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# Choro of Gordon Stout: Representation in a living art

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Choro of Gordon Stout  
Representation in a Living Art  
Elayne Harris

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the musical inspiration behind the collection of choros composed by American percussionist-composer, Gordon Stout. Three of Stout's choros, *Choro No. 1: Americana*, *Choro No. 3*, and *Choro No. 7: The Road Less Traveled* are discussed in detail within the context of traditional Brazilian choro and the solo guitar pieces by Augusto Marcellino, which directly inspired Stout's compositions. The research for this project included consulting musicological texts on choro, interviews with the composer and his colleague Pablo Cohen, listening to choro recordings, score study of traditional choro lead sheets, as well as the scores of Marcellino and Stout, and the performance of Marcellino's *Choro No. 9: Remeleixo* and Stout's *Choros Nos. 1, 3, and 7*. The paper shows the development of choro and its many representational roles in Brazil. The musical style and character of traditional Brazilian choro is then represented in the solo guitar choros of the Brazilian composer, Augusto Marcellino. Stout's choros take elements of Brazilian popular music via Marcellino's choros, and place them in a contemporary art music setting. The three forms of choro discussed in this paper, traditional choro roda, Marcellino's solo guitar works, and Stout's contemporary chamber works, all show the representational capabilities of music.



## Introduction

Music, like all art, is a representation of the world around us. It reflects the ever-changing social, political, and cultural experiences of the people involved in creating it. This paper will explore how the Brazilian popular music genre, choro, came to be represented by Gordon Stout, an American composer of art music, through the presentation of choro, what it is and what it has represented in Brazilian music; the choro of Augusto Marcellino, Stout's first exposure to the genre; and, in that context, Stout's original choros and how they were inspired by Brazilian music.

Gordon Stout, Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame Member since 2012, is world renowned as a performer and composer of marimba repertoire. In 1976, just out of Eastman, where he earned a bachelor's in applied percussion and a master's in composition, he was one of the featured marimba performers at the first Percussive Arts Society International Convention. His early recognition as a skilled performer of the instrument enhanced his recognition as a composer: due to the limited nature of marimba repertoire, Stout composed and performed many of his own works. Many of his pieces became early standards of the repertoire and continue to define it today.<sup>1</sup> More than forty years from the start of his compositional career, Stout continues to write solo and chamber ensemble music for the marimba. He also continues to be important to the performance and proliferation of new music by contemporary composers.

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<sup>1</sup> Lauren Vogel Weiss, "Hall of Fame: Gordon Stout," Percussive Arts Society, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.pas.org/About/the-society/halloffame/GordonStout.aspx>.

Stout has been the Professor of Percussion at Ithaca College since 1980. My experience with Stout's choros began at IC when he premiered *Choro No. 6: Bossa* and *Choro No. 7: The Road Less Traveled* with members of the Ithaca College faculty during my first semester as a master's student in percussion performance, fall 2009. My admiration for Stout as performer and composer originally inspired the topic of this paper. Conversations and interviews with Stout and the performance of some of the pieces in the collection contributed to the writing of this paper. I also spoke with Pablo Cohen, the Associate Professor of Guitar at Ithaca College, who participated on the premier of Stout's choros and is the person responsible for introducing Stout to the genre. Cohen has experience playing and lecturing on choro, and his family knew and associated with Augusto Marcellino and his wife. As there is little written about Marcellino's life or music, Cohen was my primary source of information on this composer. My own performance of Marcellino's *Choro No. 9: Remeleixo*, was also part of the research process.

Another part of preparing for this paper was listening to recordings of Brazilian choro made throughout its existence, as was score study of choros composed by Brazilian musicians other than Marcellino. I encourage the reader to listen to recordings included in the bibliography, or to seek out others, in order to gain an aural understanding of the concepts discussed in the following paper. With the exception of Pixinguinha, however, whom I mention briefly in the first chapter in conjunction with the analysis of one of his compositions, I have purposefully avoided the discussion of composers outside of Marcellino, including the renowned art music composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos, whose choros are a leading example of the cultural exchange between Brazilian classical and

Brazilian popular musicians. The goal of this paper is to trace the stylistic inspiration of Stout's choros, on which only Marcellino had a direct influence. In order to explain Marcellino's music, I have described the development of choro and codification of the genre's stylistic elements in a more general way.

The first chapter of this paper will explore varying representational contexts of choro, beginning with background on the social and musical environments of Brazil and Rio de Janeiro in which choro developed. Next, I will discuss the early choro ensemble, which was a continuation of the instrumentation of earlier ensembles, with a new social meaning. At this point, I will describe the musical elements that define traditional choro, which will provide the foundation for the musical comparison of pieces by Augusto Marcellino and Gordon Stout later in the paper. Finally, I will give an overview of the socio-political forces that popularized, exploited, and preserved the genre through the mid-1980s, and the state of choro today now that it has been freed from its duty as a flagship of Brazil culture.

Chapter 2 and 3 will focus on the representation of choro in the music of Brazilian composer, Augusto Marcellino, and American composer, Gordon Stout. Each chapter will give social and historical background on the composer that led to their choro compositions. I will then discuss any specific musical devices that show the inspiration and representation of choro in Marcellino's *Choro No. 9: Remeleixo*, and Gordon Stout's *Choro No. 1: Americana*, *Choro No. 3*, and *Choro No. 7: The Road Less Traveled*. I have also pointed out specific interpretative and performance issues with suggestions for how they may be solved.

In the final chapter concludes the paper. It summarizes the development of choro, its significance and impact on the choro of Marcellino, and the representation of Marcellino's choro and reflection of Brazilian choro in the collection by Gordon Stout.

## Chapter 1: Choro in Brazil

### Brazil

The history of Brazil as it affects choro begins with Portuguese colonization in the early 1500s. Colonizers planted New World crops, such as tobacco, cotton, and the labor-intensive sugar. Early attempts to enslave the native population failed: many were killed by European conquerors and diseases,<sup>2</sup> others died from brutal conditions of forced labor, or fled to the forested interior of the country.<sup>3</sup> While indigenous people did survive in remote areas of the country, and while their culture and music would later become part of the nationalist movement in Brazilian art music, it bears little relevance to choro, which formed primarily from the blending of European and African cultures.

Due to the lack of native slave labor, Brazilians relied exclusively on African slave labor, importing more slaves in the years 1528-1850 than any other New World colony: between 3.5 and 5 million. The three main ethnic groups represented among the African slaves were the *Sudanese*, from the areas that are now Nigeria, the Benin, and Ghana; the *Moslem Guinea-Sudanese*, also from Nigeria and Ghana; and the *Bantu*, from Angola, Zaire, and Mozambique.<sup>4</sup> Unlike slaves in the United States, Africans in Brazil were allowed to retain their languages, religious practices, and their family units. As a result, there was a freer cultural exchange between the two groups, beginning earlier than in America.

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<sup>2</sup> Chris McGowan and Ricardo Pessanha, *The Brazilian Sound* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## Music in Rio

Colonialists and their slaves spread throughout Brazil, which is vast and even more geographically varied than the United States with rainforest, open plains, and dry arid regions.<sup>5</sup> Regional demographic variety and isolation led to distinctive musical styles within different communities. Choro developed in the southeastern region of Brazil, in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

As a port city, Rio had the benefit of concentrated exposure to many different African and European cultures. The permanent population was composed of Portuguese elite and their house slaves. There were also many European visitors: politicians, family and relatives, businessmen and adventurers. The European elite and their visitors formed the upper class. The lower class included poor immigrants, freed slaves, and mulattos.

The Europeans brought their instruments, especially those that were easily transported, such as flute, violin, clarinet, guitar, and cavaquinho, along with the latest musical trends in European art song and popular dance. The city was also frequently swollen with the arrival of new slaves from Africa, who brought instruments and musical traditions of their own. The slaves already in the city had their music as well, which incorporated the spectrum of musical styles existing in the blend of cultures.<sup>6</sup> Among the musical styles and genres that contributed to the development of choro in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were the modinha, lundu, polka, and maxixe.

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<sup>5</sup> Chris McGowan and Ricardo Pessanha, *The Brazilian Sound* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Pablo Cohen, phone interview by the author, December 2014.

## **Modinha**

The history of the modinha takes place on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. It was originally a sentimental art song genre brought from Portugal to Brazil. It featured solemn, lyrical melodies and was popular in both the upper and lower classes. The main difference between the Brazilian and Portuguese modinha was the accompaniment: keyboard instruments typically accompanied the European song, where the Brazilian model was accompanied by guitar.<sup>7</sup> The Brazilian instrumentation crossed the ocean in the late 18th century, and was received with enthusiasm on the Continent.

