




revista  
brasileira  
de estudos  
em  
dança

# Black dances in the land of drizzle: stories from quilombos.

*Danças negras na terra da garoa:  
histórias aquilombadas.*

MANZINI, Yaskara Donizeti. Black Dances in the land of drizzle: stories from quilombos. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos em Dança*, Ano 01, n. 02, p. 122-145, 2022.



## **ABSTRACT**

The work presents the trajectory of the sambista and artist Ednei Pedro Mariano, who has been working in carnival parades since the end of the 1960s. Nascimento claims that they are transatlantic territories that preserve and gather knowledge from quilombos. Mariano, in addition to witnessing the transformations that took place throughout the years, is also the protagonist of these transformations. As a methodology, specialized bibliography, observation of records of carnival parades in digital media and interviews with the artist were used. The article is part of an ongoing research on the histories of black dances in the city of São Paulo.

**KEYWORDS:** dance history; acquilombed knowledge; samba school parade; mestre-sala and porta-bandeira.

## **RESUMO**

O trabalho apresenta a trajetória do sambista e artista Ednei Pedro Mariano, que atua em desfiles carnavalescos, desde o final da década de 1960. O aprendizado de suas danças de passista e mestre-sala deu-se nos cordões e escolas de samba, que Beatriz Nascimento afirma serem territórios transatlânticos que preservam e reúnem conhecimentos aquilombados. Mariano além de testemunha das transformações ocorridas é também protagonista dessas transformações. Como metodologia foi usada bibliografia especializada, observação de registros de desfiles carnavalescos em mídias digitais e entrevista com o artista. O artigo faz parte de pesquisa em andamento sobre as histórias das danças negras na cidade de São Paulo.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** história da dança; conhecimento aquilombado; desfile de escola de samba; mestre-sala e porta-bandeira; dança.

# Black dances in the land of drizzle: stories from quilombos.

Yaskara Donizeti Manzini (UNESP/ETEC de Artes)<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Yaskara Manzini is a sambista with a doctoral and master's degree in Arts from UNICAMP and is currently developing a post-doctoral internship at the Institute of Arts at UNESP with research focused on the history of black dance in São Paulo. She teaches theater and dance at the Escola Técnica de Artes do Estado de São Paulo and at the Fundação Teatro Municipal da Cidade de São Paulo. In samba, she is a choreographer for the comissão de frente of Lavapés Pirata Negro and Camisa 12.

E-mail: [yaskaramanzini@hotmail.com](mailto:yaskaramanzini@hotmail.com)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4385-771X>

## Introduction

Much has been discussed about the black arts on stage in recent years. These discussions range from issues related to African and Afro-Diasporic cosmogenesis to racism in its various facets. However, when researching black dance histories in the city of São Paulo, I realized that very little had been investigated about the artistic issues of the samba school parades and their protagonists.

In São Paulo, the first black manifestation in the street carnival occurred in 1914, with the Cordão Carnavalesco da Barra Funda parade, which later became known as Cordão Camisa Verde e Branco.

The cordões carnavalescos<sup>2</sup> had in their structure the presentation of balizas, porta-estandarte<sup>3</sup>, instrumental ensemble (composed of string, wind, and rhythm instruments such as bumbo, surdo, caixa, and chocalho), Rainha (or first prominence) and her court, whistleblower and pastoras (or amadora). Baliza de pau, porta-estandarte, and pastoras presented a high choreographic index with elaborate movements and special spatial configurations in the parade. Manzini (2012) points out that the presentation of the balizas demanded creativity, dexterity, and precision in the use of the stick, which had the function of a scenic element in the dances and a weapon for the defense of the standard when confronting rival cordões.

A description of the cordão parades is found in Plínio Marcos' chronicle for the Folha de São Paulo:

---

<sup>2</sup> "Cordão carnavalesco" is a form of street entertainment that appears in Rio de Janeiro in approximately 1870. It was initially related to the festivities of Nossa Senhora do Rosário and the cocumbis. In addition to costumes reminiscent of the clothes of the original peoples of Brazil, there were other characters such as "the king, the queen, the sorcerer (quimboto), one or several mametos (children), the caboclo, prince, princesses, ambassadors, soothsayers and a half hundreds of partners: dancers, musicians, and singers" (Almeida apud Araujo, 2003, p.117).

<sup>3</sup> In this text, I will keep the words that refer to figures, wings, and quesitos of the samba school parades and carnival parades, spelled in Portuguese, because they are scenic creations of Afro-Brazilian origin. Keeping the expressions in their original language has to do with the discourse of these protagonists and with an epistemic political positioning.

In the center of the city, many times, a cordão that was going to meet a cordão that was coming back. So, it was something for the brave ones. Nobody backed down. The cordões would cross paths. There was a ritual full of parangolé. The wooden beacon of one cordão protected the porta-estandarte of the other cordão. The estandartes (or flags) were exchanged with great kindness and respect. After a while, the estandartes were exchanged back, *e aí o pau comia*. Razors, clogs, and clubs were used to mess up the pagode (Marcos, 13 Feb. 1977).

In 1935, the Escola de Samba Primeira de São Paulo emerged, which was considered "a group formed to accompany singers in radio programs" (Crecibeni, 2000, p. 24) and was active until 1942. However, the oldest active samba school in São Paulo is the Sociedade Recreativa Beneficente e Esportiva do Lavapés Pirata Negro, founded on February 9, 1937, by dissidents from Cordão Bahianas Paulistas. Since then, numerous samba schools have sprung up in the city. In his memoirs, Seu Nenê da Vila Matilde<sup>4</sup> (1921-2010) tells:

And if it weren't for Lavapés, this whole story wouldn't even exist. I remember that in '46, '47, I danced, I went to the balls, and once in a while I went to where Parque Dom Pedro is today. Lavapés influenced the birth of all samba schools in São Paulo (Da Silva & Braia, 2000, p. 20).

