

Dissonance and Dissent: The Musical Dramatics of Chico Buarque¹

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Francisco Buarque de Hollanda (1944, Rio de Janeiro) is one of Brazil's most widely acclaimed contemporary artists. He is best known as a consummate popular composer, songwriter and lyricist. Within the complementary realms of romantic sentiment and social criticism, Buarque has composed numerous classics of contemporary Brazilian popular music.² While songs comprise the greatest (well over two hundred musical titles) and most broadly recognized part of his artistic output, Buarque has also distinguished himself as an author of prose fiction and as a playwright, having authored or co-authored four dramatic works. There is a potent linguistic alchemy in all of his writing, and despite never having published a book of poetry, the masterful lyric writer Buarque has merited recognition as an important contemporary poet.³ The depth and breadth of his song, fictional and dramatic writing is due, in great part, to the effective interplay of musical, lyrical, narrative and dramatic elements. The notable lyricism of Buarque's musical repertory operates in conjunction with narrative and dramatic elements. If in his stories music has a subordinate functional presence, musicality is fundamental and pervasive in Buarque's dramatic efforts. These include musical settings for the stage version (1965) of João Cabral de Mello Neto's *Morte e Vida Severina*, the controversial *Roda Viva* (1967), co-authorship of *Calabar O Elogio da Traição* (1973) and *Gota d'Água* (1975), the grandiose *Ópera do Malandro* (1978), and participation in various other projects.⁴

Chico Buarque's endeavors in the realm of theatre reveal key preoccupations and problems of recent Brazilian dramaturgy and stagecraft. For textual, compositional, performative or historical reasons, each of the major dramatic productions with which Buarque has been involved was a significant moment in the trajectory of the theatre during the military dictatorship of 1964-1985, whose repressive strategies and censorial tactics so adversely affected performance arts in Brazil. Buarque's track record with federal censors of popular music perhaps best reflects the extremes and

absurdities of their practices. His career began as the junta took power, and as the so-called "revolution" took its course, Buarque was, through his musical and dramatic art, one of the regime's most vocal critics.⁵ Because of his contestatory stances and incisive sociopolitical discourse, he has been aptly called "the conscience of an entire generation." Buarque's battles with censors have strong links with control of the stage, since many of his proscribed songs were composed for plays which themselves suffered institutional intervention.

Buarque first gained recognition in 1965 when he put to music central passages of João Cabral de Mello Neto's renowned narrative poem *Morte e Vida Severina*, which was staged by a university group in São Paulo. The celebrated poet from Pernambuco was pleased by Buarque's sensitive musical interpretation. From Cabral's point of view, the young composer had respected the integrity of the text from start to finish. Cabral later stated that he could no longer imagine the poem without its new musical vestments (Sant'Anna 124). Buarque's own comments on the project reflect a guiding preoccupation: "Com *Morte e Vida Severina* procurei adivinhar qual seria a música interior de João Cabral quando ele escreveu o poema" (Sant'Anna 124); "Aquele trabalho garantiu-me que melodia e letra devem e podem formar um só corpo" (Discography 1966). This concern for integration of words and music is relevant to Buarque's future settings, both in terms of technical ideals and of the creation of moods or dramatic situations. The fate of *Morte e Vida Severina* as a stage production is symptomatic both of the vitality of Brazilian theatre of the 1960s and of the repression Yan Michalski has documented in *O Palco Amordaçado*.⁶ After federal censors stepped in to halt a successful run of the play in Brazil, it became the award-winning performance at the 1966 Festival of University Theatre in Nancy, France.

Festivals of popular music in Brazil provided a stage for Buarque to make a rapid ascension as a performing songwriter with compositions such as "A Banda." In the midst of emerging rock and roll and nationalist protest music, Buarque's appearance and the nature of his early songs led to an image of him as a "nice young man," *o bom moço da nova música popular*. He did much to shatter that image and misconceptions about success in the entertainment industry with the 1967 festival song "Roda Viva" and with the drama of the same name in the following year. Buarque calls his two-act work a *comédia musical*, though it has more tragic than comic airs. Here as elsewhere, "musical" is an adjective denoting the presence of music in the play, not to be confused with a nominative North American usage of "musical," which may imply, for some, subordination of dramatic discourse to song and dance spectacle. In any case, Buarque's text suffers from a somewhat schematic, manichean approach. Yet *Roda Viva* remains a serious and critical work. The protagonist, Benedito Silva, turns his singing career over to voracious promoters who use electronic and print media to transform the common man Benedito into Ben Silver, *o novo ídolo do iê-iê-iê*. When the vogue of socially-conscious Northeastern based music catches on, reflecting historical realities