Two styles of modinha existed in Brazil. The *modinha da rua* was the modinha of the lower classes. It was performed by street singers, was always accompanied with guitar, and used simple melodies. The *modinha de salão*, practiced by the upper class, reflected the influence of opulent Italian aria.<sup>8</sup> While the upper classes preferred the use of piano, composers wrote accompaniments suitable to either instrument, as guitar continued to be popular. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, flute was included in the performance of modinha. The instrumentation of flute and guitar, along with soulful melodies, were important contributions the modinha made to choro.<sup>9</sup>

## **Lundu**

The lundu was originally a courtship dance practiced by the Bantu people of central Africa. It was performed within a circle and accompanied by voice and drums.

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<sup>7</sup> Tamara Elena Livingston-Isenhour and Thomas George Caracas Garcia, *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

The dance included syncretic motions, like the Spanish fandango, with claps and snapping above the head to emphasize certain rhythms and motions. Cohen demonstrated the defining rhythm of the lundu for me. The two measures in example 1 are transcriptions of the two variations of the rhythm he tapped.<sup>10</sup>

**Example 1: Lundu rhythms as presented by Pablo Cohen in a phone interview by the author.**



This rhythm is central not only to choro music, but to all the music of Rio and southeastern Brazil. It is a common New World African rhythm, present in the Cuban habanera and the Argentinian tango and milonga.<sup>11</sup>

The lundu was a sensual, lascivious dance.<sup>12</sup> The elite of Rio marginalized the dance and its music when it first came to the city because of its lewdness and association with the lower classes. As it grew in popularity, the upper class found ways to integrate the rhythmic character of the dance into parlor music and songs, in order to subdue it and make it acceptable to civilized society. The sophisticated version of lundu, which featured pitched salon instruments, then traveled back down the social ladder. As a result, the exhibition performances of “traditional” lundu today include the European instruments, flute and guitar, along with percussion.

<sup>10</sup> Pablo Cohen, phone interview by the author, December 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Another feature of the dance was the *umbigada*, an invitation to dance by to the touching of the dancers’ navels. Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 28.



## Polka

Opposite the suggestive courtship dance, lundu, stood the European polka. This popular dance is still found, with regional variations, across Europe, as well as in the New World. The main feature of the dance, common to all variations, is a simple duple meter, with bass on the downbeats and treble notes of the harmony on the upbeats, or “boom-chick” effect in the music vernacular. It appeared in Rio in 1845. While choro developed as a style of playing many European dances, it is from polka that choros typically take their simple form and harmonic structure. Polkas are usually in rondo form, for example ABACBA, using primarily diatonic chords with predictable cadences.

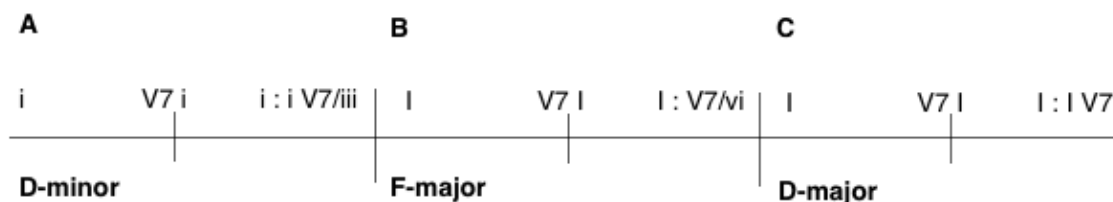
The choro *Grilando* (“Feeling Uneasy”), by one of the most influential choro musicians of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pixinguinha, is an example of the simple formal and harmonic structure adopted from polka. Its form is AA BB A CC A with a coda.<sup>13</sup> Each section is sixteen measures long, with repeats, and first and second endings. They are divided into two eight-measure phrases, with half cadences at the end of the first phrase and authentic cadences at the end of the second. The A section is in D-minor, the B section is in the relative major, F, and section C is in D-major. The new key is established with the dominant seven-chord on the upbeat to the new section moving to the new tonic on the first downbeat. While there are some third-progressions and borrowed chords, such as V7/V, V7/IV and in one instance ii/ii, the most common chords in the piece are

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<sup>13</sup> Pixinguinha, “Grilando,” *Classics of the Brazilian Choro: Pixinguinha*, ed. Rafael Caterina (USA: Global Choro Music Corporation, 2009), 42-43.

tonic and dominant, and the strong cadences in the middle and end of phrases clearly mark the form and emphasize the key.

**Example 2: Formal structure of *Grilando*, by Pixinguinha, cadences indicated every eight measures.**



## Maxixe

The maxixe, was one Brazilian adaptation of the polka. It developed simultaneously with choro to accompany the lower class style of dancing the polka in the 1870s. The dance consisted of a tightly embracing couple, with the man's hands often on the woman's buttocks, exaggerated motions of the torso and legs, and complicated, often intertwined, footwork.<sup>14</sup> The motions and the music all occurred at a very fast tempo. The maxixe, brought African rhythms

The music that accompanied the maxixe borrowed phrase structure and rondo form from the polka. The melodies typically consisted of sixteenth note runs and arpeggios, supported by strong bass lines on the beat. The characteristic that most distinguished the maxixe from polka was the syncopated, Afro-Brazilian rhythm of the accompaniment. The habanera rhythm appears again as a defining feature of the dance.

<sup>14</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 32-33.

While this already existed in Brazilian music, the popularity of the Afro-Cuban habanera at the time may have been the specific rhythmic influence on the maxixe.<sup>15</sup>

**Example 3: Afro-Brazilian rhythm taken from Example 2.3 from *Choro*.**<sup>16</sup>



As with the modinha and the lundu, at least two different forms of the maxixe existed simultaneously, and were based on the social setting in which it was performed. A “stylized” and “restrained” adaptation of the dance, known as *maxixe de salão*, took place in middle and upper class settings. Wishing to further disassociate the music and dance from its lower class, African, roots, the upper social strata preferred to call the maxixe the *tango brasileiro*. This same title, which alludes to the prominent habanera rhythm, was also applied to some early choros as a way of class distinction.<sup>17</sup> There is a fluid line separating the two genres, as the same musicians played both, and the genre assigned to a piece often depended on the social setting in which it was performed.

### **The Terno and Roda**

Choro developed, like the maxixe, as a style of playing European popular dance music. It was associated with a specific trio of instruments, collectively called the terno,

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<sup>15</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

which will be discussed in further detail below. The terno has its roots in the compulsory slave bands organized by fazenda, or plantation, holders to provide entertainment for parties. The quality of the music provided by a master's slaves reflected directly on his prosperity, and slaves were expected to practice and attend school for musical training. Two other ensembles that predated choro and used the terno instrumentation were the choromeleiro, the "cultural capital of wealthy mine owners" from the interior of the country, and música de barbeiros, which played music to entertain customers at barbershops. Both of these ensembles were typically made up of slaves or freedmen, and were hired to play at social engagements.<sup>18</sup>

The number of skilled players of African descent in Rio increased after 1888 with the abolition of slavery. As in America, freed slaves left the rural areas of the country for urban centers.<sup>19</sup> They took advantage of jobs created by industrialization and became Rio's new middle class. With their newfound disposable income, they bought instruments, and in their spare time, gathered socially to play music that incorporated established terno styles with contemporary trends.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to the early ensembles described above, the terno of the choro was based on the gathering of friends and fellow musicians to participate in reciprocated and complementary music making.<sup>21</sup> This is known as the choro roda, or "circle" choro, which includes both the players and the appreciative audience. The ideal roda is the "participatory" roda, in which the line between audience and musician is ambiguous. Regardless of ability, members of the gathering are expected to participate on some level,

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<sup>18</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 61-63.

<sup>19</sup> Pablo Cohen, phone interview by the author, December 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 65.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

and to place themselves relevantly within the musical texture.<sup>22</sup> Most players of early choro played only by ear. This continues to be the tradition in certain contexts today. In these settings, the same tunes may be played several times in one night, especially if they are the only ones all the players know, in order to include everyone as much as possible.<sup>23</sup>

Another aspect of the camaraderie of early choro roda playing is “spirited competition,” or *malícia*, primarily between the accompaniment and the soloist. Young musicians, particularly young men, used choro as a vehicle to explore the capabilities of their instruments and to show off their own technical skill. The object of the soloist was to play more and more rhythmically complicated lines until the accompanists could no longer keep up.<sup>24</sup> This was called “the drop” and was eagerly awaited by the audience.<sup>25</sup> As no single player is supposed to dominate the roda, the accompanists were equally respected for their ability to keep up: “...the delight of audiences was even greater when the accompanists showed greater *malícia* by maintaining their cool and playing through the complex sections with *panache* and *finesse*.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Choro: Musical Elements**

Choro is traditionally a purely instrumental style and genre. Virtuoso playing at incredibly fast tempos originally excluded vocalists. Although the choro slowed down sometime after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and this slower choro is the one considered

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<sup>22</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 41, 48-49.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> McGowan et al., *The Brazilian Sound*, 160.

