

The

Brazilian

Choro:

by Tadeu Coelho and Julie Koidin

Historical Perspectives and Performance Practices

Balanço is to choro as swing is to jazz—in both, mandatory elements to proper performance and enjoyment of the music. Immersion in the sound of choro is imperative to playing it well. Knowledge of its origins and history is also helpful.

Introduction

David Willoughby, editor of the *College Music Society Newsletter*, posed these questions: Should it not be a constantly sought after goal for musicians trained in narrow specialties to work together towards broader musical understandings and towards the creation of a more vibrant musical culture? Should such a culture comprise only materials imported from Western Europe? Should it not synthesize musical repertoires, of various kinds, from all over the world?¹

Throughout the world, the tradition of a country studying its own cultural practices is not inceptive with its art. Such is the case of the choro, an indigenous music of Brazil, mostly instrumental, but at times with lyrics. Although most sources credit the beginnings of the style (which later led to the establishment of choro as a genre—see below) to Joaquim Calado in the second half of the 19th century, it has only recently begun to receive formal research and analysis. Its aural tradition of study and performance practice has contributed to its regionalism. In the past, it was difficult to encounter enthusiasts of choro outside of its birthplace, Rio de Janeiro. Even with the availability of recordings and printed music, the essence of the performance practice of choro is difficult to obtain without experiencing first-hand the medium in its native environment.

Musicians who perform choro, known as *chorões*, use the expressions *balanço*, *ginga*, and *malandro* to indicate the proper feel and attitude for the performance of choro. A direct translation of *balanço* is awkward, but suffice it to say that the word indicates a “swing” to the music, much like a veteran performer of jazz would “swing” music otherwise indicated as two even eighth notes. The literal translation of *malandro* is “scoundrel,” and applies to the soloist who takes

the melody through spirited improvisations, sometimes quoting other melodies, from popular to classical styles. Although easier to decipher these performance intricacies via recordings, it still remains difficult—although not impossible—to catch the “twinkle” in the performer’s eye.

Choro’s limited dissemination is furthered by its lack of accurate printed music. The vast majority of sheet music publications have accompaniment that is written in a lead sheet format, i.e. chord symbols over melody. Without a recording, it would be impossible to decipher the rhythms used in the accompaniment. The numerous errors found in the majority of publications, both in the melodic lines and chord symbols, further infringe on the probability of the musician’s accurate musical interpretation.

Historical Background

The *lundú* dance arrived in Brazil with the first African slaves brought by the Portuguese during the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries. The first reference to it dates from the 1780s. The *lundú* was a sensual dance from the regions of Angola and the Congo. It was so sensual that by the end of the 18th century it was considered indecent. By the late 19th century, however, it had grown to become accepted as either a dance or song format at all social levels. From the time of its emergence into Brazil to the beginning of the 20th century, the *lundú* was transformed by its contact with other Brazilian dances. This transformation was hastened by the many European influences on Brazilian culture, including the introduction of the polka, around 1845, and the Spanish *habanera*, a result of Spain’s advances in the continent. Another dance, the *modinha*, was eventually combined with the *lundú*. The *modinha*, unlike the *lundú*, was a slow lyrical and sentimental song,

usually referring to a distant past, and popular in the royal Portuguese court during the 18th century. In Brazil however, it went from the court to the streets, with the guitar as its primary instrument.²

At the end of the 19th century, still another dance arose—the *maxixe*—a mixture of the *lundú* and the *modinha*, with syncopated rhythms linked to the *habañera*.³ As the first urban dance of Brazil, arising from ballrooms, it was also the first truly “Brazilian” development in music. The most common instrumentation was piano solo or a trio consisting of flute, guitar, and *cavaquinho*.⁴ Although the *maxixe* had certain consistent characteristics, such as a fast 2/4 tempo, and a major tonality, it was without a defined formal structure. It was, however, most often set in variation form or a ternary ABA.