of the development of Brazilian popular music in the 1960s, the handlers of the bewildered singer mold him into a nationalist hero rechristened Benedito Lampião, after the early twentieth-century bandit hero of the *sertão*. Caught up in the machinations of show business, the protagonist is driven to suicide; his wife will now become another pre-fabricated pop star and give continuity to the *roda viva* of entertainment.

One of the more successful strategies Buarque adopts in the play is the use of a musical and dramatic chorus. As Benedito begins to sense truly his own impotence, an anonymous *povo* intones the title song. "Roda Viva" depicts disillusionment and frustrations of an individual whose initiative is smothered by the "spinning wheel" of the *roda viva*, the rat race and hustle bustle of modern living.

Tem dias que a gente se sente
 Como quem partiu ou morreu
 A gente estancou de repente
 Ou foi o mundo que cresceu
 A gente quer ter voz ativa
 No nosso destino mandar
 Mas eis que chega a roda-viva
 E carrega o destino pra lá

Refrain: Roda mundo, roda gigante
 Roda moinho, roda pião
 O tempo rodou num instante
 Nas voltas do meu coração

A gente vai contra a corrente
 Até não poder resistir
 Na volta do barco é que sente
 O quanto deixou de cumprir
 Faz tempo que a gente cultiva
 A mais linda roseira que há
 Mas eis que chega a roda-viva
 E carrega a roseira pra lá

Refrain

A roda da saia, a mulata
 Não quer mais rodar, não senhor
 Não posso fazer serenata
 A roda de samba acabou
 A gente toma a iniciativa
 Viola na rua a cantar

Mas eis que chega a roda-viva
E carrega a viola pra lá

Refrain

O samba, a viola, a roseira
Um dia a fogueira queimou
Foi tudo ilusão passageira
Que a brisa primeira levou
No peito a saudade cativa
Faz tempo pro tempo parar
Mas eis que chega a roda-viva
E carrega a saudade pra lá

Refrain

(51-52; Discography 1968)

The notions of restrained movement and emotion that structure the stanzas are amplified in the compact refrain, which evokes numerous associations. A series of images based on various combinations of *roda* and *rodar* transmits the ideas of unchecked external influence and of losing one's bearings (head) in a world whose pace is dizzying. *Roda mundo* suggest worldly experience and the insignificance of the individual in relation to the rotation of the earth. *Roda gigante* further implies imposing size and being subjected to arbitrary circumstances, like on the ferris wheel at the amusement park. *Roda moinho* may be perceived as *remoinho*, whirlwind and whirlpool, whose connotations naturally fit the context, or as grinding, equally appropriate. *Roda pião* gives the idea of extensive spinning and of being a toy, an object to manipulate for diversion. All of these associations grow as the refrain recurs, adding power to each subsequent stanza. The second stanza laments the loss of perseverance and of the cultivation of beauty, symbolized in *roseira*, which is particularized in the third stanza in the act of music-making, specifically samba. This reference is especially important, of course, because Ben Silver is a singer who has been directed, up to this point, to cultivate internationally-styled pop music. The fourth stanza of "Roda Viva," in a summary and culmination, brings together elements of the previous stanzas and bemoans the loss of *saudade*, an essential affective dimension.

In its definitive recording, vocal arrangement contributes to the song's thematic focus and impact. The last "*Pra lá*" is chorally prolonged and descends in tone and volume, reflecting the semantic notion of dissolution or deprivation and adding dramatic effect through specific musical execution. At this juncture the refrain is taken up chorally at a slow pace. Several increasingly rapid repetitions follow with juxtaposed voices until a final unison stop. This coda gives the impression that the lead voice is overcome by larger forces and musically creates a subliminal sense of being swept away (in a

"whirlpool" or "current," following the lexico-semantic direction of the song text). Such vocal intensification adds to the cumulative power of imagery and rhyme that shape the stanzas and, in dramatic context, cast shadows on the protagonist.

