

# THE CARNIVAL HISTORY

## Introduction

Original not only in its melody, Recife Carnival has its own unique flavour, colour and aroma. The revellers' hearts and souls are set free, senses and feelings are aroused and joy fills the air.

History relates the facts, but it's in the soul of the people that culture resides, more than just seeing and hearing, it is beyond the words of even the most well informed commentator. It's in the single voice with which our people evoke their roots, spontaneously making history.

Unique to Carnival is the chance to disguise in masks and fancy dress, it's a moment to be creative, and society permits, perhaps taking off her own mask and showing her true face for a while.

Carnival takes in, pluralises and diversifies all kinds of folklore, transforming and characterising all types of culture. What matters most is that there is something for everyone to identify with and feel excited about.



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## **CARNIVAL**

### **ROME - EGYPT - NICE**

The origin of carnival is linked to Roman and Egyptian festivals. Ten thousand years before Christ, men, women and children would get together with masked faces and painted bodies to ward off the demons of bad harvests. Soon after the New Year, the Romans celebrated the Saturnals in the calendae of January, which was the first day of each ancient Roman month. These were festivals introduced by Janus in memory of the god Saturn, during which social distinctions were ignored, slaves would take the place of their masters, who would in turn serve them at the table. During this period, law courts and schools were closed, judgements suspended and executions postponed. All hostilities were brought to a halt and slaves would run about the streets singing and having fun in disorderly fashion, whilst the more cultured would retreat to the peace of the countryside. In February, the Romans commemorated the Lupercals in homage to the god Pan. This festival involved the celebration of fertility. Among the Egyptians, the traditional festivals were to pay homage to the goddess Isis and the Bull Apis. All ancient civilisations had these orgiastic festivals, brought together in the customs of the Romans and passed on to all the peoples conquered by them. In Europe, the most famous carnivals are or were: Paris, Venice, Munich and Rome, followed by Naples, Florence and Nice.

### **THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD**

#### **CARNIVAL**

Great festivals such as Carnival are associated with astrological phenomena and natural cycles. Carnival is characterised by parties, public entertainments, masked balls and displays of folklore. One of the probable origins of the word CARNIVAL is in “carrum” (car, cart) and in the expression “carnem levare” (remove meat). This would be an allusion to Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday and during which both Catholics and Orthodox Christians pay their penitence. When Christianity appeared, these festivities were so deeply rooted in

existing customs that their continuation was tolerated by the Church, provided that Carnival always took place seven weeks before Easter. Carnival's place in the calendar depends on the date of Good Friday, which corresponds to the first full moon following March 21st, such that Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Palm Sunday.

## **“ENTRUDO”**

### **PORTUGUESE CARNIVAL**

The Brazilian Carnival originated from Entrudo, dating from the beginning of colonisation when it arrived with the Portuguese, bringing the tradition from their homeland. These games held over the three days preceding Lent were documented and described in detail in 1723.

The word “entrudo” comes from the Latin word “introitus”, meaning introduction. Families known to each other and friends would warn one another that they would be paying a visit to “play entrudo”.

Although Entrudo was full of warlike acts, with lemon water bombs, bowls of urine and dirty water thrown from windows, a festive spirit prevailed thanks to the black community who would take over the streets with music and dance, such as Cucumbis, a kind of African masquerade procession with its members playing marimbas, shaking rattles and beating on simple drums.

Since colonial times the target of official prohibitions because of its disruption of public order, Entrudo gradually gave way to Carnival. Although it is difficult to say exactly when, it was certainly the last twenty years of the 19th century that marked the advent of Carnival as the new tradition.

Whilst the Entrudo festivities were centred on the home, in Carnival the street became the place for merrymaking, Carnival Balls remaining the only events to be held indoors.

Entrudo brought lemon water bombs, which were replaced by tubes of perfumed water in 1875. Soon afterwards, in 1877, confetti and “jetone”(sweets in coloured paper) appeared. In 1895, party whistles were introduced into the

Brazilian Carnival and in 1892, serpentine. False noses, beards and moustaches and coloured celluloid spectacles were brought from Germany in 1901. “Lança-perfume” in three sizes made by the Rodo factory in Switzerland came in 1906 and in 1927, the metallic lança-perfume Rodouro was introduced, its use being prohibited in 1962.

## **“ZÉ PEREIRA”**

### **SATURDAY**

The figure of Zé Pereira also originates from Portugal, where the bumbo (a kind of instrument) has the same name. In several Brazilian cities the bumbo would announce the coming of the festivities with a beat to arouse the revellers. Although the character of the bumbo beater has disappeared, the Saturday preceding the three days of Carnival was given the name of Zé Pereira Saturday.

There are various stories concerning the origin of Zé Pereira Saturday. One of them describes Zé Pereira as a folklorical figure who paraded the streets dressed in a top hat, preceding a Carnival that was still undefined at a time when Entrudo still held sway.

Another tells that the origin of this day was the 1840s when it was brought from Portugal by the shoemaker José Nogueira de Azevedo Paredes.

In any case, Zé Pereira Saturday, with the passage of time, came to designate the Saturday that opens the days of revelling.