Seu Nenê also remembers many struggles and battles for the sambistas to put their parades on the streets. He emphasizes the racism and prejudice against the sambistas and their practices:

[...] who made samba was seen as crioulo doido; if he was white, he was a maloqueiro white. When we arrived somewhere to ask for some support, or even afterwards, when we were going to receive some medal, many people would say: "Ih! the senzala is coming" (DA SILVA & BRAIA, 2000, p.13<sup>5</sup>).

It took three decades of fights and negotiations waged by the leaders of several samba schools to force the officialization of the parades, during the administration of Mayor José Vicente de Faria Lima. Law 7.100, of December 29, 1967, promotes popular festivities and carnival celebrations. Thus, for the 1968 samba school parade, the São Paulo City Hall allocated NCR\$ 480,000

---

<sup>4</sup> Alberto Alves da Silva, founder of Grêmio Recreativo e Cultural Escola de Samba Nenê da Vila Matilde, on January 1, 1949.

<sup>5</sup> "Crioulo doido" is a Brazilian expression, nowadays often perceived as racist, used to say that something or someone makes no sense; "Maloqueiro" here is used as a synonym for delinquent; "Senzala" was the name given to the dwellings of enslaved black people in colonial Brazil.

(four hundred and eighty thousand new cruzeiros). In this way, I understand that law 7.100/1967 can be considered the first encouragement to black arts in the city of the first encouragement to black arts in São Paulo since the parades have received public funding.

Fragments of carnival parades support Beatriz Nascimento's thesis that the samba schools are acculturated quilombos. In the documentary *Ôri* (1989), we see *comissões de frentes*, *balizas de pau*, *alas de passo marcado*, and several intellectuals and artists that circulated in the samba schools in the 1980s, among them Thereza Santos (1930-2012), who was a samba dancer, artist, intellectual, and contributed immensely to the consolidation of the São Paulo carnival. In the documentary, she comments:

From the moment that the samba schools [...] I mean, it's what I call a quilombo even today, a black space [...] And since the black people don't know anything about their history [...] there's a need for you to put this into the carnival, which is to open up this horizon of knowledge for people. Furthermore, it's a black organization, the samba schools, the *terreiros de macumba*, the *candomblé* centers. So for me these are the quilombos of today, the quilombos of the 20th century (*ÔRÍ*, 1989, 0:22'42").

For Beatriz Nascimento "the quilombo represents a vigorous instrument in the process of recognition of the Brazilian black identity for a greater ethnic and national self-affirmation" (Rattz, 2006, p. 125) and the samba schools, especially the so-called traditional ones (*Lavapés*, *Nenê da Vila Matilde*, *Vai-Vai*, *Camisa Verde*, and *Peruche*) are territories that aggregate communities in whose banners and flags their members recognize themselves as sambistas.

In the film *Ôri*, while Nascimento says

The quilombo arises from the historical fact that is fleeing [...] hence the importance of the search for territory. So, at that moment when it is established, it establishes a sense of nation strictly African and Bantu [...] the acculturated nation (*ÔRÍ*, 1989, 0:18'40")

Urco and dona China, *mestre-sala* and *porta-bandeira*, danced at the beginning of the rehearsal of the *Vai-Vai* samba school, in 1980.

The dance of the *porta-bandeira*, who elegantly holds the

association's flag, is full of spins, creating winds, like the orixá Oiá lansã, with the sole objective of keeping the flag of her association open in the air. The dance of the mestre-sala, full of capoeira and tiririca paulista leg kicks, braids and crosses from the macumba points, courts and guards the flag. It moves in spirals, as delineated as those of the okotô shell<sup>6</sup>, always around the pavilion.

Around the couple, the community enjoys their dance, but the flag cutting or parade ritual does not appear in the documentary, when those present reaffirm to serve and honor that territory. In this rite, the whole community participates, for the pavilion prepares and trains its sambistas for the parade.

For a sambista there is nothing more important than his Pavilion, which must be honored, loved, and cared for. Therefore, in the "Rito de Corte", everything is done for him. He is the supreme lord of that school. He is the symbolic representation of that community's ancestry and all its carnivals. In this rite, temporal dimensions intersect, the past/present/future of the community is inscribed in that "magic piece of cloth" that spins in vortex in the center of the terreiro. The people around are there to serve it (MANZINI, 2012, p. 102).

Thus, based on the knowledge elaborated by the quilombos, I present the trajectory of the Ambassador<sup>7</sup> do Samba Ednei Pedro Mariano, samba dancer and artist who witnessed the changes that have occurred since the end of the sixties, becoming an authority on the dance of mestre-sala and is still active today. Some of the history presented here was collected through a formal interview, others by living in the samba milieu between rehearsals in the sambódromo and courts, bibliography, and finally interviews and videos from the specialized carnival press.

### **From the cordão of pebbles to Aunt Lourdes' rehearsals.**

Ednei was born on August 14, 1953 and since he was a boy he lived in the Vila Mariana neighborhood, explaining to me

---

<sup>6</sup> A kind of spiral shell that relates to the orixá Exú Agba, the primordial whose existence unfolds multidimensionally in both time and space.

<sup>7</sup> The Paulista Samba Embassy gathers samba players with relevant contributions to the samba schools, the Paulista Samba Bamba Players, our cultural patrimony.

that the neighborhood was a black stronghold and as the years went by people moved away and others died. He started to be aware of what the carnival celebrations and parades were during his childhood, when he saw his cousins going out to parade in the cordões, however, as he was a boy he couldn't participate in the party, so he played together with his brothers to simulate a cordão parade, with pebbles that they collected for this purpose.