The whole of the original text in which the crafted song lyric of "Roda Viva" appears comprises a somewhat flat sequence of scenes. Yet it formed the basis of what was, in the considered opinion of Brazilian criticism, the central theatrical event of 1968. The attention Buarque's play attracted is partially attributable to the drawing power provided by the status the author had already achieved in popular music. What most profoundly marked the work was the direction of José Celso Martinez Corrêa, whose well known presentation of *O Rei da Vela* had made waves in 1967, initiating what came to be termed *teatro agressivo*.⁷ Edélcio Mostaço summarizes the importance of José Celso's direction of *Roda Viva*:

. . . O espetáculo acabou se transformando num grande sucesso de público e o epicentro estético-político mais importante do ano: *Roda Viva*. Trabalhando com jovens atores cariocas, José Celso imprimiu uma tal magnitude pessoal ao conjunto de encenação que praticamente fez sucumbir o texto piegas de Chico Buarque, mal alinhavada seqüência de cenas em torno da ascensão e queda de um ídolo da canção popular (107).

José Celso soube transformar o inosso texto de Chico Buarque numa continuação quase natural de *O Rei da Vela*. Se neste era mostrado um país *sem história*, de largos conchavos econômico-políticos e de descarado oportunismo, inventariando e espinafando o cadáver gangrenado dormitando em berço esplêndido, *Roda Viva* era praticamente a retomada desse mesmo quadro conjuntural, só que posto em cena de forma mais torpe, debochada, caricatural . . . (109)

Working with a brief text, which can be read in about forty minutes, the director added multiple visual effects, tense intervals of silence in which actors stare at spectators, obscene gestures, foul language and nudity to effect a general aggressivity, exemplified in a final scene in which a grotesque liver spurts blood towards the audience. These are implementations of his idea of direct action which would stir the public's assumed or customary passivity. In this regard, José Celso notes the historical role of *Roda Viva*:

. . . inaugurava uma nova relação com o público. Uma relação de quebrar as máscaras, de quebrar a careta, na violência do nascimento. Fez o público experimentar um estado forte do teatro. Um teatro que era o prolongamento do que se fazia nas ruas

naquele tempo. A força das passeatas, a força de *Roda Viva*."
(Arrabal 22)

Buarque's dramatic text and, much more emphatically, José Celso's staging represented vibrant interpretations of current events and attitudes. The worldwide rebelliousness of youth in the late 1960s coincided with profound resentment of the military regime in Brazil, and, as Michalski writes, *Roda Viva* was "a expressão mais incisiva dessa raiva" ("Teatro" 35). Moreover, the staging openly broke with an established and supposedly "natural" situation of actor-spectator relations which made overt questioning of scenic codes difficult and demanded a certain level of actor discipline in the service of customers of the theatre (Arrabal 23). Such associations and political overtones undoubtedly influenced the right-wing thugs (*Comando de Caça Comunista*) who destroyed props and assaulted the cast of *Roda Viva* in São Paulo. This attack, naturally, fueled the controversy surrounding the play, and after another violent incident in Porto Alegre, censors prohibited further performances. From attitudinal, sociopolitical and scenographic vantage points, then, Buarque's *Roda Viva* was a significant cultural event and a road marker of contemporary Brazilian theatre.

Political implications and production difficulties also figure prominently in the evaluation of Buarque's next incursion into the field of drama, *Calabar O Elogio da Traição*, co-authored with filmmaker Ruy Guerra. The play is a farcical re-interpretation of a historical figure executed by the Portuguese for collusion with the Dutch during their early seventeenth-century occupation of the Brazilian Northeast. Calabar is synonymous with traitor in Brazilian history books that adopt the viewpoint of the Portuguese victors. The playwrights raise questions about Calabar's motives and shed a new light of skepticism on official versions of history, implying that all of the principals in the historical episode were guilty of some kind of betrayal. The play treats problems of emerging national identity in a demythification of the homeland that strikes inevitable chords of contemporary contempt.

