



ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4332

# MUSIC OF BRAZIL

## MUSIC OF CAPOEIRA

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## MESTRE ACORDEON

PRODUCED BY ANDREW SCHLOSS & DENNIS BROUGHTON

Recorded by Andrew Schloss at the Center for Computer Research in Music & Acoustics (CCRMA), Stanford University, and at Drone Studios, Redwood City, CA.



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



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**MUSIC OF CAPOEIRA**  
**MESTRE ACORDEON**

**Side 1**

- Band 1 Saudacao aos Mestres 3:05
- Band 2 Topei Quero Ver Cair 9:40
- Band 3 Homage to Mestre Bimba: Corridos de Capoeira Regional 3:19
- Band 4 Berimbau Voices 4:00
- Band 5 Capoeira in San Francisco 2:51

**Side 2**

- Band 1 Un Grito de Liberdade 2:36  
(A Cry for Freedom)
- Band 2 Fala Berimbau 3:20
- Band 3 Berimbau and Guitar 2:11
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- Band 5 Meditation 6:25

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Illustrations by Sherri Mellinkoff and Rene Castro  
Photographs by T. Wacha and D. Netsky

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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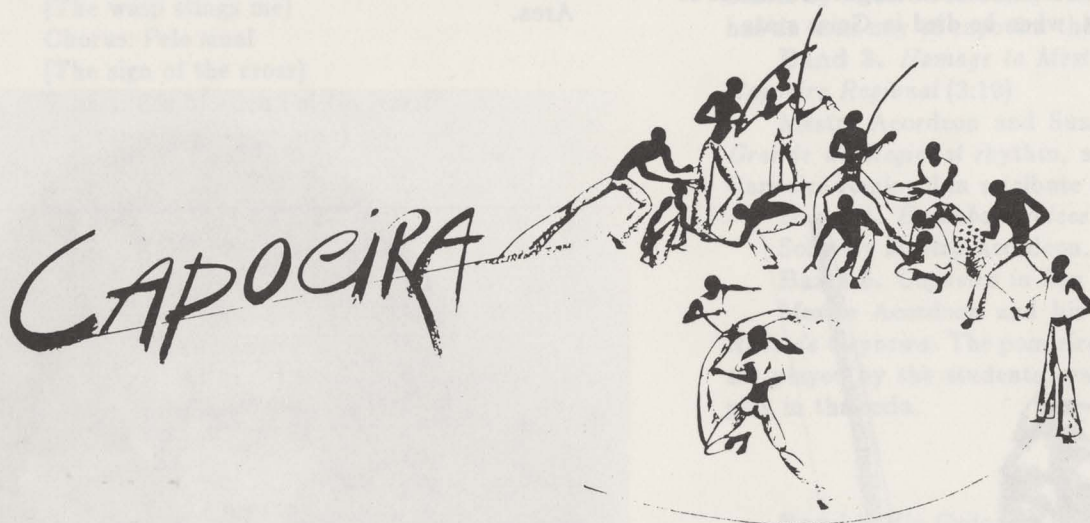
## THE MUSIC OF CAPOEIRA --- MESTRE ACORDEON

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*Notes by Mestre Acordeon*

*Edited by Dennis Broughton and Andrew Schloss*

Capoeira is a unique Brazilian art form with African roots, combining movement, music and philosophy. The essence of capoeira is a graceful flowing game played by two people inside a circle called *roda*. The fifteen-foot *roda* is formed by other participants who clap, sing and play instruments, while waiting their turn to play the game.

Capoeira is practiced to the musical accompaniment of the *berimbau*, a one-stringed bow with a gourd resonator. The *berimbau* player, usually a capoeira master, is responsible for setting the time, pace and style of the game. In addition to the *berimbau*, the *pandeiro* (tamborine), and the *atabaque* drum may be used for percussion, adding power and excitement to the game.

The movements of capoeira change constantly, flowing with grace and beauty. At times, players move as if in slow motion, fully controlling their elastic bodies. At other times, they spin and kick so quickly that one is left breathless, watching as each spinning move brings the players closer and closer to each other.