<sup>26</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 10.

“traditional” today,<sup>27</sup> most are still without lyrics. The music itself is European in its harmonic and formal structure, but includes the spontaneity, collaboration, and improvisation of popular genres,<sup>28</sup> as well as the syncopated rhythmic character of African music. The texture consists of thickly stacked, interlocking rhythmic patterns that create constant sixteenth note subdivisions of the beat. The players work together to fill in spaces at all times.

As stated earlier, choro was originally associated with a specific trio of instruments: flute; cavaquinho, a small Portuguese guitar, like the ukulele; and the violão, a six- or, more often, seven-string guitar. Following abolition, percussion instruments, which had previously been rejected by the upper classes for their association with African slaves, became standard to the group as well, in particular the pandeiro. Each instrument has a specific role to fill: center, bass, melody, and rhythm.

The “center” of choro music is carried by the rhythmic flow, texture, and harmonic foundation of the cavaquinho. It is considered the defining element of choro music. The cavaquinho player provides syncopated, driving rhythmic patterns, including Afro-Brazilian rhythms, like the lundu, and emphasis on the upbeats, as in polka.

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<sup>27</sup> Pablo Cohen, phone interview by the author, December 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 163.

Example 4: Cavaquinho rhythms, from Example 1.1 from *Choro*.<sup>29</sup>



The cavaquinho player, like every other member of the ensemble, is expected to improvise. They may vary their pattern for different sections in the form, or to respond to the soloist. They may also adjust their pattern when another group member changes rhythm, in order to maintain the constant, interlocking sixteenth note texture.

Fundamental to the instrument's role is the harmonic foundation it provides, in a driving, percussive pattern of alternating up- and down-strokes. With cavaquinho holding the center in rhythm and harmony, the violão player is freed from this role and can focus on the improvisation of interesting bass lines.<sup>30</sup>

The violão plays as creative and virtuosic role as the melody. They are expected to provide interesting bass lines that interact with, respond to, or create countermelodies to the soloist. In slow tempos, the violão player may fill the spaces between chord changes with scalar runs, melodic motives, or riffs. At faster tempos, they may use a walking bass, as in jazz, which is created with stepwise motion on the downbeats only. Yet another feature of the bass may be an emphasis on the second beat of the measure, a

<sup>29</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 5-6.

“surdo accent” borrowed from samba.<sup>31</sup> In addition to the bass line, violão players are expected to fill in harmony as need, and may often switch roles between center, bass, and melody.<sup>32</sup>

**Example 5:** Elaborated violão bass line on bottom staff. Excerpt from Thomas Garcia’s arrangement of “Flôr amorosa,” by Antônio Calado, Example 1.4, from *Choro*.<sup>33</sup>

In general, choro melody is carried by a single instrument, typically flute or bandolim. As with all other members of the group, they are expected to improvise on the written notes. Unlike American jazz, where a soloist improvises freely over the harmonic changes of the tune, the melody of a particular choro is always recognizable. The challenge to the player, and the display of their creativity, comes from how they embellish certain notes and play with the rhythms. The goal is to reflect the mood and character of the group and the soloists voice while allowing the melody to retain some of its integrity. Taken out of context, and slowed down, choro melodies often sound

<sup>31</sup> Pablo Cohen, phone interview by the author, December 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



melancholic, a remnant of the Portuguese *modinha*. In keeping with African styles, they are highly syncopated and rarely start on downbeats. Tunes often begin with a three-note pickup, which indicates to the accompanists what piece is starting, as shown in ex. 4, above.

The primary rhythm instrument is the *pandeiro*, which resembles a European-style tambourine. The jingles, tuning of the head, and playing technique are different, however, making it a much more versatile instrument, with a wider variety of colors available. It plays constant sixteenth notes, often emphasizing the off beats.

**Example 6: Typical *pandeiro* pattern. From Stout's *Choro No. 1: Americana*, mm. 51-52.**



In the witty, playful spirit of the music, they may flip their pattern in the middle of a passage, and play against the rhythm of the group, in an attempt to throw off the other musicians. They may also dramatically stop playing constant time in certain sections of the music, playing “hits” before entering with time again in the next section.<sup>34</sup>

### **Choro and Nationalism**

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, choro has served different representational purposes in Brazilian society. The characteristics of the choro genre developed naturally enough in homes and pubs of the middle class. It existed

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<sup>34</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 8.

primarily for itself as a social outlet for this new class of musicians. The concepts of racial unity, creolization, and miscegenation as they apply to choro are retrospective and served as justification for the exaltation of choro as a national music in later years.

In 1822, Brazil gained its independence from Portugal. Like all newly made nations, Brazilian politicians, intellectuals, and artists were concerned with the development of a national cultural identity.<sup>35</sup> Prior to abolition, attention was focused on the ideologies that would prepare Brazil for its future as a successful nation, which included the right to individual freedoms, requiring the end of slavery. Following abolition, modes of representation focused on the unification of African and European cultures, the two largest cultural groups in the country, and the resolution of Brazil's racial identity problem. Members of the elite class, including intellectuals, worried that the large numbers of racially inferior black and mulattos in Brazil, the concept of racial inferiority coming from European and American theorists, would keep Brazil behind the leading, whiter, countries of the world. As a concept, miscegenation, the blending of African, European, and indigenous races, had been present in socio-political discourse for decades before the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the inevitable path of Brazilian society.<sup>36</sup> Around the turn of the century, attitude toward miscegenation shifted, and it became a desirable and encouraged method by which to racially and culturally "'whiten' and thereby 'upgrade' the Brazilian population."<sup>37</sup>

Choro was recognized as the first musical representation of the success of miscegenation. The blending of African and European musical elements in choro presents

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<sup>35</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 19.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Skidmore, "Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil, 1870-1940," *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 7-11.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

a metaphor for its ideals. Musicians looked to European dance forms, parlor music, and lyrical song, as discussed above. These provided the form and harmonic organization of Brazilian music. Into this structured soundscape, Brazilian musicians absorbed the rhythmic character and communal performance practice of African music. From its inception, choro included white as well as black musicians, and therefore escaped the marginalization of other African influenced popular music, like the maxixe and samba.<sup>38</sup> While the use of expensive European instruments largely excluded the lower classes, choro was one of the first style-genres in which black musicians could gain notoriety and respect.

It is important in a socio-political context to note that choro and its relatives developed as African-influenced styles of playing European music, and not the other way around. The only exceptional case is the lundu, which had an African form of dance at its roots, and mutually appropriated musical elements across cultures. The process of absorbing and appropriating certain elements of an oppressed culture into a dominant culture, which is part of miscegenation, also falls under the anthropological term, “creolization.” This is a hot term in the field of anthropology and has sparked hundreds if not thousands of pages of academic writing on the meaning and implication of the word.<sup>39</sup> It is not used lightly here, but was chosen specifically for its association with the American port city New Orleans, and the development of jazz. The practice of “ragging” on European hymns and dance music in America is the same practice that produced the

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<sup>38</sup> McCann, *Hello, Hello*, 164.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Stewart, ed. *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2006), accessed April 24, 2015, ProQuest ebrary.

maxixe and the choro in Brazil.<sup>40</sup> The development, dissemination, and socio-political undercurrents of choro are similar to that of American jazz.

Choro was popular in Rio from the 1870s to the early 1920s, during the time when the belief in the ideals of miscegenation was at its height. However, it was still a popular music representing the musical trends of the middle class, and it eventually began to be replaced by other popular genres in the mid- to late-20s. Competition came from its derivations, samba and bossa nova, as well as foreign genres. Through the 1940s American music increasingly dominated the Brazilian market and radio as part of the artistic exchange of America's Good Neighbor Policy.<sup>41</sup> A small group of musicians and producers watched the infiltration of foreign music with trepidation and disdain.<sup>42</sup> By this time, as well, Brazilian intellectuals had grown weary of the theories of white superiority propagated by Europe and America, and began taking more interest in its African and Afro-Brazilian roots.<sup>43</sup> By the early-50s, efforts to raise awareness and support for domestic music had created a widely popular revivalist movement that championed choro as the pinnacle of authentic Brazilian culture. Radio broadcasts, recordings, and festivals featuring choro celebrated music from earlier decades, while serving a larger, political goal of preserving "national purity."<sup>44</sup>

The adoption of choro as the musical representation of Brazil had two significant effects on the genre. Choro became popular again, on a far grander scale than before. Not only were choro players reunited with audiences at home, the genre spread internationally

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<sup>40</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 66.

