

**Sounding out Identity:
The Place of Female Brazilian Singers in
Greater Somerville**

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Introduction

A gentle hand reaches down to pick up the neck of a guitar, and with quick strokes of carefully placed fingers, a chord echoes through the café. The singer leans into the microphone and takes a slow, steady breath just before she exhales a mellifluous melody into the air. Maybe the lyrics describe forbidden love, or a long struggle, but the music that carries the poetry speaks to a deeper meaning that words alone cannot capture. In its many different forms, music is a part of our daily reality, echoing out of speakers in crowded cafes, from ipods providing private entertainment on public transportation, or in a formal concert at a decorated hall. We rarely stop to think about the way that these forms of music are used in society, but for many individuals, the act of making, or even listening to music provides a valuable form of expression.

For the past six years, Urban Borderlands, a seminar in Tufts University's Anthropology and American Studies departments, has been working to document the lives of individuals in the Latino and Brazilian community of Somerville. The goal of the course is to highlight the work and contributions of these groups who have been historically been ignored and marginalized. In the past, students have focused their research on the areas of business, health care and other social service sectors that are created or utilized by the Latino and Brazilian community. This fall, however, the class decided to focus on musicians and artists, exploring the way different art forms function within the community. My classmates and I have explored a wide variety of topics and have discovered both great successes and clear challenges faced by artists and musicians in the community. With this initial research, the goal is not to provide conclusive evidence about the function of art and music for Latinos and Brazilians living and

working in Somerville. Instead, we hope to highlight important themes, and provide a jumping off point for further research.

In selecting a topic for my own research, I decided to focus on an area related to my own interests in music performance and anthropology studies. As a singer, vocal music has always been an important part of my life, and I feel that it has strong influences on an individual's personal identity, as well as their social relationships. I was born in the Philippines and raised in Southern Africa, and am currently studying at Tufts University, in Massachusetts. Throughout these transitions in my life, vocal music has provided a strong connection to home and a means for negotiating the changes I have experienced being part of different communities. My research in *Urban Borderlands* seeks to investigate similar themes among female Brazilian singers in and around Somerville. My choice to focus specifically on women and specifically on Brazilians reflects a desire to ask more in depth questions about the way a particular group of individuals are using music in their lives as recent immigrants to the United States. Before this fall, I had extremely limited knowledge of Brazilian music styles, and the pattern of Brazilian migration to the Boston area. Over the past three months, I have had the pleasure of speaking with these musicians and their friends, as well as watching a variety of different performances. I hope that this initial research will provide an avenue for others to expand on the themes I have observed, and continue to recognize the achievements of Brazilian singers here in Somerville.

Methodology

Given my limited experience with both Brazilian music and the broader Brazilian community, I began my research by contacting any musicians I knew or have worked with who might have contacts with Brazilian singers. I also took time to explore neighborhoods that have a large Brazilian presence, such as Union Square, and East Somerville. On these visits I spoke with people in shops and restaurants, and collected information about upcoming performances. Initially, I found the process difficult, struggling with my lack of Portuguese skills and having limited contacts with Brazilian musicians. I eventually began getting responses from musicians like Marcus Santos, who works with many different singers in the Boston area. After my first interview, the singers were able to provide names and contact information for singers they knew of, or had worked with in the past. Over the course of three months, I conducted a total of six interviews, speaking with five different Brazilian singers who perform in and around Somerville, and one man, Marcus Santos, who has performed with many of the singers I interviewed. I felt strongly about providing a male perspective in my research, and saw Marcus an appropriate choice, given his extensive experience with singers. In the interviews, I asked the musicians to reflect on ways that their gender has impacted their career in music, as well as their own understanding of ethnic identity and the ways this identity has changed as a result of immigration.

In addition to conducting interviews, I attended performances of each of the singers. These opportunities allowed me to make important observations in the differences between performance locations, types of audiences, and styles of music being performed. They also gave me the opportunity to speak with other Brazilians living here

about the struggles they have faced as recent immigrants. While I have chosen not to include their personal stories, these individuals provided valuable information that helped me ask more informed questions in my interviews. My research would be incomplete without their help.

My work was further informed by in depth research on Brazilian music styles. These texts provided important context for the information given by my narrators about their musical backgrounds. I also used ethnomusicology and anthropology texts that explore themes of gender in music, audience and perform interaction in music, and identity formation in immigrant communities. In general, these texts were helpful in understanding the similarities and differences of the specific group of musicians I have dealt with in comparison with other groups both within the US and elsewhere.

In this report I have attempted to organize my findings into four sections of analysis. I have first provided background information on Somerville, and specifically the history of the Brazilian population here. I have also provided a short guide to Brazilian music and its different styles. Both of these sections are intended to help the reader understand the comments of my narrators in the context of the community in which they live and perform. In the first section of analysis, I address the different ways the singers began their performance careers in and around Somerville. I also discuss the differences in the kinds of music they each perform, and how that influences the venues where each singer gives regular performances. Next, I address the issue of collaboration in music, exploring how issues of gender arise between female singers and the male instrumentalists they perform with. In my third section of analysis I address the issue of audiences, and the different kinds of interactions that are taking place in performances by

Brazilian singers in and around Somerville. Finally, I address the idea of personal identity and the ways in which immigration has influenced not only each singer's perception of self, but also the music that they perform. I finish my report by profiling a single artist, Lucia Regina Souza. The more in depth exploration of this singer's experiences in Somerville help to highlight the different themes in my analysis and provide a concrete example one individual's experience in the Brazilian music performance community.

Short Comings in the Research

The time constraints of the Urban Borderlands seminar have forced me to make certain compromises in my research. In the past few weeks I have made additional connections in the Brazilian community that would have allowed for greater diversity in my interviews, as well as the kinds of performances I was able to attend. I therefore, remind readers that anthropological research should always be seen as ongoing, and that the conclusions drawn in this paper can only speak to the experiences of my narrators. If there had been more time, I would have liked to follow up with all of the singers, as well as other contacts they may have been able to provide. I hope that future students of Urban Borderlands will pursue further research in this area, and address the concerns I was unable to cover in my short experience.

Narrator Biographies

Sonia Chimentao was born and raised in the city of Londrina, in Paraná, Brazil. The youngest of six children, she was surrounded by many different styles of music and says she began singing at the age of three. After exploring many interests, Sonia began performing professionally as a musician at the age of twenty-four. She had received no formal training, and instead learned by listening to recordings. She then agreed to perform at a political event for a mayoral campaign her brother was working on. Sonia then started performing different kinds of Brazilian music, such as Samba and Brazilian Popular Music with several bands around the country. She also worked at a large theme park, recording character voices and performing in the different variety shows. In 2005, Sonia came to the Boston area to visit family and study English. She began working as a waitress and salesperson and through these jobs was introduced to musicians in Everett and Somerville. After singing informally with the different groups, Sonia was able to secure her own performance opportunities. She currently performs regularly at Sal y Brasa in Everett [see venue descriptions], collaborating with a keyboardist or singing with electronic playbacks.

Jucimara Marciano is from Santa Catarina in the South of Brazil. As the daughter of a musician, she began singing at the age of five. Beginning at the age of twelve, Jucimara spent her weekends learning Brazilian songs from the Samba, Forró and Brazilian Popular Music tradition. She then began listening to recordings of popular music from Latin America, Spain and the United States. Jucimara used this outlet to learn songs in different languages, greatly expanding her repertoire. With the help of some of her

musician friends she found opportunities to perform as a soloist in bars and restaurants. She moved to the United States in 2001 to join her boyfriend at the time. Once again, Jucimara relied on connections with friends to help her find performance opportunities in bars and restaurants. She now performs with a Brazilian guitarist who studies at Berkley and sings a variety of music including Bossa Nova, Samba and popular music from Brazil, Latin America and the United States. Jucimara also performs with a Brazilian band at private house parties on the weekends. She sings every week at the Oasis Café in Medford, and at Sal y Brasa in Everett.

Ariane Martins was born and raised in Sant Andre, a small city outside of Sao Paulo in the south of Brazil. Music has always been an important part of her life and she was introduced to many different musical styles by her parents and grandparents who share a love for Brazilian music. Ariane began playing guitar at the age of 8, after a friend encouraged her to try a lesson. She continued her studies privately with guitarist Paulinho Nogueiro while working towards a degree in history at University in Sao Paulo. Though she has pursued many different interests in her life, music has been a constant factor. In 1999, Ariane moved to Cambridge to marry an American man she had met in Brazil. Before coming to the US, she had only given live performances twice in her life. After some encouragement by friends, Ariane began giving a few live performances in the Boston area, and collaborating with instrumentalists. She had great success with her first band, performing Samba, Bossa Nova and Brazilian Creative Music regularly at Ryles Jazz Club in Cambridge. Recently Ariane has begun collaborating with a new group of musicians and is performing every month at La Luna Caffé in Cambridge.