## **THE CARNIVAL**

### **KING AND QUEEN**

The figure of King Momo had to be invented in order to give the carnival kingdom its stamp of royalty. The contest for the first King Momo of Recife Carnival was held in 1965 by Jornal do Commercio TV, now TV Jornal.

It is worth noting that, according to mythology, Momo was a figure with feminine characteristics. Around the 16th century he took on the masculine role of King Momo, bringing cheer to the streets of Seville and relieving the boredom of the life of the Spanish royalty at the time. The word Momo could mean “ridicule, making fun and sarcasm”.

At first he reigned alone, but the creation of the Carnival Queen contest brought an end to his loneliness.

King Momo and the Queen of Carnival have the mission of keeping Carnival happy and making sure their subjects enjoy themselves wisely and respectfully. They open Carnival in an official ceremony in which they receive the keys to the city that will symbolically remain in their care for the Carnival period.

Nowadays a truly royal court takes over the city. Queens and Princesses are honoured in Carnival balls with great traditions, such as the Municipal Ball, held at the Clube Português, opening the ballroom festivities of Recife Carnival.

The Municipal Ball is followed by the Artists’ Ball, held at the Santa Cruz Football Club; the Standards Ball, also at the Clube Português. The Balmasquê at the Clube Internacional do Recife, is an authentic masked ball and was held for the first time in 1948 at the opening of the new headquarters in Rua Benfica.

The decoration of the clubs and ballrooms are a high point of Recife Carnival, as are the street decorations, in the past put up by the revellers themselves and now produced by the City Council, as the backdrop to the greatest euphoria in the world.

## **RECIFE**

### **CARNIVAL**

Recife Carnival began at the port at the end of the 17th century when sugar and goods carriers would get together to make arrangements for certain festivals, principally the Festival of Kings.

Masks started becoming part of our Carnival in the mid 14th century, when Entrudo took on a new format, in the style of the Venice and Naples carnivals. The first ball resembling a “masked ball” took place in 1845 in Passagem da Madalena, now rua Benfica.

After the abolition of slavery in 1888, the masters and authorities of the time allowed the formation of the first Carnival Groups, composed of urban workers in the old commercial districts. It was supposedly the Festival of Kings that gave the Recife Carnival its lively character. The first club that appeared was possibly the Caiadores (Whitewashers), with its base in Rua do Bom Jesus.

The place for merrymaking was the Pátio do Terço, which had special lighting and stages for the clubs to parade, and lots of food and drink. At that time revellers would just go to watch. Although the only ones in fancy dress were those that belonged to the clubs and groups, the rest of the crowd would wear a big colourful crepe paper butterfly on their lapels.

Families would stand in front of the Matriz de Santo Antônio and watch the clubs go by, at least until about three o'clock in the afternoon when the Clubes Pedestres, really just another version of Carnival Clubs, would appear. These clubs, dressed in Portuguese and Italian style, would ride horses in their parade and visit the newspaper offices. Behind them marched a human chain and a band playing beautiful Italian songs and Portuguese Fados. The first newspaper they visited was the old Diário de Pernambuco, then they would make for the Jornal do Recife, A Província and the Jornal Pequeno. Afterwards they would parade through the streets of the city, touching people's hearts along the way.

Corso was playing with confetti and serpentine, lemon water and tubes of perfumed water. Families would employ bands to parade in carnival floats, playing fanfares.

With the new name of mela-mela, Entrudo made a comeback in the 60s, as corso went from confetti fights to water, talcum powder, grease, flour, pepper, lipstick, chemical paints, various types of oil and anything else that could be used to soak the revellers. Although this horseplay was brought to an end in 1979, it survives to this day in upstate towns, somewhat less aggressive but with the playful spirit of throwing water and flour.

Recife Carnival was made up of various carnival and recreational societies, most notably the Clube Internacional, known as the rich club, whose base was at the Palácio das Águias in Rua da Aurora; the Tuma Portuguesa, now the Clube Português; the Charanga do Recife, the Recreativa Juventude and the Jockey Club, where the cream of society circulated, whose base was in the district of Boa Vista.

## **FREVO**

### **MUSIC AND DANCE**

Frevo was derived from the marches, maxixes and dobrados, which were types of music played by the bands of the time. Urban in origin, it appeared in the city of Recife at the turn of the century.

Military bands of the last century also contributed to the creation of frevo, as did square dances of European origin. From Pernambuco's long-standing band tradition, it can be deduced that this form of music was based on brass fanfares.

Frevo as a musical style is the creation of composers of fast music, made specially for Carnival. The thirties serves as a basis for the division of frevo into: frevo-de-rua (street frevo); frevo-canção (song frevo) and frevo-de-bloco (carnival group frevo).

**FREVO-DE-RUA** - Differs from the other types in its complete absence of lyrics, being composed exclusively for dancing. One of the best known frevos is Vassourinhas, by Matias da Rocha.

**FREVO-CANÇÃO** - Or marcha-canção is in some ways similar to the marches from Rio de Janeiro. One of the most well known marchas-canção is Borboleta não é ave, by Nelson Ferreira.

**FREVO-DE-BLOCO** - Originates from serenades, composed by groups of youngsters who all joined in the street carnivals of the time. One of the best known frevos-de-bloco is Evocação no.1 by Nelson Ferreira.

