Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music and the Making of Modern Brazil

Reviewed by Kariann E. Goldschmitt

Bryan McCann's *Hello, Hello Brazil* gives music scholars yet another reason to be open to interdisciplinary work involving areas such as history, media studies and literary studies. McCann expands his discussion of samba into an investigation of the connection between national politics and popular music, with an emphasis on radio broadcasts during Getulio Vargas' "*Estado Novo*." The book traces the growth of the culture industry from 1930-1955 and its relation to developments in Brazilian music and national identity. Instead of arguing that the culture industry and the propaganda offices of the Vargas administration manipulated popular culture, McCann emphasizes how these institutions provided an opportunity for regional musical styles to become nationally popular. By focusing on a period of intense growth and popularity of the samba amongst other styles, the reader leaves the book with a thorough understanding of how the structural connections of radio and government helped to intensify the notion of brasilidade in Brazilian music, a particular sense of national identity that endures to the present.

McCann carefully traces concurrent histories of radio development, musical development, American influence, fan culture, advertising, and regional styles in a rich and deeply nuanced tale. Most of his sources are culled from radio archives; this extensive research clearly formed the basis of McCann's doctoral dissertation. Fittingly, the author frames his narrative with the rise and fall of radio as primary entertainment medium in Brazil, eventually to be eclipsed by the television.

McCann's story is rather broad, refusing to single out the relationship of sambistas to the radio. In fact, he devotes entire chapters to lesser-known stories in this history, such as the influence of the United States on Brazilian radio formatting (Chapter 4) and the relationship of the popularity of regional artists such as Luiz Gonzaga and Dorival Caymmi with radio (Chapter 2). Interestingly, McCann's monograph is a particularly good example of looking at musicking from several perspectives: from the business aspect of performance to production, to reception. One of the most refreshing analyses that McCann provides is his discussion of the *choro* revival in the mid-1950s. He interprets this phenomenon as a direct response to increasing American influence in Brazil and connects it to the need for musicians to have direct access to their music's history. McCann's approach to his topic from the perspective of the history of mass media is one those of us in music-centered disciplines would benefit from contemplating.

Similarly, an area of which popular music studies can definitely take note is McCann's discussion of fan clubs and audience reception in the auditorium programs beginning in the late 1940s. This topic, one of the newest discussions in Brazilian music scholarship, gets the most extensive treatment in the book. The tendency for scholars to emphasize the artists and writers is flipped on its head to emphasize the importance of the audience. McCann's discussion of competing fan clubs, which in many cases outshined the singers they were supposed to bolster, is at once historical and sociological and draws an early picture of fan obsession and identity formation that is normally reserved for critics and journalists. McCann's critical treatment of this phenomenon is both refreshing and inspiring.

McCann's attention to historical detail is stunning. The sheer magnitude of his archival research at the Museum of Image and Sound in Lapa, Rio de Janeiro is a feat that music scholars with an interest in this period of Brazilian music history will admire. Fittingly, it serves as a nice companion to Christopher Dunn's *Brutality Garden: Tropicalia and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (2001), yet another impressive monograph that contextualizes a major development in Brazilian popular music history in terms of popular culture. Like Dunn, McCann betrays his own training by not adequately dealing with musical details. Instead, McCann avoids nearly all discussions of melody or rhythm and prefers to tell his story from the perspective of the primary players. The result is an almost perfect study that makes one wish to hear what was happening musically in order for audiences to respond the way they did.

It is interesting that McCann chose to include the phrase "popular music" in the title, for it does not appear that he ever consulted musicians or music-scholars. I was somewhat saddened to see that the author's discussions of music were limited to the lyrics of the songs he described. When attempting to discuss rhythm (essential to any substantive discussion of the samba), the author was reduced to using syllables like "tam tam-tam," which hardly do the music any justice. While McCann is not a trained music scholar himself, one expects that in this age of interdisciplinarity, musical analysis would be part of the equation.

Despite this drawback, McCann's narrative is stunning in its thorough treatment of the subject matter. One can only hope that other scholars will have access to the archive at Museum of Image and Sound and contribute to the discussion, for the complex dynamics linking mass media, music, and national identity formation definitely deserve close critical attention.

Reference

Dunn, Christopher. 2001. *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

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