Valdisa Moura was born and raised in the city of Joao Pessoa, in the State of Parraiba, Brazil. Beginning with the gift of a guitar at the age of twelve, music has been an important part of Valdisa's life since childhood. She studied law and began practicing in Joao Pessoa, but after several years of work Valdisa felt the need to look for a new career, more in touch with her creative side. She took a new job and moved to Brasilia, the nation's capital, where she eventually enrolled in music school taking voice lessons and performing with different ensembles. At music school she was exposed to many different traditions of Brazilian music, many of which are folk styles that her audiences are not familiar with. In 2001, Valdisa decided to visit a friend in Boston. Her intention was to come for a few months, and take time to learn English and be introduced to a new culture. After her first month here, her friend left the country, but Valdisa felt her visit was too short and stayed on. She met her husband and decided to stay in the US to continue studying and performing. Here Valdisa has had the freedom to begin a new career as a singer, and over time has developed her own style drawing from her Brazilian background, but also from broader world influences. She performs regularly at Café Belo in Allston, accompanied by a guitarist.

Marcus Santos was born and raised in Salvador in the state of Bahia, Brazil. The heavy African music influence there led him to an interest in percussion. In high school, Marcus formed a band with friends that became successful over time. Soon he was playing paid gigs, and then touring the country with a new band. His parents were concerned about his education, so Marcus decided to pursue business school. He valued

education, but felt did not have a passion for business. He decided to research music schools and then secured an audition for the Berkley School of Music. For several years Marcus studied English and saved money to move to Boston to study at Berkley. He moved to the US in fall of 2001 at the age of 24 to begin his studies. He now performs with many bands in the Boston area, as is often a percussionist with singers like Ariane Martins and Lucia Regina Souza. He runs the music organization Afro Brazil, and teaches percussion at the Somerville High School.

Lucia Regina Souza was born and raised in the North East of Brazil, in the state of Pernambuco. She began singing at a young age, influenced by her father, who sang professionally before he was married. Encouraged by her parents, Lucia received classical training at the conservatory during her teenage years. In University, Lucia studied biology, and got her degree in Law, but music and performance remained important parts of her life. She sang with a large orchestra, and eventually began performing her own gigs, collaborating with instrumentalists. In 2005, Lucia moved to the Boston area and began studying English in Allston with the intention of eventually practicing Law in the United States. Soon after she moved here she was introduced to local Brazilian musicians, and began performing here. She performs a wide range of repertoire, encompassing Samba, Forró and both Brazilian and American popular music traditions. She has collaborated with a variety of musicians ranging from a large Samba band to a single keyboardist or guitarist. Each week she performs at Café Belo in Allston, Café Belo in Somerville and Sal y Brasa in Everett.

VENUE DESCRIPTIONS

Café Belo Allston is nestled in the lively neighborhood of Boston University, next door to a large drugstore and across the street from a Brazilian grocery store. The Café is one of the many places of business that cater to the diverse population in Allston. Unlike many of the surrounding restaurants, however, Café Belo offers free parking, which allows people from outside the community to come and enjoy a meal or a performance there. The colorful signs above the doors certainly seem to draw customers, but the impressive long buffet counters are the real attraction. Diners can enjoy a wide variety of Brazilian foods and the affordable prices make it a popular destination for people from all different ethnic backgrounds. The restaurant itself is divided into two major sections. The first dining area, closest to the front entrance, features more formal dining, with secluded tables and booths. In second large area contains a bar, several large television screens playing Brazilian soccer games, and a small raised platform for music performances. The performance area is positioned so that guests in the rest of the restaurant can still see and hear the musicians, but are not watching a formal concert. During my visit to the Café, the bar area was largely occupied by single men, while families and couples tended to sit in the more formal dining area. There were diners from different ethnic backgrounds mixed in, but the Brazilian clientele dominated the restaurant. Most of the staff and clientele were speaking Portuguese, but were able to switch to English when they heard my English.

****At the time of writing, the Café had experienced a devastating fire, the impact of which is yet to be seen for the Brazilian community.*

Café Belo in Somerville is just beyond bustling Union Square, but tucked back off the road so that it is easy to miss. The signs and decorations are almost an exact clone to its sister restaurant in Allston, but the restaurant itself feels less segregated into sections. The grand buffet is just steps from the main entrance, and the menu itself offers an overwhelming variety of dishes. The café features a large wooden bar that is crowded with men on stools. Most watch the Brazilian soccer games that are shown on enormous televisions around the room. Nearby the bar itself there are several clusters of tables around a small raised performance platform. A second smaller bar is at the front of the restaurant and serves customers who are sitting in the main dining room of the café. The performance area is positioned in such a way that the musicians can be seen and heard by everyone in the restaurant, but only the customers sitting in the bar area have the opportunity to interact with the performers. The café is completely dominated by Brazilian clientele and Portuguese is spoken almost exclusively. There is a mix of single males, groups of women and families, but they tend to separate themselves into different areas of the restaurant with the families largely remaining in the dining area near the restaurant's entrance.

La Luna Caffè is located on the far end of Central Square in Cambridge just steps from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It offers a small menu of sandwiches, smoothies, coffees and alcoholic beverages with a focus on Italian cuisine. By day, the café is often filled with young professionals and students working on their laptops or piles of books. At night, however, it caters to a crowd of young intellectuals in their twenties and thirties from international backgrounds, including some Brazilians, that

listen to music, discuss current events and taste new wines. On Thursday nights the café features Brazilian music by different performers who work on a rotating schedule. Many of these performers are not actually Brazilian, but have studied the music in conservatories or learned the styles from working with other musicians in the Boston area. The performance area is converted for these evenings of music by pushing tables closer together in the cramped dining area and positing the musicians by the large front window. The limited space demands that waiters squeeze in between tables to fill new drink orders and chat with the regular clients.

Oasis Restaurant sits on the corner of the busy Main Street in Medford. Connected to the restaurant is a small fish market that attracts additional customers. A variety of restaurants and local businesses surround the restaurant and it is almost impossible to find parking on the crowded street. The restaurant is divided into three rooms separated by open doorways. In the first room groups of people work their way around the overflowing buffet, and several hostesses help customers pay their bills and find a place to sit. The other two rooms are filled with tables and chairs that can be rearranged according to the size of the family or party. In the first dining room, closest to the buffet, a small area has been cleared next to the doorway with a few chairs and some music equipment for the performers that entertain the diners while they eat. The performance space is relatively crowded, and makes the music a more informal part of the dining experience. There is limited applause and general interaction between performers and diners. Besides its expansive Brazilian buffet, the restaurant features an extensive menu with seafood dishes and vegetarian options. The wide variety of foods and low prices attract a broad clientele. Families are interspersed with young students from nearby Tufts

University, as well as groups of men coming off of long workday, and together they represent a wide variety of ethnicities and ages. There are several televisions throughout the restaurant featuring Brazilian sporting events and newscasts. While Portuguese can be heard clearly, it mingles with many other languages being spoken by the different clientele.

Sal y Brasa is one of many Brazilian restaurants on Norwood Street in Everett. Across the street is a large Brazilian bakery, and further down the street is a Brazilian grocery store. The entire back of the restaurant is filled with the long buffet tables, and a carving station. Tables line the walls near the buffet, and then fill into the front dining area of the restaurant. In the front corner of the restaurant there is a raised performance space that is used every night by different groups of musicians. The central position of the performance space makes it a major focus of the restaurant, while the televisions screens tend to be pushed off to the side. The walls of the restaurant are decorated with street signs, posters and advertisements from people's hometowns in Brazil, giving the restaurant an air of nostalgia. Its busy, comfortable atmosphere gave me the impression that it serves as a reminder of home for many of the regular Brazilian clientele.

Portuguese is the dominant language, and though the waiters and waitresses spoke English and accommodated my needs. The restaurant was much less segregated and the lack of a formal bar seems to contribute to this. Many of the people I spoke to on my visit were regulars at the restaurant and explained that they came to see all the different musicians perform each week. The restaurant is often used as a gathering space for the Brazilian community and is a host to large groups and parties.