### History

The history of capoeira can be divided into three different periods. The first is an obscure and poorly documented period, which begins sometime during the early years of colonization in Brazil until the end of the 16th century. The second period begins with the publication of the first known written documents and ends in 1920, with the appearance of the famous capoeira master, Mestre Bimba. This period was widely documented, mainly through police reports in the contemporary newspapers of Recife, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. The third period relates to capoeira as it exists in modern times, and covers its development as a national sport in Brazil and its expansion throughout other countries.

It is known that capoeira is intimately related to the presence of the African people taken as slaves to Brazil. However, it is difficult to trace the history of capoeira in its first period because documents which would have shed light on the origin of the art were destroyed during the first Republican government in an effort to erase all traces of slavery from the history of the country.



In the 18th and 19th centuries, capoeira was used mainly as a pastime by people of lower economic status, and by vagrants and outlaws. The practice of capoeira was so fully identified with social turmoil that the word "capoeira" became synonymous with "bum" and "thief." Because of the failure to discern the difference between people who practiced the art and the art itself, capoeira was stigmatized as a social sickness and became seriously repressed by society and the police.

Around 1930, after a military takeover, General Getulio Vargas relaxed restrictions on cultural expressions of the people, in order to gain more popular support for his government. Because of this, the repression of capoeira was relaxed. In 1936, Mestre Bimba obtained a license to teach capoeira formally as a program in physical education, and he opened the first school of capoeira. Mestre Bimba taught thousands of students until 1974, when he died in Goias state.

### About Mestre Acordeon

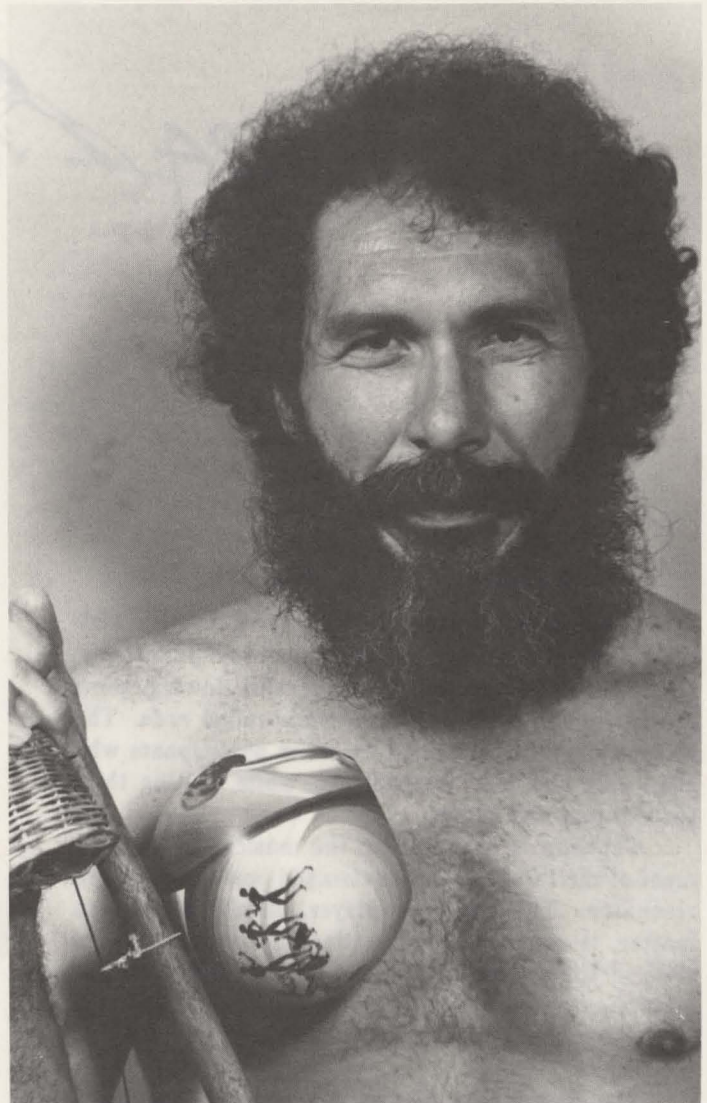
Mestre Acordeon is one of the few students of Mestre Bimba who is now teaching, continuing the work of the great master. He graduated in capoeira in 1958 and has been teaching since 1962.