Nowadays we can also consider a fourth variety of frevo: **ELECTRIC FREVO**, which appeals to the new cybernetic generation. Its main characteristic is powerful electrical amplification.

The *Jornal Pequeno*, Recife's evening newspaper that had the best carnival section of the time, made the first reference to frevo on 12th February 1908. The word frevo is a mutation of the verb ferver, meaning boiling, bubbling, agitation.

Frevo as a dance comes from the acrobatic skill of the capoeira dancers, who, to intimidate rival groups, would disguise their blows as dance steps, at first incorporated by the marches and then evolving together with frevo. The frevo dancer's movement is generally characterised by virtuosity in their display of the different steps. The main ones are: dobradiça (the hinge); tesoura (the scissors); ferrolho (the bolt); parafuso (the screw) and pernada (the kick), the last clearly being identified with capoeira.

Dress is simple but with colourful print, the shirt being tied at the waist and the trousers between the knee and ankle. The dancer's clothing has to be comfortable and light to enable the execution of the different frevo steps.

The dance is complemented by the sombrinha (little umbrella), which the dancer holds as a symbol of frevo and as an aid to the acrobatics. The sombrinha was originally just an umbrella carried by the capoeira dancers as a weapon for attack and self defence, since capoeira was prohibited at that time. This theory is based on the fact that the umbrellas of the first frevo dancers weren't in very good condition, only the solid frame being used. With the passage of time, they were converted into small umbrellas of 50 to 60 centimetres in diameter.

## **CARNIVAL**

### **GROUPS**

Carnival groups (agregiações carnavalescas) usually bring together people of the same occupation or that have something in common. In Recife there are groups such as: Frevo Clubs, "Troças", "Blocos", Caboclinho Tribes, Carnival Bears, Allegorical or Critical Clubs, "Turmas", "Bulls" etc.

In other places, such as Rio de Janeiro, other kinds of groups have formed around Carnival: The Cordão originated among the poorer population who didn't have access to the clubs. There is also the Rancho, which is what has remained of the most traditional Rio Carnival. The first was formed in 1872 in the district of Saúde by port workers from Bahia. They would parade to the sound of marches and used items that would subsequently be incorporated by the samba schools, such as: fancy dress, "enredos", standard bearers and

“mestre-salas”. And then there are the Bands, which are relatively new to Rio Carnival, the first, from Ipanema, gathering together intellectuals, artists, professional people, and people from the nearby shanty towns.

In Bahia there are Afro-Brazilian carnival groups such as the Afoxés with their percussion bands and songs and rhythms of Nago-Yoruba heritage. The Blocos-Afro (Afro Groups) celebrate their ethnic origins alongside Blocos de Indios (Indian Groups). There are also Batucadas, a type of walking orchestra made up of drums and other percussion instruments.

Returning to Pernambuco Carnival, we find Allegorical and Critical Clubs such as the Homem da Meia Noite (The Midnight Man), a symbol of Olinda Carnival that originated as a “troça”, a type of group whose main characteristics are giant puppets and carnival floats.

Turmas are various groups that join in the three days of Carnival, often made up of masked girls and boys all in the same fancy dress. Turmas are also considered to be temporary, in contrast to Carnival Blocos, which originated from ranchos and “pastoris”.

There are also groups called Reisado and the Bloco de Sujo (the Dirty Group).

The Reisado is a strange group that is present at Christmas and New Year and on the eve of the Day of Kings. It's a similar tradition to the “Cavalcada de Alagoas” in which men, women and children perform plays telling biblical and other stories. They wear colourful clothes decorated with mirrors. The Reisado Imperial is the oldest in the State and keeps alive the folk tradition that recalls the Three Kings' visit to baby Jesus, a Christmas tradition which, like “bumba-meu-boi” has shifted to Carnival in the form of a “Troça”.

The Blocos de Sujos are found all over Brazil and are lively groups of people without fancy dress who improvise instruments made of tins and pans.

It is not difficult to confuse the members of the different carnival groups in Pernambuco, especially the indigenous figures that make up four distinct groups. Those that carry a bow

and arrow are from the Caboclinho Tribes; the ones with axes and shields are from the Indian Tribes; those dressed up as American Indians are part of the Turmas. In the Rural Maracatus, there are two more types, the Caboclos de Pena who wear long headdresses with crowns of feathers and the Caboclos de Lança who carry cowbells on their backs and long spears.

## **FREVO**

### **CLUBS**

The structure of Frevo Clubs is very similar to that of the Lent processions of Cinzas (Ashes) and Fogaréus (bonfires) common in Recife in the 18th century, whose members carry medieval type standards and wear silk, flannel trousers and professional livery. It was the professional groups of the last century, reminiscent of the first centuries of our colonisation, that brought about the Frevo Clubs or Carnival Clubs.

Each Carnival Club opens its court with clarions, followed by the standard bearers dressed in Louis XV style, two ropes that surround the whole group and last of all, the orchestra.

The original march was modified by the polka and military marches, in time becoming the Pernambuco frevo and transforming the old groups of the 19th century into the Carnival Clubs of today.

The Club brought the attention of the capoeiras, common in the bands of military processions and which, performing complicated steps, created the choreography of our frevo, which is also called “passo”.