Background: Somerville and Its Brazilian Community

Somerville: A Brief Introduction

The rambling streets and squares of Somerville are a cultural mosaic of shop-fronts and restaurants. Depending on the street corner, a visitor could easily be convinced that they had wandered into one of many tiny countries, as the fresh smells of pizza waft out of an Italian café, the dulcet melodies drift out of an Irish bar, or the colors of the Brazilian flag wave in the breeze. The boundaries of this bustling city are rather unclear, appearing as more of a hodgepodge of neighborhoods than any formal city. City Hall is tucked next to the large Somerville High School; just a stone's throw from the City Library. Among the rows of almost identical houses, an orange or purple home calls attention to itself, as if to remind passersby of the city's artistic reputation. A full tour of Somerville reveals the sometimes-confusing dichotomy of trendy college town, courtesy of Tufts University, and a rugged working-class community.

Somerville was first settled in 1630, as an outskirt of the bustling city of Boston. It was finally incorporated as city in 1842, separating from neighboring Charlestown and becoming a city in its own right. The most densely populated city in New England, Somerville houses its 77,478 residents within a 4.1 square mile radius (Burke 2002: 6). The most recent census data from 2000 showed that 29.3 percent of the population was foreign born, and another significant portion were first and second generation citizens. With its close proximity to Boston and strong industrial past, Somerville has long been thought of as a city of immigrants. The exact ethnic makeup, however, has changed remarkably over time. Up until the 1980s, residents were largely of Irish-American, Italian American and Portuguese American decent and Somerville was seen as a, "white,

working class community” (Burke 2002: 6). The presence of these groups is still seen in places like the Irish bar, The Burren in Davis Square, or the Portuguese restaurant The Neighborhood, which has become an institution in Union Square.

Over the last three decades, however, the population has grown to include immigrants from Latin American, Asian and African origins as well. The 2000 census showed that over fifty languages are spoken, and recent reports have described Somerville as a, “vibrant urban community with a distinct international flavor” (Burke 2002: 6). The character of the city has been heavily influenced by changes in transportation as well. In 1985, the expansion of the Red subway line, a part of the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, into Davis Square in Somerville has made the city increasingly accessible to the City of Boston. This change has been paired with increases in rent and general cost of living, causing many residents to begin looking for more affordable housing alternatives in neighboring communities such as Everett and Medford. According to a recent health status report, “It appears that Somerville, like many other cities in the urban core, is on its way to becoming a city of the economically comfortable and the economically desperate” (Burke 2002: 7). As these shifts in population occur, the city may begin to lose its identity as a working class community, following the sweeping trends of gentrification of other cities near Boston such as Cambridge.

Brazilians in Somerville

The picture of the Brazilian population in Somerville and the United States as whole is somewhat difficult to understand. The arrival of Brazilians here is a somewhat recent phenomenon, beginning as a slow migration in the 1980s and increasingly steadily

over time (Becker 2006: 17). The official census data from 2000 showed there to be just over 200,000 Brazilians living in the United States, with around 36,000 of them residing in Massachusetts. Comparing these numbers with statistics kept by Brazilian organizations here in the US and in Brazil, however, there appears to be a significant disparity. According to these groups, a more accurate population estimate would be somewhere between 800,000 and 1.1 million Brazilians in the US, with over 200,000 of them residing in Massachusetts (Becker 2006: 4). The reasons for these striking differences are many, but perhaps the most obvious is how many Brazilians are living in the US without documentation, many by simply not returning home after their visitor visas expire. These individuals may not intend to stay in the US, but remain here because of factors like work or education. Of the six Brazilians I interviewed in my research, four told me that they had intended to return to Brazil after visiting for several months, but had found reasons to stay. The factors that cause Brazilians to immigrate to the US, and specifically to Massachusetts, are numerous, and vary depending on the individual. In my research, the most common factors mentioned were economic opportunity, education (particularly to study English), and personal relationships. In his recent study of Brazilian community in Somerville and trends in immigration, Daniel Becker highlights economic and political challenges as major factors in the increased flow of Brazilian migrants to the area. In examining factors within Brazil, Becker explains that, “With the economic crash of the 1980s and its political and economic reverberations that carried on well into the following decades, the need of Brazilians to find better economic opportunities abroad increased dramatically” (2006: 28). Somerville is an attractive

destination for these migrants because of its history as a new home for immigrants and a working environment with a relatively low rate of unemployment (Burke 2002: 7).

To better understand the large Brazilian population living in Somerville, it is important to discuss a more detailed picture of the individual migrants and the kinds of backgrounds they have. In his studies, Becker found that the original migration flow from Brazil was from the southern state of Minas Gerais, and was dominated by young adult males. Over time, the Brazilian immigrant population in Somerville has diversified greatly. Becker notes that, “According to a May 2006 report from the New Bostonian Series, while immigration from Minas Gerais used to dominate the flow of Brazilian migration, today at least 16 out of Brazil’s 26 states are contributing to the migration stream” (2006: 31). In his report, Becker also explains that the balance of gender has also evened out, showing estimates that the population is now roughly 53 percent male and 47 percent female. The majority of migrants still tend to be young adults between the ages of 20 and 34. The fact that immigrants tend to be in this age group is not surprising, explains Becker, because they are at an optimal age to pursue economic and educational goals without the burden of large families or permanent careers in Brazil (2006: 32-33). What is more difficult to discern about the Brazilian population here in Somerville are questions of race and socioeconomic class. The first problem, Becker explains, come from the different definitions of race that exist in Brazil and in the US. There is a much broader understanding of the spectrum of racial differences in Brazilian, and these definitions do not necessarily translate into an American vocabulary, that tends to limit individuals to the broader categories of White, Black and Latino. Social class is a difficult discussion because once again its definition is extremely personal and relative to

location (Becker 2006: 35-36). Many of the individuals I interviewed talked about the difficulties of translating quality of life in Brazil to the same quality here in Somerville. For some, a degree from foreign education systems is simply not recognized in the US, and for others, the English language itself presents barriers in the search for employment.

In short, it is important to view the Brazilian community as a diverse group of individuals rather than a homogeneous group. Brazil is an extremely large nation with people of many different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Here in Somerville, immigrants represent many of these differences and therefore it is impossible to make generalizations about the population. Perhaps more complicating are the blurring lines of the community's borders, which have been influenced by Somerville's recent trend of gentrification and the resulting movement into neighboring communities. A local

Brazilian resident, Valter Vitorino explains,

“The problem is that it is hard to talk about just Somerville because the Brazilians around Somerville could actually be living in Somerville, Malden or Everett. They are all very close to each other, so the community has expanded far beyond just that area. So if you want to talk about Somerville, you should really talk about greater Somerville” (Becker 2006: 49).

In my research I have witnessed these expanding borders, as many of the singers perform in different venues, catering to the broader Brazilian community. As artists, they are not confined to specific neighborhoods or even a single city, but find work in a variety of locations in what Vitorino refers to as “greater Somerville”.

A Quick Guide to Brazilian Music

In my study of Brazilian singers I was introduced to many different music traditions. The nation of Brazil has been shaped by a wide range of cultural groups and its music reflects these influences. This can be seen in the use of rhythms from African

origins, chord progressions from European art music, and collaborative styles of American jazz. Particular music styles are associated with geographic regions and cultural centers such as large cities. The following descriptions deal with the types of music performed most frequently by the women I interviewed in and around Somerville.

I. SAMBA

The Samba music style developed in Brazil in the early 20th century as a hybrid combination of, “strongly African ways of making music with European-derived harmonies, instruments and musical forms” (Murphy 2006: 7). In his survey of Brazilian music, John Murphy compares the Samba genre to that of American jazz, emphasizing that it encompasses, “a broad stream of musical activity”, rather than a single conformed style (2006: 7). Samba is believed to have developed out of the Brazilian call and response tradition, Candomblé and makes use of improvisation. It is an integral part of the Carnival tradition and its popularity extends across Brazil and around the world. As the tradition has spread, Samba has evolved to include a wide range of styles. Murphy explains that Samba, “is as multifaceted and adaptable as the Brazilian people themselves (2006:7). Its wide appeal can be credited to making use of both urban and rural musical traditions.

Historically, the development of Samba is strongly tied to a shift in Brazilian national self-image. Like many countries, Brazil was searching for its own identity apart from Portuguese and African heritage. Murphy explains that the birth of Samba occurred at, “a time when many countries were looking to their own people and culture as a source of identity rather than continuing to use the culture of the leading European nations as the un-questioned criterion” (2006: 12). Through this new genre, Brazilian musicians were

able to experiment with different influences and create a unique sound that represented their own background rather than simply borrowing one of a dominant culture. This tradition of improvisation and creativity has continued in the Samba style and has made the genre an integral part not only of music culture, but also of Brazilian culture as a whole. As Murphy explains: “What all forms of samba share is a role of in creating a sense of national identity, a sense that they communicate something uniquely Brazilian, something rooted in Brazilian ways of making percussive music, of moving the body, and using language to comment on daily life in artful ways” (2006: 26). The samba tradition continues to develop in immigrant communities like Somerville where people from around Brazil integrate their own experiences of samba to create new sounds.