The *maxixe* was considered a risqué dance, and in fact, outlawed. Some composers of this period would often disguise their *maxixes* for publishing by calling them *tango brasileiro* in order to meet general social acceptance. This period was a time in Brazil when ballroom dances became extremely popular, and the necessity grew to either copy or create new music. Thus the *maxixe* later lent its influence to other Brazilian music forms such as the *samba*, *choro*, and the *bossa nova*. Modifications to the form came about naturally and informally in that it was primarily amateur musicians who played these forms of music in their free time.

The Choro

The choro represents the height of Brazilian nationalism, having its birthdate estimated to be between 1867 and the early 1870s. According to José Maria Neves, the choro is the most authentic manifestation of popular Brazilian music.⁵ Choro, as a genre, was born of the unconscious necessity to nationalize foreign music—not to repeat it, but to create a unique musical identity.⁶ It is probably a good analogy with the national dish *feijoada*, where a lot of different ingredients are thrown in to make the stew.

The word *choro* in Portuguese comes from the verb *chorar*, which means to cry or weep. Some experts suggest that the music gained its appellation because of its occasional melancholy sound (although its character is often jovial). Other sources trace a connection with the Afro-Brazilian dances or parties called *xolo*, or with the *Charamelas*, instrumental fraternity groups that performed at certain religious activities and at occasional private parties. The *Charamela* musicians were referred to as *Charamelheiros* or *Choromeleiros* and they used the *Charamella*, a double reed instrument in their groups.⁷ A connection to the Latin, *chorus melleus*, or sweet sounds, is another possibility.⁸ By the end of the 19th century, the word *choro* was also used to designate instrumental groups comprised of *cariocas* (natives of Rio de Janeiro), who would perform tangos, waltzes, and polkas in serenades and at family gatherings and popular festivities.

In its infancy as a style, choro was primarily a way of performing European dance music, such as waltzes, polkas, schottisches, and mazurkas, rather than a genre unto itself. Its newly created renditions of European dances were mixed with the syncopation and flair of Afro-Brazilian music.⁹ By the beginning of the 20th century, choro had developed into an independent genre, as an outgrowth of the performance practice, having its own distinctive characteristics. Originally, amateur musicians performed choro in a *terno* (trio) or *pau e corda* (group consisting of flute, guitar, and *cavaquinho*). The flute played the ornamented melodies, while the guitar and *cavaquinho* provided the improvised harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment as well as the melodic counterpoint.¹⁰ Since there were no written arrangements, each instrument randomly alternated between solo and accompanying parts. Later on, with the famous collaboration between Pixinguinha and Benedicto

Lacerda, two of choro’s most illustrious wind players, the counter melody was introduced to choro.

It is possible that the freedom of the instrumental solo line of choro paved the way for improvisation to be included in its performance practice. Additionally, or

alternatively, the rise in the improvisatory nature of choro was possibly due to the practice of embellishing the melody as was happening concurrently with North American jazz. Virtuosity, therefore, developed to a high level, and continues to be a hallmark in the style,¹¹ although, with Calado, we already see the virtuoso element taking shape.

After the turn of the century, new instruments such as *bandolim* (Brazilian mandolin), piccolo, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, baritone, and trombone were integrated into the groups as solo instruments. According to Tinhorão, it was during the 1930s that percussion instruments were also added to the choro.¹² Lyrics were added to some of the most popular choros (*Tico-Tico No Fubá*, *Carinhoso*, *Lamento*) during the 1930s and ’40s, as an influence of the North American Big Bands.¹³ According to Tom Garcia, “It is an ironic twist that great choros were preserved by the very change in popularity and foreign influence which precipitated its decline.”¹⁴

Choro Performers

Flutist Joaquim Antonio da Silva Calado Júnior (1848–1880) is traditionally credited as the founder of the original choro group, introducing the flute as a solo instrument in this genre. Not only is the first choro group attributed to Calado, but the first choro composition as well. *Querida por Todos* (Loved by All) was published in 1869, subtitled “Polka,” and dedicated to Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847–1935). This composition merges polka, Spanish *habañera*, and the Brazilian *maxixe*.¹⁵

Calado’s group consisted of flute, *cavaquinho*, and two guitars. Other musicians, such as Viriato Figueira da Silva

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Julie Koidin and Altamiro Carrilho in August 2005.