These clubs went on to become Frevo Clubs once they had incorporated the capoeira groups due to the rivalry among the clubs, like at the time of the military bands. The capoeira dancers at the front would intimidate rival groups and defend the standards in the event of confrontation.

## **CARNIVAL**

### **“TROÇAS”**

The Troça Carnavalesca Mista is a smaller Frevo Club that parades in the morning and performs in the streets of the city centre or suburbs until the early afternoon. These groups originated from simple antics in which the critical spirit of the revellers is implicit, as demonstrated by the verb troçar which means to make fun or ridicule. The Pernambuco Carnival Federation divides the Troças into first, second and third categories, although there are others that are not affiliated and therefore not classified. They are the joy of the suburbs, sometimes called “levanta poeira”(dust raisers) or “acorda-povo”(wake the people up). They liven up street carnival during the daytime and sometimes perform with greater opulence and better orchestras than the Carnival Clubs themselves.

## **CARNIVAL**

### **“BLOCOS”**

In contrast to the Carnival Clubs, that originated from professional associations, the Carnival Bloco comes from family get-togethers in the districts of, among others, São José, Santo Antônio and Boa Vista, as an extension of presépios and ranchos de reis in the Recife of the twenties.

The Bloco enabled women to participate in Recife street carnival. Far from joining the masses that followed the frevo clubs, they would go out into the streets protected by a rope and under the strict supervision of fathers, husbands, sons, sons-in-law, fiancés, friends and relatives.

Women also made up the choir of the Carnival Bloco, whilst the men would take care of the orchestra, typically playing saraus and serenades with guitars, violins, banjos, bandolins, flutes, clarinets, double bass, mouth organs, tambourines and percussion. A whistle followed by the whole orchestra playing a chord in unison would announce the beginning of the marcha

de bloco with its instrumental introduction and slow frevo, followed by the choir at a pace similar to our pastoril.

The group is headed by a banner carrying the name and motif of the bloco, followed by the directors, the leading ladies, the leading fancy dress and the chain of men and women that march along making way for the crowd, the choir and orchestra.

## **NAÇÃO OR BAQUE VIRADO**

### **MARACATUS**

With the abolition of slavery, the crowning of the Kings of the Congo lost its *raison d'être* since there was no longer the need for this “authority” to maintain order and the subordination of its negro subjects. The coronation of the Negro Kings took place in the church courtyard and their homage, developing over time, has lasted to this day, standing out from the Reis Magos festivities (bumbas-meu-boi, cheganças and pastoril) and becoming part of Carnival.

The word Maracatu probably originates from a password used to warn of the arrival of police coming to stop the performance, the password being given by drums beating: maracatu/maracatu/maracatu. In popular dialect the word maracatu means confusion, disorder, reflecting the supposed origin of this word. In Africa there is nothing that resembles our maracatu.

The followers of Baque Virado or Nação Maracatu are devoted to Nago Afro-Brazilian cults. The doll used in the cortege is called a Calunga and incorporates the divinities of the orixás, its head receiving the axés and the veneration of the group. The songs are called toadas and include verses of African origin. Their beginning and end are marked with the sound of a whistle. The tirador de loas sings the toadas, which the group members respond to or repeat at his command. The music, whose performance is called toque, is played on instruments such as gonguê, tarol, caixa de guerra and zabumba.

The Maracatu is a truly royal court, with a king, queen, counts and countesses etc.

## **THE NIGHT**

### **OF THE SILENT DRUMS**

This is a ceremony held on the Monday of Carnival in front of the Terço church in the district of São José, by the Nação or Baque-Virado Maracatus that relive a tradition more than three centuries old. It originated in the colonial period, when the negroes, far from their homeland, asked Our Lady for protection in a desperate attempt to relieve the pains of their cruel captivity.

## **RURAL OR BAQUE-SOLTO**

### **MARACATUS**

The Maracatu de Baque-Solto, also known as Maracatu de Orquestra or Rural originated in the second half of the last century and appears to be a transfiguration of groups called Cambindas (men dressed as women). The Maracatus de Baque-Solto are a type of hybrid of several folk traditions that reached the streets of cities near sugar plantations.

The rapid beat of the cowbells, the faster boom of the bass drum, the creak of the cuíca, the steady beat of the gonguê, and the rattle of the ganzá all blend together with solos played on the trombone and other brass instruments which together give the band its own unique musical characteristics quite unlike those of traditional maracatus.

The caboclos de lança make their way through the crowds carrying pointed wooden spears two metres long and wearing an enormous wig of coloured cellophane. Among their gear is an embroidered vest and surrão. The brightly coloured vest is totally embroidered with small pieces of glass and sequins. The Surrão, made of sheep leather over a wooden frame, is like a bag with cowbells affixed and is worn at the height of the buttocks, so the wearer is also

called Bunda-alegre (happy bottom) or Bunda-de-guiso. The caboclos de lança make a loud primitive sound as they walk along.

The Maracatu Rural parades in a tight circle, in the middle is the standard surrounded by baianas (women in Bahian dress), damas-de-buquê, with bunches of flowers, rag or plastic dolls and caboclos de penas or tuxáus, who wear enormous headdresses almost a metre high. These are in fact a crown embroidered with glass, long peacock feathers and wide chequered or flower-embroidered ribbons which fall down from both sides, covering the ears. They are always confused with the indians that make up the Caboclinho Tribes.

