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## Contemporary Carioca

Moehn, Frederick

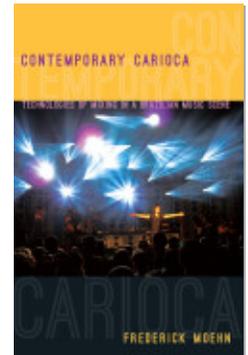
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# APPENDIX



## INTRODUCTORY ASPECTS OF MARCOS SUZANO'S PANDEIRO METHOD

I learned the basics of Suzano's method through one of his former students, Robert Saliba, a founding member of the Pandemonium ensemble of pandeiros. I also studied for a brief period with the choro pandeiro master Celsinho Silva. Samba and choro musicians generally describe the principal rhythms of these genres in  $2/4$  time, with each pulse divided into theoretically even sixteenth notes (although in samba, the subdivisions of the beat sometimes tend toward triplets, or the equivalent of  $6/8$  time, and in choro  $3/4$  time may also be used). On the pandeiro, the cymbals articulate these sixteenth notes (which Suzano sees as analogous to the highest atabaque drum part in the Candomblé tradition) as they shake. Normally, with the pandeiro held in front of the body, this is achieved by rhythmically rotating the instrument a short distance one way as the fingertips strike near the top of the frame, then the other way as the heel of the thumb strikes near the bottom of it, each motion lasting a sixteenth

of a beat. The student must at first avoid attempting to play the characteristic swing of samba sixteenth notes, instead training the musculature to play what is called the *condução*—literally, the conduction, the drive—as evenly as possible. With this rhythmic base mastered, the percussionist can control precisely where the varied accents that distinguish specific rhythms fall in the pattern of eight steady sixteenth notes and can eventually add other strokes on top of the base. Low-range pitches (what Suzano sees as analogous to the lead atabaque in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé drumming) are produced on the pandeiro with open strikes either with the thumb near the lower edge of the instrument or with a jab with the middle finger near the higher edge, depending on which part of the instrument is moving toward the playing hand. Slaps and other midrange pitches are produced in a variety of manners, some examples of which I describe here. In the typical choro and samba techniques for playing the pandeiro, the first sixteenth note of a given pattern is usually played with the thumb of the right hand while the fingertips of the right hand strike the second sixteenth note, and so on. Open and low sounds are then analogous to the surdo bass drum part in samba, with an accent on the second downbeat in duple meter.

Suzano's fundamental variation on this technique is to begin the patterns with the articulation at the fingertips, leaving his thumb free to accentuate the offbeats, a method that, he believes, gives him more "Afro intention." He seeks to approximate "the bass sound in Afro music," he said, in particular, in the music of the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religious practice. In this tradition, the low rum drum "musically organizes the choreography" (Béhague 1984, 236) and functions as a kind of soloist (see also Fryer 2000, 19; and, on "Afro intention" in the Cuban context, Garcia 2006, 58–59). If, Suzano noted, he uses the thumb stoke on the downbeat of beats 1 and 2, as in the standard samba surdo part, and as the pandeiro is normally played, he loses the syncopation of the bass. Since the thumb is the strongest bass strike, he said, he keeps his thumb "always offbeat," maintaining power in syncopated low frequencies. The smaller lé and rumpi drums in Candomblé are typically responsible for steady patterns. Similarly, the cymbals on the pandeiro, in Suzano's style, generally maintain even sixteenth notes as they clang against one another, providing the fastest pulse of a given rhythm and functioning as a kind of "density referent" (Koetting 1970). The middle range on the pandeiro includes various sounds such as a muted slap on the drumhead. As Robert Saliba

Samba



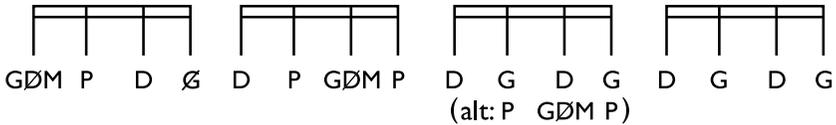
Samba



Samba



Samba



showed me, one can describe seven basic ways of striking the pandeiro with the following abbreviations for didactic purposes:

G—*Grave com o polegar*. A thumb stroke between the edge of the instrument and the middle of the drumhead producing a bass tone as the lower edge of the instrument is rotating upward toward the hand

GDM—*Grave com o dedo médio*. A bass tone made with the middle finger near the top edge of the drumhead as it is being rotated toward the fingertips (and the lower edge is moving down in the opposite motion to G [grave])

P—*Agudo com o punho*. High frequencies with the heel of the hand, a stroke that causes the cymbals to sound as part of the basic pulse (condução)

D—*Agudo com os dedos*. High frequencies with the fingertips; like P, a stroke that causes the cymbals to sound as part of the basic pulse

FIGURE 21. Variations of Marcos Suzano's samba pandeiro patterns, utilizing symbols for different hand strokes

T—*Tapa médio*. A slap in the middle of the drumhead (a mid-range sound)

∅—*Médio no centro com o polegar, or grave fechado*. Mid-range or a closed low sound with the thumb striking the center of the drumhead, but dampened with the remaining fingers so that it does not resonate

G∅M—*Médio no centro com o dedo médio or grave fechado*. Mid-range or closed low sound in the center with the middle finger; same function as G (*médio*), but with middle finger, and dampened

Figure 21 shows some of the exercises for pandeiro illustrating patterns of steady sixteenth notes utilizing these strokes that Robert gave me in our lessons. Note that all the samba examples begin with the bass sound produced at the first subdivision of beat 1 with the fingertips of the right hand, rather than with the thumb, allowing the low-frequency articulation on the fourth sixteenth note of beat 1, that is, a sixteenth-note anticipation of beat 2, the kind of offbeat low articulation that Suzano identifies with “Afro intention.” (The last two patterns utilize more muted midrange strokes at these subdivisions.)

There is much more to his pandeiro playing than this (and indeed to pandeiro playing in general); these are but a few possible patterns. Nevertheless, this introduction gives a sense of a crucial mechanical aspect of Suzano’s approach to the instrument. For more on the pandeiro, Pandemonium, and Suzano, see Crook (2009), 37–45.