(1863–1934) and Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847–1935), were important contributors and frequent guests. Considered the successor of Calado, Viriato was an accomplished flutist, but not a prolific composer. Mentored by Calado, Chiquinha Gonzaga was key in the development of the choro. It is probable that Calado's early death prompted Gonzaga to pursue the choro even further. In 1889, Chiquinha composed a Brazilian Tango entitled *Só no Choro*. This is one of the first instances in which the word "choro" appears in print.

The pianist/composer Ernesto Nazareth (1863–1934) expanded Calado's pioneering work in popular urban music by employing a style of playing that resulted in a "delayed downbeat," three-plus-three-plus-two units and a fine sense of wit in his compositions. As a silent movie pianist in a famous movie theater in Rio, Nazareth was also influenced by American ragtime, Argentinean *tango*, and the Spanish *habanera*.

Pattápio Silva (1880–1907) is perhaps the only flutist of mulatto origin who acquired national fame in the classical genre around the turn of the century in Brazil. In 1888, when Pattápio was just 8 years old, Brazil became the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery. He struggled throughout his life for social acceptance because of his mixed ancestry. In 1901, Pattápio moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he worked as a barber and later in a printing shop. He finally gathered enough courage to audition at the National Institute of Music, studying with Duque Estrada Meyer (1846–1905), the most famous flute teacher in Brazil at the time. He completed the six-year course requirements in only two years, graduating in 1903. At the final exam, he received the Institute's first prize and the gold medal. Although Pattápio had a very limited output, he captured the hearts of his audiences. His compositions, written in the style of salon pieces of the Romantic period, are technically demanding and reflect his incredible virtuosity. The music portrays European influences as the subtitles imply, but

the character is truly Brazilian: light, syncopated, and enjoyable for the performer and audience alike.

Probably the most influential composer in the preservation of choro during the 20th century was the flutist Alfredo da Rocha Vianna Jr. (1897–1973), or *Pixinguinha*, as he was more commonly known. Unquestionably the most prolific choro composer in history, Pixinguinha has composed the majority of the most popular choros for flute, namely *Um a Zero*, *Naquele Tempo*, *Vou Vivendo*, *Segura Ele*, *Tapa Buraco*, *Ingênuo*, *Chorei*, *Lamento*, *Urubú Malandro*, and *Carinhoso*, among others.

Benedicto Lacerda (1903–1958), composer and flutist, was a contemporary of Pixinguinha. With his popular group Conjunto Regional appearing regularly on radio and recordings, Lacerda was influential in the choro milieu. He was a leading force in establishing the "correct" swing for choro by being more faithful to the Brazilian feel without the intrusion of styles such as polka and ragtime. In addition to his role as bandleader and flutist extraordinaire, Lacerda also spearheaded the copyright laws for musicians, and headed the Brazilian musicians' union. Beginning in 1945, Lacerda, on flute, teamed up with Pixinguinha, on tenor sax, to form one of the most famous duos in choro history. Their style of melody and counterpoint has been preserved in 34 recordings on the RCA Victor label. These recordings, which Lacerda negotiated along with publishing contracts, helped promote Pixinguinha's music anew at a time when Pixinguinha was in a financial crisis due to a decline in work.¹⁶ In exchange, Pixinguinha agreed to include Lacerda's name as "co-composer" on approximately two dozen of his already composed works.¹⁷

Altamiro Carrilho

Probably choro's greatest flutist of all times, Altamiro Carrilho is also a prolific choro composer. Carrilho, born in 1924, was a young musician at the height of choro's popularity (mid 1940s), and has accumulated a wealth of experience playing with Brazil's most famous musicians, including Pixinguinha and Benedicto Lacerda. Carrilho began playing the flute (bamboo) at age 5. At 11, he played in the "Banda Lira de Arion" with his relatives, uncles and cousins. At 12 he began to study the flute, and finished his course work in only two years. At age 15 he recorded his first LP. On many occasions he substituted for Benedicto Lacerda, and accompanied famous singers such as Francisco Alves, Orlando Silva, Vicente Celestino, Sílvio Caldas, and Augusto Calheiros. He succeeded Lacerda in the popular group Regional do Canhoto (formerly known as the *Conjunto Regional Benedicto Lacerda*).

