Tropical(ist) Fantasies: Bossa nova and samba in contemporary Lebanon[1]

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Abstract: In this article, I provide an overview of the historical factors and contemporary issues that shape the presence of Brazilian music in Lebanon. I discuss the history of migration and remigration between the two countries, and how this transnational relationship has resulted in a small Brazilian population in Lebanon. I also discuss the music of Fairouz, the Rahbani brothers, and Ziad Rahbani; in particular, I examine Ziad's use of Brazilian music throughout his career. In the last section of this article, I present a case study of Xangô, a Beirut-based band who specialise in samba, bossa nova and MPB. Using ethnographic material, I outline the issues they face as professional performers, and how exoticism and stereotyping affects and shapes the production, performance and reception of Brazilian music in Lebanon.

Keywords: migration, transculturalism, tropicalism, bossa nova, Lebanon

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My first encounter with Brazilian music in Lebanon was in January 2017 at Salon Beyrouth, a relatively upmarket jazz bar in Hamra, West Beirut. Hamra has been famous as an entertainment district since the 1960s and is considered to be the most secular, diverse, and cosmopolitan area in the city[3]. I was invited to this gig by Kevin Safadi, a freelance Lebanese drummer and percussionist living in Beirut who specialises in Brazilian repertoire.

I walked into the bar, a glamorous, art-deco inspired space of marble and glass, converted from an old Lebanese house. The band hadn't started yet, so Kevin and I took our seats and ordered a couple of expensive cocktails. The venue was buzzing, filled with glamorous, young, middle class Lebanese, drinking glasses of wine, smoking and talking; the space filled with the sound of bebop jazz. Kevin introduced me to a few friends of his, most of whom were musicians due to play that evening. The band was called Xangô, named after the god of thunder and lightning revered by adherents of the Afro-Brazilian religion *candomblé*[4]. As the bebop faded from the sound system, the audience cheered, and Xangô began their set. Gradually, some members of the audience left their tables and started to dance to the sound of classic Brazilian bossa nova, samba and *música popular brasileira* (MPB) repertoire: Antônio Carlos Jobim, Baden Powell, Chico Buarque. Kevin and his friend started dancing and cajoled me into joining in. Kevin's friend was Brazilian, but didn't know how to dance samba, so Kevin, a Lebanese man, started teaching her the steps. I began to join in, and soon the three of us were dancing samba together.

As I got to know these musicians and spent more time in Lebanon, and Beirut in particular, it became clear that there was a thriving Brazilian cultural scene, and I noticed visual and aural symbols of Brazilian culture everywhere: Brazilian flags adorning grocery shops during the World Cup, coffee brands in the supermarket labelled 'Café Brasil', or 'Café Carioca'. A tinny, synthesized version of the classic *choro* composition "*Tico-Tico No Fubá*[5]" emanated from hidden speakers in the busy arrivals hall as I walked through Beirut's Rafik Hariri airport, and João Gilberto's semi-whispered vocals serenaded me in hipster East Beirut coffee shops. In Lebanon, and in Beirut particularly, Brazilian music and dance is practised, performed and listened to in diverse and multiple settings, from corporate events in venues

[3] For discussion of Hamra and cosmopolitanism, see Steven Seidman, 'The Politics of Cosmopolitan Beirut: From the Stranger to the Other'. *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 29, 2, March 2012, pp. 3-36.

[4] *Candomblé* is an Afro-Brazilian religion. It is primarily based on West African animist religious practices, and also incorporates elements of Catholicism.

[5] "*Tico-Tico No Fubá*" was written by Brazilian composer Zequinha de Abreu in 1917.

such as the opulent 'Casino du Liban' to energetic samba performances in small, independent nightclubs in East Beirut. Brazilian musicians and dancers are hired for lavish summer weddings, and play at public events such as the Beirut Marathon. Samba dance and capoeira classes are growing in popularity amongst young, middle class Lebanese, and there are well-established programs that use capoeira as a therapeutic activity for Syrian refugees living in camps across Lebanon. Its presence can broadly be attributed to three interlinked factors. Firstly, Lebanon and Brazil share a long history of migration and cultural exchange, and bountiful financial remittances from the Lebanese diaspora in Brazil have helped to ensure Brazil's positive reputation in Lebanon. Secondly, the country's best-loved singer, Fairouz, and her son Ziad Rahbani, recorded and arranged multiple cover versions of classic bossa nova tracks by the likes of Antônio Carlos Jobim and Luiz Bonfá, and many of Ziad's original compositions have been influenced by bossa nova[6]. Thirdly, the global spread and commodification of primarily Rio de Janeiro-centric Brazilian dance and music genres has also reached Lebanon. Although there are musicians and dancers who perform other regional Brazilian styles, 'Brazilian music' in a Lebanese context tends to mean bossa nova or samba. As is well-documented elsewhere (Hoskin, 2018, and Gibson, 2013; for example), this has typically been the case when Brazilian music migrates internationally. These genres become mediated through migration, and, divorced from their original context, take on new meanings (Toynbee & Dueck, 2012, Krüger & Trandafoiu, 2013).

In this article, I aim to provide an overview of the historical factors and contemporary issues that shape the presence of Brazilian music in Lebanon today. Firstly, I will outline the history of migration and remigration between the two countries, and how this transnational relationship has resulted in a small Brazilian population in Lebanon. I will discuss how financial and cultural remittances from Brazil (and elsewhere) have contributed to the growth of a prosperous and cosmopolitan Lebanese middle class; a development crucial to the making of modern Lebanon. The following section will be concerned primarily with the music of Ziad Rahbani: an extremely popular Lebanese artist who has incorporated aspects of bossa nova into his compositions and arrangements consistently over the past forty years. In the last section of this article, I will present a case study of Xangô, the Beirut-based band mentioned above who specialise in samba, bossa nova and MPB. Using ethnographic material gathered in 2017-18, I will

[6] Ziad Rahbani is generally known simply as 'Ziad' in Lebanon, and to avoid confusion with the Rahbani Brothers (his father and uncle), I will refer to him as 'Ziad' throughout this article.

outline the issues they face as professional performers, and how exoticism and stereotyping affects and shapes the production, performance and reception of Brazilian music in Lebanon.