II. Forró

The Forró tradition refers to a wide range of dance rhythms from northeastern Brazil. The style developed out of a dance rhythm known as ‘baiao’ and features the accordion, the zabumba (a bass drum), and the triangle (Murphy 2006: 95). The origins of forró are traced to music legend Luis Gonzaga from Pernambuco, Brazil. The genre holds a sense of nostalgia for many Brazilians, and as Murphy explains, “Forró evokes in its listeners an idyllic rural image of bonfires, outdoors dances, straw hats and checkered shirts, and festival foods made with corn” (2006: 108). It presents a stark contrast from the more urban sounds of samba styles. Forró has recently enjoyed a large revival in popularity since 2000 and has become an important part of the music culture of Somerville.

III. Bossa Nova

The Bossa Nova tradition developed out of the samba in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The new style was created by musicians in one of Brazil's major cities, Rio de Janeiro. The name "Bossa Nova" translates to mean "new flair", which refers to the new variations of chord progressions and syncopated rhythms that were infused into the samba tradition (Murphy 2006: 37). As Murphy explains, the new style developed at a time of modernizing and new energy in Brazil. What musicians produced was a new musical mixture ensuring that, "voice, instrumental accompaniment, and lyrics are carefully coordinated so that no single element is more prominent than others" (Murphy 2006: 37-38). Bossa Nova is performed in many different configurations including solo voice with guitar, solo voice with large instrumental ensembles, vocal ensembles and purely instrumental groups (Murphy 2006: 42-43). This flexibility has given the genre international appeal. In Somerville, Bossa Nova can be found in a variety of performance spaces and appeals to a wide audience from different backgrounds.

IV. Música Popular Brasileira

The term Musica Popular Brasileira (MPB) developed in the 1960s and refers to, "popular music of high artistic achievement that drew from Brazilian musical traditions and used acoustic instruments" (Murphy 2006: 48). The term was originally used by musicians who wanted to distinguish themselves from other forms of popular music as artists with carefully crafted lyrics and melodies. Many original MPB musicians rejected rock music that was gaining in popularity around the world. According to Murphy, its strong appeal in Brazil can be attributed to the integration of, "regional music to create a sound that speaks to a wide audience" (2006: 49). Over time, the term MPB has grown to refer to an extremely broad genre of music as, "a common way to refer to these

performers, whose music defies easy categorization” (McGowan et al 1998: 75). For some artists, this has meant the incorporation of rock music styles, or influences from other popular music traditions from around the world. The term now means very different things for musicians, and some artists such as the Brazilian singer/songwriter Joyce have replaced the term altogether, preferring to call their music “Brazilian Creative Music” (Interview – Ariane Martins 10/17/08). Major changes in music technology over the last few decades such as the CDs, digital music and the Internet, have had enormous influences on access to music. This increased access to musical styles from the world have given musicians new ways of developing their musical styles. In many of my interviews, Brazilian musicians from Somerville and its surrounding areas talked about being influenced by music styles from around the world. In Somerville many different styles of MPB are performed in different venues, catering to audience interests.

Analysis

I. Getting Started In “Greater Somerville”

As noted earlier, Somerville is a community known for its artists and musicians. In any given the week, the number of opportunities to hear live Brazilian music performed in one of the many restaurants or bars are numerous. For recent immigrants, however, the task of finding places to perform can be daunting. In speaking with many of the female Brazilian singers, I found that it was important for them to first establish themselves within the Brazilian community, often through friend and family contacts, before finding performance opportunities. Lucia Regina Souza explained that her roommates and friends from school helped to introduce her to other Brazilian musicians they knew. These music contacts began asking Lucia to join them on stage and

eventually to replace them when they could not make their own performances (Interview 11/03/08). One of the benefits of sharing these performance opportunities within the Brazilian community is having an established audience that appreciates Brazilian music. Sonia Chimentao had a similar experience of finding performance opportunities within the community. While working as a waitress in a Brazilian restaurant she asked some of the performers if she could join them and sing a song. She explained that this became a nightly ritual with the different performance groups, and over time Sonia was asked to join them for entire performances at other venues. Through these connections Sonia established herself as a singer in the Brazilian community here, and now has regular performances (Interview 11/15/08).

Music can also be seen as a tool for helping a singer gain access in a new environment. When Jucimara Marciano first arrived in the Boston area she was too young to go to bars or attend performances with her friends because of the age restrictions. She gained access to these venues by introducing herself to the manager as singer. The manager asked her to sing and was extremely impressed with her vocal talent. He offered her the opportunity to perform in the bar and her performances there helped her find more opportunities to perform by introducing her to other people seeking performers (Interview 11/19/08). For a singer finding a place to have regular performances is important both for a steady income, and for establishing an audience that will attend performances at different venues in the community.

For a singer in a brand new country music can also function as connection to home. For guitarist and singer Ariane Martins, when she left home, music was the one portable pieces of Brazil that came with her. She described to me the piles of CDs and

books that she brought along with her guitar. As Ariane explained, “It was an effort to imagine myself outside Brazil...I love the country and music is such an important part of it. I brought the guitar, every single CD I had, everything I could, and just kept it as one solid thing that I could hold on to” (Interview 10/17/08). For a long time Ariane kept her music private, preferring to play with close friends and avoid public performances. With the encouragement from these friends she eventually gave a small performance at an art opening and met the bassist for her first band. Her music then became a connection to Brazil for her new American friends. Ariane’s music experience has remained on the periphery of the Brazilian community in Greater Somerville as she does not perform in restaurants like Café Belo that cater to predominantly Brazilian audiences.

Much like Ariane, Valdisa Moura did not initially immerse herself as an artist in the Brazilian community. When she first arrived, she pursued other kinds of work taking, a job as a social worker in Somerville. Valdisa’s personal experience of Brazil and Brazilian music has been very different from the trends in the larger community because of her studies of lesser-known folk music traditions and this initially influenced her ability to gain access as a performer. At first she avoided performing in Brazilian restaurants because she did not want to perform the style of music they were looking for. She explained that there tends to be more of a focus on MPB in these restaurants and she prefers to sing very different styles. Since then the managers of restaurants like Café Belo have become more open to the different performance style that Valdisa offers and she has become a regular performer at popular Brazilian restaurants and bars.

For all of these singers, the choice of repertoire has been determined by their personal experience of Brazilian music, and, for many of them, by the musical interests

of their audience. All of the singers I spoke with emphasized that their repertoire is constantly growing to include new music they hear. While some of the singers have had songwriting experience, the majority of the music they perform is their own arrangements of songs written by other musicians. The different repertoire of each of the women exemplifies how broad the spectrum of Brazilian music is. Ariane explains that her own repertoire encompasses many traditional styles like samba, bossa nova and MPB, but also new funkier jazz pieces and fusion styles. She is constantly building new repertoire by creating arrangements of music by Brazilian artists and makes a point of gathering new music on her trips back to Brazil. In her first band, Ariane was the only Brazilian member and found herself in an interesting position of not only creating arrangements, but also teaching a whole group of musicians about Brazilian styles (Interview 10/17/08).

In discussing her repertoire, Jucimara explained that she often takes on the role of introducing her audience to new popular music from Brazil. Because many immigrants in the Brazilian community left home a long time ago and have not returned, they do not have easy access to new music being produced there. By using the Internet as a tool, Jucimara stays updated on the newest songs being performed in Brazil and performs her own version of them here in Greater Somerville. In this position, she is acting as a transnational connection for the Brazilian community, bringing pieces of Brazilian culture to them that they would otherwise not have access to.

Sonia's experience of music in Brazil included popular music styles from several different countries, including the US. In her performances she has found a way to make these music styles fit together extremely well and finds that they do not conflict based on their national origins. The melodies, subject matter and general orchestration of these

songs are very similar, making it easy for Sonia to switch from Brazilian to American to Latin popular songs without confusing or upsetting her audience. In his discussion of Brazilian musician Rafael Bastos notes that popular music is, “a global phenomenon of recent modernity” (1999: 68). He goes on to explain that popular music draws on traditions of folk and art music and reinvents these traditions, giving them new significance to a given population. It seems what Sonia is attracted to in all of these styles of popular music are their similarities. By incorporating aspects of art and folk music traditions, pop music appeals to a wider audience. What is fascinating about watching Sonia’s performances is how accurately she mimics the accents and mannerisms of the different singers whose music she performs. From her speaking voice there is no doubt that Sonia is a foreigner, and that English is a new language for her. However, when she sings, her thick Brazilian accent disappears and her flawless imitation of an American country singer’s southern drawl makes it difficult to know where Sonia is from.