According to Carrilho, he has more than 110 recordings, most of which are now out of print, and more than 200 compositions, and has toured Europe and the Americas. Carrilho indicated that he was most influenced by flutists Dante Santoro and Benedicto Lacerda, but his style emerged from listening to a variety of music, including American and European jazz, Dixieland, Scott Joplin, and

classical, which he combined into one style he calls his own.¹⁸ Altamiro's style is based on his sense of humor and his love of performing. Playing in a "teasing" manner—in Portuguese, *brincando*—is key to his musical personality. Carrilho often uses this term to describe his style and the necessity of having fun with the music.

Formal Structure of the Choro

Form and Harmony

Having a strong lineage from the European dance idioms, choro patterns its harmonic and melodic structure after its close relatives. The majority of choros are in rondo form, ABACA, with each section approximately the same length and in a 2/4 time signature. If the piece is in a major key, the B section would move to the dominant, parallel or relative minor, or tonic, and the C section would be in the subdominant or dominant. If the choro is in a minor key, the C section might move to the parallel or relative major.¹⁹ Initially, the harmonies were not complex, and used the contemporary harmonic language as did the *modinha* and *lundú*.

Although standard progressions are still used, I-IV-V7-I in major, and I-III-VI-II-V7-I in minor, for example, current composers and arrangers are branching out to include chord substitutions and chromaticism, found in contemporary classical music and jazz. Contemporary stylistic fusions abound, with groups such as Rabo de Lagartixa and Nó em Pingo D'Água not only incorporating funk and rock into their arrangements of traditional and newly composed choros, but also adding non-traditional instruments such as electric or acoustic bass, and eliminating the seven-string guitar. Conversely, and perhaps heralding from choro's earliest days of setting European dance tunes, Henrique Cazes and Altamiro Carrilho are two notable arrangers who have remained within the boundaries of traditional choro harmonies and instrumentations to accompany non-choro melodies. Cazes has produced choro albums of the Beatles and J.S. Bach, while Carrilho has recorded well-known classical repertoire by Chopin, J.S. Bach, and Beethoven.

Melody

The vast majority of choros begin with pick-up notes, usually starting in the second beat (in 2/4), with three 16th notes, an eighth and 16th note, or simply, an eighth note. It is conceivable that the pick-ups assisted the accompaniment musicians, who did not read music, as a preparation for the performance.²⁰ In general, melodies are outlines of the harmonic accompaniment, with chromatic and diatonic scales as passing-tones. It is important to note that the melody also includes facets of the rhythmic accompaniment, as well as elements of the *baixaria* (bass line).

Bass Line

The bass line was traditionally played by the common six-string guitar. Later, the seven-string guitar assumed that role. In the terno, the original configuration of the

choro ensemble—flute, guitar, and cavaquinho—the guitar provides both chordal and rhythmic accompaniment as well as the bass line. The bass line contains runs, providing a melodious line called the *baixaria*. The *baixaria* line is akin to the contrapuntal bass lines found in Baroque music.²¹

Ex. 1²²



Rhythmic Accompaniment

The rhythmic accompaniment is crucial to choro's style, and consists of several "standard" figures, as noted below. In some choros, to specify the accompaniment style, a descriptive subtitle appears on the sheet music, such as "choro-maxixe," "choro-polka," "choro-tango," "choro-samba," "choro schottisch," and "choro-baião." According to Altamiro Carrilho, there are more than 20 "styles" of choro.²³