1. FIRST ENCOUNTERS

Although geographically far apart, and often perceived as culturally opposite, Lebanon and Brazil share a rich history of migration and cultural exchange. The foundations of this relationship can be traced back to the "two 1492s": the *Reconquista* and the *Conquista,* or the end of Moorish rule in the Iberian Peninsula and Christopher Columbus's 'discovery' of the New World, which marked the beginning of the European colonial projects in Central and South America and the Caribbean (Shohat and Stam, 2014). The sociocultural and linguistic influence of the Moors on the Portuguese and Spanish in Iberia was carried across the Atlantic by Columbus, and thus a mediated, but present, 'Oriental' influence travelled to Brazil[7]. Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre notes the importance of both the Moorish and Sephardic Jewish influence on Brazilian society in his 1933 book *Casa Grande e Senzala* ('The Masters and the Slaves'). A highly influential study of Brazil's racial makeup, Freyre is credited with first introducing the idea of Brazil as a "racial democracy"; a country whose strength and national identity was due to its unique mixture of European, African and indigenous peoples. He, however, also emphasised the importance of the Arab influence on Brazilian culture, claiming that Brazil's transition from Portuguese colonial rule and slave state to tripartite racial democracy was in part thanks to centuries of encounters between the Portuguese and their Moorish rulers and Sephardic fellow citizens. Freyre argued that these Arab citizens provided the Portuguese with dual characteristics of "patriarchal authoritarianism and sexual-racial flexibility"; attributes that encouraged both white dominance and miscegenation. In his work, Freyre emphatically states that the Arab world has been an important presence in the Brazilian imaginary for hundreds of years, although his controversial ideas betray a long history of contradictory and highly Orientalist attitudes towards 'the East' in Brazil.[8]

In 1876, Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, undertook a tour of the Ottoman Empire, spending significant time in Greater Syria. He visited Baalbeck, the well-preserved Roman ruins in the Bekaa Valley

[7] For example, see Miguel Nimer, *Influências Orientais na Língua Português* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2005).

[8] Contemporary 'Tropical Orientalist' attitudes can be found in Brazilian depictions of the Middle East in popular culture and the media, for example the romanticised and sensual East of the *telenovela 'O Clone"*. For discussion of these issues, see John Tofik Karam (2010) and Shohat and Stam (2014).

in today's eastern Lebanon, and, as the legend has it, invited the inhabitants of the area to migrate to Brazil (Khatlab, 2005: 62). Seemingly, they took him at his word, and the first significant groups of Arab migrants left for the Americas from Ottoman Greater Syria – present-day Lebanon and Syria – in the 1880s (Lesser, 2013)[9]. The period between the 1890s and the beginning of World War I in 1914 saw the arrival of 60,000 Lebanese migrants in Brazil. The War temporarily halted migratory flows, but by 1933, the total number of Lebanese arrivals reached around 130,000. In total, by 1930 approximately 330,000 migrants had left from the Port of Beirut for the Americas, with 220,000 travelling to South America, and the remainder sailing to the United States (Truzzi, 1997: 13, and Lesser, 2013, 130). The majority of the migrants were from the Mount Lebanon *mutassarifate*[10] which would later form the basis of the Lebanese state. The *mutassarifate* encompassed a large area surrounding Beirut, which at the time had the largest and busiest port of the region, so therefore it was easier for Mount Lebanon residents to leave the country, although citizens from the extreme north and south of the country, and from cities further afield such as Damascus also emigrated. Demographically, most of the population of Mount Lebanon were Maronite Christians, and therefore they constituted the majority of Arab emigrants; according to some sources, 90 percent of the Syrians and Lebanese that left the country between 1890 and 1930 were Christians (Truzzi, 1997: 6).

The first Arab immigrant arrivals to Brazil carried Ottoman passports, and thus were nicknamed '*turcos*' or 'Turks', despite the fact that they were Arabs, and did not have Turkish heritage. Unlike the German, Portuguese and Spanish immigrants, they were not invited to emigrate to Brazil, and thus their trajectory was different. Instead of essentially replacing black slaves and becoming low-paid plantation workers, as happened to many European immigrants, Syrian and Lebanese arrivals typically became peddlers, known as *mascates*. They worked in both the city of São Paulo, and in the surrounding countryside, selling goods to rural populations mainly based on coffee plantations, as city access was limited (Lesser, 2013: 123). This was allegedly so common that *turco* and *mascate* became synonymous, and often pejorative, descriptions (Lesser, 2013: 125). During the early decades of the 20th century, the Syrian and Lebanese immigrants firmly established themselves as a permanent and economically

[9] At that time, Syria and Lebanon were under Ottoman rule (1516-1918) and were not autonomous nation-states, rather a selection of *vilayets* and *mutassarifates*: semi-autonomous provinces that formed a part of 'Greater Syria'. Also known as 'Ottoman Syria' or *Bilad al Sham*, this region encompassed present-day Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Israel and the majority of Syria and Jordan. It is important to note that prior to independence, Lebanese and Syrians self-identified on a highly localised basis, prioritising village, family name and religion over allegiance to larger entities.

[10] Semi-autonomous provinces that formed a part of 'Greater Syria', see footnote 6.

successful community, mainly in the city of São Paulo, which is where the Syrian-Lebanese community continues to have its largest presence to this day. Gradually, the perjorative *turco* demonym lessened in usage, and they became known as *sírio-libanês* – Portuguese for 'Syrian-Lebanese' – although *turco* or the sometimes affectionate *turcezinho* continued to be used (Lesser, 2013, Karam, 2010: 7).

2. REMIGRATION AND REMITTANCES

Although large numbers of Lebanese ended up settling in Brazil, and creating successful, wealthy communities, it is clear that many Lebanese initially did not intend to emigrate permanently. The main objective of most emigrants – the majority of whom were young men, initially – was to travel abroad, stay there until they had made enough money to improve their economic situation back home, and then return to Lebanon (Lesser, 2013: 7). Despite their original intentions, however, many immigrants that had managed to profitably establish themselves in their new country decided to stay and sent for their sons and other relatives of a working age to join them. Businesses expanded, and many Lebanese built a semi-permanent or permanent presence in Brazil. They sent for further family members to work with them, which gradually attracted other Lebanese, who in turn sent for their family members – a process described as "chain migration" (Khatlab, 2006, and Karam, 2010). By the 1920s, the *sírio-libanês* had worked up from poor, immigrant peddlers to successful businessmen, and had entered the professions in significant numbers.

As a result of their success, the *sírio-libanês* sent millions of dollars back to Lebanon. The large number of remittances being sent back to Lebanon gave Brazil a very positive reputation, and thus the popularity of Brazil as a destination for Lebanese to pursue their 'South American dream' continued to grow. Akram Fouad Khater outlines how the wealth pouring into Lebanon from abroad, via both financial remittances and wealthy returning emigrants, fundamentally changed the country on multiple levels, as did the returning emigrants themselves (Khater, 2001). By 1920, the influx of money from abroad, amounting to around $8 million, accounted for about half Lebanon's annual income. As this wealth arrived in Lebanon, remittances directly impacted the architecture and urbanisation of many Lebanese towns and cities (Khater, 2001). Khater argues that returning migrants thus played a key role in

the making of modern Lebanon: this injection of wealth and raising of living standards was the first step towards creating a new Lebanese middle class.