Two people were essential for his formation: his neighbors, whom he still affectionately calls uncle and aunt. His uncle, who lived in house number three, was Mr. Sebastião Eduardo do Amaral (1913-1990), the famous Pé-Rachado, president of Cordão Carnavalesco Vai-Vai, which introduced him to Carnival and with which he also founded the samba school Barroca Zona Sul in 1974. His aunt, who lived in house number five, was Lourdes Amaral, a black actress who participated in the Teatro Experimental do Negro, in São Paulo, and in the group Quilombo, directed by Dalmo Ferreira (1935-1979). From the former he inherited his knowledge and love for samba, from the latter her racial and political consciousness through theater.

And I followed my aunt a lot; she would go to rehearsals and I would follow her. So much so that in the last show that Dalmo created I even participated. It was my first participation [...] Imagine participating in the group Quilombo, which was Dalmo's group, it was very important, because they did the studies of the plays they were going to put on, and the political studies [...] The shows were always about black culture, about religion, but there was always a political discussion involved (Mariano, 2022).

He remembers that many students were present at the discussions, and there was a connection with the teachers of the Santa Inês course, in the middle of the censorship period of the military dictatorship. From these meetings between blacks and students emerged the samba school Pérola Negra, 1973. He comments that at that time black actors couldn't live from theater alone and, like his aunt, had other professions besides the stage.

It seems that this experience with the theater and his aunt



reverberated years later, while working at IAMSPE<sup>8</sup> founded, on January 6, 1984, with other employees, Aqualtune, the Study Center of IAMSPE Employees against Racial Discrimination. He tells me: "we were always connected to politics, we used to say here on the server everybody is black, the attendants are black, a lot of black people, on the cleaning staff, everything is black, but on the board of directors? We don't see them" (Mariano, 2022). Among the projects developed at the time, he mentions *E a escola de samba chegou ao hospital (And the samba school came to the hospital)*, when sectors of the samba school talked about their artistic-sambistic practices to employees and users, and the theater group *Refletores e Ribalta (Reflectors and Ribalta)*, formed with employees who also came from the Drama School, in which Ailton Graça participated.

Ednei was also the cultural director of AFIAMSPE<sup>9</sup>, when he wrote in the association's little newspaper, at first to charge professional issues from IAMSPE hospital and, later, a column about samba. The column about samba made him get a taste for writing, and until today he writes and is finishing a book, besides the column with carnival chronicles, in Sampa Magazine's site.

**"Where did Pé-Rachado find that neguinho guy to dance like that?"**

---

<sup>8</sup> Instituto de Assistência Médica do Servidor Público Estadual, a type of medical assistance for public servers in the state of São Paulo.

<sup>9</sup> Associação dos Funcionários do Instituto de Assistência Médica do Servidor Público Estadual, Association of Employees of the Institute of Medical Assistance of the State Public Servant.



Ednei Pedro Mariano dancing at AMESPBEESP's 16th anniversary party, in 2011. Credit: AMESPBEESP. Source: Ednei Pedro Mariano's personal collection.

Ednei began his career as a passista in the cordão Vai-Vai. He tells that when Pé-Rachado asked him if he wanted to leave the cordão, his father, realizing the answer, looked at his friend and said: "he wants to leave, but it is you who will take care of him" (Mariano, 2022). Ednei's father, Pé-Rachado, and Inocência Tobias had the same profession, they were bricklayers, traveled together for work and became very close friends, so they entrusted their son to the care of their neighbor.

Pé-Rachado then took him to Cleusi Penteadó's house, one of the matriarchs of Vai-Vai who lived on Tuiuti Street, and said: "Cleusi, take care of this neguinho guy here!" (Mariano, 2022). She was looking for a boy to put in the abre-alas, which was another way of calling the wing divisor: the person who went ahead dividing one wing from another in the cordão, it was a place of certain prominence. Ednei was a big partier and used to watch many shows of samba groups from Rio de Janeiro that performed here in the city, when it was possible to see passistas

dancing with pandeiro (tambourine) and doing countless juggling tricks. It was watching these presentations and reproducing them at home, introducing his own movements, that he first learned to samba, as a self-taught student. Ednei took the contest and beat the other two candidates and, in 1968, made his debut as a dancer in Cleusi Penteado's wing, remaining there until the following year.

In 1970, he founded his own wing in the cordão with friends and cousins and called it Ala Samba Show Cuíca de Ouro, for its differential was the presence of two cuiqueiros at the head of the wing, his brother Helinho and Dagoberto (a musician who also played *reggae*). Then came the girls and boys, who were dancers. They were a great success!

At that time, the two best known cordões carnavalescos in the city were Vai- Vai and Camisa Verde, presided by Pé-Rachado and Inocêncio Tobias respectively. The other associations had either become samba schools or had paralyzed their activities, since there was no more space for the cordões in both the specialized press and in possible sponsorships of the parades. Nevertheless, a dialogue described by Pé- Rachado and registered by Moraes is memorable:

[...] Inocêncio said that he was going to become a School because we only heard about School and Cordão nobody talked about. And so, jokingly, we always had a pimbazinha. I said to him: "If you turn in the morning, in the afternoon I will turn too. As long as you don't, I'll stay here. Moreover, that was it. The day he did, I did too, because otherwise I would have no competitor. That competitor was "Camisa" (MORAES, 1978, p. 72-77).

Plinio Marcos, dissatisfied with the cultural changes brought about in the São Paulo carnival, writes *O carnaval dos cordões* for Folha de São Paulo's Folhetim, when he reaffirms Pé-Rachado and Inocêncio's resistance and criticizes the established policy that privileged the promotion of a Carioca carnival aesthetic, instead of thinking about the characteristics of São Paulo samba:

The carnival tradition in São Paulo was the cordão. There were some samba schools, however (and there always is a however), the bambas, the heavyweights were the cordões. Camisa Verde e Branco (really white), Vai- Vai, Paulistano da Glória, Campos Elíseos, Som de Cristal were all famous cordões.

