

Invitation to Brazilian Dance

Contributed by Daniella Thompson
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The old dance hall isn't dead. Anyone who has watched the Mexican film *Danzón* can attest to the spellbinding attraction of those old-fashioned spaces where entwined sweaty couples sway sinuously for hours.

Brazil's dance hall, the *gafieira*, is closely allied to *choro*. The country's greatest *choro* musicians, from Pixinguinha to Luiz Americano, regularly played in these venues, for couples to dance.

The great clarinetist (and at other times saxophonist) Paulo Moura continues this tradition in his latest disc, *Estação Leopoldina*. The CD's title (much like Guinga's *Suíte Leopoldina*) alludes to the Rio working-class suburbs, cradle of *choro* and *pagode*.

Paulo Moura's *gafieira romp*.

Moura, who in the 1980s grew dissatisfied with his jazz-oriented repertoire, moved from the southern bairro of Botafogo to the northern suburb of Ramos.

His new house was just in front of the quadra of the samba school *Imperatriz Leopoldinense*, and the famous carnival bloco *Cacique de Ramos* was nearby.

Beth Carvalho, with whom Moura worked at that time, introduced him to roots samba, as well as to the new *pagode* movement then being born in Ramos.

From Ramos, Moura borrowed the typical *pagode* percussion instruments, such as the *tantan* and the *repique-de-mão*. But *pagode* is a sung medium, and a wholly instrumental album needed a companion voice for the clarinet.

Moura settled on the accordion, remembering the accordion-clarinet duets that Orlando Silveira and Luiz Americano used to play on the radio of his youth.

Enter accordionist Chico Chagas, who adds rhythmic texture to most of the tracks and contributes his own composition on track nine.

Opening the disc with a flourish is Moura's "*Estação Leopoldina*," a traditional *gafieira* tune that urges any listener to jump up and dance (even if s/he doesn't know how). "*Fibra*" introduces a measure of contemporary *chutzpah* to the proceedings.

The *choro* classics are represented by three Jacob do Bandolim tunes and one by Radamés Gnattali. Baden Powell's "*Deve Ser Amor*" is turned into a sensual Latin dance-hall number, while João Donato's "*Bananeira*" receives an adventurous opening that blends Yiddish-like guitar trills with remote *cuíca* howls.

Among the more recent compositions, Rodrigo Lessa's "*Rala Coxa*" carries a strong klezmer flavor, while Rodrigo Campello's "*Oritimbo*" (buttocks) is evocative of Brazil's Northeast.

Among these and other colorfully rhythmic tunes, Moura's waltz "*Linda*" offers a lovely change of pace. And traditional samba isn't left out: a medley of golden classics allows the dancers to take a break and sing along.

Also worth a listen:
Gafieira Dance Brasil with Paulo Moura and pianist Cliff Korman.

Paulo Moura: *Estação Leopoldina*
(Rádio MEC RM015/Rob Digital; 2003) 66:19 min.

01. *Estação Leopoldina* (Paulo Moura/Almazor Cavalcante)

02. Fibra (Eloir Moraes/Paulo Moura)
03. Simplicidade (Jacob Pick Bittencourt)
04. Nosso Romance (Jacob Pick Bittencourt)
05. Deve Ser Amor (Baden Powell/Vinicius de Moraes)
06. Bananeira (João Donato/Gilberto Gil)
07. Rala Coxa (Rodrigo Lessa)
08. Oritimbó (Rodrigo Campello)
09. Pro Paulo (Chico Chagas)
10. Maré Cheia (Paulo Moura/Jorge Degas)
11. Linda (Paulo Moura)
12. Remexendo (Radamés Gnattali)
13. Pot-Pourri:
 - Ai, que Saudade da Amélia (Ataulfo Alves/Mário Lago)
 - Trem das Onze (Adoniran Barbosa)
 - Prêmio de Consolação (Jayme "Meira" Florence/Augusto Mesquita)
 - Leva Meu Samba (Ataulfo Alves)
14. Receita de Samba (Jacob Pick Bittencourt)

Chalana de Prata Navigates the Pantanal.

Chalana de Prata

Situated in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul on the borders of Bolivia and Paraguay, and connected to Argentina by way of the Prata Basin, the Pantanal shares various social and cultural customs, figures and accents of speech, and musical rhythms with its neighboring Spanish-speaking countries.

The Chamamé, for example, is an Argentine dance that has found a home in Brazil. The guarânia crossed the border from Paraguay, while the polka is a European import popularized throughout the Prata Basin.

They all coexist happily with typical local rhythms such as the cururu, the siriri, and the rasqueado, and with country rhythms such as the xote (also of European origins), which can be found all over Brazil.

Chalana de Prata is a musical group dedicated to spreading the Pantanal traditions. Composed of four well-known solo artists, the group includes the famous accordionist Dino Rocha, "King of the Chamamé"; guitarist and singer Guilherme Rondon; lead singer and bassist Celito Espíndola; and Paulo Simões, who plays 10-string viola and sings.

Chalana is a boat of the type that sails on the rivers of the Prata Basin. It's also the title of a famous song by Arlindo Pinto and Mário Zan that the group performs on this disc, along with the bandmembers' own compositions.

What unites all the tracks is a danceable joie de vivre that is an authentic regional expression. Among the delightful songs found here is the opening tune, "Prazer de Fazendeiro," a manifesto for cowboy indolence in the same way that Wilson Batista's "Lenço no Pescoço" was one for the malandro way of life:

O maior prazer na vida
 Já estou acostumado
 Abraçar moça bonita
 E dançar um rasquado

Carregar dinheiro aos maços
 E viver sempre folgado
 Lenço branco no pescoço
 Trinta e oito niquelado [...]

Equally enticing is the penultimate track, "Chamamé Comanda," which observes that even if you can't dance the chamamé, it wouldn't be hard to become addicted:

Quem não souber dançar
 Pode se acomodar na varandá
 Saiba que nesse baile
 O chamamé comanda

Mas se você tentar
Pode se acostumar a mudança
E até se viciar
Com essa nossa dança [...]

Listen to audio samples of all the tracks.

Chalana de Prata: Chalana de Prata
(Independent; 1998) 43:23 min.

Produced by André Magalhães

01. Prazer de Fazendeiro (Delio/Delinha)
02. Quero Quero (Celito Espíndola/Dino Rocha/Paulo Simões)
03. A Chalana (Mário Zan/Arlindo Pinto)
04. Morena que Vale a Pena (Celito Espíndola/Paulo Simões)
05. Invernada (Almir Sater/Guilherme Rondon/Paulo Simões)
06. Fazendeiro Rico (adaptação: Tavinho Moura)
07. Curupi (Dino Rocha)
08. Trem do Pantanal (Geraldo Roca/Paulo Simões)
09. Última Boiada (Guilherme Rondon/Paulo Simões)
10. As Mocinhas da Cidade (Nhô Belarmino)
11. Chamamé Comanda (Guilherme Rondon/Paulo Simões)
12. Baile Pantaneiro (Dino Rocha)

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