This new middle class was not based entirely on increased wealth. Returning emigrants also brought with them social and cultural remittances: experiences, new values and attitudes that they had picked up on their travels. Their experiences abroad posed fundamental challenges to Lebanese society, and led to fierce debates about the nature of tradition and modernity, and of "Eastern" and "Western" attitudes to gender, family structure, marriage and education. These new aspirational middle-class Lebanese were used to an urban, bourgeois existence in São Paulo or New York, and now wanted to replicate facets of their lives in the diaspora back home in Lebanon. These debates led to new constructions of gender and family roles, and a marked movement of previously rural populations to urban settings (Khater, 2001). Therefore, returning migrants from across the world played a highly significant role in the making of modern Lebanon, financially, culturally and demographically. The transcultural links between Lebanon and the many countries where there is a Lebanese diaspora population feed into, enrich and complicate Lebanon's multiple national and cultural identit(ies).

3. THE '*BRASILIBANÊS*': BRAZILIANS IN LEBANON TODAY

Lebanese emigration to Brazil continued across the 20th century, with numbers of emigrants and remigrants ebbing and flowing depending on the political situation in Lebanon. The last major migration was during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), during which approximately one million Lebanese left the country, although the proportion of those who went to Brazil is unknown (Fursan, 2010). Therefore, these migratory processes of both emigration and chain migration as outlined above have continued for well over a century, and are still happening now. The third and fourth generation descendants of Lebanese migrants have "become Brazilian", and many of them are ambivalent about their Lebanese heritage, and no longer speak Arabic. However, many second, third and fourth generation Lebanese-Brazilians still retain familial or business links to Lebanon, and travel regularly between the two countries[11].

[11] During the summer and Christmas holiday seasons, large numbers of Lebanese-Brazilians (as well as Lebanese citizens living in other countries) return to Lebanon. One member of the *Brasilibanês* community told me that the population of her village in the Bekaa Valley (see p.8) doubles during the summer months.

There are now thousands of Brazilian-Lebanese citizens, with Brazilian passports, living in Lebanon. Thiago Oliveira, Head of Culture and Education at the Embassy of Brazil in Beirut, estimates the total number of Brazilians, meaning Brazilian passport holders, living in Lebanon at 17,000. In the context of Lebanon's population, it is a small percentage, and very difficult to measure as Lebanon has not had an official census since 1932, and many Brazilian passport-holders will also be Lebanese passport holders. Of these, a significant proportion are Lebanese Brazilians: Brazil-born descendants of the original Lebanese migrants[12]. These dual-heritage citizens are often given a colloquial Portuguese endonym, *'Brasilibanêses'*. Others are Lebanese citizens left for Brazil during the civil war, obtained a Brazilian passport, and then returned to Lebanon the 1990s. Some are Brazilian women who met and married Lebanese men in Brazil, and moved to Lebanon after their marriage. Others still are Brazilians with some Lebanese heritage, who moved to Lebanon for work, an adventure, an interest in Lebanese culture, or a better security situation. I also met a few Brazilians with no prior connection to or interest in Lebanon, who had found themselves there for a variety of reasons. There are also many Lebanese citizens who have spent time in Brazil without obtaining a Brazilian passport, although they have retained the Portuguese language and still form a part of the *Brasilibanês* community. Lebanese-Brazilian scholar Roberto Khatlab comments that "Rarely do we find a village or a town [in Lebanon] that does not have some of its children in Brazil", and indeed Brazilians or Lebanese-Brazilians are spread across the country (Khatlab, 2005). There are larger populations concentrated in particular areas: in the Bekaa Valley there are villages where up to 90% of the inhabitants speak Portuguese, and have built their houses with Brazilian money. Shops, with names such as 'Copacabana Mercado', sell Brazilian snacks and drinks like *pão de queijo* and *Guaraná*[13].

The Brazilian community living in Lebanon differs somewhat from more "typical" Brazilian diaspora populations typically found in America and Europe, as members of these diasporic groups tend to have migrated in search of economic opportunity[14]. As the majority of Brazilians in Lebanon have Lebanese heritage, the community shares similarities with the Brazilian diaspora in Japan, which is also primarily based on return migration and familial or marital links (Tsuda, 2003). However, the variety of migratory reasons mentioned above, and great variation in terms of class, ethnic, religious and regional

[12] Thiago Oliveira, head of culture and education, Embassy of Brazil in Beirut: personal communication.
[13] These villages include Kamed Il Laouz, Ghazze and Sultan Yaacoub, Bekaa Valley.
[14] For example, see Gabi Hoskin (2018) and Annie McNeill Gibson (2013).

backgrounds has resulted in a highly heterogenous community. Brazilians in Lebanon have differing relationships and levels of identification with Brazil and Lebanon, and there is a wide variety of preferred cultural tastes and affiliations within the community. Thus, their level of participation in musical activities, whether as performers or consumers, varies greatly, and it should certainly not be assumed that all Brazilians living in Lebanon attend concerts by Brazilian musicians, or even speak Portuguese as their first language.

4. FAIROUZ, ZIAD RAHBANI AND LEBANESE BOSSA NOVA

Fairouz (b. 1935) is undoubtedly Lebanon's most famous and well-loved singer, and a national icon. It is difficult to overstate her cultural importance in Lebanon and across the Arab world; she is arguably the most famous living Arab singer (Stone, 2007; Racy, 1981). Indeed, there is great truth to the popular Arabic saying "*Fairouz bil sabah, Umm Kulthumm bil massa*", which refers to the extraordinarily widespread practice of listening to Fairouz in the morning, and legendary Egyptian singer Umm Kulthumm at night[15]. Many radio stations across the Arab world adhere to this programming, and it has become a very well-known cultural convention across the region (Bothwell, 2013: 12-14)[16]. In Lebanon however, it is almost impossible to not hear Fairouz's songs at any given time throughout the day; her voice resonates from passing taxis, cafés, and mobile phones.

When she was in her late teens, Fairouz was introduced to Assi Rahbani, who was to become both her husband and one of her principle songwriters. In 1954, at the age of nineteen, Fairouz married him, and from then, Assi and his brother Mansour – who together were known as the Rahbani Brothers – became her sole songwriters and creative directors, as well as writers for the theatrical plays she starred in. During the 1960s and 70s, the trio experienced extraordinary popularity and success, especially through the fêted yearly appearances of their musicals at the internationally-renowned Baalbeck Festival (Stone, 2007). Fairouz and the Rahbanis created a vast catalogue of ground-breaking musicals and songs of enduring popularity. The nationalistic sentiments that infused their plays and songs, such as "*Bhebbak Ya*

[15] Meaning "Fairouz in the morning, Umm Kulthumm at night". I have heard this saying countless times, in Lebanon and in Palestine.

[16] In Beirut record shops, it is very common to see compilation tapes or CDs of "Fairouz Morning Songs", and there are also several Instagram pages dedicated to documenting the ritual of listening to Fairouz whilst drinking coffee in the morning – for example, the popular account '@lebanesemorning'.