Furthermore, the cordão paulista had a different beat than the samba schools, had other figures and other tricks. I said "had". Because, as far as I know, there is no cordão in São Paulo anymore. The ones that didn't finish for good became samba schools. As is the case of Vai-Vai and Camisa Verde e Branco, those were the ones that most resisted before becoming samba schools (Marcos, 1977).

When Vai-Vai became a samba school, Ednei was chosen to represent the organization at the National Samba Festival, in Santos. But he didn't go alone; his companion was the first Rainha de Bateria of the samba school, the passista Edna Zuleika. About the presentation he says: "Eu era muito bom de perna [...] a perninha era muito forte mesmo<sup>10</sup> and Edna was a wonderful black woman, even in the seventies, she managed to travel to Italy, lived in Japan, with a beautiful international career, as a passista" (Mariano, 2022).

#### **From passista to mestre-sala.**

Pé-Rachado was Ednei's mentor, he realized that the strength of the young man's dance could be used in another way, and took his pupil to Rio de Janeiro, in the morro da Mangueira. There he learned by listening to the elders, he recounts:

[...] When I arrived in Mangueira, that's when I saw Seu Delegado, Dona Zica, Seu Cartola [...] So at night, before we left, we would go there and sit on the floor, because those who sat on the chairs were the big guys [...] and I would listen [...] seeing Alcione arriving there, Beth Carvalho arriving there [...] So I thought: my God, these are the kings of music! They are here in Mangueira, in the favela [...] And I, I several times caught myself crying when dawn was breaking. The samba was eating and we saw that wonderful scenery, those houses, those little lights and then the colorful hill that was black because of the night began to appear. So for me, for my cultural life this brought me a lot of good things, a lot of learning, but a lot of listening (Mariano, 2022).

This quotation from Ednei immediately reminds me of the poetic images of the samba exaltação from Estação Primeira da Mangueira, by Enéas Brites da Silva and Aloísio Augusto da Costa, released for the 1956 carnival.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ednei is saying that his leg was strong and he was good at using it; in other words, he means that he was indeed a great dancer.

Mangueira teu cenário é uma beleza  
Que a natureza criou, ô...ô...  
O morro com seus barracões de zinco,  
Quando amanhece, que esplendor,  
Todo o mundo te conhece ao longe,  
Pelo som de teus tamborins  
E o rufar do seu tambor  
Chegou, ô... ô...  
A Mangueira chegou, ô... ô...  
Ó Mangueira, teu passado de glória,  
Ficou gravado na história,  
É verde-rosa a cor da tua bandeira,  
Pra mostrar a essa gente,  
Que o samba, é lá em Mangueira!

Cartola encouraged Pé-Rachado to found the Faculdade do Samba Barroca Zona Sul, in 1974, together with some relatives, friends, and pupils. Ednei was part of the team that founded the association and in the first year, he helped make the allegories, since he had a wing at Vai-Vai and could not commit himself. It was during this period that Ednei's apprenticeship at Mangueira took place, and his wing at Vai-Vai lasted until 1977.

This year, Ednei debuted as Barroca Zona Sul's official mestre-sala, replacing Wilson de Moraes (1927-2010) and his wife Dona Marina Luiza (s.d.- 2007), who were already almost fifty years old. He remembers that it was also in this year that the book *Escolas de Samba de São Paulo* was written, by seu Wilson, and released the following year. About the couple he tells me:

Wilson de Moraes was a short white man. He was a professor who was married to Marina Luiza. Marina Luiza was a black dancer who traveled the world with a group called Brasiliana. They were the first couple of mestre-sala and porta-bandeira of Camisa, when Camisa became a samba school. And then they went to Vai-Vai, because they lived in Bela Vista, and as they were very good friends of Pé, they were the first couple of mestre-sala and porta-bandeira of Barroca. They were not the first couple of Vai-Vai, but dona China<sup>11</sup> and seu Ivo, because when Vai-Vai was a cordão, dona China was a marquise, duchess, court figure who paraded in the Vai-Vai cordão, but she was the porta-bandeira of Acadêmicos do Tatuapé. Pé-Rachado said to Mala: "Oh, I will take your porta-bandeira to Vai-Vai" and brought China to be a porta-bandeira of the saracura. (Mariano, 2022).

Ednei, along with his aunt Lourdes Amaral, wrote the

---

<sup>11</sup> Dona China is the porta-bandeira who appears in the documentary Ôrí (1989) dancing with Urco, who was also her partner.

themes for Barroca Zona Sul: *Uma hora na Amazônia* (An Hour in the Amazon, 1981), *A história do futebol através do tempo* (The history of football through time, 1982), and *Um novo Sol para a América do Sul* (A New Sunshine for South America), from 1989. However, he did not do the parade that year, as he had been away from the school since 1985 due to internal political issues and disagreement with the porta-bandeira. This year, he received his first invitation to parade in the Rosas de Ouro Society, but he declined.

Between 1988 and 1994 he danced as mestre-sala in the samba school Acadêmicos do Ipiranga, with Patricia Walska as porta-bandeira. He also worked as a carnavalesco signing the themes *Negra, nasce de seu ventre a esperança da igualdade* (Black woman, the hope of equality is born from your womb, 2000), *Nações* (Nations, 2001), *Legado dos Iorubás* (Yoruba legacy, 2002), *Maíra - o supremo e a supremacia* (Maíra - the supreme and the supremacy, 2003), and *Ipiranga de todos nós* (Ipiranga of us all, 2004).

He returned to Vai-Vai in 1991, and together with dona China, they founded a school for mestre-sala and porta-bandeira. From this project a new generation of dancers was born: Renatinho and Fabíola, Paula Penteado, Emerson Ramires - son of Eneidir, also a porta-bandeira of the samba school. "We took Paulinho Guedes to be mestre-sala at Vai-Vai, in '95. I left as a gold mestre-sala, because I wanted to parade, but I didn't want to know about commitment" (Mariano, 2022). It was when Jorginho, mestre-sala of the Rosas de Ouro samba school, passed away and I was invited again to defend the flag, together with Maria Gilsa (1951-2008).

