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Magazine Article:
Music and Dance in Brazil, Samba School

As our class traveled all across Brazil, everyone could see how much of a developing country Brazil is. This can be seen through architecture, culture, environment, transportation systems, technology, and many other aspects which are forming Brazil into a developed country. These are a few aspects which are pushing Brazil in the right direction; however, this country has a ways to go before the world can view it as a developed country. I wrote my research paper on the music and dance of Brazil and after the course and recent research I am able to see how the music and dance in Brazil is currently forming Brazil into a developed country and is having major impacts socially and economically in Brazil.

Brazil's music and dance is a direct representation of the expressions of people's emotions and attitudes. The aspects which make up this part of Brazil's culture come from all over the world and are a mixture of these aspects to form Brazil's music and dance. When the Portuguese arrived in Brazil, they brought many of their customs with them which originated from European society ("Music and Dance of Brazil"). These customs included different forms of songs such as ballads, church hymns, children songs, and love songs. The Portuguese people brought much into Brazil and were a major part in developing the music, dance, and culture.

African slave trade was very prominent in Brazil beginning in the 1500's. The African slaves' customs and traditions flourished throughout Brazil and contributed much in creating Brazilian music and in turn creating their forms of dance (McGowan and Pessanha). Also, when enslaved in Brazil these people kept practicing their religions and customs which were seen in the songs and religious dances. These beliefs were passed down to from generation to generation to maintain these traditions.

The combination of the European traditions from the Portuguese and the religious songs and dances from the enslaved Africans created the dance and music of Brazil that we know today ("Music of Brazil"). Throughout Brazil, the music and dance can have different forms and rhythms as well as motions and forms. Brazil is known throughout the world as the center and birthplace of the samba which originated from the Brazilian music known as the choro and has roots in ceremonial rituals of the African slaves. The African word "samba" means to pray to the gods. The samba can be seen throughout the year all over Brazil; however, when Carnival occurs is the time when it can best be seen and "symbolizes racial and social harmony" ("Samba").

Samba schools were created as an outlet for the younger Brazilian generations in poor communities. Originally, these schools were looked upon poorly by the upper class and were viewed as dangerous and morally wrong. So secret societies were formed where enthusiasts could dance and sing freely. In recent years, the samba schools are being

more and more accepted by others. Now the samba schools sing and dance during carnival and throughout the favelas.



Before entering the samba school in Rio de Janeiro, I believed that we were going to be taught how to dance the samba in a formal dance class and studio. Upon arrival we were all pleasantly surprised that samba school is more of a place for younger generations to dance, sing, and watch the samba dancers practice for the carnival competition. This school was like a huge party everyone was having a great time and they did not care what others thought of them. Every year during carnival the different samba schools compete with one another in a friendly dance competition through the streets of Rio de Janeiro. The winners are awarded respect and honor. The women wear revealing outfits and dance through their hips with arm motions. The author, Jonas Gerald, of the well known book, “Dancing – The Pleasure, Power, and Art of Movement”, stated that

"Out of this mix came the so-called 'samba schools', neighborhood-based social clubs whose principal purpose is to organize Carnival processions. At first, the authorities in Rio discouraged the participation of samba schools from the city's poorer black neighborhoods; in the early years of this century club-swinging police often broke up rowdier processions. In 1935 the samba schools were organized as official Carnival organization: in return, the schools agreed to abide by the city regulations governing the use of musical instruments and the allegorical themes around which the

pageants had to be structured. From this agreement Rio's modern carnival, a highly organized event that leaves room for individual 'acting out' was born."



This basically sums up what a samba school is and how the government is involved with the poorer communities. This relationship shows how the government is trying to work with the poorer communities to compromise instead of forcing them to not practice a custom which is so much of their culture.



Samba schools are unlike any party or social event I have ever experienced in my life. This is a once in a life time experience which can only be achieved in Brazil. The atmosphere is lively, exciting, full of life, passionate, extreme, and electrifying. Words

cannot explain the experience one will have at a samba school; it is something that one must experience to fully understand what it is.

Works Cited

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