In her new performance environment, Valdisa has been able to explore her own identity as a singer and develop the kind of music she wants to perform. Performing in Greater Somerville, she has both used the kinds of music she used to sing in Brazil, and experimented with other new styles from Brazil and beyond. In speaking of her development as an artist, Valdisa explains, “When I got here I could be more in contact with me...It’s a strong experience to live in another country...it made me get closer to what I want, so I could see how I love music, and see how I could start working with music and invest more in music” (Interview 10/13/08). Valdisa explained that the economic realities in Brazil prevented this kind of opportunity because of the quality of life

depended on her job in law. Here she is free to experiment and her audiences have been open to her unique performances. In Brazil, her music experience had mostly been as a soloist with choirs, and performing with folklore groups around the country. Now she has the freedom to explore her own identity as a musician, mixing genres and collaborating with different performers to achieve new fusion sounds. Valdisa explained that her own definition of herself as a performer is still developing. She noted that her music is often unfamiliar to audiences because Brazilian music is extremely comprehensive and only a tiny portion of these musical genres is heard here in the US. In discussing her own style of music, she explained that many listeners and audience members are not even aware that she is performing Brazilian music because her music is so different from popular genres played on the radio or in other popular Brazilian venues. Valdisa attributed this unconventional music style to her early influences at music school. The director of the program exposed her to a variety of genres from Brazil, opening her eyes to new ways of thinking about and performing music.

II. Artistic Collaboration

Given the number of female singers in the Brazilian community in Greater Somerville, I was surprised to find that none of them have ever given a formal collaborative performance together. Every woman interviewed performs on a regular basis with male musicians, and many of them even work with the same men. They perform in many of the same venues and in many cases have seen each other's performances at different restaurants and bars. In asking for their individual reasons for not working together one of the most common answers was that of practicality; it is

difficult to find female instrumentalists in the Brazilian performance community. As singers, each of these women is looking for some kind of instrumental accompaniment, whether that is guitar, keyboard, percussion, or some combination of these. Many of the singers explained that a lack of female instrumentalists is an issue in Brazil as much as it is here in the US. According to my narrators, it is much less common to find an entirely female performance group, even women accompanying male singers, than it would be to find entirely male groups. For Sonia, sometimes even finding men to collaborate with is difficult. She told me that in Brazil she was most comfortable performing with larger bands, because it was more fun to interact with several other performers. Here in the US, though, most of Sonia's performance opportunities are limited to solo voice with recorded playback tapes, or with just a keyboardist. While she expressed interest in performing with other women, she emphasized that it would be difficult to arrange (Interview 11/15/08).

Another common reason for not collaborating with other women was simply that it was not part of the singer's vision for the performance. Because all of these women are solo singers, their repertoire does not tend to include duets that would allow more than one singer to be a focus in the musical performance. As Marcus Santos explained, these kinds of performances in Greater Somerville are not large enough to need a backup singer, making collaboration just between singers somewhat impractical. Still, several of the singers I spoke with expressed an interest in having the chance to perform with other women. While none of these performances have been planned, Sonia and Lucia each told me about an experience where they had spontaneously performed with another singer. Sonia described an occasion when she had sung with Valdisa at a performance for a

homeless shelter. Sonia explained that nothing was planned; they simply suggested songs until they found ones they both knew and could sing together. While she enjoyed this experience, Sonia has not chosen to plan an event to allow her to sing with other women in a formal setting. After I brought the subject up, she expressed an interest in organizing such an event, and perhaps one like it will happen in the future. In Lucia's experience, she had recognized two female singers that she knew in the audience and asked them if they would join her on a couple of her songs. For this performance, however, Lucia remained the focus of the performance, and the other singers were simply providing a spontaneous harmony.

While very few female musicians are able to function as performers in Brazil entirely without men as their accompanying instrumentalist, the country's tradition of female singer/songwriter is strong. Several of the women I spoke to referenced these women as major influences on their music careers. As Ariane explained, "When I listen to music...I find myself listening to female singers just because it's familiar, it becomes your reference point. You sing along, you incorporate nuances you enjoy" (Interview 10/17/08). For Ariane, these singers help create a more personal connection to where she as a woman fits in the broader picture of Brazilian music. Jucimara also emphasized her preference for listening to women explaining that it is, "because I am a woman...I want to know and learn about women" (Interview 11/15/08). Jucimara is drawn to the themes and stylistic approaches of female performers above their male counterpoints.

Still, these women do not deny the role that male musicians have played in their development as singers and performers. Though she views women as her main sources of inspiration, Ariane has had all her training and performing experiences with men. She

confessed that she has always been conscious of the fact that it is less common in Brazil for women to play the guitar, and she is drawn to performers like Joyce, the Brazilian singer/songwriter, because she challenges these traditional roles. While Jucimara sees female singers as her main musical influence, she explained that she has preferred to work with men throughout her performance career because of the balance it brings to her singing (Interview 11/15/08). Perhaps most revealing in terms of gender relations among Brazilian musicians was Marcus Santos' reflection on female musicians. After thinking for a minute if there were women he looked up to in music he replied, "'Unfortunately no. Now you're calling attention to it, I never realized it...Hopefully it will change'" (Interview 11/08/08). All of the women I interviewed talked about important male influences, as well as important female influences, in their music education and as inspiration for the music they perform. In some ways it is surprising that Marcus seemed not to even have considered gender as a factor, particularly because it is a subject these female vocalists have been unable to ignore. This difference in viewpoints suggests a larger struggle in music: that women go unnoticed or are not seen as influential. In her discussion of women in Salsa music, Francis Aparicio calls attention to how greatly women's roles have changed in last thirty years: "...the 1980s and 1990s have witnessed a gradual growth in the participation of women in the musical culture, accompanied by shifting practices not only in composition but also in reception and signifying acts" (1998:156). Taking this into account, the musicians I spoke with have grown up in the midst of these changing roles, and may have faced similar barriers. This is worth noting because if women's roles have only just begun to develop beyond the role of singer, it will take longer for these changes to be recognized on a broader scale.

In discussing collaboration between musicians, it is important to consider the dynamics between performers in terms of control and the language being used to create a unified vision of the music. Here in Greater Somerville, Marcus admits, there are major differences between the musicians, both men and women, who he performs with. In order to produce music together, singers and instrumentalists have to find a common ground in their musical experience and this process is much simpler if everyone is speaking the same musical language in terms of rhythm, chord progressions and general theory. It is at this point that a level of education can create certain barriers in collaboration. According to Marcus, as both a guitarist and singer, Ariane's first-hand knowledge of and concern for the instrumentalist perspective gives her some advantages in performing with other instrumentalists. Overall, the women I spoke to have much less formal musical training than some of the men they perform with, and this can present challenges. As Marcus explained, "One of the difficulties of working with singers is many times they don't know how to communicate...It would help if they could just grab a paper and write the notes" (Interview 11/08/08). The kind of communication that Marcus is talking about, however, is grounded in Western traditions of musical notation and analysis. In his exploration of the meaning of performance traditions in music, Christopher Small challenges the concept that, "a classical training is thought to be a fit preparation for any kind of musical performance" (1998: 3). Small emphasizes the fact that people take part in music making in a variety of different ways. By limiting the idea of a true musician to one that has received western classical training we deny the grand majority the title of being a musician, or even in partaking in the act of making music: "Most of the world's musicians – and by that I mean...not just professional musicians, not just those who make a living from singing or playing or composing, but anyone who

sings or plays or composes – have no use for musical scores and do not treasure musical works, but simply play and sing, drawing on remembered melodies and rhythms and on their own powers of invention within the strict order of tradition” (Small 1998: 7).

From this analysis, we can judge these female singers simply as a different kind of musician, rather than lacking in some way.

Still, it is important to consider to what extent these women have been denied the kind of music education Marcus and his male colleagues have received because of the way women are viewed in the music industry in Brazil. What factors, for example, have caused there to be fewer opportunities for female instrumentalists? In her discussion of gendered music, Aparicio explains that the greater number of female vocalists above all other musical positions suggests, “a process of containment in their professional development and opportunities” (1998: 173). I do not mean containment in the sense that women are physically barred from higher education in music, but rather denied through social norms that discourage them from pursuing instrumental music, or studying these forms of notation that their male counterparts view as an important part of a musical background. Jucimara expressed a strong interest in studying at Boston’s Berklee Conservatory of Music, but explained that without a significant scholarship she is unable to study there (Interview 11/15/08).