Gilsa was a maid, but she was a goddess! You looked at her, you saw an entity. Gilsa was from candomblé and she had a truth in her words, in her food [...] She was from Bahia and had a very big heart, so much so that we say that Gilsa died of love because she was so good, so wonderful (Mariano, 2022).

Ednei already knew and had danced with Maria Gilsa,

between 1983 and 1986, in the samba school Acadêmicos do Tucaruvi. He remembers that Patusca, a playwright and enredista, a friend of his aunt, introduced them to him. Gilsa was a porta-bandeira of the Primeira do Itaim samba school and Mariano says about her dance

[...] When I looked at her and saw her dancing, I fell in love! I fell in love with that black monument, right in front of me and was very beautiful. She had Adriana, who was still a little girl, and we used to push the cart with her to get to the rehearsal on Mazzei Avenue. It was love at first sight (Mariano, 2022).

At Rosas de Ouro the couple danced until 2008, the year of Maria Gilsa's death, who passed away on December 28, after a six-month coma due to a stroke. In the last carnival with Gilsa, they stood out on a five-meter high allegory<sup>12</sup>.

A trace of Maria Gilsa remains on the runways when her daughter Adriana Gomes, currently at Mancha Verde samba school, and one of the most respected Brazilian porta-bandeiras, with her stage presence, exudes sympathy, a broad smile, and the strength of her spins as she shows off her flag.

It was also with Gilsa that Ednei, after retiring as a radiology technician at IAMSPE, traveled several times abroad to perform with the Rosas de Ouro samba school. Daniela Renzo, when choosing important and remarkable moments in the couples' dance in the thirty years of the sambódromo in São Paulo says

It was the year 2006, when they came as a guest couple [...] They danced divinely, a loose, joyful, happy dance. Nobody said that those clothes were heavy. The pavilion was different, everything was different [...] It was a magical parade (Faixa Amarela do Carnaval, 2021, 0:04'18")<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Watch at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WZxZKAaQGA> at 0h 48' 13" of the parade.

<sup>13</sup> Seconds of this presentation can be enjoyed via the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztidtvDJI3I&t=258s>, starting at 0:04'18".





Porta-bandeira Maria Gilsa and mestre-sala Ednei Mariano, parading as African kings in the theme "*The African Diaspora*", 2006. Source: Ednei Pedro Mariano's personal collection.

The couple's clothes were extremely luxurious and the design by the carnavalesco Fabio Borges was daring for the time, and many people believed that the porta-bandeira danced with her breasts exposed.

### **From the street to the sambódromo, what has changed?**

As for the costumes, until 1984, when the first sewing workshops appeared, it was the couple themselves who bought



the fabric (in Rua 25 de Março<sup>14</sup>) and sent it to the trusted seamstress and then decorated, embroidered their own clothes, choosing even the type of feather and seam they would use. There was autonomy of choice in the making of the costume. Nowadays the carnavalesco creates the concept of the costume and the couple basically gives their opinion only about the technical issues that can hinder their dance. The costumes are made and embroidered in *ateliers* and cost around one hundred and fifty thousand reais in the São Paulo special group<sup>15</sup>.

Mariano comments that in the 1970s the skirt of the *portabandeiras* was supported by *filo* petticoats, with brocade over it, with a plume or marabou plate, also known as "arminho", but only in the schools that had money to invest. In the 1990s, the frame was made of steel tape, which, although very expensive, lasted for more than ten years. Even today, steel tape is used for this. Another technique used to structure the skirts is using a hula hoop with galvanized iron on the inside to show off the wheel and the frame of the petticoat. The clothes grew, their volume increased,

[...] because the parade grew, but on the other hand the route decreased, because we used to assemble the school or *cordão* there in Praça Júlio de Mesquita and went down all the Avenida São João and entered the Anhangabaú. When not, the parade started at Praça do Correio and ended at Praça da Bandeira. When it was *Tiradentes*, it started at Ponte Pequena, went up, and ended at Luz station, down there. Then, the route was gigantic, today it isn't, the Sambódromo is 530 meters long. Moreover, it was slower too (Mariano, 2022).

From the street parades of *cordões* to the Anhembi Sambódromo, more than fifty years have passed and if we think of the Sambódromo as the space of the parade that aggregates an audience of 32,000 people, all the visual and scenic elements had to grow bigger and bigger. Today there is even the Fábrica do Samba, a conglomeration of huge sheds where the allegories are as-

---

<sup>14</sup> Rua 25 de Março is a notorious street in São Paulo's downtown, known for its various stores that sell products for low prices. It's also an important provider for the samba schools, selling fabric, stones and beads, feathers, and wigs among many other items used in the parades.

<sup>15</sup> An elite group of samba schools that parade on Friday and Saturday during Carnival at the Sambódromo, and receive major sponsorship from the São Paulo City Hall, as well as funding from Globo Television Network.

sembled.

It seems to me that this growth of the samba school parades begins long before the construction of the sambódromos in Rio and São Paulo and is part of the commodification of the parades. During the government of Getúlio Vargas, Álvaro Salgado wrote for the magazine *Cultura Política* that:

Samba carries in its etymology the mark of sensualism, it's ugly, indecent, disharmonic and arrhythmic, but patience: let's not repudiate this brother of ours for the defects it contains. Let us be kind; let us use intelligence and civilization. Let us slowly try to make him more educated and social (SALGADO, 1941, p.86).

It is important to understand that the ranchos and the parades of the great carnival societies originated the identities of the samba schools of Rio de Janeiro. These were structured in the 1930s, with criteria such as the enredo, samba de enredo, allegories, comissão de frente, and the mestre-sala and porta-bandeira couple. In the following decade, the criteria shaped the structure of the presentations and the themes began to deal only with national issues, coinciding with the Estado Novo's desire to educate the samba.