## **CABOCLINHO**

### **TRIBES**

One of the most beautiful displays in Pernambuco Carnival is the tribos de caboclinhos that parade through the streets of the city centre and suburbs to the tune of a small band and the beat of preacas that produce the strident sound of bow against arrow, with flying standards and beautiful costumes. If maracatu evokes all our African heritage, then it's the caboclinho that brings to the fore the indians who, as the original inhabitants, preserve their dances and legends that tell the story of their ancestors.

Caboclinhos are groups of men and women wearing beautiful headdresses with peacock and ostrich feathers, feather skirts, necklaces and ankle bands. They parade in two files, dancing and jumping with great energy and agility, and spinning on their heels and toes. The musicians usually play in groups of four, comprising inúbia (a small flute), caracaxás or mineiros, tarol and surdo.

The Caboclinho group comprises the chief, the tribe mother, witchdoctor, captain, lieutenant, standard bearer, boys and girls, drummers and files of tribesmen and tribeswomen.

## **INDIANS**

### **TRIBES**

A folk tradition originally from the state of Paraíba and which now claims a great number of followers in Recife, the Tribos de Índios are often confused with Caboclinhos. The organisers are called mestres and the group is arranged in two files, one of women and one of men carrying axes and spears respectively.

In contrast to the Caboclinhos, the Tribos de Índios do not use preacas. They paint their faces red, wear headdresses made of stork, emu or chicken feathers and carry small shields. The group has a varied choreography of from four to nine dances for each tribe, always accompanied by a group of musicians comprising two gaitas, two ganzás and three surdos.

## **CARNIVAL**

### **BEARS**

One of the most valued games in carnival in Recife is La Ursa; the carnival bear originating from the European gypsies who would go about the city with a bear on a chain that would dance from door to door in exchange for a few coins, to the command of: “dança la ursa!”

The main figure is a bear, usually a man wearing old overalls covered in velvet or fur and a painted papier-maché mask, chained at the waist to his tamer.

The carnival bear orchestra is generally made up of an accordion, triangle, drum, reco-reco, ganzá and tambourine, although there are more elaborate ones with guitars, clarinets, trombones and cavaquinhos.

## **CARNIVAL**

### **BULLS**

The bumba-meu-boi tradition is a pastoril drama, linked to Christmas festivities. It is an arena spectacle, a mixture of improvisation and traditionalism similar to the technique used by exponents of the old Italian comedy tradition. It normally lasts eight hours, mainly because of the repetition of songs and steps. Its characters are classified in three categories: humans, animals and fantasy figures. The orchestra traditionally comprises a zabumba, ganzá and tambourine.

Also present at Christmas time, the bull returns to the streets of Recife as the Boi do Carnaval with special colours and choreography. Bois, Burras, Calus, Mateus, Catirina, Sebastião, Mané Pequeno, Babau all hit the streets of the suburbs under the command of their capitão on his seahorse, animating the children and people. Sometimes the bois do carnaval perform with more than fifty figures and a complete orchestra.

Nowadays burrinhas (little donkeys) are very popular and people get together in real blocos of burrinhas of all sizes and colours.

### **SAMBA**

#### **SCHOOLS**

The word “school” was first used in relation to samba by the old samba players from Rio. Because of the uniformity of their clothing, the group looked like a band of schoolchildren, hence the name, Escola de Samba.

Samba arrived in Recife by sea in 1942 on the battleship São Paulo which brought both a military band and a bloco de samba among its crew. This bloco paraded through the city with

the name of Mimosas da Folia. There was already the batucada Bando da Noite in Casa Amarela that came to be known as batucada Cuíca de Bambu and finally as Escola de Samba Quatro de Outubro.

Samba has established a strong foothold in Pernambuco, as shown by the great number of clubs spread over Recife and even upstate. The Samba-enredo, samba-de-quadra, and samba-de-partido-alto sung by their members are by local composers.

## **TURMAS**

The Turma is one of the oldest carnival traditions, principally the beautiful clown costume with papier maché mask, velvet waistcoat embroidered with glass and sequins, large colourful silk pantalons, decorated with pompoms, and gloves. These turmas de palhaços are usually made up of boys.

Another very popular costume is the “North American Indian”, with plaits, coloured feathers and top and trousers with leather fringes.

Another group is the “Almas” (souls), with white cloth masks and big white shirts, giving them a ghostlike appearance.

In the town of Bezerros in Pernambuco, there are Turmas called “Papangus”, masked using a pillow case with three holes, white tunics and carrying a whip and cornet.

There are dozens of Turmas on the streets during Carnival. Every year, many organise themselves for one carnival, few have a permanent life or maintain bases.

These groups are all part of the spontaneous and original street carnival of Recife and other carnival cities in Brazil that love these days of merrymaking.

## MEMORIES OF CARNIVAL

### A TRIBUTE TO MESTRE

#### NELSON FERREIRA

Nelson Heráclito Alves Ferreira was born on 9th December 1902 in the town of Bonito, interior of Pernambuco, the second son of Luiz Alves Ferreira and Josefa Flora Torres Ferreira.