<sup>41</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 105.

<sup>42</sup> McCann, *Hello, Hello*, 160.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Skidmore, "Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil," 20-23.

<sup>44</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 107.

to find audiences elsewhere. Unfortunately, the particular rhetoric adopted by Brazilian nationalists, which made choro music an object of Brazilian identity, severely limited the genre. The idea that choro was something to be “defended and preserved”<sup>45</sup> against foreign influence precluded overt innovation within the genre.<sup>46</sup> The codification of choro in the 1950s preserved it as an exhibit in a museum and excluded innovative, modernizing musicians and compositions.<sup>47</sup> This had a detrimental effect on the second choro revival in the 1970s in that it restricted the definition of what could be called choro and, for a time, prevented the genre from finding a lasting social significance.

### **Modern Choro**

The choro revival of the 1970s appeared to begin organically with concerned academic musicians, journalists, and critics who wished to save a national treasure from extinction. Covertly, however, the movement received considerable financial backing from the military dictatorship that terrorized the country at the time.<sup>48</sup> Once again, political leaders used choro as the rallying point of Brazilian national pride. It was chosen with sinister, ulterior motives. As an instrumental genre, there were no politically sensitive lyrics to censor; by this time it was also dominated by white musicians, from the upper and middle classes, rather than the politically radical black and mulatto lower classes.<sup>49</sup> When choro once again lost government sponsorship with the new democracy, established in 1985, it went underground, off the festival and concert stage, into the small

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<sup>45</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 118.

<sup>46</sup> McCann, *Hello, Hello*, 173-174.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 178. Some were “reclassified as Brazilian jazz musicians.”

<sup>48</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 131.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

clubs and private residences where it originated.<sup>50</sup> The immediate loss of large audiences has perhaps served the genre better than its previous, politically charged popularity, as now the genre has the opportunity to exist for its own sake.

Choro had all but disappeared from the public sphere, until the mid-90s with the advent of affordable, quality recording technology and the Internet. Sheet music, method books, and readily available recordings outside of Brazil have created choro communities around the world, and encouraged solo instrumentalists to incorporate the genre into their own repertoire.<sup>51</sup> The innovations previously rejected by the restrictive ideals of identity preservation, are now embraced, and have led to the expansion of the genre. A music that once served as a way of revering the golden past now has relevance in a variety of modern contexts, including “progressive” choro, which is influenced by rock and jazz, and often includes electric instruments, and “erudite” choro, which involves the instruments and settings associated with western art music.<sup>52</sup> The popularity of the *roda*, in its public and private performances, has grown since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Concerts and festivals have also started again and help keep the tradition alive.

Erudite choro will be important to the understanding the relevance of Gordon Stout’s *Choros* to Brazilian music. The revivalist movement of the 70s rejected this sub-genre for its harmonic complexity and the difficulty of its execution. The harmonies are dense and chromatic, exploring tonalities beyond the prevalent diatonicism of traditional choro. The melodies are typically intricate and contrapuntal, the tempos fast.<sup>53</sup> The high level theoretical sophistication of these compositions and arrangements requires trained

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<sup>50</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 151.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 151-152.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-156.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

musicians, sometimes with music on stands: two features not required by choro roda, or traditional choro.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Livingston-Isenhour et al., *Choro*, 154.

## Chapter 2: The Choro of Augusto Marcellino

The link between Brazilian choro and Gordon Stout are the choros for solo guitar composed by Augusto Marcellino. Stout came into contact with these pieces through Pablo Cohen at Ithaca College: “I started playing the Marcellino pieces because Pablo Cohen came to my office one day and said I should play them and [that I] would like them.”<sup>55</sup> Although Cohen did provide Stout with recordings of choro roda, Marcellino’s solo pieces were Stout’s primary inspiration for his own choros.

Augusto Marcellino (1911-1973) was a Brazilian guitarist of mixed race. When he was still in his thirties, he emigrated to Argentina, where he spent the rest of his life. He performed in many popular music styles as part of live cabarets in clubs and restaurants and participated as a member of live orchestras for radio broadcasts. Though he didn’t play classical guitar professionally, he was well practiced in reading and playing classical guitar music, and taught private classical guitar lessons.<sup>56</sup> Cohen believes Marcellino’s wife may have been one of his classical guitar students. She was actively involved in the publication and dissemination of Marcellino’s music after his death and it was due to her friendship with Cohen’s uncle that Cohen acquired the music for the solo guitar choros.

Marcellino moved to Argentina during Brazil’s first choro revival in the 1940s and 50s, when the genre was celebrated as a true representation of the nation and its people, to be upheld and protected against foreign influence. Choro was everywhere in

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<sup>55</sup> Gordon Stout, instant message interview by the author, Fall 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Pablo Cohen, interview by the author, December 2014. Guitar lessons may have been how Marcellino met his wife, who was a classical guitarist, and responsible for the spread of Marcellino’s music after his death.



public and private, at home and abroad. Whether out of nostalgia for his birthplace, as a shout out to the genre, or merely for his own enjoyment of the music, Marcellino composed a collection of choros for solo guitar. In them are some examples of complex and chromatic harmony, at least in the context of traditional choro. Marcellino has crafted each note and written them down in the style of classical guitar music. Cohen expressly stated that in spite of these classical characteristics, Marcellino would not have considered these to be classical pieces. This is the time during which choro was still predominantly a popular music genre, and was encouraged to maintain its popular roots by the leaders of the revivalist movement. Evidence of Marcellino's own classification of these compositions as popular is found in the sub-title of the choro studied for this paper: "remeleixo," is a word that refers to the indefinable swing of Brazilian dance, and Brazilian dance music.<sup>57</sup> This "swing," associated with choro and Brazilian music, is not like swing in American music. Where jazz swings on the last half of the beat into the next beat, Brazilian music swings in the middle of the beat. If sixteenth notes are used as the subdivision: jazz swings on the last and first sixteenth notes, and choro on the second and third. Without remeleixo, the music is stiff, "square" in jazz terms, but with it music sways in a special way.

The form and harmonic structure of *Remeleixo* are typical of Brazilian popular choro. It is in rondo form, AA BB A CC' B A. The A and B sections are each sixteen measures long, divided into two phrases of eight measures each, and have repeats with first and second endings. The first phrases of A and B begin on tonic and end with a half cadence on the dominant; the second phrases also begin on tonic, but end with an

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<sup>57</sup> Pablo Cohen, phone interview by the author, December 2014.

authentic cadence on tonic, as in *Grilando*. The trio, section C, is thirty-two measures in total, with two nearly identical sixteen-measure periods, each of which is further divided into eight-measure phrases. The end of the third and fourth phrases feature variations on the rhythmic character at the end of the first and second phrases, respectively, which is why Marcellino did not use repeat signs here as he did for A and B. The harmony at C is different in that each of the eight-measure phrases begin with the dominant. The first and third phrases end with a ninth chord on the tonic, while the second and fourth phrases end on the dominant.

**Example 7: Formal structure of *Choro No. 9*, by Augusto Marcellino, cadences indicated every eight measures.**



Tonic and dominant are still the most prevalent chords, like *Grilando*, with some borrowed chords and third progressions, in particular ii-vii<sup>o</sup>-I. The harmonic feature that distinguishes *Choro No. 9* from *Grilando*, is the use of the ninth chord, in particular in harmonization above chromatic bass lines, in particular those that lead to a cadence.

**Example 8: Ninth chord harmonization above chromatic bass line, tonic to dominant, *Choro No. 9*, mm. 7-9.**

Marcellino's *Choro No. 9: Remeleixo*, like his other choros for solo guitar, condenses the roles played by different members of the choro ensemble onto one instrument. The characteristic bass, melody, and center roles are fulfilled, as well as the constant sixteenth note rhythmic component. The discussion below shows my analysis of these roles and possible interpretations, followed by technical advice on their execution.

**Example 9:** Section A of Marcellino's *Choro No. 9: Remeleixo*, from Stout's arrangement, for the sake of clarity, mm. 1-20.

Marimba

mf

5

11

16

1.

2.

To Trio on D.S.

mf p

The bass line is important to recognizing this piece as a choro: it includes fast chromatic fills between chords, the habanera-lundu pattern in walking lines, and strong emphasis the downbeat of the measure.

**Example 10:** Possible interpretation of the bass line for section A of *Choro No. 9*, mm. 1-17.



While the surdo accent on the second beat of the measure is not explicitly present in *Remeleixo*, the player may choose to add another layer of interest to the music by including this in their interpretation.