Mestre Acordeon has won three national capoeira championships in Brazil, and played a major role in bringing capoeira to the United States. He founded the World Capoeira Association to promote capoeira in the U.S. through classes and workshops with Brazilian teachers.

Mestre Acordeon has lectured about capoeira and Afro-Brazilian dance in colleges and universities in the U.S. as well as performing capoeira in Brazilian and American theatre, on film, and on television. He is currently living and teaching in the San Francisco Bay Area.



Mestre Bimba

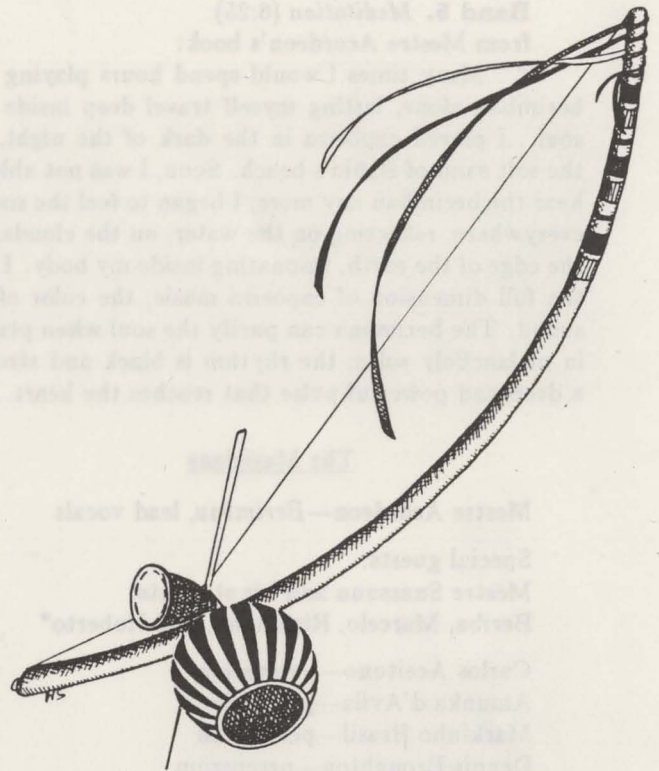




## About the Musical Instruments

### Berimbau

The berimbau is the most important instrument in capoeira. It is a bow constructed from a special kind of wood, generally *beriba* or *mucujê* on which is stretched a steel string. On one of the ends of the bow, about one foot from the end, is placed a gourd resonator, the *cabaça*, which is held by a string to the bow. The instrument is played with a thin, flexible stick about a foot and a half long that is struck against the steel string. In the same hand that holds the stick, the player holds a *cazixi*, a small rattle made of wicker and filled with dried seeds. On the other hand the player holds the bow, and at the same time, grasps a thick coin or a pebble between his thumb and index finger. Generally it is a Brazilian copper coin used during colonial times called *dobrão*. The coin is placed against the steel string to modulate the pitch and to create a special buzzing effect that is an essential aspect of the sound, and part of the rhythm. In Brazil, the berimbau builders use steel strings extracted from old automobile tires because they are less expensive than new steel strings.



### Pandeiro

The *pandeiro* is a very old percussion instrument. The pandeiro is known in the United States as the tamborine and has been used in weddings, religious ceremonies, and other festival occasions by Hebrews, Hindus, Arabs, Africans and Europeans. It is included in current Brazilian popular music so much that the people have come to say that without pandeiro, *samba* music does not exist.

The pandeiro is made of a circular wooden frame about a foot in diameter, covered with a thin, tightly stretched skin. Small metal rings in the frame produce a jingling sound when the instrument is shaken.

### Agogô

The *agogô* is a double bell made of two iron bells of different sizes attached by a metal rod, which when struck, produce a two-tone pattern. It is played with a metal stick. The agogô in Brazil was originally used in the Afro-Brazilian religious ceremony called *Candomblé*.

### Atabaque

The *atabaque* is a big drum similar to the well-known *conga* drum from Cuba. It is made with several staves of wood, similar to a barrel. Atabaques are mainly used as a sacred percussive instrument in *candomblé* ceremonies.