Below are examples of how a rhythmical accompaniment might be provided by a guitar or piano.²⁴

Ex. 2 Choro Maxixe Accompaniment



Ex. 3 Choro Polka Accompaniment



Ex. 4 Choro Tango Accompaniment (as exemplified in Chiquinha Gonzaga's Gaúcho)



Ex. 5 Choro Samba Accompaniment



OR

Ex. 6 Choro Samba Accompaniment



Ex. 7 Choro schottisch Accompaniment



Ex. 8 Choro baião Accompaniment



A mixture of these rhythms in the accompaniment, as well as the inclusion of the baixaria, gives the genre its trademark.

Performance Practices

Swing

European composers have long noted this rhythmic swing or the aforementioned *balanço*. Perhaps the first to write about these rhythmic nuances in reference to the music of Ernesto Nazareth was Darius Milhaud, who lived in Brazil from February 1917 to November 1918.²⁵ During the First World War, Milhaud accompanied Paul Claudel, the appointed French Minister to Brazil, as his secretary. He was particularly impressed with the style and swing in the music of Ernesto Nazareth, and wrote the following:

The rhythms of this popular music intrigued and fascinated me. There was in the syncopation an imperceptible suspension, a languorous breath, a subtle pause, which seemed to me very

difficult to capture. I then purchased a large quantity of *maxixes* and tangos and tried to play them with the syncopation which alternated from one hand to the other. My efforts were rewarded and I was finally able to express and analyze this “little nothing” so typically Brazilian.²⁶

This inherent characteristic swing, so essential to choro, is one of the most difficult interpretational aspects of the performance practice for those not acclimated to this music. The predominant rhythm of 16th-eighth-16th, is not played as written, much like even eighths are not played as such in jazz. Instead, the choro rhythm is played more like two 16th, 16th rest, 16th, or like an even triplet. According to Thomas Garcia:

The choro divides the bar and the beat differently than American jazz. Whereas in jazz, [the] weight in each measure is on [the] second and fourth division (what Brazilians call ‘suíngue americano’ [American swing]), in choro the emphasis is on the first and third. Another difference between the choro and jazz is the division of the beat. In jazz the beat in 4/4 is divided in triplets, producing the effect of a 12/8. The beat in choro is divided evenly into four 16th notes.²⁷

Examples of Choro rhythm

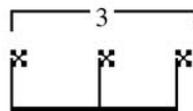
Ex. 9 Standardly written, and played as follows:



Ex. 10 Alternative manner to play example #9:



Ex. 11 Alternative manner to play example #9:



Rhythmic Nuances

Most non-Brazilians have a characteristic “accent” while playing choro. In order to diminish or even eliminate an “accent,” one needs to pay close attention to nuances in articulation and rhythmic feel, including anticipation of the beat. It is helpful to hear a native speaker sing-speak the melody. This can be referred to as the “first step to glory” when learning music.²⁸ It involves the monosyllabic pronunciation of the music: pa ru di da du – da, pa ru di da du – da, which reflects the beginning of *Tico-Tico*. This process reveals the phrasing, the stresses and releases of the notes, dynamics, note lengths, and the “emotional” content of the music. It is an effective device to use with students, as they can quickly assimilate the “accent” of the music by hearing it and feeling its “pronunciation.”

Ex. 12

pa ru di da du da pa ru di da du da pa ru di da du ba da di du da du da
 um ti- co ti- co só um ti- co ti- co lá já- ta co- men-do to- do to -do meu fu- bá
OR
 um ti- co ti- co lá um ti- co ti- co ca um ti- co ti- co ta co- men-do meu fu- bá

Example: *Tico-Tico No Fubá* by Zequinha de Abreu, lyrics by Eurico Barreiros, measures 1-4.

