

Immaterial Cultural Heritage

Casa do Samba: Student Excursions to the UNESCO center for the traditional Samba de Roda from Bahia

What is the meaning of music as living cultural heritage? How can music be taught without writing? What role do music masters play, and what didactics do they use in music lessons? And above all: What does it mean when music and dance determine the daily life of a society – across the generations and throughout the year? These were some of the questions that musicology, arts management and music education students from Weimar posed on various excursions to Bahia, Brazil, from 2010 until 2013. LISZT Magazine author Ina Schwanse reports on the former and current collaboration with the *Casa do Samba*.

For several years, the *Transcultural Music Studies* of the Department of Musicology Weimar-Jena have maintained a partnership with the cultural center *Casa do Samba* in the historical city of Santo Amaro. The local Samba de Roda was registered as UNESCO Immaterial Cultural Heritage in 2005. Music as immaterial cultural heritage is also one of the research emphases of the Weimar study program. Prof. Dr. Tiago de Oliveira Pinto of the *Transcultural Music Studies* serves as an expert on the German UNESCO commission. Thanks to his research in Bahia during the 1980's the Brazilian Ministry of Culture was able to compile a dossier on the Samba de Roda that subsequently led to the nomination at the UNESCO in Paris.

Samba de Roda is the name of a music and dance form that originated in the countryside around Salvador, Bahia, the so-called *Recôncavo Baiano*. From 1530 until 1850 several million people were shipped from Africa into this historic sugarcane- and tobacco-producing region to work as slaves. In *Recôncavo* about 80 percent of today's population have African ancestors. This is the largest percentage of Afro-Brazilian population in the entire country.

Capoeira and Candomblé

The fact that Samba de Roda is performed at all important occasions on the local calendar, but also that Samba de Roda is both a stylistic and a substantial link to the other two important music genres of the region, namely to *Capoeira* and *Candomblé*, make the Samba a strong identification factor in Bahia. The Weimar students became acquainted with Santo Amaro and the area around the old sugarcane- and tobacco-producing region of Bahia. The cigar factory Dannemann, diverse cultural institutions, but above all the *Casa do Samba* itself, where the group stayed, were important locations to explore.

They learned how to make and play the *Berimbau* music bow. They practiced Samba dance steps and the appropriate body movements, visited religious ceremonies – an intense immersion in an unknown culture for everyone involved. “To offer our students the opportunity to experience music in a cultural context that is completely new to them is part of the curriculum in Weimar,” Prof. Pinto explains. As the leader of the excursions he repeatedly gave the participants concrete tasks related to music and musical daily life in the *Recôncavo*. The themes that the Weimar students examined in Bahia included music and society, immaterial cultural heritage and

tourism, music and cultural identity, children's musical activities, and music and rituals.

Building up a Music Archive

In the meantime master theses have emerged from this research. But the purpose of the excursions extends further: "The learning objective of these excursions is not to produce music specialists on Bahia, but rather to produce musically comprehensively educated musicians, musicologists and pedagogues," Tiago de Oliveira Pinto explains. The collaboration with the *Casa do Samba* is designed to be sustainable for both partners: Together, they are working on a music archive and planning an exhibition. The holdings of ca. 2,000 audio files of traditional music in *Recôncavo* in Weimar alone are an important foundation for the archive. These are already recognized as historically significant source materials for the music history of Bahia.

In 2014 there was no excursion to Bahia – instead, a music group from Santo Amaro travelled to Germany and performed at the "Long Night of Music Cultures" in July at the Kaisersaal in Erfurt, organized by the *Transcultural Music Studies*. Dona Nicinha, the well-known Samba dancer from Santo Amaro who arrived with her musicians and dancers, was happy to see so many familiar faces in Weimar again. "It is as though I were coming home," she excitedly exclaimed. These human encounters that evolve from experiencing music together – independent of whether passed on in writing or by word of mouth, whether African or European – leave a lasting impression on the students.

Ina Schwanse