It was in the 1950s that professors and artists from the School of Fine Arts, the Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro, and television (scenographers and scenery technician) began to coordinate the parades, creating the figure of the carnavalesco and imposing a drastic change in the visual-plastic treatment of the parades (Araujo, 2003). I understand that it is in this way that the samba ends up being "educated" along the lines of Eurocentric thinking.

But the changes continue and during the military dictatorship, the middle class discovers the samba and starts attending its rehearsals and parading, creating a "cultural syncretism" in the parades (Araujo, 2003, pp. 230-231). The television channels (Tupi, Continental, Rio, and Excelsior) and the national magazines *Manchete* and *O Cruzeiro* fight over ratings and sales, giving prominence to the parades. Also, in the 1960s

[...] the controversial figure of the bicheiro emerges publicly as the patron of samba schools. Although, on the one hand gam-

bling is still considered a criminal misdemeanor liable to imprisonment, on the other hand, the gambling bankers in question were one of the few patrons to invest economically and sparingly in this type of popular cultural expression. With money, the schools began to invest heavily in the visual modules of the parade, starting an "aesthetic revolution" (MANZINI, 2012, p. 48).

In the 1970s, with the growth of the human contingent in the parade and with larger carnival floats, the bateria increased their pulse rate, speeding up their rhythm, and consequently, the sambas de enredo. The destaque de luxo, unable to walk faster due to the weight of their costumes, became "allegory" highlight, and the "alas" began to parade in compact form to keep up with the parade time.

During the following ten years, after the inauguration of the sambódromo in Rio de Janeiro, Passarela Professor Darcy Ribeiro, the cars grow in height, because there is no longer any danger with high tension wires that existed in the avenues, and a space is born that becomes the stage of the sambistas, but limits the access of the population to the parades, because the tickets are sold at unpopular prices. Furthermore, even with public sponsorship, the demands of innovation and grandeur in the production of the parades require more money, usually from corporate sponsors (of the enredos).

Fernando Pamplona (1926-2013), scenographer and carnavalesco, in the documentary *Balé de Pé no Chão*, makes harsh criticisms about the changes in the samba school parades, when he recalls the work of Mercedes Baptista (1921-2014), who presented a minuet in the 1963 *Xica da Silva* storyline, defended by Salgueiro:

[...] the mass culture, the commodification, the purchase, the capital, the money, ended the samba school, ended everything. You don't see a show today as we used to do with Mercedes [...] Today you see a show and there are a lot of logos around it. Today you have to be sponsored by a thousand guys, it's bullshit! (*Balé de pé no chão*, 2005, 0:24'44").

In São Paulo, despite the thirty-year lag in parade regulations in relation to Rio de Janeiro, the most drastic modifications began to appear after the inauguration of the São Paulo sambódromo, Pólo Cultural e Esportivo Grande Otelo, in 1991, during Luiza Erundina's administration. Then, besides the increase in size

of the allegories, organization of the parades and, as Mariano reported, the acceleration of rhythm and evolution, as well as the definition and reduction of the parade route, the costumes and dances also suffered consequences.

### **And the dance, the couple's dance movements?**

Mariano says that the couple's dance has also evolved and changed. However, in São Paulo, the steps are preserved. Although the tradition has been adapted, the movements that were danced in the 70's, 80's and 90's, today are performed with the awareness of being fundamentals of the couple's dance.

This gain is due to the founding of the Associação de Mestres-Salas e Porta-Bandeiras e Estandartes do Estado de São Paulo, known by the acronym AMESPBEESP. The idea of creating an association came through a conversation during the broadcast of the 1995 parade, on Gazeta radio station, when Ednei and Mestre Gabriel Martins<sup>16</sup> were encouraged by the radio hosts Evaristo de Carvalho (1932- 2014) and José Carlos Alvarenga about the quesito and its issues. Several mestres-salas and porta-bandeiras joined the two dancers with the objective of preserving and teaching the couples' dance for future generations.

Among the supporters and founders of the association were Manoel Dionísio (1936) and Thereza Santos, the former was a student of Mercedes Baptista and built a solid career as an afro-dancer performing in several countries, in addition to being the founder of the first school of mestre-sala and porta-bandeira and estandarte in Rio de Janeiro, in 1990, inside the headquarters of the Federação de Blocos Carnavalescos (Rego, 1996). He is currently the president of the Associação Cultural Educativa da Escola de Mestre-Sala, Porta-Bandeira e Porta-Estandarte Manoel Di-

---

<sup>16</sup> A symbol of the samba from São Paulo, he is the Master Ambassador of Samba from São Paulo and together with his wife Viviane (Vivi) Martins, they hold the title of Sovereign Couple of Camisa Verde e Branco, dancing until today in very special events of the association and with the pavilion of the Liga Independente das Escolas de Samba de São Paulo (Independent League of Samba Schools of São Paulo), an organ that represents the samba schools of the Especial and Acesso 1 and 2 groups, in the city of São Paulo.

onísio. Master Dionísio contributed with his experience leading the course for the formation of the couple, since his school had already been functioning for five years. The second was a theater artist, sambista, carnival dancer, choreographer of the comissão de frente, and at the time of the foundation of the association she was working as an advisor for Afro-Brazilian affairs for the government of São Paulo. Ednei reports that Thereza also had a strong connection with the couples' dance and was one of the founders of the association, whose inauguration of the first board of directors took place in a noble hall at the State Secretariat of Culture of São Paulo (Mariano, 2022).

In addition to teaching and preparing the mestre-sala and porta-bandeira, the association also helps various carnival entities to think about the criteria for judging the category. About the judging criteria in the parades of groups especial and acesso 1 and 2 in São Paulo, he reports that there are

[...] obligatory movements of the protection spin of the mestre-sala, the frenetic spin of the porta-bandeira. When she turns, the flag has to unfurl. The frenetic play of the mestre-sala's legs. All this we managed to put in the couple's evaluation criteria (Mariano, 2022).

