, first recorded *choro* music for Casa Edison, the first Brazilian recording company. Among the pieces recorded there were waltzes, schottisches, polkas, Brazilian *tangos* and other genres (Cazes 1998; Franceschi 2002). At the same time, a nationalistic search for a Brazilian identity was taking place. In the 1930s this political, artistic and intellectual movement started to make a positive contribution to the merging of ethnicities, and hence to the birth of a new concept of 'Brazilness' which demanded the establishment of national symbols. In terms of music, the genre which emerged as national symbol was the *samba*. The origins of *choro* and *samba* are deeply interwoven, both having roots in a mixture of polka and other European dances with African-derived styles such as *lundu*, and both were suitable for evoking a national feeling (Vianna 1995). The consolidation of *choro* as an individual genre in the 1930s is perhaps related to a shift in the *samba* style of the time, when the old *samba-maxixe*, which dated from the mid-1800s, gave way to a more 'white' *samba* (Sandroni 2001; Piedade 2003).

Alfredo da Rocha Viana Filho, best known as Pixinguinha (1897–1973), is the most famous representative of this phase and his name is associated with the affirmation of the *choro* as a genre. Pixinguinha was a flautist, saxophonist, arranger and composer, who worked in various musical ensembles such as Os Batutas, Orquestra Victor Brasileira, Grupo da Guarda Velha, Orquestra Diabos do Céu, and made records and radio broadcasts. In 1922 he and his already famous ensemble Os Batutas traveled to Paris, where they exchanged musical ideas with jazz bands and jazz musicians of the day who were living in the city (Menezes Bastos 2005). To Pixinguinha, this episode represented a shift in many ways, for he adopted the saxophone as his main instrument and started composing in new idioms such as foxtrot, shimmy and ragtime. Two of Pixinguinha's most remarkable pieces are 'Carinhoso' (Loving, 1916–17) and 'Lamentos' (1928). His reputation grew to such an extent that he was turned into an icon of the golden era of *choro* (Bessa 2005; Cabral 1978; Menezes Bastos 2005), and his birthday (23 April) has been celebrated as the National Day of *Choro* since 2001.

The introduction of percussion in the *choro* ensembles is attributed to João Machado Guedes (*João da Bahiana*, 1887–1974), a friend of Pixinguinha. This development resulted in a new ensemble formation that was to become significant to the culture of Brazilian music, the so-called *regional*, which consists of guitar, *cavaquinho* and *pandeiro* (tambourine).

The *regional* usually played to accompany solo instruments or singers in recordings or radio broadcastings.

From the period of crystallization and the heyday of the *choro* – from the 1930s to the 1950s – some of the most significant instrumentalists and composers to mention are Jacob Pick Bittencourt (known as Jacob do Bandolim, 1918–69) and the ensemble *Época de Ouro*; Aníbal Augusto Sardinha (known as Garoto, 1915–55); and Waldir Azevedo (1923–80).

The Music of *Choro*

The *choro* is an instrumental music characterized by the use of a binary beat and a small rondo form in three parts (A-B-A-C-A), although the form in two parts (A-B-A) also became common from around the 1940s. Frequently there are modulations to closely related keys (change of mode in I, relative keys III or VI, IV, etc.) in the intermediate parts (B and C). Besides the typical sound of *regional*, *choro* musicality is primarily enacted through melodic characteristics, which emerge through a particular shaping of the melody by means of ornamentation and arpeggios. The essence of *choro* expresses a scherzando and nostalgic spirit, for the sound of *choro* evokes the purity and simplicity of old times. The dances that originated the genre – waltz, schottische, polka, *habanera* and others – were played by *choro* musicians in a way that offered a distinct contrast with their originals, and there were also many improvisations, usually in one of the three parts. Another essential characteristic of the *choro* is the improvisatory bass line of the seven-string guitar, a counterpoint to the melody.

Choro in the Twenty-first Century

Early twenty-first-century Brazilian musicians have much respect for *choro* performers, especially great masters such as Pixinguinha, yet some argue that *choro* has become too conservative, resulting in a kind of roots music that has been preserved from exotic influences and has not evolved. Maybe it was this stability that caused the genre to enter a long eclipse, from the 1940s until the 1970s, during which it was restricted to families and friends and few professional groups, until *choro* festivals (organized by a nationalist government effort to promote Brazilian culture) started to give a boost to its re-emergence. The art music composer Radamés Gnattali (1906–88) also played a central role in this rekindling of *choro*. In the early 1970s he led the Camerata Carioca, a group formed by young musicians playing sophisticated arrangements that gave a new, chamber-music character to the music.

Choro is undergoing an impressive revival, mainly in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Brasília, with a new generation of groups such as Trio Madeira Brasil, Arranca-toco, Trio Brasília Brasil, and artists such as Maurício Carrilho and Yamandú Costa, as well as specialized record labels such as *Kuarup Discos*, *Acari Records* and *Biscoito Fino*. Contemporary *choro* explores new repertoires, while attempting to maintain its traditional sound in what seems to be a rebirth of the old concept of *choro* as a way of playing.

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- ### Chouval Bwa
- The term *chouval bwa* encompasses two musical genres: traditional and modern *chouval bwa*. 'Chouval bwa' is Creole for 'wooden horse' (*cheval bois*) or merry-go-round. On the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe in the French Antilles,