Lubnan ('I love you Lebanon', 1976)" endeared them to the Lebanese population, and the Rahbani family developed an almost mythical status in Lebanon and across the Arab world, which strongly endures to this day (Stone, 2007). Ali Jihad Racy describes how music in Beirut has long been a "complex conglomeration of Eastern and Western practices, repertoires and aesthetic outlooks", and the music of Fairouz and the Rahbanis especially exemplified this mélange (Racy, 1986). Their compositions blended Lebanese folkloric genres, *maqam*-based music and elements of European classical harmony and orchestration (Stone, 2007 and Racy, 1981), a highly innovative and distinctive compositional approach that reflected the unique diversity of Lebanon: multiconfessional, ethnically diverse; part of the Arab world, yet connected to a global diaspora. Christopher Stone argues that despite their cosmopolitan ideals, Fairouz and the Rahbani's music actually privileged a narrow, rural Christian utopia that reflected their own backgrounds (Stone, 2007). Despite this, the rose-tinted nationalism represented by the music of the Rahbanis demonstrates clearly the link between cultural hybridity and national identity in the Lebanese imaginary, which is an essential factor in the unequivocal popularity of their music[17].

In 1972, Assi suffered a brain haemorrhage. Whilst he was recuperating, his son Ziad Rahbani began writing music for his mother. After his partial recuperation, Assi resumed writing for Fairouz, but their relationship – and his health – suffered, and they divorced in 1979, permanently ceasing their working relationship. Ziad, having spent the intervening years writing and recording his own increasingly successful solo works, then became her principle songwriter. Ziad began taking his solo material in a far more experimental direction than the music of his parents, disregarding their nostalgic and nationalistic sketches of Lebanese Christian village life in favour of a more cosmopolitan philosophy. Although heavily influenced by the music of his family, he discarded the nationalism and illusory nostalgia invoked by his mother and the Rahbani Brothers in their 1960s heyday, and presented a far more cynical view of a divided, corrupt and violent country torn apart by civil war[18]. Ziad's music, plays and political commentary were broadcast constantly on the radio throughout the civil war, and therefore, a whole Lebanese generation grew up listening to him, at a formative and traumatic time in their country's

[17] See Kraidy, 2005, and Stone, 2012, for in-depth discussion of issues pertaining to national identity and the music of Fairouz and the Rahbanis.

[18] The Lebanese Civil War lasted from 1975-1990.

history. As a Lebanese friend of mine put it, "We used to gather in the staircase with the radio and candles, there was no electricity of course. We were putting Ziad on the radio to not hear the bombs"[19].

Christopher Stone argues that one of the goals of Ziad's project was to represent a "bigger, more inclusive Lebanon" (Stone, 2007: 92), and this musical cosmopolitanism was marked by experimentation with jazz harmonies, complex arrangements and musical influences from a range of international genres, which he incorporated into the songs and plays he wrote for both his solo music and for Fairouz. At some point in his youth, Ziad had heard and fallen in love with the music of Brazilian bossa nova pioneers João Gilberto and Antônio Carlos Jobim. A clear bossa nova influence, in terms of rhythm, instrumentation and melody, can be heard on his solo albums, musical theatre productions and arrangements he produced for his mother and from the late 1970s to the present day[20]. For example, the main theme of his play '*Bennesbeh la Bukra shu?*' ('What About Tomorrow?') is a clear example of this. One of his most famous and successful plays, it was first performed in 1978 in Hamra Street, West Beirut. It broke box office records for Lebanese theatre, and ran daily to full houses for at least six months. with the soundtrack providing "some of the most popular songs in Lebanon for the next ten years" (Stone, 2007: 110). The main theme, simply titled "Intro Instrumental 1", or "First Musical Scene", is clearly indebted to bossa nova. The opening flute melody that recurs in various guises throughout the soundtrack is highly reminiscent of the opening flute melody of Jobim's 'Corcovado'[21], and the drum kit and the guitar 'comping' patterns adhere to typical bossa nova conventions of the 1960s, albeit with less syncopation and 'swing'. The lush instrumental arrangements are reminiscent of early Jobim: the genre conventions that Ziad favoured were popularised on such classic albums as João Gilberto and Stan Getz's 1964 collaboration "Getz/Gilberto," and Jobim's "The Wonderful World of Antônio Carlos Jobim" (1965)[22].

Later on in his career, Ziad also arranged classic bossa nova compositions for his mother to sing, with Arabic translations of the original Portuguese lyrics. An example of this is his arrangement of Luiz

[19] Yahya Yehia, personal communication, July 2018. Also, see Abu Khalil, 'The Cult of Ziad Rahbani', https://english.al-akhbar.com/node/12871; Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon,* Chapter 4: 'Nostalgias', and Stone, 2007, pp. 9-138.

[20] Although early compositions of the Rahbani Brothers did not explore Brazilian music, they did occasionally reference other genres from Latin American, such as tango and cha-cha-cha. Additionally, Fairouz undertook several South American tours, including dates in Brazil, in 1961, 1970 and 1981. She performed to a rapturous crowd of Lebanese expatriates, and cemented her popularity amongst the Lebanese diaspora. A live recording of her 1961 South American tour, entitled "*Haflat min Brazil and Argentina*" – "Shows from Brazil and Argentina" – was released in 1962.

[21] As featured on the 1963 Antônio Carlos Jobim album "The Composer of Desafinado, Plays".

[22] The bossa nova influence does not run through the entire soundtrack: the three songs sung by Joseph Saker –"*Isma' ya Reda*", "*Ayesh Wahda Balak*" and "*Oghneyat al Bostah*" – draw primarily from Lebanese urban music, rhythmically, melodically, and instrumentally.

Bonfã's '*Manhã de Carnaval* (1959)' for Fairouz's 2002 album '*Wala Kif*'[23]. Ziad maintained the original melody, but rewrote the lyrics in Arabic, naming it '*Shu Bkhaf*' – 'How I Fear' – and completely changed the meaning of the song, from a romantic and wistful tale of the first morning of carnival, to a paranoid narration of sleepless nights and lost love. Although on first listen the song appears to follow bossa conventions, rhythmically, Ziad only uses one 'side' of the bossa clave[24] – in effect, simplifying the rhythmic structure of the piece, and the melody is sung with much less syncopation than the Brazilian version; therefore, the rhythmic characteristics of bossa nova are significantly altered.