Although choro is mainly an instrumental genre, several have added lyrics. It is helpful to learn the lyrics with their proper pronunciation and natural cadence to acquire the characteristic phrasing and timing. Typically, the melody is played slightly before the beat, instead of on the back-end of the beat as is standard in jazz. *Lamento* by Pixinguinha is a good example of a choro that anticipates the beat in its melody, and indicates its phrasing via its lyrics.

Lamento, first verse:

Morena,
 Tem pena
 Mas ouve o meu lamento
 Tento em vão
 Te esquecer
 Mas olhe o meu tormento é tanto
 Que eu vivo em pranto e sou todo infeliz
 Não ha coisa mais triste meu benzinho
 Que esse chorinho que eu ti fiz.²⁹

*Dear (Woman with dark skin, hair and eyes),
 Take pity
 But hear my lament
 I try in vain
 To forget you
 But, listen, my torment is so much
 That I live weeping and I am totally unhappy
 My dear, there is nothing sadder
 Than that chorinho that I composed for you*

Ex. 13

Mo_ re ____ na Tem pe ____ na Mas ou ____ ve..o
 6 meu la ____ men ____ to Ten to em vão ____
 10 Te es ____ que ____ cer ____ Mas o - lhe.o meu tor ____ men ____
 14 ____ to.é tan ____ to Que eu vi ____ vo.em -
 16 pran to.e sou to _ do.in _ fe ____ liz Não ha coi _ sa mais tris ____ te
 20 meu ____ ben _ zi ____ nho que esse chor _ i _ nho que eu ti fiz ____

Performance practice of articulation is similar to that of baroque music.

Articulation

In the case of articulations, the length and the harmonic stress each note receives are very much connected to the melodic inflections of the music. Articulation is highly variable and subject to the style of the player and the idiomatic tendencies of the instrument. Generally, note lengths vary, depending on the mood of the piece. According to Altamiro Carrilho, a “dry” articulation is appropriate for faster choros, but slower, more “romantic” choros should have more of a triplet feel—almost equal.³⁰ *Um a Zero* is an example of the fast, technical, and dry choro, while *Carinhoso* exemplifies the slower, romantic choro. In *André de Sapato Novo*, the notes can be played very detached and short, or, alternatively, smoothly, in a legato style, if the performer wants to convey a relaxed feel.

The performance practice of articulation is in fact similar to that of baroque music. Rarely are sweeping slurs used. For the most part, all tongued, slur three/tongue one, or slur two/tongue two, are common articulations for wind players. Like baroque urtext editions, the majority of choro sheet music is written without articulations, leaving it up to the performer’s discretion. Also, akin to baroque performance practice, it is commonplace to change articulations upon the repeat of a section to give variety.

Choro has become characterized by amazing virtuosic displays by the soloist. To this end, double-tonguing on the part of the flutist is a necessity. In choro, double-tonguing keeps with the swing of the music, much as in jazz, and therefore leans towards a more legato approach in slower choros. In moderate to slow tempo choros, double-tonguing generally will follow the accents of the *pandeiro* to propel the music forward without sounding rushed. Very fast double-tonguing, however, needs to be lighter, much like the *Ti dill* of the baroque or jazz articulation. One should keep in mind that few Brazilian flutists at the turn of the 19th century knew how to double tongue, but the technique developed as the virtuosity of the music gained popularity. Also, clarinet and saxophone players do not generally double-tongue. When used in choro, these instruments will use a more legato and relaxed approach. On the other hand, the mandolin repeats its notes to sustain the sound. When this technique is translated to the flute, it will most often be used as flutter-tonguing or other ornamental devices such as trills. Poyares used a distinct vibrato (almost like a double-flutter tonguing) technique.

Influence of the *Pandeiro* in Articulation

Today, the *pandeiro* (Brazilian tambourine) is the rhythmic backbone—the driving force—of the choro ensemble. To understand the rhythmic complexities of this instrument is to understand the basis of the Brazilian “swing” in choro. Generally, the *pandeiro* plays even 16ths, with occasional rhythmical punctuations during “breaks” in the music. The running 16ths, however, are not created equal—they take on different stress/accents within the beat. The flutist should listen carefully to this instrument

to imitate the rhythmical accentuation and apply it to his or her own articulation.