## The Rhythms of Capoeira

The different rhythms played for the game of capoeira or *jogo de capoeira* are called *toques de berimbau*. The imagination and creativity of the berimbau players have developed a large number of rhythms. Many times they have called the same rhythms by different names, and used common names for different rhythms.

The following list shows the most frequently played rhythms from some academies in Bahia<sup>1</sup> in the 1960's.

### Academia de Mestre Bimba<sup>2</sup>

#### Toques:

1. São Bento Grande
2. Cavalaria
3. Santa Maria
4. Iuna
5. Banguela
6. Amazonas
7. Idalina

### Academia de Mestre Pastinha<sup>3</sup>

#### Toques:

1. São Bento Grande
2. Cavalaria
3. Santa Maria
4. Iuna
5. Amazonas

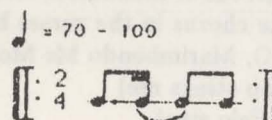
### Academia de Mestre Acordeon<sup>4</sup>

#### Toques:

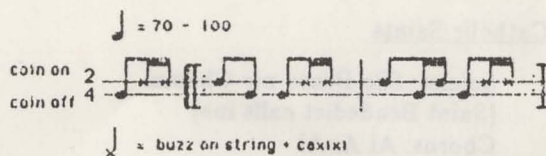
1. São Bento Grande de Angola—the basic rhythm for the game of beginners.
2. São Bento Grande de Regional—(main rhythm used by Mestre Bimba in the capoeira Regional) is used for the game focused on fighting in which the players emphasize speed and high movements.
3. Cavalaria—used for acrobatic games.
4. Angola or Banguela—used for *jogos de chão*, the game in which the Capoeiristas mainly use floor techniques such as *rasteiras* (sweeps) and *tesouras* (scissors).
5. Iuna—used only for graduated students in a special, slow game, with a lot of acrobatic movements.
6. Com-Pé—Incorporates parts of many rhythms, plus new variations. It is played for festive occasions and open rodas.

The rhythms of São Bento Grande (Saint Benedict Major) and Santa Maria (Saint Mary) refer to Catholic Saints. Banguela and Angola refer to African nations. Iuna is the name of a bird. Cavalaria means cavalry. It refers to the famous cavalry squadron that was the terror of the capoeiristas and *terreiros de candomblé* in the beginning of the 19th century in the state of Bahia. Amazonas is the largest state in the north of Brazil, and Idalina a female proper name.

One of the most common rhythms used in capoeira is clapped by the participants:



The basic rhythm of São Bento Grande de Angola for berimbau is typically played:



\*\*\*\*\*

<sup>1</sup> A state in the northeast of Brazil, with a predominantly black population. Bahia contains the old colonial capital of Brazil, called Salvador, the acknowledged birthplace of capoeira.

<sup>2</sup>(Manoel dos Reis Machado). See Discography for recordings.

<sup>3</sup>(Vicente Ferreira Pastinha). See Discography for recordings.

<sup>4</sup>(Bira Almeida)





## About the song texts

The lyrics of the capoeira songs in general reflect many aspects of Brazilian life. A variety of themes such as superstition, Catholic and African saints, geographic locations, and historical events are common.

### Superstition

Often people make the sign of the cross when facing a dangerous or scandalous situation. This habit influenced the chorus in the verses below:

Soloist: O, Marimbondo Me Mordeu  
(The wasp stings me)  
Chorus: Pelo sinal  
(The sign of the cross)  
Soloist: Ele Mordeu Foi No Nariz  
(He stung me on my nose)  
Chorus: Pelo sinal  
(The sign of the cross)

### Catholic Saints

Soloist: São Bento me Chama  
(Saint Benedict calls me)  
Chorus: Ai Ai Ai  
Soloist: São Bento me Leva  
(Saint Benedict takes me)  
Chorus: Ai Ai Ai  
Soloist: São Bento me Prende  
(Saint Benedict holds me)  
Chorus: Ai Ai Ai  
Soloist: Senhor São Bento  
(My lord Saint Benedict)

### **The Recordings**

There are about eight or ten known recordings of capoeira music (records devoted entirely to capoeira), all made in Brazil. Each has its own style, focus and strong points. This album has been designed to be of use to students of capoeira in their studies as well as to the ordinary listener with an interest in Brazilian music.