The melody begins with a characteristic three-note pickup before the rest of the voices enter. As the bass is generally alone on the downbeats, the melody will automatically demonstrate syncopation characteristic to choro. Without the player's deliberate distinction of the melody, however, shared range and timbre makes the difference between melody and harmony ambiguous. In the spirit of improvisation, the player might choose to vary the division of melodic and center notes in the repeats.

Example 11: Possible interpretation of the melody for section A of *Choro No. 9*, mm. 1-17.

The image shows three staves of musical notation for a melody in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff contains measures 1 through 5. The second staff, starting with a measure number '6', contains measures 6 through 11. The third staff, starting with a measure number '12', contains measures 12 through 17. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with some rests and accidentals.

The center in this piece is most easily described as those notes that don't belong to the melody or the bass. At times, these notes may be in harmony with the other voices, or may be filling in the constant sixteenth note subdivision.

Example 12: Resulting notes of the center for section A of *Choro No. 9*, mm. 1-17.

The image shows three staves of musical notation for a bass line in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff contains measures 1 through 6. The second staff, starting with a measure number '7', contains measures 7 through 12. The third staff, starting with a measure number '13', contains measures 13 through 17. The bass line features a constant sixteenth note subdivision, often with chords and accidentals.

The following recommendations are based on my own performances of the piece. The bass line should be easily distinguishable from the other voices. With the exception

of a few quick, wide leaps it is possible to play the bass line using only the outside mallet of the left hand. A softer mallet should therefore be carried in this position and careful attention should be paid to sticking choices in the early stages of practicing the piece to make the fullest use of this mallet. The remaining three mallets should be the same type and hardness to allow for more interpretational variations of melody and harmony.

Stout has performed this piece many times over the years and, true to the spirit of the music, in a variety of different ways. When he first started playing it, along with Marcellino's *Choro Nos. 1 and 3*, he and Cohen played it as a duet, taking turns playing melody or bass/accompaniment. He has also performed the pieces with various percussion instruments, recently with a cajón and maraca player.<sup>58</sup> The collaboration that led directly to Stout's original choros was with percussionist Dane Richeson.

Dane Richeson, professor of percussion at Lawrence University, was at one time a graduate student of Stout's, who played primarily jazz drum set. Through funding from Lawrence University and grant money, Richeson traveled to several countries around the world, becoming intimately acquainted with the instruments and performance practice of certain African, South American, and Caribbean cultures through study with their masters.<sup>59</sup> In Brazil he developed competent ability on the pandeiro and it was on this instrument that he first accompanied Stout on Marcellino's choros.

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<sup>58</sup> Gordon Stout, marimba, Carlos Sulbarán, maracas, Colleen Clark, cajón, *Marimba Recital*, Carraige House, Ithaca, April 29, 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence University, "Dane Richeson: Professor of Music," faculty biography, accessed April 30, 2015, [https://www.lawrence.edu/conservatory/faculty/dane\\_richeson](https://www.lawrence.edu/conservatory/faculty/dane_richeson).

When asked about the experience of working with Richeson, Stout responded “He ...played pandeiro on Marcellino with me, and I loved it, so I thought it would be nice to write [a choro] for the two of us.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Gordon Stout, instant message interview by the author, Fall 2014.

### Chapter 3: The Choro of Gordon Stout

Stout's first original choro was born out of a desire to continue playing with Dane Richeson. It represents Stout's enjoyment of making music with friends, as well as the spirit of camaraderie found in Brazilian choro. Stout's subsequent choros were also inspired by collaborations on other projects. As a collection, they show some influences from choro, and Latin American popular music in general, in the context of Stout's own contemporary compositional personality.<sup>61</sup> Stout's choros feature his own unique approach to harmony, which utilizes fourths and fifths and the manipulation of quartal chords in a contemporary style. His music also typically features a fluid use of many time signatures, especially compound and asymmetrical meters.

Stout's choros can be divided into three sets: *Choro No. 1*, *Choros Nos. 2-5*,<sup>62</sup> and *Choros Nos. 6-7*. In this chapter, I will discuss in depth *Choro No. 1*, *Choro No. 3*, and *Choro No. 7*. Each section will begin with a brief introduction to the choros of the set.

#### ***Choro No. 1: Americana***

As stated before, Stout's inspiration for this piece came from playing Marcellino's choros with Richeson. It is scored for Marimba: 5.0 (octave), Percussion: pandeiro, wood block with pedal, ankle bells, and Optional 2<sup>nd</sup> Percussion: small triangle, small cowbell.

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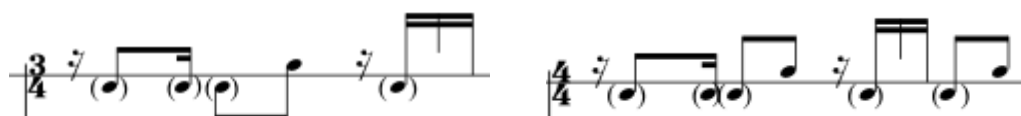
<sup>61</sup> Gordon Stout, program notes, *Wood That Sings: Celebrating Choro, Song, and Dance*, Ford Hall, Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY, March 30, 2009, Ithaca College website, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.ithaca.edu/fleff09/festival/concerts/>

<sup>62</sup> The second choro in Stout's series is titled *Astral Choro [No. 2]*, but will be referred to here as *Choro No. 2* for the sake of clarity.



The pandeiro part is central to the style of Stout’s first choro. Stout said of the part, “I liked the challenge of trying to write for pandeiro, although I actually transcribed what [Richeson] played from a sketch type part that just had three lines, high, medium, and low. He improvised...from that, then I transcribed what he played.” In other words, the final version of the part was achieved via a three-step process: notation, improvisation, transcription. Rather than developing his own notation for the part, Stout used a Brazilian, pandeiro method book, *Pandeiro Brasileiro Volume 1*, by Luiz Roberto Sampaio and Victor Camrago Bub, as a guide.<sup>63</sup> The part exhibits traditional playing technique, and, according to Henrique Medeiros Batista, a graduate student in percussion performance who came to James Madison University from Rio and accompanied me in playing these choros, includes typical “calls” that indicate form or invite solos.

**Example 13: Pandeiro “calls.” *Choro No. 1*, mm. 42 and 45.**



The use of pandeiro defines the character of the piece but also potentially limits its performance in America. The collaboration between Richeson and Stout produced a part that represents both traditional and contemporary styles by inserting Brazilian performance vocabulary into Stout’s metrical style. It therefore requires an experienced

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<sup>63</sup> Gordon Stout, *Choro No. 1 (2006): Americana* (Asbury Park, NJ: Keyboard Percussion Publications, 2012), title page.

percussionist with adequate knowledge of, and ability to execute, pandeiro playing technique.

The marimba part also shows an overt blend of styles. It has several rhythmic features of choro. The opening rhythmic figure uses the habanera-lundu pattern.

**Example 14: Lundu-habanera rhythmic motive, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 1.**



During practice, Batista said the opening theme at B “reminded him of samba,” which I determined to be due to the Afro-Brazilian rhythmic character and bass line of the passage.

**Example 15: Marimba theme at B, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 44.**



The rhythmic character of choro is also captured in melodic figures that start just off the beat. While the use of asymmetrical and frequent changes of meter in the first half of the piece are not typical in traditional choro, Stout’s playful approach to rhythm and meter also reflect the syncopated style of Brazilian popular music.

A new texture begins at C. The music up to this point could be considered outdoor dance and carnival music. At C, the music becomes more contemplative, and remains in steady, fully subdivided compound meters through the end of the piece.

**Example 16: Marimba texture in section C, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 74-77.**

As in Marcellino's *Choro No. 9*, here the distinction of melody from harmony is left to the interpretation of the player. A few options I explored were bringing out the pitches in the outside mallet of the right hand as the melody, and emphasizing the "strummed" tenor note as the melody. The section from C-D, excerpted in example 13, repeats the same pitch content twice, which allows for the consecutive use of these two interpretations, if desired.

The first half of *Choro No. 1* makes exemplary use of Stout's idiomatic construction, conservation, and manipulation of harmonic material. Though Stout's tonal language manifests itself in many textural and rhythmic ways, the analysis below shows the way in which one would approach the harmonic analysis of any of his compositions.

The marimba chords in the first measure of the piece could be described as major-minor seventh chords in third inversion, with the third omitted and the fifth doubled. However, given the missing third, it is more accurate to describe this as a quartal chord, constructed with an augmented fourth at in the bass, followed by a perfect fourth, and finally a perfect fifth. This measure is repeated three more times, separated by three

interludes: the arpeggiation of a diminished chord on C $\sharp$ ; chromatic scales going to and from A, the melodic center of the bass line in the first measure; and the arpeggiation of a half-diminished seventh chord on E.