One of the other subjects that came up in several interviews was the difference in the way men and women handle emotions. For Marcos, it can be much easier to collaborate with men because he finds them to be more laid back in collaborative settings. . In explaining the difference from the men he has worked with, Marcus said, “Women, at least the women I’ve worked for, they have a stronger personality as far as what they want to hear...men are like ‘Oh, let’s go and play’...Women usually tend to

express a lot more their feelings and that's when things might come up" (Interview 11/08/08). Here, Marcos seems to view the emotional element that some female singers bring to collaboration as a hindrance to achieving a common goal. These differences could be attributed, though, to women using a different kind of musical language, as well as a sense of needing to assert themselves as a minority in the performance world. To show an alternative perspective, Valdisa felt that women's emotions were a strong asset in music performance. In explaining the difference in performing with men and women, she remarked, "People said 'Work with women is difficult'...I don't think it's difficult...it's another language...they talk more, it's more honest. The problem is not everyone is open to that kind of relationship" (Interview 10/13/08). For Valdisa, the emotional and assertive qualities that Marcos viewed as potential barriers in collaboration are important assets in achieving her musical goals.

III. Musician and Audience Interaction

In exploring music performance within the Brazilian community in Greater Somerville, it is important to remember that singers do not exist in a vacuum, and that live performance is an interactive activity. The kinds of music that my narrators choose to perform is influenced by the men and women who come to hear them, and the environments of the bars and restaurants where this interaction occurs. Music is often analyzed in a way that separates the performer from the material they perform, as well as the spaces where the music is produced. Small insists, however, that all of these elements are vital parts of how the act of making music must be understood. He explains that viewing music as an individual experience excludes the most important parts of performance: "If we widen the circle of our attention to take in the entire set of

relationships that constitute a performance, we shall see that music's primary meanings are not individual at all but social" (Small 1998: 8). Following Small's holistic theory of music, it is important to explore not only the personal experiences of these Brazilian singers, but the relationships they maintain with their audiences and venues in Greater Somerville. According to Small, music being made in a specific place has distinct characteristics that are influenced by the location itself and the people that gather there.

In each of my interviews, I asked the musicians to reflect on how gender has influenced their ability to gain access to performance spaces and develop a strong following with an audience. Valdisa insists that being a woman had not been a barrier in any way, but rather an advantage in most cases. She attributes this to the importance of interpretation, and said she believes women possess an incredible ability to communicate with an audience. In comparing social norms for men and women she explained, "The society we're living in right now doesn't allow the men being emotional, being vulnerable...they expect women being like that" (Interview 10/13/08). Rather than catering to a specifically female audience, the emotions that Valdisa communicates through song are universally human, and connect with a large audience. In this way, her gender seems to offer an advantage because her skills as an interpreter are strong. She also noted that it was easy to find performance opportunities in restaurants where female singers are desired for their ability to bring in larger crowds. This comment seems to suggest that the physical appearance of a performer is an important factor in finding work, and attracting an audience.

Ariane's reflections seemed to agree with the idea of physical appearance playing an important role. While she denied that her gender was a major factor in her identity as a performer, she admitted that is something she is constantly aware of:

"I would not be honest if I said I felt any strong factor, but I think it's impossible not to be conscious of that condition when you put yourself on stage...you're conscious that you're there in front of an audience, they are looking at you, and they're listening to you, and you're a woman" (Interview 10/17/08).

Exactly which aspects of being a woman make her feel more self-conscious onstage are unclear to me, but the idea of being watched suggests an element of physical attraction.

Ariane also recalled an experience at Ryles Jazz Club when an audience member told her that having a woman in the band "helped". She did not expand on what exactly what was 'helpful' about having a woman as a centerpiece for the band, but it seems to suggest that Ariane's physical appearance enhanced the appeal of her band, and made them more desirable for some members of the audience.

My interview with Marcus Santos offered a male perspective on the issue of physical appearance and performance. In responding to Ariane's experience that being a woman "helps", Marcus said, "It makes it much more interesting. The first thing that drew me to Christina Aguilera was her beauty, then I realized she was a good singer...It works like that for men too, like Ricky Martin" (Interview 11/07/08). While it is true that physical appearance is an innate aspect of live performance, it is unclear if it holds the same level of importance for both men and women who perform. If, as it appears from my interviews, it is difficult to separate the physical appearance of female performers from their skills as musicians, this may be having a direct influence on these women's lives as musicians in terms of the way they are viewed by other musicians, audiences and

producers. Appearance, therefore, can have a direct influence on a singer's ability to find performance opportunities.

A second important theme that arose in discussions around audiences was the distinct types of audiences that have developed around the different venues I observed in my research. Given the levels of diversity within the Brazilian community of Greater Somerville, it seems clear that a similar diversity of music performances, as well as preferences for different music styles, must exist. In my research, I have tried to gain an understanding for where these differences can be seen, in terms of performance venues and their respective audiences, as well as exploring how and why these differences exist. Small emphasizes that our understanding of music should include these kinds of explanations:

“It must be able to explain, in fact, not just why members of one social and cultural group differ in their ways of musicking from members of another group but how it is that members of one cultural group can understand and to enjoy, and perhaps creatively misunderstand, the musicking of others” (1998: 12).

It is therefore not productive to assume that all Brazilian singers will attract the same audience, or that all other these performances will work within the same venues. The smaller music communities that I observed around each venue, however, offer important commentary on the diversity of the Brazilian community.

One of the most helpful observations in identifying differences came from Marcus, who, with his various bands and collaborations, performs in almost all of the venues I observed. In his interview, Marcus drew comparisons between the audiences at Café Belo in Somerville and Allston, and La Luna Caffe in Cambridge. He performs at all three of these venues on a regular basis and sees them as being completely opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of the Brazilian music community. Marcus described Café

Belo as catering to an almost entirely Brazilian audience, and one that tends to have limited English skills. He explained that for this audience performers chose folk and dance music with simpler chord structures, and that listeners, “don’t care about the message” that the songs may carry. In contrast, Marcus explained that the audience at La Luna Caffe is almost entirely “foreigners”, Americans and other non-Brazilians, most of who are intellectuals and have an interest in jazz music. For them, Marcus explained, it is all about the message of the songs and the significance they hold for the performers (Interview 11/07/08). In my experience viewing performances and observing audiences at the two venues, I found the differences between the groups of people to be extremely striking, as well as the differences in music styles being performed. In Café Belo, Portuguese was the dominant language spoken and the clientele was almost entirely Brazilian. The music being performed ranged from MPB to more traditional folk music styles. At La Luna Caffe, English was the dominant language spoken, and the music performed was largely Samba and Bossa Nova. These differences do not indicate any kind of value judgment by Marcus or myself, but rather provide proof that both the genre of Brazilian music and the Brazilian community of Greater Somerville are extremely diverse. In the interview, Marcus emphasized that both kinds of music are enjoyable to play and cater to their audiences at the given venue. It is inaccurate and unproductive to assume that all Brazilians living in Greater Somerville enjoy the same kinds of music, and interact within the same social networks. As Peggy Levitt explains in her discussion of transnational identity, “long-standing patterns of privilege and access do not disappear merely because they are recreated across borders” (2001: 13). The contrasts I have observed seen between these Brazilian singers I have interviewed are influenced by their

backgrounds in terms of education and exposure to music, as well as the region of Brazil they come from. Their audiences are also influenced by these same differences in background. The presence of so many different venues and music styles that cater to the Brazilian music community highlight the strong presence of Brazilian immigrants in Greater Somerville, as well as the success with which this group has established a strong community here.

IV. Identity and Music

Music is just one of several outlets that individuals may use to express their identity. In the case of Brazilian women singers in Somerville, the choice of music, as well as the location that it is performed in reveals a great deal about the way an immigrant's identity can evolve in a new place. In my interviews, I asked each of the singers to reflect on how they viewed themselves in terms of ethnic identity, and if they felt that their identity had changed in the time they have spent in the US. All the women I spoke to emphasized the fact that they saw themselves as Brazilians living in America, but not Brazilian-Americans. This description is not surprising given that they are all recent immigrants, and have spent most of their lives in Brazil. As Levitt explains, "We expect newcomers to renounce their membership in their home countries in exchange for full social and political membership in the United States," when in reality, "assimilation and transnational practices are not incompatible" (2001: 4-5). By seeing themselves as Brazilian, these women are not necessarily denying ways they have embraced American culture. Instead, through music and other outlets, these women have maintained an important connection to home. Most of the singers I spoke to agree that their time spent

in the Greater Somerville area has influenced both their personal identity, and the kind of music they perform.