What we have done with these recordings is to interpret the music of capoeira and the berimbau and present to the listener some of the traditional music and songs. We also include herein some music which, although not strictly a part of the traditional repertoire, draws on the spirit of the berimbau, and seeks to express its voice and expand its usage.

## Side 1

### **Band 1. Saudação aos Mestres (3:05)**

This opening piece is a salute to all capoeira masters. Mestre Acordeon begins recalling the definitions of capoeira by Mestre Bimba and Mestre Pastinha, respectively: "Capoeira is treachery," and "Capoeira is everything the mouth eats." Mestre Acordeon sings and plays four berimbaus on different tracks.

### **Band 2. Topei Quero Ver Cair (9:40)**

Mestre Suassuna sings with his students, while Mestre Acordeon plays the solo berimbau. This session was spontaneous, similar to a live capoeira roda, recorded in the studio during a visit to the United States by Mestre Suassuna, who lives in São Paulo and has an academy of capoeira there.

### **Band 3. Homage to Mestre Bimba: Corridos de Capoeira Regional (3:19)**

Mestre Acordeon and Suassuna play *São Bento Grande de Regional* rhythm, and the main songs of Capoeira Regional in a tribute to Mestre Bimba.

### **Band 4. Berimbau Voices (4:00)**

Solos by Mestre Acordeon.

### **Band 5. Capoeira in San Francisco (2:51)**

Mestre Acordeon and his students in a typical *Roda de Capoeira*. The pandeiro, atabaque, and agogo are played by the students, waiting for their turn to play in the roda.

## Side 2

### **Band 1. Un Grito de Liberdade (A Cry for Freedom) (2:36)**

"...Capoeira is an art, a dance, music. Capoeira is a fight. Capoeira is everything for me—water to drink, and a cry for freedom. Capoeira is a way of being..."

### **Band 2. Fala Berimbau (3:20)**

Here, four berimbaus are being played. Mestre Acordeon recorded all four individually, getting from each one its special "voice," in a dialogue of berimbaus. There are different sizes of berimbaus: *viola* usually refers to a higher-pitched one, and *gunga*, a lower-pitched instrument. In the past, berimbaus have also been called *viola-de-arame* and *berimbau-de-barriga*.

### **Band 3. Berimbau and Guitar (2:11)**

### **Band 4. Fantasy (2:37)**

This piece is an excursion into the possibilities of the berimbau. Mestre Acordeon plays two berimbaus simultaneously. There are no special effects used to alter the sound of the berimbaus; they are played in a non-traditional way, assisted by Dennis Broughton. The synthesizer was the likely accompaniment for this piece.



**Band 5. Meditation (6:25)**

from Mestre Acordeon's book:

"...Many times I would spend hours playing the berimbau alone, letting myself travel deep inside my soul...I played capoeira in the dark of the night, on the soft sand of Bahia's beach. Soon, I was not able to hear the berimbau any more; I began to feel the sound everywhere, reflecting on the water, on the clouds, on the edge of the earth, resonating inside my body. I felt the full dimension of capoeira music, the color of its sound. The berimbau can pacify the soul when played in melancholy solos; the rhythm is black and strong, a deep and powerful pulse that reaches the heart..."

The Musicians

Mestre Acordeon—*Berimbau*, lead vocals

Special guests:

Mestre Suassuna and his students:

Beriba, Marcelo, Rizadinha, and Roberto\*

Carlos Aceituno—percussion

Amunka d'Avila—percussion

Markinho Brasil—percussion

Dennis Broughton—percussion

Glen Cesari—bass

Marcos Dias—chorus

Rich Kuhns—synthesizer

Sherri Mellinkoff—chorus

Carlos Oliveira—guitar

Rudy Ortiz—percussion

Preguiça—chorus

Marcos dos Santos—chorus

Jordon Simmons—chorus

(\*Side 1, bands 2 and 3)

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