Despite the political overtones, federal censors had pre-approved staging of the work in April of 1973. Once an opening date was set, however, censors recalled the text for "re-examination" and refused to say when a final decision would be reached. Holding the work in a limbo of uncertainty guaranteed the financial ruin of the production, the most expensive (to that date) in the history of the national stage, and led to the dissolution of the cast by the end of the year. Federal censors did subsequently issue an official prohibition of *Calabar* and, cognizant of the potential negative effects on their none too comfortable public relations, also forbade the press to divulge their banning of the work. News publications were even instructed not to mention the title of the play, which was christened and discussed as *a peça inominável*. Banned from the stage until 1980, *Calabar* appeared in other media. In the realm of literature, the least censored of the arts, Buarque's and Guerra's text was a

very successful publication, reaching ten editions by 1977. Buarque recorded an album (released with a revealingly blank white cover) with twelve of the play's fourteen songs but was not allowed, following the logic of military censors, to use the title *Calabar*. In addition, several lyrics were purged and the corresponding songs had to be recorded as instrumentals.

Buarque's songs are an important part of the critical and political discourse of the play, which indirectly targets the Brazilian regime of the 1970s and has been evaluated as "authentic protest art" (Molotnik 518-520). One of the compositions gives a notable example of the songwriter's characteristically surreptitious language.

Ele sabe dos caminhos/Dessa minha terra
 No meu corpo se escondeu/Minhas matas percorreu
 Os meus rios/Os meus braços
 Ele é o meu guerreiro/Nos colchões da terra
 Nas bandeiras, bons lençóis/Nas trincheiras quantos ais, ai
 Cala a boca/Olha o fogo/Olha a relva
 Cala a boca Bárbara/Cala a boca Bárbara
 Cala a boca Bárbara/Cala a boca Bárbara. . . .
 (5; Discography 1973)

The character who sings this is Calabar's widow, Bárbara. The notable effect is the voicing of "Cala a boca Bárbara," which by virtue of emphasis and repetition gives "CALA a boca BARBara: CALABAR." Thus, as one critic has written ". . . a proibição de nomear nomeia" (Silva 90). This single verse is an ironic reflection of the fate that befell *Calabar*, an episode which, in all its ramifications, is one of the best reflections of the conflicts in Brazil between military authoritarianism and the performance arts.

Following his collaboration with Ruy Guerra, Buarque teamed with Paulo Pontes to write *Gota d'Água, uma tragédia carioca* (1975). The drama is a versified and musical recreation of Euripides' classic Greek tragedy *Medea* in the context of the modern-day working-class suburbs of Rio de Janeiro. The critical social essay published as a preface to the dramatic work has attracted as much attention as the text proper. Therein, Pontes and Buarque outline the "fundamental preoccupations" and ideological positions that their play tries to reflect. The first refers to the consolidation of a socioeconomic model in Brazil during the "last few years" (i.e. those of the military dictatorship): "a experiência capitalista que se vem implantando aqui--radical, violentamente predatória, impiedosamente seletiva--adquiriu um trágico dinamismo . . . *Gota d'Água*, a tragédia, é uma reflexão sobre esse momento que se operou no interior da sociedade, encurralando as classes subalternas" (xi,xv). The authors' second express concern relates cultural reality to socioeconomic structures. Stating that the *povo* had disappeared from national cultural production since the 1950s, the playwrights see a need to de-emphasize

internationalistic and cosmopolitan modernization and to focus instead on popular culture, on the problems of the Brazilian people, in Brazilian theatre. The authors summarize: "Nossa tragédia é uma tragédia da vida brasileira" (xvii). The third issue Pontes and Buarque raise, relating form to content, is the need to emphasize communication over spectacle in the theatre. They aim to promote a spirit of inquiry and to make evident "a necessidade da palavra voltar a ser o centro do fenômeno dramático [. . .] intensificando poeticamente um diálogo que podia ser realista, um pouco porque a poesia exprime melhor a densidade de sentimentos que move os personagens, mas . . . sobretudo, com os versos, tentar revalorizar a palavra" (xix).

Judged against the playwrights' declared principles and within the scope of seventies' theatre, *Gota d'Água* was a noteworthy achievement. The authors' crafted text slipped by censors and received the Prêmio Molière as the best drama of the year by a national author. Pontes and Buarque would not accept the award, voicing continued objections to the system of government intervention in the arts and alleging that works that had been censored (e.g. *Rasga Coração* by Oduvaldo Viana Filho) could have merited top recognition instead. *Gota d'Água* became a long-running play and constituted, in the assessment of Peter Schoenbach (45), one of the few truly successful theatrical endeavors of the 1970s. Myth and current social reality are integrated thematically to form a double-edged attack against corruption, real estate speculation and manipulation of the masses. Popular perspective is achieved through the choice of dramatis personae, settings, colloquialism (within the classical frame) and, of course, Buarque's songs.