Music was a driving force in his family, it was his sister Laura who initiated him in piano. Everybody in his household played an instrument.

Keeping the family tradition with music in his blood, he moved to Recife. It was in the Pátio do Terço in the district of São José where he first experienced his great love of the city.

In 1916 Recife discovered his gift in the form of the waltz entitled VITÓRIA. He played in saraus, cafés and hotels, his teenage fingers gliding over the piano keys and bringing even more beauty to the waltzes, tangos and anything else that could be transformed into musical notes.

At the age of 15 he was invited by the conductor Carlos Diniz of the Cine Royal orchestra in Rua Nova to join as a pianist. Nelson Ferreira made this conductor his mentor.

Nelson was a keen observer of the changes that were occurring in the world and especially in Recife. The post-war period brought new customs and habits that were beginning to become part of the city's daily life, gas lamps gave way to electric light, silent movies to talkies, the trains left Rua Formosa, now Conde da Boa Vista and no longer crossed Caxangá, now Duarte Coelho bridge and carriages were replaced by cars.

In 1920 José Lourenço, known as Zuzinha, the then conductor of the Cinema Moderno orchestra, invited Nelson to take over from Madame Valery, an outstanding pianist of the

time. There he began to release his compositions, such as the famous MILUSINHA. The city's poets began to ask him to put their verses to music.

In 1922 he travelled to Europe as substitute pianist aboard the ship Bagé. On his return, the cine-theatre Moderno had a new owner, Luiz Severiano Ribeiro and Nelson became conductor.

His great love was Aurora Salgueiro Ramos, they married in 1925 at the Matriz de Santo Antônio and went to live at 390 Rua da Concórdia, where he became a music, singing and piano teacher and where their first and only child, Luiz Carlos, was born.

After the first World War, Nelson improved his orchestra, which was the first jazz band to use the "bass tuba".

The "Wizard of Frevo" loved the Clube Vassourinhas, making the march "Vassourinha" both the musical trademark of his frevo orchestra and a kind of Pernambuco Carnival Anthem, thanks to the saxophone variations performed by the talented Felinho and the modulations he created for brass, which were subsequently imitated by all the other orchestras.

His march "Borboleta não é ave" was dedicated to the "Bloco Concórdia" with lyrics by his brother in law Júlio Borges Diniz. Between 1923 and 1924 he wrote the marches "Cavalo do cão não é rio-plano" and "Bota a saia no joelho". In 1928 he won the Clube Internacional do Recife contest with the march "Não puxa Maroca", whose verses are by Samuel Campelo.

For the Carnival of 1930 he released the march "Dedé" with verses of his own creation. The carnival of 1931 marked the history of Pernambuco Carnival with the carnival balls held by the famous Jockey Club. Nelson was there with his orchestra and his marches "A canoa virou...", "Vamos se acabá" and "Maroca só que seu Freitas". In 1932, he released "Evohé".

In 1933, at the Boa Viagem Cassino, the marches "Que é que há?", "Turma quente" and "O dia vem raiando" were released, followed the same year by the frevos "Cuidado com a loiça" and "Arreliada". His frevo "Oia virada" won first prize in the contest run by the Diário de Pernambuco.

In 1934 Nelson won the Diário da Manhã contest with the march "Dobradiça" and again in 1935 with "Tô te oiando". In 1936 he released the frevo-canção "Pare, olhe, escute...e goste", and in the same year came first and second in the same contest with the marches "Palhaço" and "No passo".

In 1937 and 1940 Nelson released “Arlequim”, “Que fim você levou?”, “Juro”, “Chora Palhaço” and “Boca de forno”.

In 1941, in partnership with Sebastião Lopes, he composed “O passo do caroá” and commercial tunes such as “Canção do Guaraná”, “Fortunato no Frevo”, “A dança do Carrapicho”, “Qué matá papai, oião?” and “Criado com vó”, among others.

In 1946, in partnership with Nestor de Holanda, he composed and edited “O Frevo é assim”, followed by “A palavra é Frevo”, “Um instante maestro” and the march “Cabelos Brancos”.

In 1950 the frevo-de-bloco Evocação was written and after nationwide success became known as Evocação No.1. All Brazil was singing Recife. Motivated by the success, Nelson composed Evocação N° 2 in tribute to Chiquinha Gonzaga, Noel, Sinhô and Chico Alves.

In 1960 he composed Evocação N° 3 dedicated to the journalist Mário Melo. Evocação N° 4 was dedicated to the clay figure sculptor Vitalino and Dona Santa and Evocação N° 5 was in tribute to Ascenso Ferreira.

Evocação N° 6, composed with Aldemar Paiva, was a musical message to the poet Manoel Bandeira. In 1972, Evocação N° 6 was released and was dedicated to the streets of his childhood that disappeared with the opening of Avenida Dantas Barreto.

To commemorate fifty years of artistic work, Nelson recorded an LP, produced by Rozemblit and containing twelve of his finest waltzes, played by the author himself with a chamber orchestra.

In the clubs of Recife, Nelson Ferreira introduced the practice of taking his orchestra down to the ballroom on the last day of Carnival and then leading everyone out onto the street to the catchy tune of “Vassourinhas”. And with the chords of “Mefistófeles”, another Carnival would come to an end.