In the Judge Manual of the Liga Independente das Escolas de Samba de São Paulo (Independent League of Samba Schools of São Paulo) (2020), for the groups especial, acesso 1, and 2, the initial considerations within the mestre-sala and porta-bandeira category present the issues raised by Mariano in relation to the obligation of certain aspects of the dance to maintain the tradition of their gestures and movements, in addition to the main foundation of the couple's dance: presenting the official flag of their school.

Also in these considerations the roles of both dancers are outlined. The porta-bandeira

Has the function of displaying, conducting, and presenting the flag of its Samba School, which must always be unfurled at the moment of the spin. She must present herself with elegant, friendly, soft and light gestures [...] She must demonstrate sympathy when presenting her pavilion and be perfectly integrated in the execution of the dance with the Mestre Sala (Liga-SP, 2020)

And the mestre-sala

Has the function of being the guardian of the flag, and at the same time must present it during the parade. His dance around the Porta Bandeira has the purpose of protecting it, with elegant postures, it must contain [courteous] and soft gestures that show reverence to the Porta Bandeira, with traditional steps, and spins, waving, curtsy, half-turns and turns. They must present the Pavilion and perform complete movements to protect the Pavilion in clockwise and counterclockwise directions, not necessarily in the same sequence, and develop the danced leg movements that are reminiscent of capoeira traditions (Liga-SP, 2020).

Interestingly, although the manual standardizes certain types of dance actions, there is an opening for one of the great premises of samba dancing: improvisation. Improvisation within samba is also called "dar a letra" (give the lyrics), "versar" (verse) and in the Liga-SP manual: "a danced leg movement that reminds us of capoeira traditions" and that Mariano calls "frenetic leg movement". Since I began to understand the culture of the samba schools, these expressions caught my attention, because they refer to the creation of a discourse of the body in samba, a personal and singular discourse that is created by each sambista.

As president of AMESPBEESP, Mariano is happy to have succeeded in adding to the criteria of the street parades, organized by UESP<sup>17</sup>, the penalty of serious fault if the mestre-sala is not wearing one of the three hand instruments: baton, fan, or handkerchief. The first symbolically recalls the sticks used by the balizas de pau in the cordões, the fan has to do with the court dances performed by whites in the salons, which were reinterpreted by the enslaved, often satirically, and the silk handkerchief, which a razor does not cut, also used to defend the banners in disputes between cordões when they met.

Mariano understands that more than a cultural and recreational association that teaches the couple's dance, AMESPBEESP is a political association, which is why it has achieved great results and respect from carnival entities such as UESP, Liga-SP,

---

<sup>17</sup> União das Escolas de Samba Paulistanas is the entity responsible for the parade of samba schools and blocos on the city streets, and was founded on September 10, 1973.

FESEC<sup>18</sup> among the most traditional ones.

### “Sapatos Brancos”

At the age of fifty-five a new challenge appeared for Ednei, to return to the theater scene dancing in the show *Sapatos Brancos* (*White Shoes*) (2008), by choreographer Luiz Ferron. He tells that his first meeting with Ferron happened at AMESPBEESP, in 1998, when the latter took the association's improvement course, as he was parading as mestre-sala in a samba school in Diadema. At the time, Ferron expressed the desire to put on a show about the couple's dance, but only ten years later, through the approval of his project in the IV Edital de Fomento à Dança of the city of São Paulo, did his wish come true. Mariano says that he was somewhat suspicious about this, for "we see so many people come to us, do their research, and then go away, write a book and say that he did it [...] Well, will it be just another one?

Ednei's suspicion was not unfounded, given the countless cases of cultural appropriation and mischaracterization of epistemologies, social and artistic contexts by both researchers and artists in relation to the samba culture, but this was not the case in question. Ferron assembled a cast with artists from the contemporary dance scene and popular artists<sup>19</sup>: *Sapatos Brancos* was not just a performance, it was a project that proposed to

[...] investigate themes and questions that involve traditions pertinent to São Paulo's carnival, its samba schools and especially the ritual present in Mestre Sala and Porta Bandeira dance.

The idea is to transpose these elements to contemporary dance operating with as many open variables as possible, starting from a flow of associations and sensations that may converge, through the process, into a dramaturgical and choreographic script. (Ferron, s.d.)

Given the density of the research, Núcleo Artístico Luiz Ferron requested the continuity of the project and was contemplated again in the VI Edital de Fomento à Dança of the city of São

---

<sup>18</sup> Federação das Escolas de Samba e Entidades Carnavalescas do Estado de São Paulo (Federation of Samba Schools and Carnival Entities of the State of São Paulo), founded on July 13, 1984.

<sup>19</sup> The cast of performers included Luiz Ferron, Tony Siqueira, Zélia de Oliveira, Mestre Ednei Mariano, Mestre André, Maurici Brasil, and Jorge Nascimento.

Paulo, in 2009. With this award, the project widened its action beyond the performance by creating a study center. The seminar *Corpo & Cultura*, interviews with several generations of mestres-salas and porta-bandeiras, and workshops of dances that were related to the Afro-Brazilian carnival aesthetics, whose material was registered in the CD-ROM *Sapatos Brancos (White Shoes)* (s.d.).

The show, which is about the dance of the mestre-sala and porta-bandeira couple, premiered in 2008 and ran for six years, with presentations throughout the country and also in the halls of the samba schools. It received the 2009 Best Composition Award from the Associação Paulista dos Críticos de Arte (APCA) and the 2010 Bravo! Award for Best Show.