Among the musical compositions of *Gota d'Água*, the title song plays a notable functional role. As the play begins, the protagonist Jasão, a young samba composer, has already gained notoriety with a hit song titled "Gota d'Água." The samba's success is the basis on which Jasão is differentiated from his lower-class companions; his new-found status is reinforced in repeated references throughout the first act and most of the second. Until near the play's climax, however, only the second part of the song is performed. The complete song is finally sung by the tragic heroine Joana, who has been abandoned by Jasão, after her last meeting with him.

Já lhe dei meu corpo, não me servia
 Já estanquei meu sangue, quando fervia
 Olha a voz que me resta
 Olha a veia que salta
 Olha a gota que falta
 Pro desfecho da festa
 Por favor/Deixe em paz meu coração
 Que ele é um pote até aqui de mágoa
 e qualquer desatenção/Faça não
 Pode ser a gota d'água (159; Discography 1975)

This is the key musical passage of the play, as clearly indicated by the execution of a suite which immediately follows. The suite is comprised of the play's other major songs performed by other characters in the different sets that have been employed until this juncture. Revealed in full, the verses of "Gota d'Água" crystallize developing dramatic emotivity (Joana's affective responses to her treatment at the hands of Jasão and others) while anticipating a tragic dénouement ("desfecho da festa"). The song, moreover, comes to embody a metaphorical analogy: the "gota d'Água" or "last straw" of the relationship between Jasão and Joana, which may provoke a powerful reaction from her, suggest similar potential within the encompassing social structures in which they, symbolic personages, operate.

Gota d'Água shares with the earlier *Roda Viva* fundamental formal and attitudinal features, as they incorporate versification, in music and dialogue alike, of a harsh lyricism of social dissent. With respect to stagecraft, the lavish concepts of aggression employed by José Celso in Buarque's debut musical comedy contrast sharply with the focus on language in his collaboration with Pontes. A central question arises in the comparison of intentions expressed in the preface and the actual dramatization of *Gota d'Água*: what is the potential for contradiction between the denunciatory impulse of social realism and the artificiality or rigidity of metrical schemes? Buarque's and Ponte's application of metrical models can be seen as a natural outgrowth of recreating an ancient Greek play and as a method of drawing particular attention to the literary model. The hypothesis of a regressive stylistic mannerism can be discarded, since the modern playwrights are clearly committed to the messages adhered to their rhythmic verse. The authors' formal approach must be regarded as ironic. In conjunction with their perspective on exploitation, it comprises a critical commentary on what has been termed "a imposição autoritária e fechada de um modelo cultural alienígena a uma aturdida massa que vive ainda em estágio de desenvolvimento mais primitivo" (Guimarães 68). The metrification provokes a measure of estrangement and, part and parcel of a consciousness-raising strategy, functions as a distancing element.

Buarque's most ambitious stage venture is the 1978 *Ópera do Malandro*, an adaptation of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1798) and *The Threepenny Opera* of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill (1928). Like the distant English model, Buarque's drama transpires in the midst of prostitutes and criminal elements and shows vice and corruption at all levels of society. From *The Threepenny Opera* are borrowed the basic cast of characters and melodramatic scheme, as well as a series of structural details, including placement of musical passages in the dramatic sequences. Brecht's critique of early twentieth-century bourgeois mentality was no novelty to the Brazilian public, since it was staged in 1964 in São Paulo and 1967 in Rio de Janeiro. Buarque's elaborate musical comedy is a sweeping social satire which is set during the dictatorial *Estado Novo* of the 1940s, a time of increased urbanization, industrialization and

foreign (North American) penetration. There are clear projections on the 1970s and the economic model of import substitution and consumerism.⁸