Tone Color

For flutists, as with vocalists, tone color is one of the most personal aspects of an individual’s style. Within each person’s tonal palette, the lighter “color” of tone is usually preferable to a heavy sound when performing choro. The style itself should be the determining factor on how a performer uses vibrato. The focus on tone quality is not of utmost importance within choro flute playing, as it is in “classically” trained circles. Instead, the swing and improvisatory inventiveness of the flutist are held in much higher esteem.

Tone color, however, can be used to enhance certain changes within the choro. A fuller, more intense tone can be introduced during the dominant key areas (as well as more vibrato if in a slow tempo choro). Imitation of vowel sounds in choros with lyrics can be helpful. For example, in the choro *Carinhoso*, the “ão” sound (approximately nasal “ahwun”) found in the word *coração* (heart), can be imitated by using a darker sound.

According to Carrilho, some flutists play too brightly in the upper register, and too forcefully.³¹ It is better to play in the third register with a rounded sound, less aggressive. To address this issue, Carrilho often employs alternate fingerings to produce a less piercing sound in the third octave.

Improvisation

Improvisation in choro is very different from improvisation used in jazz, and in fact, has more similarities to Baroque music. Whereas in jazz the musicians oftentimes play “outside” of the harmony—notes that are either not in the chord, or ninths, 11ths, 13ths, etc.—in traditional choro, the musician needs to stay within the harmony, normally not straying any farther than seventh chords. A typical embellishment would be creating a turn, *grupetto*, out of a couple of eighth notes, or arpeggiating a chord. Filling in intervals greater than a third with scales is very common.

Flutists often use flutter tonguing as an embellishment. It can be used to highlight a phrase in the melody, to emphasize a held note at the peak of a phrase, or even to ornament a descending scale, especially if it is chromatic. Several choros, such as *Flôr Amorosa*, *Naquele Tempo*, *Vê Se Gostas*, and *André de Sapato Novo*, can benefit from this technique. Flutter tonguing has the connotation of playfulness, and can even represent “birdlike” characteristics. In *Urubú Malandro* (Mischievous Crow), for example, this technique can be exploited to enhance the playfulness of the bird.

According to Carrilho, *Lamento* is particularly good for improvisation because of the harmony. When improvising a second part to the melody—a counter melody—one should embellish the first part and reflect either the simplicity or complexity of the first player’s improvisation. The counter melody should be played more rhythmically, outlining the

harmony, and using motifs that emphasize four 16ths per beat, or combinations of eighths and 16ths.³²

Trills and Mordents

Many flute chorões favor the use of mordents, trills, and tremolos. In most situations, the trills or mordents will be used quickly, on eighth notes or shorter, and are not sustained since notes held longer than half notes are relatively rare. The longer note values in *Carinhoso* provide an opportunity to use sustained trills.

Tico-Tico No Fubá offers opportunities for quick mordents on the downbeats of each measure in the A section (see example #12).

Mordents, which are usually played before the beat, can be used throughout choro to emphasize downbeats, as well as endings of phrases and cadences. Over-use of this technique, however, creates predictability and staleness.

Appoggiaturas

Appoggiaturas are used in conjunction with the anticipation of the downbeat or otherwise performed quickly, before the beat. In the latter case they typically portray birds, such as in the choros *Urubú Malandro* and *O Gato e O Canário* (The Cat and the Canary) (see example below). Appoggiaturas are used at the beginning of this “Polka-Choro,” and could be interpreted as the *canário* (canary).

Ex. 14

Example: *O Gato e O Canário* by Pixinguinha

Glissandi

Glissandi, mostly descending, are popular with choro flutists, especially at the end of phrases. They are usually performed with an extreme *decrescendo*, perhaps to reflect a sigh or other element related to crying (*chorar*). Altamiro Carrilho suggests that descending glissandos are always chromatic at the end of phrases, but within a phrase, or if ascending, they would reflect the current key.³³ An interesting aspect related to the technique of choro flutists is that most of them pre-

fer using the Bb thumb lever in the chromatic, descending glissando as an effect, more so than the right-hand lever or first finger right-hand fingering.