Throughout his memorable artistic life, he deservedly received many accolades for his contribution to Brazilian popular music, having occupied the 16th chair of The Brazilian Academy of Popular Music, of which he was a founder.

Nelson was a versatile musician with eclectic talent, an excellent arranger and exceptional conductor that always composed with the sensitivity of an admirer of his homeland.

The “Super Wizard of Music” is reborn each Carnival through his frevos. He left us on 21st December 1976, a day on which “Recife slept, left to dream to the tune of the sad melody (of farewell)”.

## **PUBLICISING**

### **CARNIVAL**

**FREVIOCA** - Created in 1979 and operating for the first time in 1980, the brainchild of Leonardo Dantas had the aim of reviving street carnival in Recife by collaborating directly with groups unable to finance their own orchestra for parades. The Frevioca was originally a decorated truck with amplifiers and an orchestra on top. The initial idea was for the Frevioca to stay in the city centre, but nowadays, in the form of a purpose-built vehicle, the Frevioca can go anywhere requested, taking along its main objective of giving continuity to frevo in the streets of Recife.

**RECIFREVO** - In 1956, Recife City Council passed a law by which the staging of carnival music contests to publicise frevo became obligatory. This contest was first held in Praçinha do Diário and in 1975 The City of Recife Cultural Foundation organised the first Frevo and Maracatu Meeting, the Frevança to give an opportunity for new composers. This event continued for ten years and was publicised by TV Globo. In 1989 Recifrevo began, with its preliminaries at the Teatro do Parque and finals in the Pátio de São Pedro.

**RECIFOLIA** - Held by Recife City Council every October since 1993 on the Boa Viagem seafront, Recifolia is already on the city’s tourist calendar. A real encounter of rhythms performed by the greatest national and local artists, Recifrevo is already considered to be one of the most important popular events in Brazil. Created to bring trade to the city in the low season, Recifolia has proved that it is possible to fuse the new with the old, bringing novel interpretations of folk traditions.

ESTAÇÃO DA FOLIA - The city of Recife Tourist Authority has made Avenida Guararapes one of the main festive spots, thus reviving carnival in the city centre, where the most traditional groups parade, depicting what is most genuinely “Pernambucano” and turning the night into an authentic open air carnival ball, with shows by local and national artists.

In the District of Recife, another revelling spot is being set up, DANCING IN THE STREET - CARNIVAL which will open 1997 Carnival in January with the rehearsals of traditional groups.

THE MEETING OF BLOCOS - The success of the meeting of blocos, held by Recife Tourist Authority in Carnival 1996, has produced new meetings of traditional carnival groups for Carnival 1997.

One meeting will be held at 4pm each day. On Sunday the Encontro dos Caboclinhos, in tribute to Caboclinho Tribes Canindés and Carijós; on Monday the Encontro dos Blocos da Saudade and das Ilusões and on Tuesday the Encontro dos Maracatus.

Carnival 1997 will be a tribute to the singer Alceu Valença, entitled “Alceu Alto Astral”.

BALÉ POPULAR - Founded in 1977 by André Luiz Madureira, it was then called the Folk Dance Circus Group. Their displays won the hearts of public and critics alike and ended up taking the troupe to a real circus, set up on Rua da Aurora Quay: “The Spotted Jaguar Circus”, at the same time being christened Recife Folk Ballet by Ariano Suassuna. The aim of this artistic-theatrical group, already famous for its professionalism, is to revive folk traditions, among which are frevo and maracatu. They perform all year round at the Beberibe Theatre in the Pernambuco Convention Centre.

PERNAMBUCO CARNIVAL FEDERATION - Originally called The Carnival Federation Foundation, was founded in 1935 by a group of Pernambuco entrepreneurs, among whom were Mário Melo, the brothers Arnaldo and Oscar Moreira Pinto, Natividade and Rafael Fischer of the Recife Streetcar Company and the Vitta family. The Headquarters of Frevo was thus set up in the Pracinha do Diário. The Federation now brings together all the carnival groups in the state and operates from no.438 Pátio de Santa Cruz.

**CASA DO CARNAVAL** - Is an organisation run by Recife Cultural Foundation and which has the aim of publicising and promoting all things related to The Carnival Culture of Pernambuco. It holds a vast collection of photographic material, costumes, accessories and standards that show the history of Carnival in all its folklore. It can be found at no.52 Pátio de São Pedro.

**PÁTIO DE SÃO PEDRO** - Is the site of displays of folklore all year round and during Carnival becomes a magnificent showcase of street carnival. Each stone of Pátio de São Pedro, at the heart of the city, tells of her great cultural wealth.

**MARACATU NAÇÃO PERNAM-BUCO** - A new tribute to maracatu has appeared in Pernambuco in the form of Maracatu Nação Pernambuco, founded on December 15th 1989 with the aim of spreading maracatu. Currently the state's leading cultural group, Nação Pernambuco has recorded the world's only all-maracatu records, which are helping to publicise and revive the history of Pernambuco's culture both in Brazil and abroad.

All year round there are performances with guest groups on the second Sunday of each month in the Mercado Popular Eufrásio Barbosa in the Varadouro district of Olinda.