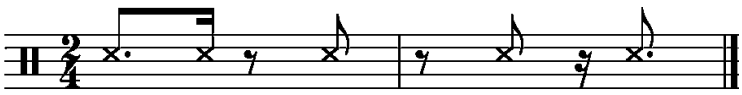

Fig. 1: 'Bossa Clave'

These rhythmic and linguistic alterations are one of the most immediately apparent ways in which bossa nova has been transformed through Ziad's interpretation of the genre; processes of mimesis, mediation and ultimately reification that have long been evident since the genre's migration to the US and beyond in the 1960s (Keightley, in Toynbee and Dueck, 2011; Treece, 1992). Toynbee and Dueck outline a template for this journey as follows:

> Following an original moment of mimesis, the copied music undergoes further developments and transformations. And although the original moment of transfer might have involved an anxious attempt to contain a threatening alterity, the copied object often becomes familiar, localised and indigenised and is then elaborated in response to the most pressing concerns of the people who have appropriated it. (Toynbee & Dueck, 2012: 10)

These processes are evident in the development of an idiosyncratic Lebanese iteration of bossa nova over the past forty years. Although other artists active in the 1970s including Elias Rahbani (Ziad's uncle), Issam Hajali and Ferkat Al Ard were similarly influenced by bossa nova, Ziad arguably played the most significant role in introducing this mediated version of the genre to the Lebanese public, and undoubtedly the involvement of his mother, Fairouz, played a critical role in its dissemination. Typical in

[23] Bonfã's '*Manhã de Carnaval*' was originally recorded for the soundtrack to the 1959 Marcel Camus film '*Orfeu Negro*', or 'Black Orpheus'.

[24] The 'bossa clave' is a two-bar rhythmic cell used as a tool for temporal organisation in bossa nova music. The drum patterns in Ziad's "*Shu Bkhaf*" feature only the first bar of the clave, not the second.

both Ziad's work and that of other artists is the removal of musical signifiers of "alterity" – the complex Afro-Brazilian-influenced rhythms and the Portuguese language – yet the retention of certain timbral and instrumental qualities that are essential to creating the distinctive bossa nova "vibe": the lush string arrangements, soft vocals and Impressionist harmonies that have come to signify sophistication, luxury and a somewhat familiar exotic. Although these sound like the markers of the soothing blandness of internationalized bossa nova (Treece, 1992: 60), Ziad's work, for the most part, avoids banality by dint of his carefully constructed, intricate and highly creative arrangements.

This partially de-exoticized interpretation of bossa nova was both linguistically accessible and rhythmically less unfamiliar to a Lebanese audience. The Lebanese bossa nova style became so popular, and so clearly associated with Fairouz and Ziad Rahbani, that "*Shu Bkhaf"* became a Fairouz classic in its own right. It has spawned its own cover versions across the Arab world, and like many of Fairouz's arrangements of pre-existing music, the original has remained widely unknown in Lebanon, and the song became 'hers'[25]. Indeed, the deep association between bossa nova and the Rahbani family was reiterated by many of my interviewees. One of them, a Lebanese guitarist named Adel Minkara who has regularly performed with Ziad Rahbani over the past decade, told me that once he was playing a gig in Beirut, and a member of the crowd asked for a Ziad or Fairouz tune. The band responded by playing *"So Danço Samba"*, another Jobim composition that Ziad Rahbani had rearranged as part of a collaboration with another singer, Salma Mousfi; "*Mish Bas Talfinly"* in its Arabic translation[26]. According to him, the audience were happy with this selection, and accepted it as an authentic Ziad Rahbani song[27].

The association between Ziad and bossa nova was strongly emphasised the first time I saw Ziad perform in Beirut, on May 1st 2018, at the Blue Note Café in Hamra. It was his first 'comeback' show, after a hiatus of three or four years. The concert was framed by the genre: before and after the live performance, a selection of bossa nova recordings played over the club's sound system, including original

[25] For example, the Egyptian singer Noha Fekry has recorded a version of '*Shu Bkhaf*' with pianist Rami Atallah, and Lebanese singer Ghada Ghanem has recorded a version of *Manhã de Carnaval* in Arabic with her own lyrics, which has more thematic similarities to the original Bonfã version. However, her vocal phrasing is clearly influenced by Fairouz's original recording of "*Shu Bkhaf*".

[26] Although released in her name, Salma Mousfi's 2001 album 'Monodose' was entirely arranged by Ziad, and he wrote all the original material. The album features arrangements of two bossa nova songs: Antonio Carlos Jobim's *"Só Danço Samba* (1962, Jobim & Moraes, aka 'Jazz 'n' Samba')" and a lesser-known composition by Astrud Gilberto, "*Gingele* (1972)*"*.

[27] Ironically, despite his strong associations with bossa nova, Ziad is not particularly well-known within the Brazilian community in Lebanon, and several of those whom I spoke to were not aware of the Brazilian influences present in his music. Likewise, some Lebanese fans of Ziad I spoke to did not know that the songs and plays they loved were composed in a bossa nova style, or were arrangements of Brazilian classics.

1960s Brazilian recordings, as well as Ziad's own cover versions. An Astrud Gilberto version of '*So Dançe Samba'* was played in its original form, followed some time later by '*Mish Bas Talfinly'*; the Arabic cover version that Ziad arranged for Salma Mousfi on the 'Monodose' album. During the concert itself, guest singer Lara Rain came onstage and sung '*Mish Bas Talfinly'* in Arabic and Portuguese. The rest of the set was peppered with Brazilian influences, alongside jazz and funk covers. Although there did not appear to be any Brazilians in the audience, nor were any members of the band Brazilian, the choice of recorded music to play before and after the performance, as well as during the break, seemed to intentionally emphasise the connection between Ziad and Brazilian music, albeit limited to 1960s bossa nova compositions.

5. XANGÔ

That evening at the Blue Note Café, Adel Minkara was playing guitar with Ziad. Their working relationship began in 2008, when Ziad went to see Adel playing with his own band, Xangô, a Beirut-based band who play Brazilian music. Adel is Lebanese, but has family in Brazil, and spent many years studying music there, and Naima Yazbek, the lead singer and co-founder, is Brazilian, of Lebanese heritage on her mother's side, and moved to Lebanon from her home city of São Paulo in 2008. After watching their performance, Ziad asked Adel and Naima to collaborate with him, as he loved how they played Brazilian music, and he was especially keen to have Naima, a native Portuguese speaker, sing with him. Both of them continue to collaborate with him on a regular basis.

Xangô's drummer Fouad Afra and bass player, Bashar Farran, are both Lebanese, and they are sometimes joined by Artur Satyan, a Armenian jazz pianist and head of jazz studies at the Lebanese National Conservatoire of Music, and Kevin Safadi, a Lebanese percussionist who specialises in Brazilian music, although the line-up depends on the size of the venue and the fee offered. Fouad and Kevin have also performed and recorded with Ziad Rahbani, who especially chose them to collaborate with him because of their expertise in Brazilian music. Xangô's repertoire is solely Brazilian: they play bossa nova, MPB, choro and samba, as well as styles from the North East of Brazil including *forró* and samba-reggae: all cover versions, and no original compositions. Xangô are unique in Lebanon, as they are the only band

with a pop or jazz instrumental line-up who play this repertoire[28]. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, there are other Brazilian bands and projects, covering the genres of *choro*, bossa nova, and carnival-style samba, but none of them that I saw play MPB or *forró*, and none are as versatile. Xangô play at a variety of venues, mainly bars, small music venues and restaurants in Beirut and its affluent, mainly Christian coastal suburbs; typically in venues that would usually host rock, pop or hip hop bands, although they often perform in bars and restaurants and at more 'corporate' events that usually book jazz musicians, adapting their repertoire and line-up to suit the crowd. For example, I saw them play at an upmarket Armenian restaurant just outside Beirut. Here, they had a pianist, in lieu of a bass player, and played mainly slower bossa nova tracks.