Endings

Typically, the endings of choro are an arpeggiated triad, either ascending or descending (see examples below). However, oftentimes they are embellished or improvised. Altamiro Carrilho stated “whatever you want to end with is fine—nothing is standard.”³⁴

Below are typical choro endings, without ornamentation:

Ex. 15 Downward:

Ex. 16 Upward:

Conclusion

Choro has endured over a century. It has survived the popularity of various movements of Brazilian music—*bossa nova*, *pagode*, *samba*, *tropicalia*—as well as influences from abroad. Most Brazilians have heard choro at some point in their lives, and for the younger set it was considered the music of older generations. Choro's popularity has fluctuated since its inception, and it has been having its latest increase in popularity beginning in the late 1990s, especially among young musicians. For the first time in choro's history, music schools specifically dedicated to teaching choro have sprung up in various locations throughout Brazil. The resurgence of interest in choro is directly connected to Brazilians' desire to salvage their cultural identity. Within the new generation of choro musicians, there is a wide range of performance styles, from the traditional to the innovative. What remains consistent, however, and a staple of choro, is the "feel"—the *balanço*—and the inventive spirit—the *malandro*—in which it is rendered.

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Just as close listening and immersion are the best ways to learn a spoken language and the subtleties of its pronunciation and accent, so too, do these tools apply when learning choro. It is therefore recommended that the reader acquire various choro recordings, transcribe the pieces or order music from the various sources available online, and, if possible, listen to live ensembles. These strategies will pave the way toward achieving a convincing performance of this intriguing, imaginative, and beautiful music called choro. ✱

Tadeu Coelho joined the faculty of the North Carolina School of the Arts in fall 2002. He appears frequently as a guest artist in national and international festivals throughout Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. Coelho received his DMA from the Manhattan School of Music as a student of Julius Baker and Ransom Wilson. He gave his New York recital debut at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in April of 1992. Coelho is an avid proponent of new music and the music of the Americas. His solo CDs include *Life-Drawing: Works for Solo Flute*, *Rompe!*, *Flutists of the World*, and *Flute Music from Brazil*. His newest recording, *18th Century Flute Sonatas*, was released in summer 2005. He can also be heard performing works by Thomas Delio on *3D Classics* and *Villa-Lobos on Albany Records*. Tadeu Coelho has published the complete works of Pattápio Silva and other pieces for solo flute and collections of daily exercises with accompanying CDs. More information is available at tadeucoelho.com.

Julie Koidin is pursuing her DM in flute performance at Northwestern University and writing her dissertation on *Benedicto Lacerda*. Her duo, *Dois no Choro*, with guitarist/vocalist Paulinho Garcia, has recorded two CDs, *Carinhoso and Juntos*; the latter, having the participation of Altamiro Carrilho and Maria Teresa Madeira, received a grant from the Illinois Arts Council and two first-round nominations for the 2003 Latin Grammy Awards. In 2002 she received a Fulbright Lecture/Research Grant to Brazil. She has performed extensively throughout Brazil with artists such as Altamiro Carrilho and Maria Teresa Madeira. For more information, please see atouchofclassensembles.com.

Footnotes

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22. Garcia, Paulinho. Chicago, IL. January 4, 2002.
23. Carrilho, Altamiro. Personal Interview by Julie Koidin, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. 1997.

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- 25 Tadeu Coelho, *Guidelines to the Performance of Selected Chamber Music for the Flute of Heitor Villa-Lobos*. (Doctoral dissertation, Manhattan School of Music, 1994), 17.
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- 28 Coelho, Tadeu. Pedagogical approach.
- 29 Moraes, Vinicius de.
- 30 Carrilho, Altamiro. Personal interview by Julie Koidin, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1997.
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