**Example 17: Opening motive and interludes, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 1-7.**

The musical score for Example 17 consists of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 1 through 7, and the second system covers measures 8 through 9. The music is written for piano (mp) in 6/4 time. The bass line is the primary focus, featuring arpeggiated chords and chromatic passages. The treble line is mostly silent, with some melodic fragments in measures 8 and 9. The score includes a tempo/mood marking: "Lightly, but rhythmically (balance with pandiero)".

The sixteenth-note passage beginning in measure 8 uses only the pitches found in the first measure, usually in an arpeggiation of interval partners. For example, the first four sixteenth-notes of measure 8 are arpeggiations of the augmented fourths from first two chords of theme, followed by extended use of the upper fifths of all the chords.

**Example 18: Arpeggiation of fourths and fifths from opening chords, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 8-13.**

The musical score for Example 18 consists of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 8 through 13, and the second system covers measures 14 through 15. The music is written for piano (mp) in 6/4 time. The bass line is highly active, with arpeggiated chords and chromatic passages. The treble line is mostly silent, with some melodic fragments in measures 14 and 15. The score includes a tempo/mood marking: "Lightly, but rhythmically (balance with pandiero)".

The return of the rhythmic motive in measure 14 features stacked fifths, one perfect, one diminished, separated by a major second. This creates a half-diminished seventh chord. The diminished fifths in the right hand are enharmonic spellings of the

augmented fourths from the left hand of the original theme. The exception is the second chord of the measure, which stacks an augmented fourth on the fifth, while still maintain the major second in the middle, which if one used the enharmonic spelling of B, Cb, would create a fully-diminished seventh chord. The C# minor/diminished chord, from measure 2, begins to take over going into the new rhythmic theme at rehearsal A.

**Example 19: Modulation of the opening motive and transitional C# minor/diminished material, *Choro No. 1*, m. 14-17.**

Rehearsal A begins with a C#-minor chord in root position. The second two chords of the measure could be inversions of the ii7 and iv chord in the key, however, both chords lack the third to establish the quality of the chord. The augmented fourths in the right hand (again the same augmented fourths from the left hand of the first measure of the piece), with the arpeggiated fifths in the left hand, also obscure chord functionality.

**Example 20: C# minor motive at A, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 20-22.**

The intervallic relationship between the left octaves and fifths, and the right hand third and augmented fourths is maintained in the fourth measure of this section when the motive shifts a minor-sixth/major-third. The original motive and its modulation ascend

the marimba with octave transposition, before rapidly descending to the C# transitional material before rehearsal A, via the arpeggiated half-diminished seventh chord on E from measure 6. The opening theme returns briefly before transitioning on the E half-diminished seventh into rehearsal B.

**Example 21: Modulated motive and ascending pattern, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 23-27.**



The opening theme of rehearsal B maintains the D# and C# “melodic” notes from the opening motive, also featured in the “melody” through rehearsal A, reharmonized with sixths in both the left and right hand, separated by a fourth. The first two sixteenth-note interludes in this section use the same fourths and fifths from the sixteenth-note passages in the opening section of the piece.

**Example 22: Opening theme at B, with fourths and fifths from opening section, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 40-42.**



Starting in measure 46, the new sixteenth-note passages are permutations of the stacked 6-4-6 chords from the opening motive of rehearsal B. The fifth/fourth-based sixteenth-note passages alternate with the sixth-based passages until the latter take over,

and descend through modulation and octave transposition into a slightly varied version of the original motive from the first measure of the piece.

**Example 23: Arpeggiated chords, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 46.**



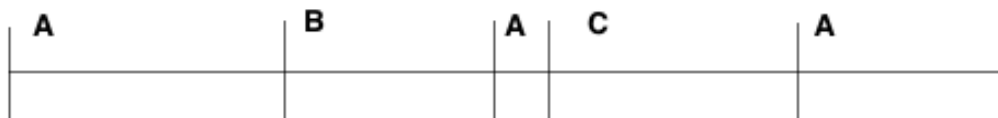
The first half of *Choro No. 1* ends with a restatement of the opening theme, with slight variations. The intervallic direction of the fifths and augmented fourths are reversed in the extended sixteenth-note passage to allow a graceful ascent to the upper octave of the marimba. Here the intervals are once again reordered to create a contrasting melodic contour, before descending again and transitioning into the new texture at rehearsal C.

**Example 24: Reversed fifths, contrasting melodic contour, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 65- 68.**

The form of the first half of the piece resembles rondo, though the length in measures of each section in no way resembles traditional choro. If we label the opening section A, the material that opens rehearsal A as B, and the new harmonies at rehearsal B as C, we get a rough formal plan of A B A C A, but with non-traditional proportions: A

(19 measures, including 3 measures transition) B (16 measures, including 5 measures transition) A (4 measures) C (18 measures) A (15 measures, including 1 measure transition).

**Example 25: Proportional diagram of the form for the first half of *Choro No. 1*.**



It is possible to capture the spirit of the piece with marimba and pandeiro alone. However, the score includes several other percussion instruments that are, at times, important to the rhythmic and formal structure of the piece. For example, the pandeiro player is also asked to play woodblock with foot pedal, and ankle bells. The ankle bells provide an interesting, delicate timbre at the beginning of the texture change at C. More importantly, the woodblock is often playing defining dance rhythms: in the first half of the piece, the woodblock plays the habanera-lundu pattern from the first marimba figure, then becomes the motivic voice in section B, while the marimba simply arpeggiates harmonies.



**Example 26: Lundu-habanera rhythm in woodblock and marimba arpeggiation in section B, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 54-55.**

The image shows two systems of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first system consists of two staves: the top staff is for woodblock and the bottom staff is for marimba. The woodblock part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with stems pointing up, alternating with eighth notes with stems pointing down, creating a syncopated feel. The marimba part consists of arpeggiated chords, with the left hand playing a descending sequence of notes and the right hand playing an ascending sequence. The second system continues this pattern for two more measures.

In the second half of the piece, the woodblock plays the bell pattern percussionists refer to as “the standard pattern,” a common African bell pattern. The optional percussion two part, for small triangle and small cowbell, contributes another layer of syncopated rhythmic interest.

**Example 27: Standard pattern in woodblock on upper stave, syncopated cowbell pattern on bottom stave. From Section E, *Choro No. 1*, mm. 123-126.**

The image shows two systems of musical notation in 6/8 time. The first system consists of two staves: the top staff is for woodblock and the bottom staff is for cowbell. The woodblock part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with stems pointing up, alternating with eighth notes with stems pointing down, creating a syncopated feel. The cowbell part consists of a syncopated pattern of eighth notes, with the left hand playing a descending sequence of notes and the right hand playing an ascending sequence. The second system continues this pattern for two more measures.

There were few performance issues to resolve with this piece. I was fortunate to have a colleague with knowledge of pandeiro playing who was also willing to perform the piece with me. At the beginning of the project, Batista struggled with stamina and, based on his observations of choro sessions in Rio, suggested the possibility of substituting snare drum with brushes for pandeiro if necessary. Due to the focus required for the pandeiro part, he decided not to play the woodblock and ankle bells, and I brought

in a second percussionist, who played woodblock and keys densely hung from a circular piece of wood, an instrument Batista had brought with him from Rio, which we substituted for ankle bells. A third percussionist played the optional part without any modifications. Due to the similarity in voicing, bass versus melody-center, to Marcellino's *Choro No. 9*, I used the same mallets, in the same positions, from that piece for the marimba part in Stout's *Choros No. 1* and *No. 3*.