When I saw Xangô play at Radio Beirut in Mar Mikhael, a late-night alternative bar and music venue in East Beirut, their performance was promoted as a 'Brazilian Party' special, with *caipirinha* cocktails on offer. For this gig, they performed as a four-piece band: Naima singing (and dancing), Adel Minkara on guitar, Bashar Farran on bass and Fouad Afra on drums. They played for two hours with a short break, and their repertoire covered several genres including *chorinho*, samba, samba-reggae and *forró*. The bar was very busy, and the audience were very enthusiastic and responsive, starting to dance almost immediately as Xangô's set commenced. Naima addressed the crowd almost solely in English, which reflected the generally middle-class and well-educated crowd in attendance, which is relatively typical for that venue and also the bars along Sharaa Armenia in general. Naima did, however, thank the crowd between songs in both Portuguese and Arabic, acknowledging the crowd by saying "*obrigada, shukran*" between songs. A musical link between Brazil and Lebanon was alluded to, by a brief mention of singer and composer João Bosco, who Naima explained was a Brazilian of Lebanese origin. She briefly spoke of a deep cultural link between the two countries, before singing a version of his 1976 track "*Incompatibilidade De Gênios*". Many members of the audience were dancing in a general 'Latino' style - using moves primarily derived from basic salsa and *bachata*, although a small group of women caught my attention as they were using the correct steps of *samba no pé* – the intricate steps characteristic of Brazilian samba. Gradually, through watching members of the crowd dance, and hearing them verbally respond to Naima in broken or fluent Portuguese, it became clear that there was a sizeable group of Lebanese who clearly regularly partook in Brazilian cultural activities, as well as a number of Brazilians in

[28] By 'pop or jazz line-up' I mean a rhythm section (bass and drums plus piano/keyboards and/or percussion) plus guitar and vocals.

the audience. The Brazilian community and aficionados of Brazilian culture comprise a sizeable and loyal group, and any Brazilian performances or themed events are always very well attended. Brazilian bands like Xangô tend to play as part of Brazilian-themed nights, but often bands play within the context of other music scenes. For example, Brazilian music is very much present within the jazz scene: the jazz venues of Hamra often host Brazilian music, bossa nova is incorporated into the repertoire of many jazz musicians, and many freelance musicians, including most of those who play with Xangô, are active within multiple genres. Although Xangô enjoy a great deal of popularity within their circle, and have a loyal, reliable crowd who attend their gigs, they often find it difficult to attract 'outsiders'. Adel explained to me it is for this reason that they limit their performances in certain areas and at certain venues. They try not to play too regularly in certain places as they tend to rely on their fanbase and the Brazilian community in general to provide an audience for their gigs.

Through interviewing the band members and watching several of their performances in very different venues and contexts, I was made aware of the issues and tensions surrounding the performance of Brazilian music in Lebanon. For example, although their versatility was admirable – and indeed necessary, as it is for musicians worldwide – several band members remarked pointedly on the tensions they felt between authentic performance and commercial gain. The band often had to sacrifice elements of their 'authenticity' as a Brazilian group in order to obtain work. This sometimes meant changing their repertoire to include non-Brazilian music, and playing songs in a different manner. Guitarist Adel Minkara mentioned that it was not possible at all to play what he considered to be authentic bossa nova, as the correct way to sing and play it on an acoustic guitar is too subtle and quiet, and Lebanese audiences would not listen to it, nor were there any venues to cater for such a performance[29]. Therefore, any bossa nova tunes they played had to be loud, and refashioned into more of an MPB or samba style. Another issue that I heard musicians complaining of multiple times was that Brazilian music was often subsumed under the generic rubric of 'Latin', and conflated with salsa, Latin pop or even tango. Often, the band were asked to include Latin pop hits in their set, which they either did or not did comply with depending on the gig at stake. I witnessed these tensions clearly at one of their concerts at the Casino du Liban.

[29] Interview with Adel Minkara, August 2017

6. XANGÔ AT CASINO DU LIBAN: *'FESTA DO BRASIL'*

> On a mild Friday evening, guests arriving at a terrace overlooking the bay were welcomed by the cawing of parakeets, lovebirds and parrots, and plied with trays of caipirinhas as the band played bossa nova in front of Rio de Janeiro's Sugarloaf Mountain. But this was not Brazil. Instead, on Sept. 8, the opening night of *'Festa do Brasil'*, Brazil had come to Lebanon[30]. – *The Daily Star*, Lebanon, September 12th, 2017

Xangô's guitarist Adel told me about '*Festa do Brasil'*, a two-week 'festival' of Brazilian food, music and dance. It was to be held at the Casino du Liban, near Jounieh, a town around 22km north of Beirut. Overlooking the beautiful Bay of Jounieh, the Casino first opened in 1959. In its 1960s heyday it epitomised the time when Beirut was nicknamed the 'Paris of the Middle East'; a playground for the rich where patrons could watch international jazz stars such as Duke Ellington at the Casino cabaret, as well as the most respected names in contemporary Arabic music, such as Farid al Atrash and Fairouz. It closed in 1975 upon the outbreak of the civil war, but reopened in 1996 thanks to a $50 million refurbishment, and its re-inauguration was officiated by the then president, Elias el Hraoui. Today, it is one of the only locations in the country where it is legal to gamble, and is the largest casino in the Middle East[31]. Although the number of international musicians playing at the cabaret has dwindled, and it no longer holds quite the same exclusive status as in previous decades, it is still a symbol of luxury, glamour and decadence.

'*Festa do Brasil'* was advertised as a 'culinary and dance festival', with a Brazilian chef, Felipe Rameh, providing the food, a troupe of dancers, and a live band playing every night for two weeks. Rameh had also conducted a well-attended cooking workshop at *Brasiliban*, the Brazilian cultural centre in Beirut, the previous week[32]. I went to the Casino one evening with Natalie Nassif, a Brazilian woman of Lebanese descent who teaches Portuguese at *Brasiliban*. She is also the girlfriend of Adel, who was

[30] 'Brazilian Festival opening full of flair', *The Daily Star Lebanon*, 12th September 2017. http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Life/Lubnan/2017/Sep-12/418988-brazilian-festival-opening-full-of-flair.ashx

[31] Casino du Liban website, http://www.casinoduliban.com.lb/about-us.php#the-company. Last accessed 1/10/18.