The extent to which each of the singers felt they had been changed by their time here varied greatly. The experience of immigration has clearly been unique for each of these women, and as a result, so has their level of assimilation into US society. Levitt has shown that, “Migrants adopt some values and practices but not others, and they do so at different rates...they may exhibit structural assimilation without cultural or residential assimilation” (2001: 4). Being in a new space can also cause individuals to have even stronger feelings about their home country. Perhaps as a reaction to the new culture that she has inserted herself in, Ariane described the feeling of being “more Brazilian” here than she was at home (Interview 10/17/08). Many of the women I spoke to described their desire to seek out Brazilian foods and products, many of which they had not expected to miss in their new home. This does not mean that these women are struggling to adjust to an American lifestyle, but rather are seeking out accessible ways to maintain a connection to home.

The initial act of moving to the US suggests an interest in American culture, or, at the very least, an interest in the resources that it may offer in terms of education and work opportunities. For some of the singers I spoke to, the desire to be in the US began at an early age. In her interview, Sonia talked about the admiration that she had for American culture as a child, watching movies, listening to music and seeking out English lessons. The first song that she ever learned to sing was in English, and she explained that she had always been attracted to American music styles (Interview 11/14/08). Jucimara spoke about her childhood desire to be a pop music star, and explained that she has always

viewed the US as an optimal place to begin such a career (Interview 11/19/08). For others, living here has provided the opportunity to study English, a valuable tool in the job market. The Greater Somerville area is an appealing destination for Brazilian immigrants because of the size and strong foundation of the Brazilian community here. This structure makes it is easier for new immigrants to take advantage of social networks to find work and education opportunities relatively quickly in their transition.

Regardless of their motivation in moving to the US, as these singers begin to integrate themselves into the community and embrace certain aspects of American life, they may notice changes in their own identity. Though she feels strong that she is “a Brazilian living in America”, Ariane explained that, “It’s impossible not to change. Your eyes change a lot. You look at your own culture and your own city and environment with very, very new eyes. Sometimes it’s shocking” (Interview 10/17/08). These differences that Ariane noted include things like social relationships and government practices, as well as forms of cultural expression. In a new space, immigrants are given alternative perspectives on both of their homes, old and new. The more time Ariane spends here, the stronger her connection to the US becomes: “There’s a sense of confusion on where my life is” (Interview 10/17/08). She emphasized that she now has ties to both her home community in Brazil, and the community she lives in here in Cambridge. While she misses many aspects of home, she also recognizes that she would experience a sense of loss leaving the US because she has made a place for herself here.

For other immigrants, living in the US can mean expanding one’s identity in a global sense. Through what she described as a ‘complex journey’, Valdisa has come to see herself as a ‘world citizen’, incorporating aspects of both Brazilian and American

identity. Valdisa compared her changed perspective to the evolution of childhood: “I can see the change...I’m not the child, not following the rules...I’ve become the mother” (Interview 10/13/08). Being here has allowed her to grow as a person, understanding her new home, but also the environment she grew up in more clearly. These themes have strong ties to her work as a musician. Valdisa explained that her identity as a singer had completely changed since 2001, influenced by new people and experiences: “Being a singer means a lot, means for you to discover who you are, your identity” (Interview 10/13/08). Valdisa explained that through living here she has met other artists and been introduced to music styles from all over the world and her personal identity has grown to incorporate many of these influences. She sees the resulting combination of cultural influences as transnational, rather than entirely Brazilian or American. The idea of global influence can be attributed to Greater Somerville’s identity as a home for so many different ethnic groups. Here, immigrants from all over the world find themselves interacting in neighborhoods, restaurants, and business, and can find places to present their own cultural production such as music and art.

Lucia described similar influences on her music from her experience living in Greater Somerville, but explained that these differences were within the Brazilian community itself. Living here she has met Brazilian musicians from many different parts of the country, and each bring their own variation on common styles such as Forró and Samba (Interview 11/03/08). In working together, these musicians create new musical sounds through a fusion of their personal styles from home. The result is a Brazilian music style unique to Greater Somerville, influenced by the various backgrounds of the performers. The community therefore is home not only to new aspects of American

culture that are integrated into personal identity, but also new aspects of being Brazilian culture that influence a performer's identity. Lucia's personal definitions of Brazilian music and Brazilian identity have been expanded by her experience living in Greater Somerville.

Still, not all immigrants welcome the process of expanding identity and incorporating American culture. While none of the singers I spoke to expressed a desire to avoid these influences, their audiences do not always appreciate the changes in style. Sonia, who has always had an appreciation for American music genres, described one experience with an audience member who rejected her choice of repertoire. One night while she was performing, a man in the audience began harassing Sonia and asking her where she had learned to play a set of American songs she had just sung. Sonia tried to explain to the man that she had learned all of the songs in Brazil, listening to the radio. However, the man continued to criticize her choice to incorporate American music into her performance, instead of choosing only Brazilian songs. This story raises deeper sensitivities that some immigrants may have about losing their own sense of culture when they enter a new one. Perhaps this man felt that by performing American popular music Sonia was somehow compromising her identity as a Brazilian. In reality, Sonia has always viewed this aspect of American culture as part of her identity, because American music has had an influence on her since childhood.

Identity formation is an extremely personal process and can be difficult for individuals to explain. In speaking with the different singers, I found their personal identities both as recent immigrants and musicians to be constantly evolving. As they become more rooted in the Greater Somerville community, singers may feel a stronger

sense of belonging here. They may also be introduced to styles of music that cause them to expand their musical identity to incorporate broader Brazilian or even global influences. The singers I spoke to have varying amounts of involvement in the Brazilian community, however, this does not directly translate into the extent to which they see themselves as Brazilian. For example, Ariane described having a strong sense of herself as Brazilian living here in the US, but explained that she actually avoided inserting herself into the community when she first moved here: “It was a conscious decision. I had seen people I knew who had lived abroad and stayed within the community and went back with an experience I thought wasn’t as rich as it could have been” (Interview 10/17/08). For Ariane, the desire to experience a new culture does not indicate confusion about her identity at all. While many immigrants use the Brazilian community as a place to find valuable social connections to build a life here, Ariane has simply chosen a different path. Because of this choice, her life as a performer has also grown largely outside of the Brazilian community, revolving around places like La Luna Caffe in Cambridge. Each singer has made a choice about the extent to which they are involved in the Brazilian community based on their own needs as a performer, and as a recent immigrant. For some, the community provides important resources, but others may find similar levels of success without pursuing strong ties to Brazilians. I see this as a reflection on the many different backgrounds that Brazilian immigrants have here in Greater Somerville. It is unrealistic to assume that what works for some individuals, is the only option for entering a new community and establishing oneself.

Concluding Thoughts

As this report has shown, Greater Somerville is home to a diverse music performance community. In examining the experiences of my narrators, who represent just a small sample of the music activities of the Brazilian community, there are a wide variety of styles represented. This diversity caters to the many different individuals who live in the community and make up the audiences for these performers. I attribute the distinct audience communities that have developed in places like Café Belo and La Luna Caffè to the kinds of musical experiences that these individuals are already familiar with and/or are intentionally seeking out. Both music traditions are serving an important purpose for performers and audience members alike, and reveal an important quality of Greater Somerville as a place that can not only accommodate such different groups, but also allow them to grow and develop.

In my research, I did not find gender to be a blatant barrier for female singers in Greater Somerville. Still, it is important to recognize the more subtle influences that gender may have on these women's audience interactions, choice of music, and collaborative work with other musicians. While I do not believe being female is hindering these singers in any outright way, it is important to remember that gender is an inevitable factor in social interactions, and therefore should be considered in any analysis of musical activities within the Brazilian community.

The experiences that have been shared by my narrators show how music is functioning in Greater Somerville as a way to display a strong sense of Brazilian identity here in the US. However, their evolving personal music styles emphasize the ways in which music is being used as a way to explore and perform new ideas of Brazilian

identity. For some singers, this has meant adapting a more expansive and national Brazilian identity, while others recognize American cultural influences in their lives and work. Both of these experiences are evidence that Greater Somerville provides a supportive space for cultural exchange and personal growth for musicians.

As stated at the beginning of this report, this research represents the beginning of what I hope will become more extensive investigation of music in the Brazilian community, as well as investigation of other immigrant groups living in Greater Somerville. For more conclusive evidence on the themes I have discussed, further investigation is necessary on the various perspectives of the music performance community. The opinions of audience members, as well as the managers of the various restaurants and bars where these singers perform, may either support or refute the conclusions that I have been able to make in my limited research. It would also be worthwhile to investigate any community organizations that exist in support of the arts and/or of immigrants in their transition to the US. These institutions may be assisting women in finding performance opportunities, or potentially creating barriers of their own due to policies or regulations. Further research would raise many other issues to be addressed, but most importantly, the Greater Somerville community must continue its efforts to recognize these artists for the contributions that they are making. It is only through this recognition that we can begin to ask what kinds of barriers these immigrant musicians are facing, as well show true appreciation for the valuable assets they bring to Greater Somerville.