About returning to the scene after years and carnivals Ednei comments that the work reinvented him. He recalls that Uxa Xavier did the cast's body preparation and that he would finish rehearsing completely exhausted and sometimes ask himself "what am I doing here?" (Mariano, 2022). It was at the premiere that he realized how much he had incorporated scenic dance techniques to his repertoire as a mestre-sala, and that everything he absorbed from this experience, such as the perception and somatic education classes, he still uses today in the work he develops in the preparation of couples for the parades.





Scene from the choreography *Sapatos Brancos (White Shoes)*, with Núcleo Artístico Luiz Ferron. In the foreground Zélia Oliveira and Ednei Pedro Mariano. Credit Gil Grossi.

### **Black dances, stories from quilombos...**

Giving visibility to stories of doings, thoughts and protagonisms of samba school artists has allowed until the present moment to perceive encruzilhadas (crossroads, intersections) in which the knowledge of samba schools feeds and is fed by the black theatrical milieu of São Paulo, by discussions about politics and racism, by friendship networks that recreate and build territories, presenting their plots, dances and artists, under the banner of transatlantic communities. To think of black dance histories without considering the production and artistic experience of the samba schools, focusing only on the theatrical production, is to delegitimize the work and the struggle of ancestors and artists from previous generations.

### **Referências**

ARAUJO, Hiram. **Carnaval**: seis milênios de história. 2ª. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Gryphus, 2003.

BALÉ de pé no chão: a dança afro de Mercedes Baptista. Direção: Lilian Solá Santiago & Marianna Monteiro. Produção executiva: Lilian Solá Santiago. São Paulo: Terra Firme Digital/SESC TV, 2005, 1 vídeo, cor, 52 min. Disponível em <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9CMU4aayjU> Acesso em: 28 out. 2022.

CARNAVAL 2008 – Rosas de Ouro. Produção Rede Globo de Televisão. 2008. 1 vídeo (47'47"). Publicado pelo canal Museu da Imagem e do Som do Carnaval. Disponível em <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WZxZKAaQGA> Acesso em 28 out. 2022.

CRECIBENI, Nelson. **Convocação geral a folia está na rua**. O carnaval de São Paulo tem história de verdade. São Paulo: O Artífice Editorial, 2000.

DA SILVA, A.A. & BRAIA, A. **Memórias do Seu Nenê da Vila Matilde**. São Paulo: Lemos Editorial, 2000.

ANHEMBI 30 anos – Casais de mestre-sala e porta-bandeira. Produção Faixa Amarela do Carnaval. 2021. 1 vídeo (19'29"). Publicado pelo canal Faixa Amarela do Carnaval. Disponível em <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztidtvDJI3l&t=122s>. Acesso em 26 jul. 2022.

FERRON, Luiz. **Sapatos Brancos**: alargando as fronteiras da espetacularidades. São Paulo: Fomento à Dança/Núcleo Artístico Luiz Ferron. [s.d.] 1 disco compacto (CD-Room).

LIGA-SP. **Manual do Julgador**. Desfile das escolas de samba carnaval 2020. Grupo Especial. Grupo de Acesso I. Grupo de Acesso II. São Paulo. Formato PDF. 2020. Disponível em <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oilHvYIWAFmVHei1GeedSNhNUanEPr16/view> Acesso em 29 out. 2022.

MANZINI, Yaskara Donizeti. **“Pra tudo se acabar na quarta-feira”**: aproximações, diálogos e estranhamentos entre carnaval e teatro nas performances da Comissão de Frente. 2012. [s.n.] Tese (Doutorado em Artes). PPGA/Instituto de Artes/UNICAMP. Campinas, 2012.

MARCOS, Plínio. O carnaval dos cordões. Folha de São Paulo. Domingo, 13 de fevereiro de 1977. Folhetim. Banco de dados Folha. Acervo on line. Disponível em [http://almanaque.folha.uol.com.br/plinio\\_marcos\\_o\\_carnaval\\_dos\\_cordoes.htm](http://almanaque.folha.uol.com.br/plinio_marcos_o_carnaval_dos_cordoes.htm) . Acesso em 29 out. 2022.

MARIANO, Ednei Pedro. Entrevista cedida via *Google Meet*. São Paulo, 25 de julho de 2022, via google meets.

MORAES, Wilson Rodrigues de. **Escolas de Samba de São Paulo** (Capital). São Paulo: Conselho Estadual de Artes e Ciências Humanas, 1978.

MUSEU DA IMAGEM E DO SOM DO CARNAVAL. **Carnaval 2008**. Rosas de Ouro. Youtube. 23 jan. 2021. Disponível em

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WZxZKAaQGA>. Acesso em: 9 ago. 2022.

RATTZ, Alex. **Eu sou Atlântica**. Sobre a trajetória de vida de Beatriz Nascimento. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo/Instituto Kuanza, 2006.

REGO, José Carlos. **Dança do samba**: exercício do prazer. 2ª. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Aldeia, 1996.

SALGADO, Adriano F. Radiodifusão, fator social. *Cultura Política*: revista mensal de estudos brasileiros. Rio de Janeiro. Ano 1. Número 6. Agosto de 1941. Pp.76-93. Disponível em [http://memoria.bn.br/pdf/163538/per163538\\_1941\\_00006.pdf](http://memoria.bn.br/pdf/163538/per163538_1941_00006.pdf) Acesso em: 28 out. 2022.

ÔRÍ. Direção de Raquel Gerber. Produção Executiva: Raquel Gerber. São Paulo: Angra Filmes, Fundação do Cinema Brasileiro, 1989. 1 video, 35 mm, cor, 91 min, 2.493 m., 24 q, Eastmancolor, 1:1'37". Disponível em: <https://negrasoulblog.wordpress.com/2016/08/25/309/>. Acesso em: 15 ago. 21.

*Received on October 31st, 2022.*

*Approved on November 22th, 2022.*

REALIZAÇÃO



UFRJ

PPGDAN  
UFRJ

*Anda*  
associação nacional de  
pesquisadores em dança