The external structure of *Ópera do Malandro* is a major determinant factor in its process of signification. The dramatic event is framed by an introduction, musical prologues (one for each act) and a pair of musical epilogues. In the introduction, the supposed author of the play (João Alegre) is introduced by a fictional producer, who also presents a *patronesse* (his wife). The couple, Sr. and Sra. Duran, are main characters in the play proper, while the *malandro* João Alegre figures in the final scene and performs the passages of musical commentary.⁹ Duran is an "respectable" businessman who runs a chain of brothels according to newly-instituted government guidelines for workers. When he discovers that his only daughter has married Max Overseas, a successful dealer of contraband, Duran persecutes him using the chief of police, who has been at the service of both the criminal ringleader and the entrepreneur. Duran has organized those under his service in a ploy to pressure the police to eliminate his adversary. When Duran's workers, against the boss' wishes, carry out a demonstration of protest, their action is stifled. The play is suspended by the *patronesse*, who demands an explanation of the march's leader, João Alegre. Objecting to the show of popular sentiment, she further insists that the conclusion of the drama be acted out according to the (fictional) script and rehearsals, thus putting in motion the desired "happy end" (in English in the original). Rather than strife or vengeance, there is reconciliation between Duran and Overseas, whose marriage to the former's daughter will flourish through business associations with foreign concerns. An absurd felicity reigns supreme during this *epilogo ditoso*, which represents the ascendance of foreign influence and contemporary consumer society. The *opera bufa* finale is sung over orchestral citations of European composers (Verdi, Bizet and Wagner) and is replete with references to financial schemes and consumer goods.

The authorial and authoritarian intervention in favor of a farcical happy ending seals Buarque's satirical critique of the socioeconomic fabric of modern Brazil. If Duran represents the forces of order and progress, he is no less contemptible than the criminal Max Overseas, who services "nice society" with desired foreign luxury articles. The kingpin of prostitution and the anti-social *malandro* are both corrupted schemers who manipulate and exploit underlings. Their reconciliation and the great happy ending represent an alliance of national and foreign interests at the expense of the subaltern classes as well as Brazilian submission to multinational capitalist values.

As its title certainly suggests, the discourse of music, in its diversity and depth, is more important in *Ópera do Malandro* than in any other of Buarque's dramas. Following Brecht, Buarque composes three main songs for the play. The lead song "Malandro," written over Weill's "Die Moritat Von Mackie Messer" ["Mack the Knife"] melody, constitutes the first prologue; "Homenagem ao Malandro," an original, precedes the second act; and a final

version of "Malandro" serves as *epílogo do epílogo*, after the operatic happy end. The last song gives a grotesque view of the demise of the *malandro*, symbolic both of pre-1940s Brazil and of the victims of the violent repression of the 1970s, the period of the so-called "economic miracle" (one verse calls a citizen's cadaver a *presunto*, a term often used to refer to the victims of Brazil's infamous death squads). The middle song depicts the disappearance of the classic *malandro* of Rio de Janeiro and suggests that the tradition of *malandragem*--hustling and cheating instead of honest work--passed to higher echelons of society.

Eu fui fazer/um samba em homenagem
 Á nata da malandragem/Que eu conheço de outros carnavais
 Eu fui à Lapa/E perdi a viagem
 Que aquela tal malandragem/Não existe mais
 Agora já não é normal/O que dá de malandro
 Regular profissional/Malandro com aparato
 De malandro oficial/Malandro candidato
 A malandro federal/Malandro com retrato
 Na coluna social/Malandro com contrato
 Com gravata e capital/Que nunca se dá mal
 Mas o malandro pra valer/--não espalha
 Aposentou a navalha/Tem mulher e filho
 E tralha e tal/Dizem as más línguas
 Que ele até trabalha/Mora lá longe e chacoalha
 Num trem da Central (103-104; Discography 1979)

The lead "Malandro" song functions as an overview of the drama's ideological dimensions and presents a microcosm of the world the play depicts. Within the pliable melodic frame is sung an allegory of domination. A *malandro* fails to pay for a drink of *cachaça*; the small financial loss is passed from the waiter to the tavern owner to the distributor to the distiller to the Bank of Brasil, which taxes *cachaça* abroad only to find the USA prohibiting its use. The cycle reverses and damages pass back to the distiller, the distributor, the tavern owner, the waiter and finally the *malandro*, who is blamed for the whole situation. The sequence of this slapstick song text depicts, in sum, the very relations of domination that structure the *Ópera do Malandro* and social reality of the 1940s and 1970s.