### ***Choro No. 3***

*Choros Nos. 2-4* share the same instrumentation: violin, marimba, and percussion. They were inspired by collaboration with Pablo Cohen on Argentinian tangos:

“My original idea was to have percussion, marimba, and bandoneon. From my work with Pablo playing tangos, I heard and loved that sound. There aren't bandoneon players around Ithaca much, so the violin seemed like a good alternative. Marimolin, Zeltman's marimba/violin duo had been around for a while, and I liked that sound.”<sup>64</sup>

The violin part was composed for his colleague, Susan Waterbury. Stout again envisioned Dane Richeson as the percussionist for the first performance of the pieces and, inspired by their recent performance of another of Stout's pieces, *Incoming: for drum set and marimba*, wrote the percussion part for drum set.<sup>65</sup> On the day of the first rehearsal, however, Stout walked in to find Richeson seated on cajón, surrounded by other hand drums. When asked why, Richeson explained Brazilians don't typically use drum set in

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<sup>64</sup> Gordon Stout, instant message interview by the author, Fall 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

playing choro. He felt they should explore drum set alternatives, in order to be true to the style.<sup>66</sup>

*Choro No. 5: Toccata* was also originally composed for the above instrumentation, but after writing it, Stout changed the violin part to a second marimba, or 3.5-octave vibraphone, because he “felt it better fit the nature of the music.”<sup>67</sup>

*Choro No. 3* is scored specifically for Marimba: 5-octave, Percussion 1: cajon, congas, bongos, splash cymbal, all with hands, and Optional Percussion 2: small shaker, samba whistle, quica. It exhibits characteristics of both tango and choro. The influence of tango is reflected in the singing character of the violin lines, though not necessarily in rhythmic content. The aggressive fanfare of the solo marimba at the opening of the piece also contributes to the tango feel. At E, the marimba breaks into a strict habanera rhythmic pattern, characteristic of both Argentinian tango, and choro, the *tango brasileiro*. When melodic material is shared between violin and marimba, the interlocking, contrapuntal style of Stout’s ensemble writing reflects his own compositional voice, and parallels the virtuosity and interaction between soloists found in traditional choro. The choice of percussion instruments is also an overt reference to Brazil.

The violin melody is highly syncopated against the strong compound meter established by the marimba. Not only does the prominent melodic motive start on the second beat of the measure, it ends on the last sixteenth note of the measure.

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<sup>66</sup> Gordon Stout, phone interview by the author, fall 2014. Dane was also exploring drum set alternatives in his own playing at the time and took the opportunity to try out new sounds.

<sup>67</sup> Gordon Stout, “Choro No. 5 (2008),” *Gordon Stout* (artist website), accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.gordonstout.net/music-44.html>.



Example 30: Polyrhythmic passage in which the violin plays on the offbeat, *Choro No. 3*, mm. 96-98.

The marimba alternately plays roll of accompaniment, or bass-center, and melody-counter melody. Throughout most of the piece, the marimbist plays running sixteenth notes, arpeggiating the harmony. The last sixteenth-note of the subdivided beats is emphasized with a chord of either two or three notes, which unsettles the groove while promoting a sense of forward propulsion.

Example 31: Marimba pattern, *Choro No. 3*, mm. 17-18 and mm. 48-49.

While marimba is the only pitched instrument in the texture at E, its habanera pattern serves a primarily rhythmic role as part of the percussion break.

Example 32: Habanera pattern in the marimba at E, *Choro No. 3*, mm. 122-125.

In sections F and I, the marimba joins the violin's melodic character, producing a uniquely harmonized melody in which it is difficult to determine which instrument might be considered the dominant voice.

Example 33: Two examples of violin and marimba interplay in section I, *Choro No. 3*, mm. 201-202 and 209-211.

As previously mentioned, marimba solo opens the piece, with a dramatic fanfare reminiscent of Argentinian tango. A quote from the opening returns in the last nine measures of the piece as a countermelody to the violin.

**Example 34: Statement of opening marimba fanfare with violin melody, *Choro No. 3*, mm. 220-227.**

The final reflection of Brazilian popular music in *Choro No. 3* is the instrumentation of the percussion parts. Percussion 1 plays cajón, congas, bongos, and splash cymbal. While none of these instruments are native to Brazil, this type of multiple percussion set up, in contrast to the multiple percussion sound of drum set used in American popular music, would be used to accompany choro, particularly cajón and congas. In modern performances of choro in Brazil, one player might use a multiple percussion set up, but the multiple parts represent the many percussionists that might have originally joined the music. The Optional Percussion 2 part includes small shaker, samba whistle, and quica, all samba instruments. For this and practical reasons, the Percussion 2 part should be included whenever possible: it takes responsibility for pulse and rhythmic continuity on shaker while Percussion 1 is often syncopated, both in rhythm and accent patterns. In the few instances when Percussion 2 becomes rhythmically syncopated on quica, Percussion 1 takes over the pulse, becoming more regular, with emphasis on the beat.

Example 35: Syncopated hand drum part on the upper staff, steady pulse in the shaker, *Choro No. 3*, mm. 17-21.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The upper staff is in 3/8 time and features a syncopated hand drum part with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The lower staff is also in 3/8 time and features a steady pulse in the shaker with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The score consists of five measures, with the upper staff showing various rhythmic patterns and rests, and the lower staff showing a consistent eighth-note pulse.

The most difficult part of performing this piece was helping the violinist enter in the correct part of the beat. Including the Percussion 2 part, which we originally tried to omit, helped resolve this issue. I also helped by emphasizing the downbeat in the marimba pattern. This required more focus in the 6/8 passages, as the bass note was not always the lowest in the grouping.

### *Choro No. 7: The Road Less Traveled*

Stout expands the ensemble further in *Choro Nos. 6* and *7* to include soprano saxophone, acoustic guitar, and upright bass, making a six-person ensemble. When asked why he decided to go from an intimate group to a larger ensemble, he said he “just felt the need to branch out.”<sup>68</sup> He wanted to include more of his colleagues and friends, such as Pablo Cohen who had been part of his choro experience from the beginning, and Steven Mauk, the saxophone professor at Ithaca College, with whom he had been frequently performing at the time. In contrast to the earlier choros, the two melodic lines in *No. 6* and *7* are predominantly in rhythmic unison. Syncopation in the melody is sparse more sparse, as well.

<sup>68</sup> Gordon Stout, phone interview by author, Fall 2014.



*Choro No. 7: The Road Less Traveled* is aptly named in that it stretches and pushes the boundaries of choro even further into abstraction. The guitar and cajón timbres, along with the thickly stacked rhythmic texture, maintain the link to Brazilian popular music. The harmonic character, while still contemporary and typical of Stout, is voiced in such a way as to be acceptable to non-musicians as “popular” sounding.<sup>69</sup> Another contemporary feature of the piece is the use of 7/8, Stout’s favored time signature, which is used throughout the piece.

The first part Stout wrote was the string bass part, which was intended to give the group a strong rhythmic foundation. There are instances, however, where the bass, and cajón with it, contradict the rhythmic flow of the ensemble. The 7/8 meter is grouped 2-2-3 for the two melodic instruments, marimba, and guitar throughout the piece, while the bass and cajón occasionally slip out of this grouping into 3-2-2, in the way a pandeiro player might play “against the beat” in a traditional choro ensemble. In these passages, the group can rely on the constant eighth notes provided by the marimba.

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<sup>69</sup> My mother, a visual artist who has nothing to do with art music until she is compelled to come to my recitals, commented that *Choro No. 7* was her favorite thing I had ever played, and that she “got” it. Typically after a recital she says, “That was lovely, but I didn’t understand it at all.”

**Example 36: Bass and cajón in 3-2-2 grouping against 2-2-3 of the rest of the rhythm section, *Choro No. 7*, mm. 97-101.**

The musical score for Example 36 consists of four staves. The top staff is for Maracas (Mar.), marked *mp*, with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The second staff is for Guitar, with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, showing a harmonic accompaniment of chords. The third staff is for S. Bass, marked *p*, with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat, showing a melodic line. The bottom staff is for Cajón, marked *p*, with a key signature of one flat and a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

The bass line is representative of choro style in that it is sometimes melodic, sometimes arpeggiated, supporting the harmonic content of the “center,” and other times more in the character of walking bass.

**Example 37: Opening solo bass melody, *Choro No. 7*, mm. 1-4; bass harmonic arpeggiation, mm. 53-57; walking bass, mm. 65-69.**

The musical score for Example 37 consists of three staves, all in bass clef. The first staff shows the opening solo bass melody for measures 1-4, marked *mf*, in a 7/8 time signature. The second staff shows bass harmonic arpeggiation for measures 53-57. The third staff shows walking bass for measures 65-69, with a double bar line and a '2' below it indicating a second ending.

There is very little rhythmically indicated for the guitar. Until the end, all that is given is a half note followed by a dotted quarter note in each measure. One should keep in mind that the part was written for and played by Pablo Cohen, who has extensive knowledge of the genre, and would have improvised rhythms appropriate to the role of the “center.” When I brought the part to the guitar instructor at James Madison University, Keith Stevens, for him to suggest a player, he commented that the chords were strangely voiced for the guitarist, and that it would be better if they were notated only on a treble staff, as opposed to the grand staff. The guitarist who performed the piece with me confirmed the voicing of the chords across two staves looks more like a piano part than a guitar part, but it was possible to use the chord indications above the staff and the notated pitches to re-voice the chords without any difficulty.

The marimba plays a predominantly accompanimental role in *Choro No. 7*, filling out every eighth note in the measure, with shorter melodic passages than in the previous choros. It provides the clearest and most consistent source of pulse for the melodic instruments throughout the piece.