**GALO DA MADRUGADA** - The Galo da Madrugada (Dawn Rooster) Club was officially founded on January 24th 1978 at no.43 Rua Padre Floriano, in the district of São José. Its main aim is to revive the true origins and traditions of street carnival.

The Galo da Madrugada procession takes place every year on the morning of Zé Pereira Saturday. The Galo traditionally begins at 5:30am with clarions heralding the arrival of Pernambuco Carnival. According to the 1995 Guinness Book of Records, the Galo da Madrugada is The Largest Carnival Group in the World.

The Recife Tourist Authority runs a parallel event on the River Capibaribe involving a procession of boats in a truly aquatic carnival.

## **CARNIVAL IN**

### **BOA VIAGEM**

20 years ago, Carnival in Boa Viagem came into being for young people to enjoy pre-carnival week. The Banda de Pau e Corda, which at the time symbolised youngsters' regional identity, was the opening attraction of this carnival point. Things went so well that the event later carried on until Ash Wednesday, bringing together many different kinds of music and dance to entertain all the young people.

In Boa Viagem there was a repetition of the trend of the 20s, when the Carnival Blocos came into being as middle class youngsters participating in Serenatas and Pastoris got together to enjoy carnival in the streets, cordoned off to protect them from the rough-and-tumble of frevo-driven street carnival (at that time ballroom carnival was strictly for the elite).

As in the past, the middle class youngsters returned to the streets in search of their identity. The 80s brought Trios Elétricos (sound trucks) to Pernambuco Carnival and with them a single voice in the search for the new and different.

The new format of Boa Viagem Carnival has thus joined the traditional, and become a landmark in Carnival's constant evolution through the demands of the moment, and it will also be part of the future, the marks of change and our people's cultural tradition. It's youth writing history.

## **CARNIVAL**

### **IN OLINDA**

The participative carnival of Olinda has no spectators' gallery. The old town's steep streets contemplate the passage of the Clubs, Troças, Blocos, Bears, Giant Puppets and all the revellers' spontaneity and improvisation.

All the groups take turns in Recife and Olinda, creating the legitimate carnival of their origins, street carnival.

The Carnivals of Recife and Olinda melt together as they consolidate their commitment to the reveller, for the festivities are all about popular participation. The twin cities echo with the same sounds, becoming one great hall where the music is frevo and the dance passo.

Olinda Carnival is opened by the Virgins of Olinda, a week before Carnival officially begins. This group was founded in 1953 and is entirely made up of men dressed as women. The Virgins of Olinda Anarchic Carnival Group was founded by seafront goers. During the parade, which takes place along the main street of Bairro Novo, there are contests to decide who is the most gentle virgin, the sauciest, the most charming and the oldest.

From the Virgins to Bacalhau do Batata on Ash Wednesday, the merrymakers revel in the freedom that carnival brings. And anyone who thinks it'll all come to an end one day is mistaken, for groups that started off playing simple antics now draw huge crowds through the streets of Olinda, thinking nothing of it.

## **“TRIO ELÉTRICO”**

### **CARNIVAL**

Out of season carnival began in Feira de Santana in Bahia in 1937, when terrible rainfall prevented Carnival from being celebrated on its normal date. It could only be held after Lent and was given the name of Micareta.

This festival spawned many others all over the Northeast with the indispensable presence of trios elétricos. In Fortaleza, there is the Fortal; in Natal, Carnatal; in João Pessoa, Micarora; in Campina Grande, Micarande; in Maceió, Carnaval Fest; in Caruaru Micaru; and in Recife, Recifolia. In Brazil, an out of season carnival is born every day.

The trio elétrico was invented during the 1950 Carnival in Salvador. It's a child of frevo left in Bahia long ago, when the Vassourinhas Carnival Club of Recife passed through the town of Soteropolitana, on its way to Rio de Janeiro.

They decided to do a performance, but there was no orchestra, so Osmar Macedo, a radio technician, and Adolfo Nascimento (Dodô), a garage owner, both amateur musicians,

improvised the first parade on an old 1929 Ford "truck", the famous "fobica". The year after, the band acquired another member and so became the first "trio elétrico".

The Vassourinhas Frevo Club left this seed from Pernambuco which has now made its way back, matured by time and the influence of its adoptive family.

## **THE FLAVOUR OF CARNIVAL**

Recife has a special flavour during the days of Carnival, a flavour typical of childhood, with the sweet taste of "filhós" or "filhoses", served with lots of syrup and a touch of cloves or aniseed. If you'd like to try some, here's the recipe: 1/2kg flour; 1 spoonful of oil; 6 eggs; 1 spoonful of baking powder; plenty of water; and salt. Boil the water with salt and add the flour, a little at a time to make a thick porridge. After cooking well, remove from the heat and allow to cool. Mix in the rest of the ingredients and beat the dough, which should be quite soft. Fry spoonfuls of the dough, the filhoses, in hot oil, and then drain in kitchen paper. Make some aniseed or clove syrup separately. Taste and enjoy.

The traditional reveller's drink is batabate de maracujá, served from clay filters to taste. Here's how to make your batabate: 1/2 bottle good quality aguardente; 1/3 bottle passion fruit juice; 1 cup syrup; 1 spoonful honey. Mix and serve.

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