Appendix

I. Artist Profile: Lucia Regina Souza

Lucia Regina Souza is one of the busiest Brazilian singers in the Somerville area. She performs in different cafes and restaurants several nights a week, and at each one she must adjust to the diverse backgrounds of her audience in choosing the music she performs. Such an expansive repertoire is new for Lucia, and is largely a result of immigration to a new country. She was born and raised in the Northern Brazilian state Pernambuco, a place known for its traditions of Forró and Frevo, another folk tradition of Northeastern Brazil. Her father who performed on the radio before he was married introduced Lucia to these particular styles. He passed on his love for music to his talented daughter, and has always encouraged her to study and perform. Lucia's mother is not a musician, but she has always supported her music studies. As a teenager, Lucia received voice lessons at the local conservatory. She trained with an opera singer and learned exercises and techniques for warming up and strengthening her voice. Lucia never chose to study classical music, but she emphasized the importance of having this foundation as a singer. When she was older, Lucia was sought out by Sony Music to record a CD of Forró songs for the label.

When she reached university, Lucia decided to leave the conservatory behind and pursue other interests. Music performance can present many challenges as a career path in terms of finding steady work, and Lucia decided to refocus her interests to make music more of a side interest. She began studying Biology, and after finishing began a second degree in Law. Still, Lucia's interests in music remained important, and she continued to perform as a soloist and with a large orchestra. As her performance career continued she

was introduced to new styles of music and began expanding her repertoire beyond Forró and Frevo traditions and incorporating Brazilian Popular music and Samba. She performed in bars and restaurants, but also gave more formal concerts. Through out all her studies and the pursuit of other work, Lucia always felt a strong urge to continue her music.

In 2005, she made the decision to leave her family and work behind and move to the US. Like many immigrants, Lucia used her connections with friends in the Boston area to help in her moving process. With the help of these contacts she was able to find a group of Brazilian women to share an apartment with. By sheer coincidence her new roommates were from Lucia's hometown in Brazil. She was surprised by the Brazilian presence in the Boston area and acknowledges how helpful it was to have a supportive community during such a big transition. At the same time, however, Lucia recognizes the limitations that this can sometimes present:

“It's interesting, because the Brazilian community is huge here. I didn't know that before I came. But, for me it's hard to learn English, because all the time I have a lot of Brazilians around, and they are always talking in Portuguese. Sometimes I don't know if I'm in the United States or Brazil, it's crazy (Interview 11/03/2008).”

Having stronger English skills would allow Lucia to pursue a career in Law here, presenting her with more work opportunities.

Still, it is in the Brazilian community that she has found her most successful performance opportunities. She explained to me that her audience is almost entirely Brazilian, and that many people attend her performances at multiple restaurants or bars during the week. In commenting on her audience Lucia notes, “Of course sometimes there are some Americans there, but the people who follow us, they are Brazilians (Interview 11/03/2008)”. Without a strong support from this familiar community, Lucia

might struggle to find performance spaces for her music here in Somerville and its surrounding areas. Restaurants like Café Belo and Sal y Brasa offer an instant connection to groups who are seeking out Brazilian music in the first place.

In speaking about Somerville as a community, Lucia explained that she sees it as a home for musicians and artists. She spoke fondly of the restaurants, businesses and clientele there, explaining that it's where she got her start as a singer in the US. She recalled one memory that demonstrates how prominent and accessible music and art seem to be in Somerville. One day when she was out running errands when she came across a group of Brazilians performing on a busy street:

“Yea, I remember one time I was in Union Square. I was there for something else, and when I passed by I saw a group of people dancing and playing outside, Forró. And I thought, ‘Oh my God, let me see what’s going on’. So I went there to see, and I met the accordionist, and he said, ‘Come, come and sing a song’, and I said ‘Are you crazy!’ He took my bags and I went and sang” (Interview 11/03/08).

Lucia’s story highlights a unique quality of Somerville as a place that embraces the creative expression of its immigrant communities. New migrants can easily locate the Brazilian community because of the numerous restaurants and businesses, but also because of the abundant music and artistic events that happen both within these restaurants and in public spaces. While Lucia’s goal in moving to the US was to gain access to education and work opportunities, she has clearly helped the artistic community to grow, and therefore strengthened the Brazilian community as a whole.

In her short time in the performance community here, Lucia has witnessed the complex process of exchange that occurs between different musicians. In speaking about the music traditions she was raised with, Lucia emphasized Brazil’s diversity, both in terms of population and music. In Greater Somerville, where migrants from all over the

country may be meeting for the first time, these music styles are exchanged and reproduced in new ways. Lucia explains that her own knowledge of Brazilian music has greatly expanded here, but that she has also done her part to introduce other musicians to the traditions she was raised with: “I learned a lot from people who know a different style. Forró for me is a little different from the Forró for people from the South. And we mix together and we see some things. I think we exchange a lot. So I am pretty sure I learned, but also I taught (Interview 11/3/08).” Lucia’s experience shows that communities like Somerville are providing new spaces for cultural exchange. As an artist, she has needed to broaden her view of Brazilian music by incorporating elements like new rhythms that are introduced by musicians from other backgrounds.

Lucia also noted the influence that her audiences can have on her repertoire choices. She described the struggles that these demands can present for an artist explaining that, “here there are people from a lot of states of Brazil and they ask for a lot of different styles of music, and I had to learn a lot of styles I didn’t know. I had to learn, and I started singing something I had never sung before, just to please the audience. So it’s a challenge (Interview 11/03/08).” In Lucia’s case, this new repertoire has not just meant Brazilian music styles she was unfamiliar with, but also American popular music that her audiences request. As the diversity of her audiences continues to grow with new immigrants from across Brazil, well as individuals from other ethnic backgrounds, Lucia will continue to grow as an artist to fit these new demands.

In raising the issue of gender with Lucia she insists that music performance is not any different her experiences in school or the workplace. She is not only used to, but also comfortable with the idea of being one of the only females. Being in the minority has

been a reality for Lucia since she began performing. In her first performance she was one of only three women in a huge orchestra of men. Lucia feels that this is the reality of being a woman in the workplace, explaining that this experience is not unique to Somerville: “All my life, even when I worked in an insurance company before I finished my law degree and all the time I’m the only woman, and the rest, all men. For me it doesn’t make any difference” (Interview 11/03/08). For Lucia, relations between men and women in music are simply a microcosm of the same gender relations in the wider world. It appears that Lucia has learned to assert herself in this position as a minority, insisting on the direction she wants to take her music in, and when and where she will perform.

So far in her music career in and around Somerville, Lucia has done no formal collaboration with other women musicians. She explained that female instrumentalists, who would complement her vocal repertoire, are extremely difficult to find. Her only experiences working with other Brazilian singers here have been spontaneous and informal. The lack of such experiences has not gone unnoticed by Lucia, who says that she would enjoy having the experience of collaborating with other women. Unfortunately, the difficulties of coordinating these performances have prevented them from happening. Lucia described one attempt to do so: “I tried, because I had a friend, she left, she went back to Brazil. She played piano, and I always said to her, let’s go do a duo. It would be interesting, you know, on stage with two women. But she refused (Interview 11/03/08).” Once again, the kinds of collaborations Lucia has with other musicians may also be influenced by the expectations of audience members and restaurant managers who arrange for the performances. If people are expecting the

combination of a female singer with male instrumentalists, this may limit the kind of work Lucia is able to do, perhaps preventing new collaborations.

Lucia's experience as singer in Greater Somerville shows that it is a community that fosters musical and artistic expression. While her gender may present some restrictions in terms of collaborative freedom, these seem to be a result of societal norms, rather than active restrictions in the Brazilian community. In her work with instrumentalists from across Brazil, Lucia's own musical identity has expanded to include different traditions and embrace new fusions of Brazilian music. Being in the US has expanded Lucia's identity to include new experiences both in terms of music and as an immigrant in a new country. The strength of the Brazilian community here, however, prevents her from losing her sense of identity. In describing the changes she has felt, Lucia explains "I cannot feel myself as American. I feel like I'm living in a little bit of Brazil inside of America" (Interview 11/03/08). Somerville is able to offer Lucia that "little bit of Brazil," and provide musicians here with a place to grow and incorporate new ideas.

II. Pictures of Artists and Venues



Lucia Regina Souza and Keyboardist Daniel Nouisira at Café Belo, Somerville



Ariane Martins and her band at La Luna Café



*Marcus Santos Performing with Ariane Martins
At La Luna Caffe*



Sonia Chimentao at Sal y Brasa



*Sonia Chimentao interacting with her audience
At Sal y Brasa*



*Brazilian street signs, decorating the walls of
Sal y Brasa*

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