The violin and saxophone are rhythmically together most of the time, but are not melodically in unison. They are typically harmonized in close intervals, especially in thirds. In some passages, the instruments weave around each other, and it is difficult to determine which, if either, voice should be dominant.

The guitar, marimba, and melodic lines presented several technical and musical problems in the performance of this piece, which are alluded to in the above paragraphs. In the following paragraphs, I will illuminate these issues and the solutions I used to perform the piece.

As stated before, the guitar rhythms in the score are a skeleton of the 7/8 grouping it shares with the marimba, saxophone, and violin. To fill in the texture, I asked my guitarist, a senior music education major with no choro experience, to play the upbeats of 2-2-3 grouping. Another difficulty we encountered with the guitar part was balance. An acoustic instrument is preferred to an electric one for both its timbre and link to traditional choro. Because my guitarist's instrument did not have built in amplification capabilities, we used a mic positioned in front of the instrument.

Technically, the marimba part doesn't present any great challenges for the intermediate to advanced player. This allowed me to give clear cues at the beginning of sections for the melodic instruments, which typically had trouble following the form during their rests, due to the lack of tonic-dominant relationships and cadences. The only challenge in the part was choosing mallets that produced a warm sound in lower register of the instrument without competing with the upright bass, blended with the guitar, and spoke clearly in the upper-mid range of the instrument. I used a medium-soft mallet in the bass, two medium mallets in the inner two positions, and a medium hard mallet in the outside mallet of the right hand as the top note of the chords occasionally contained countermelodic lines.

The issue of shared range between the violin and saxophone meant conscious decisions needed to be made regarding balance for the sake of clarity in the melodic line. I used two basic rules to determine the balance between the instruments throughout the piece: the line with the higher pitches takes precedence; passages where the instruments frequently cross each other in range, or where they trade figures, would be balanced equally. The following are examples of how I applied these rules.

The violin has the longest solo lines in the piece. When the saxophone enters at B, however, it is written a third above the violin and should be slightly louder as the lead voice. This occurs again at D, after another extended solo violin passage. In section E, saxophone briefly takes over as the only solo voice. Eight bars later, however, the lines interact with each other more intricately, briefly in cannon and trading range, as the violin takes over dominance again. Section F is the most extended example of the parts being balanced equally, as they weave around each other in range.

**Example 38: Shared range of violin and saxophone, *Choro No. 7*, mm. 126-130.**

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Saxophone (S. Sax.) and Violin (Vln.). The score is for measures 126 through 130. Both instruments are written in treble clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The saxophone part starts with a quarter rest in measure 126, then plays a series of eighth and quarter notes. The violin part starts with a quarter rest in measure 126, then plays a series of eighth and quarter notes. The two parts are written in a way that they often overlap in pitch, creating a shared range. The saxophone part has a sharp sign above the first note in measure 127, and the violin part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 127. The saxophone part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 128, and the violin part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 128. The saxophone part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 129, and the violin part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 129. The saxophone part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 130, and the violin part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 130. The saxophone part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 130, and the violin part has a flat sign below the first note in measure 130.

An exception to the rules occurs in the middle of section E. The goal of measures 104-108 is the arrival of the long note motive in the violin at measure 109. Though it is lower in pitch, it should be played dynamically above the saxophone. In measure 113, the roles of the instruments flip again, as the saxophone takes over the long note motive in measure 114.

**Example 39: Long note motive exchange between violin and saxophone, *Choro No. 7*, mm. 107-116.**

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Example 39. The first system, starting at measure 107, shows the Saxophone (S. Sax.) and Violin (Vln.) parts. The Saxophone part features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the Violin part provides a harmonic accompaniment with similar rhythmic patterns. The second system, starting at measure 112, continues this exchange. In this system, the Violin part takes the lead with a melodic line, and the Saxophone part provides the harmonic accompaniment. Both systems are written in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Another potential exception occurs at G, which features the same melody and harmonization of B and D, where the saxophone had the lead line a third above the violin, except this time the parts are flipped. This is shown in example 40, on the following page. One could interpret this two ways: the melody has been reorchestrated into the violin part and the violin should lead where the saxophone previously did, or the harmony now has the greater importance, and saxophone should continue to be the lead voice. I chose the first method with the hope of helping the audience connect this section with the previous two like it.

Example 40: Saxophone and violin at B, *Choro No. 7*, mm. 41-44; saxophone and violin at G with reversed roles, mm. 131-134.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for saxophone (S. Sax.) and violin (Vln.).

The first system covers measures 41-44. The saxophone part is marked *legato* and *mf*. The violin part is marked *mf*. Both parts feature a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and some notes are tied across measures. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

The second system covers measures 131-134. The roles are reversed: the violin part is marked *legato* and *mf*, while the saxophone part is marked *mf*. The melodic patterns are similar to the first system, with eighth and sixteenth notes and ties. The key signature remains two flats.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

Choro, as a Brazilian genre, has a rich representational history. In its earliest form, an ensemble of instruments originally reserved for slaves and former slaves played popular European dance genres in a style that included African and Afro-Brazilian influences. This music was played as a social pastime in the homes and intimate public meeting places of Rio's new middle class, which developed in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as freed slaves and low-class immigrants took industrial and civil jobs in the city. As a representation of the groups stuck in the economic, racial, and cultural middle of Brazilian society, choro served as the meeting ground between the upper and lower classes, in which each group could participate to whatever degree they chose.

Choro faded from popularity in the 1920s before being adopted by Brazil's cultural intellectuals and government for the purpose of preserving a national identity in the face of foreign influences. As a nationalistic music during the first choro revival, its symbolic meaning expanded to include all Brazilians and daily life in Brazil. The establishment of choro as the placeholder of national identity required consideration of what choro was and should include stylistically. The elevation of choro to a model of quintessential Brazilianess to the world, while it generated renewed interest in the genre, had the detrimental effect of limiting choro to specific musical and social parameters.

These boundaries, which rejected jazz, rock, and art music influences, continued to influence choro in the second revival during the 1970s. Again, the motivation of this cultural movement was the preservation and defense of Brazilian identity. It is during this revival, however, that it becomes apparent that choro as it was in the golden past, no longer had ubiquitous relevance to Brazilian life. The oppressive government embraced



choro for this reason, supporting festivals, competitions, and concerts, to promote the wordless, politically malleable music of the middle class. Denial of the influence of other popular genres and art music prevented choro from doing what revivalists claimed it could: represent Brazilian people.

The genre split and, ultimately, barely survived the loss of government funding in the mid- to late-80s, returning to its true roots: the amateur and professional musicians of Rio. Today, choro represents the musicians and people of Rio as they are today. Jazz, rock, and classical music have found their way into choro performance, by way of instruments and musical style. Traditional choro still exists in some capacities, including the reemergence of the intimate *roda*, and public concerts. The availability, and usability, of quality recording equipment and the wide use of the Internet have made it possible for all varieties of choro musicians to share their representations of the genre with the world. Method books make it possible to teach oneself choro; choro schools and international choro communities encourage new generations and communities of musicians to use choro as their own vehicle of expression.

Marcellino's choros reflect the stylistic qualities of traditional choro as defined by Brazilian nationalist ideals that dominated the genre in the 1940s, which was around the time he left the country. They can be viewed as an immigrant's reflection on home and a representation of the composer's identity through the appropriation of the musical language that symbolized his nation. The publication dates of *Choro No. 1*, *No. 3*, and *No. 9*, the first two of which were published posthumously, occurred in Argentina parallel to the second revival of the 1970s. This could be coincidental, but as radio broadcasts during the second revival took choro even farther from home, it is not unreasonable to

think these pieces were brought out or composed in conjunction with the representational goals of the revival.

The inspiration for Stout's choros for chamber ensembles came mainly from Marcellino's arrangement of traditional choro for solo guitar. While the latter may still fall into the category of popular music, representative of Marcellino's profession as a popular musician, Stout's move firmly in the direction of Western art music, reflecting his career as a composer and performer in the erudite musical sphere. Stout's personal approach to meter, rhythm, and harmony represents his musical preferences. The use of chamber ensemble, especially a chamber ensemble of friends, and specific musical elements such as texture, isolated rhythms, and instrumentation, are direct representatives of Brazilian choro in Stout's music.

The three forms of choro discussed in this paper, traditional choro roda, Marcellino's solo guitar works, and Stout's contemporary chamber works, all show the representational capabilities of music. Brazilian choro represents the social, political, and cultural attitudes of a nation. Marcellino's choros represent an expatriate's national musical identity. Stout's choros show an admiration for the music of Brazil, and, through his distinctive compositional voice, merge the representation of a foreign musical style with the representation of self.

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