[32] The Brazilian-Lebanese Cultural Centre, also known as *Brasiliban,* is affiliated with the Brazilian Embassy and is the only cultural institution that specifically serves the Brazilian community, and those interested in Brazilian culture. The centre is in a beautiful renovated townhouse in the middle class area of Achrafieh in East Beirut, and hosts many events, classes and activities including Portuguese language lessons, cookery nights, concerts and Brazilian dance and *capoeira* classes. The centre provides a meeting point for Brazilians from across Lebanon, and at the social events, Brazilians tend to make up the majority of the attendees, although there tend to be a sizeable number of aficionados of Brazilian culture, too, as well as curious members of the general public. The two main objectives of the centre are firstly, to promote the Portuguese language, and secondly, to promote Brazilian culture and encourage cultural exchange.

playing guitar for the whole two-week event. She had agreed to come with me, albeit reluctantly, as she perceived the event to be overpriced, highly commercialised, and a somewhat 'inauthentic' experience. Adel was driving her and the bass player, Bashar, and they kindly picked me up from my apartment. As we drove off, I asked Adel about the festival, and he launched into a tirade against the organisers of '*Festa do Brasil'*, and the Casino in general. He told me that their main contact and organiser was a "a stupid orange [fake tanned] woman with a lot of botox", and in his opinion she clearly knew nothing about music, how to treat musicians, and certainly nothing about Brazilian culture; she personified the "fakeness" of Lebanese society that I had heard him, and others, railing against on previous occasions. One of the main reasons for his outburst was that on the first night, the band had played a set of Brazilian bossa novas, including compositions by Antônio Carlos Jobim and other well-known musicians. Despite the fact that the band had been specifically booked to play Brazilian music, after this first set this woman asked him if the band could broaden their repertoire to include more commercial music, specifically Spanish and Latin hits, including Enrique Iglesias. This lack of knowledge about authentic Brazilian culture clearly marked her out as an "idiot", and he levelled these charges against the whole organisational team. His comments and general attitude towards the organisers, and his openly-voiced conclusion that none of them had any knowledge of Brazilian music, were repeated by several of the other musicians, and were a common theme in conversations that evening. The general feeling towards the show was one of ambivalence and open distaste and disdain: of course, they were making money, and it is not all that easy to make a living as a musician in Beirut, but they felt that they were not treated very well, and the whole project was "fake", which is a term I have heard multiple times from Lebanese and Brazilian musicians regarding similar events. I asked if there had been many Brazilians in the audience, and Adel and Bashar replied that there were for the first three nights, including the Ambassador and Brazilian Embassy staff on the opening night, but after that, the clientele was mainly affluent Lebanese. I was attending exactly halfway through the run, on a Saturday night.

The entrance of the casino was decorated with Lebanese and Brazilian flags, and a big globe emblazoned with "*Ordem e Progresso",* modelled on the Brazilian flag. Like many other events I've seen, there was strong visual emphasis on Lebanese-Brazilian links: an overt statement that the event was about emphasising ties between the two countries as much as it was a celebration of Brazilian culture. We sat down in the lounge, and saw Kevin Safadi, the percussionist of the group. I asked him a few similar

questions, and he responded with many of the same answers as Adel about the clientele, music and general atmosphere of the place, with a distinctly cynical and mocking tone. I asked him about the change of repertoire requested by management, and he told me that I'd "hear a bunch of *montunos* in the middle of the *bossas*"; *montunos* being a highly distinctive and common piano style used in Cuban salsa, and not found in Brazilian music. He said the request was "Casino Bolicy", a joke he repeated with great pleasure throughout the night. Many Arabic speakers have difficulty with the letter P, as it is not present in the Arabic alphabet, so this joke implied that the organisers were, compared to him, uneducated and uncultured, and his particular vocal impression signified a particular kind of bureaucratic and corrupt official.

The band started at around 9pm. They were a five-piece, consisting of Bashar on electric bass, Adel on electric guitar, Artur Satyan on piano, Kevin on percussion and Chris Shaheen on drum kit, an American musician of Lebanese descent, jokingly referred to as 'CIA'. Naima was not singing with them, as the venue organisers had requested a solely instrumental line-up: the band were supposed to accompany the dinner service, and a singer was deemed to be too distracting. During their first set, the band played some classic bossa nova standards, including '*Manhã de Carnaval'* and '*Corcovado*', peppered with some numbers from the wider Latin jazz repertoire, such as '*Bésame Mucho"*[33]. The band were excellent, certainly well-rehearsed after a week of playing the same repertoire together. They performed on a small stage in front of a large screen, which played a looped video of images of Rio de Janeiro: panoramic views of Guanabara Bay, the *Cristo Redentor* monument and scenes of the carnival parades at the *Sambodromo*.

After about 45 minutes, the band finished their set and the dance entertainment began. The troupe of dancers, four women and one man, strutted onto the main dancefloor to the sounds of "*Cidade Maravilhosa"*, a very famous *marchinha* composed for the 1935 Rio de Janeiro carnival. The title, meaning 'Marvellous City', has become an enduring nickname for the city of Rio de Janeiro, and fittingly, the dancers danced in front of the same screen displaying images of the cityscape. The dancers were from a larger Paris-based dance troupe called 'Elegancia'[34]. Some of the dancers were Brazilian,

[33] "*Bésame Mucho"* is a bolero that has become a jazz/Latin standard. It was written in 1940 by Consuelo Velázquez.

[34] According to their website, 'Elegancia' dancers are available for hire in a number of configurations, or 'Spectacles', including 'Brésil', 'Football' (wearing Brazilian colours), 'Cabaret', 'Afrique', 'Oriental' and 'Latino'. They have performed in Lebanon before, at another venue of a similar profile – the famous Hotel Phoenicia in downtown Beirut. Elegancia website: http://www.show-elegancia-paris.fr/. Last accessed 1/10/18.

others French, yet they were described as 'Brazil's best dancers' on the casino's own advert[35]; a clear branding tactic demonstrating the desirability of "authentic" Brazilian dancers. Perhaps for this reason, the event organisers did not hire any samba dancers from Lebanon, despite there being many[36].

Continuing the theme of Brazilian-Lebanese unity, one dancer held a large Brazilian flag and another had a Lebanese flag as they walked on to the performance area. After their entrance, they performed synchronised routines to a medley of dance remixes of well-known Brazilian samba-pop songs played by the DJ, such as "*Magalenha*" and "*Mas Que Nada*" by Sergio Mendes: tracks regarded as clichéd by my companions. The sequence was punctuated by a short ident of a whispery female voice saying 'Elegancia', emphasising the brand of the dance troupe. Although the audience seemed very excited by the show, the dancing was not of very good quality. The choreography was very basic and not particularly synchronised, with very little *samba no pé*: the intricate footwork that is one of the defining features of Brazilian samba dance. After completing their sequence, the band came back for a final short set of bossa nova and 'Latin'. When the band finished, the dancers came back for a second show, and entered the dancefloor to a soundtrack of rainforest sounds and panpipes. The three female dancers were holding bows and arrows and wearing what looked to be indigenous-inspired outfits, adorned with feathers, face paint and cowrie shells, at which Natalie openly rolled her eyes. What followed was an uncomfortable journey through Brazilian culture, including a football-inspired dance sequence and a solo capoeira show. Once the dancers finished, the DJ started playing less and less recognisably Brazilian music. Loud 'Latin' pop started pumping through the speakers, and gradually the audience began to dance.