Although completed around the time of the initiation of *abertura*, *Ópera do Malandro* was not staged without difficulty. When it was submitted to local Rio de Janeiro censors, they censored it outright. Superiors in Brasília overruled that decision and allowed the work to be staged with some modifications. These changes did not alter the essence of *Ópera do Malandro*. In this production, Buarque unites central artistic qualities evident in previous ventures: the perspective of history and double-edged language as in *Calabar*,

the focus on national reality and popular culture as in *Gota d'Água*, the acrid tragicomedy of *Roda Viva*, and the characteristically incisive musical dramatics and dramatic musicality that mark his work for the stage.

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Notes

1. A preliminary version of this paper was delivered at the 40th Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, April 23, 1987. I am grateful to Randal Johnson for his assistance during the completion of this article.

2. On Chico Buarque's place in contemporary Brazilian popular music, see Charles A. Perrone, *Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Song: MPB 1965-1985* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). For an extensive bibliography on Buarque and MPB in general, see Charles A. Perrone, "An Annotated Inter-Disciplinary Discography and Bibliography of Brazilian Popular Music," *Latin American Music Review* 7.2 (Fall 1986) 302-340.

3. Adélia Bezerra de Meneses, author of an in-depth study of Buarque's work, believes that poetization is at the heart of his artistic production. She writes: "... toda a sua múltipla atividade pode ser reduzida a um denominador comum: compositor, dramaturgo e ficcionista se encontram, derrubando barreiras de gêneros e formas, sob o signo do poeta. Chico Buarque é um artesão da linguagem. As palavras com ele adquirem, na sua fluidez, algo de alquímico. Algo de mágico." (17). See also Sant'Anna and Silva.

4. Buarque also authored songs/lyrics for Dias Gomes' *O Rei de Ramos* (1979); *Geni* (1980), the ballet *O Grande Circo Místico* (1983), Augusto Boal's *O Corsário do Rei* (1985), and several other plays and films (the most notable of these being "O que será" for *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*). See discography.

5. On Buarque and censorship, see Molotnik 510-512.

6. Chronologies and documentation of censorship practices in the present paper are based on Michalski and Pacheco.

7. On the staging of Oswald de Andrade's noted play *O Rei da Vela*, see David George, *Teatro e Antropofagia* (São Paulo: Global, 1985) and "Oswald's Cannibalism and *Teatro Oficina*" in K. David Jackson, ed. *Transformations of Literary Language in Latin American Literature: From Machado de Assis to the Vanguardists* (Austin: Abaporu Press/Department of Spanish and Portuguese, 1987) 132-137; as well as Fernando Peixoto *Teatro Oficina (1958-1982): Trajetória de uma Rebelião Cultural* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982), 60-63, subsection called "O Significado de *O Rei da Vela*."

8. The political and economic contexts of the period in which *Ópera do Malandro* takes place are analyzed by Luis Werneck Vianna in his preface, "O americanismo: da pirataria à modernização autoritária (e o que pode seguir)" 5-15.

9. The fundamental meaning of *malandro* is one who does not work for a living. More specifically, the term designates an urban social type of the 1920s-1940s, a "hustler" who lived by his wits or illicit means (gambling, gaming, pimping, thievery) and showed a predilection for a bohemian life style. Roberto da Matta understands the "classic" *malandro* as one who, rather than submitting to the rules and regulations of official society, learned to manipulate laws and social codes to his own advantage (154). Music was an important activity in the sphere of the *malandro*, and a large body of songs glossed the theme of *malandragem* during the golden age of the samba in Rio de Janeiro. During Getúlio Vargas' *Estado Novo* (1937-1945), the period of Buarque's drama, official efforts were made to implant a work ethic and civic pride. A

federal bureaucracy (endowed with legal power over broadcast media) encouraged samba composers to abandon the glorification of the *malandro* and to exalt the value of work, to make popular vocal music an instrument of the *ideologia do trabalhismo* (Oliven, *passim*). See also Cláudia Mattos, *Acertei no Milhar: Malandragem e Samba no Tempo de Getúlio* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982) and Jairo Severiano, *Getúlio Vargas e a Música Popular* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1983).

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