A Brazilian interviewee from *Brasiliban* described '*Festa do Brasil'* to me as "a show of stereotypes", explaining that the entertainment consisted of "things that are not Brazilian culture, that are more... a cliché of Latin culture, and for us Brazilians, Latin culture is something, Brazilian culture is something completely different...we don't even share the language". The disdain and cynicism the musicians from Xangô expressed towards the organisers and the audience reveals the ambivalence and tensions that the musicians feel when they are required to sacrifice musical quality and cultural

[35] Link to the Facebook advert on the Casino du Liban page: https://www.facebook.com/CasinoDuLiban/photos/a.88382722045/10154638915347046/?type=3&theater. Last accessed 01/10/18.

[36] Although it is beyond the scope of this article to talk about samba dancers in Lebanon in depth, there are several professional samba dancers, both Brazilian and Lebanese. These dancers perform professionally at commercial and private events, and also provide dance classes in and around Beirut.

authenticity in order to make a living. This points towards a general trend that I noticed at several Brazilian events in Lebanon. Although Brazil is the sole Lusaphone country in Latin America and is for the most part excluded from general Latinx cultural discourse[37], Brazilian cultural manifestations in Lebanon are regularly conflated with other Latin American genres, such as salsa, Spanish-language popular music, and even tango. Additionally, representations of Brazil in Lebanon and Latin American culture in general are often highly exoticist, replete with clichéd images of mixed-race women in bikinis, football, beaches and carnival. These cultural representations, assumptions and stereotypes that Latin American culture is subjected to closely mirrors Orientalist discourse concerned with Lebanese society and cultural production (Shohat and Stam, 2014, and John Tofik Karam, 2010).

Frances Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman have proposed the term 'Tropicalism', or 'Tropicalisation', to encompass processes of 'othering' in relation to Latin America, and the reductive lens through which the region is viewed. A concept clearly indebted to Edward Said's Orientalism, Tropicalisation, as Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman define it, is "to trope, to imbue a particular space, geography, group, or nation with a set of traits, images, and values that are circulated and perpetuated through official texts, history, literature, and the media" (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman, 1997). Common Tropicalist tropes in North American and European media discourse include the hyper-sexualisation of Latina woman, and the negative stereotyping of Mexican immigrants as violent criminals, for example. In the case of Brazilian musical performance in Lebanon, Tropicalisation manifests itself in multiple ways, most obviously the conflation of Brazilian culture with Spanish-speaking Latin American culture, but also in the revealing of deeper, insidious and highly damaging gendered and racial stereotypes. These stereotypes manifest themselves clearly in negative attitudes towards female samba dancers, and their conflation with sex workers, and the hyper-sexualisation and fetishization of Brazilian men and women of colour, although I do not have space to discuss this fully here.

7. CONCLUSION

The long history of Lebanese-Brazilian migration has been one of the defining factors in the creation and shaping of a cosmopolitan Lebanese middle class, and it has naturally followed that there is a

[37] 'Latinx' is the gender-neutral term for Latino/a.

general familiarity with Brazilian culture in Lebanon. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that some of Lebanon's most beloved artists – Fairouz, the Rahbani Brothers and Ziad Rahbani – take influence from the countries where there is a Lebanese diaspora. In Ziad's case, this has resulted in a sustained engagement with Brazilian bossa nova for over forty years. He is effectively responsible for popularising a unique, highly popular and influential 'Lebanese bossa nova': many Lebanese artists including Salma Mousfi, Rima Khcheich and even Julia Boutros have recorded Arabic-language bossa nova that appears to be indebted to his idiosyncratic style[38]. He has also played an important role in supporting Brazilian artists, such as Naima Yazbek, and regularly features in his live shows musicians and dancers working in the Brazilian cultural sphere. Thus, it is clear that he has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the promotion of Brazilian music in Lebanon. However, his engagement with Brazilian music is limited to canonical bossa nova repertoire, and whilst the "ambience" of the genre is retained, the complex Afro-Brazilian-derived rhythmic structures are often discarded, or highly modified.

Similar processes of mimesis and mediation occur within the realm of commercial and corporate practice and performance of Brazilian music and dance, which tends to be primarily based on clichéd and highly mediated versions of Rio de Janeiro-centric cultural manifestations. Brazil tends to be represented as an "exotic paradise"; a "timeless, fixed, unchanging space of Western fantasy", as Keir Keightley describes it (Keightley, in Toynbee and Dueck, 2011:113). Musically, this tends to mean that Rio-style samba and bossa nova are privileged over styles from elsewhere in Brazil, and also that Brazilian music and dance is often conflated with general 'Latin' culture, as discussed above. Therefore, although most Brazilian musicians and dancers work hard to avoid stereotypes, most musicians have to autoexoticise and adhere to a narrowly-defined conception of Brazilian culture in order to gain employment.

Brazilian performers are able to make a living in part thanks to the ever-increasing demand from the cosmopolitan Lebanese middle and upper classes for varied and novel forms of entertainment, which is reflected in the wide variety of venues and events in Beirut and its surrounding districts. Many bars and venues have opened—and closed—in recent years, in response to this growing desire for eclectic entertainment options. In general, the patrons are middle class or affluent young Lebanese with strong international links through friends and family living in the diaspora, who have grown up in an increasingly globally-connected Lebanon. Although Lebanon's economy and nightlife scene was almost

[38] For example, see Salma Mousfi's 2001 album 'Monodose', Julia Boutros' '*Shu Il Helo Fik'* from her album '*Yawman Ma'* (2012), and Rima Khcheich's '*Muwasha Hebbi Zorni'*, from the 2016 album '*Yalalalli'.*

totally destroyed during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90), the city centre was rebuilt rapidly in the 1990s. The dividends from the reconstruction boom and subsequent economic recovery considerably widened the wealth gap between rich and poor, with only the middle and upper classes benefitting; a situation which has persisted. These factors have led to the emergence of a thriving, competitive nightlife scene, although the recent economic downturn has led to the frequent closure of venues, and a situation of precarity for musicians and those working in the entertainment business. Thus, the prevalence of Brazilian cultural practices in Beirut is also symptomatic of Lebanon's increasingly cosmopolitan, neoliberal modernity[39].

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[39] For an in-depth discussion of contemporary neoliberalism in Lebanon, see Andrew Arsan, 2018.

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