

Cultural salvation and Musical Education: residues of colonization processes in Brazilian Northeast

Salvação cultural e Educação Musical: resíduos do processo colonial no Nordeste Brasileiro

Andersonn Henrique Araújo¹ 

andersonn.henrique.araujo@gmail.com

¹ Departamento de Música e Artes, Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte, Mossoró, Rio Grande do Norte, Brasil

SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE

Section Editor: Fernando Chaib

Layout Editor: Fernando Chaib

License: "CC by 4.0"

Submitted date: 02 may 2025

Final approval date: 20 jun 2025

Publication date: 02 aug 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35699/2317-6377.2025.58955>

ABSTRACT: This theoretical discussion deepens the data from my doctoral research and introduces new elements to reflect on the concept of Cultural Salvation (CS). It outlines key characteristics of CS identified through a review of literature in Music Education and the Social Sciences. Between January 2022 and July 2023, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork at Ilha de Música Social Project, located in África Community in Natal, Brasil. I identified three central elements of CS: the metaphysical veil of music's power, the ritualistic order, and the transformation process. Understanding CS as an exercise of power is essential for music educators. This awareness supports a critical, inclusive approach to music education for children and adolescents living in socially unequal conditions. The text concludes by raising questions that seek to reconstruct musical practices within social projects, aiming to challenge and overcome the structural foundations of inequality embedded in the idea of Cultural Salvation.

KEYWORDS: Colonization; Cultural Salvation; Social Projects; Sociology of Music Education; Weber and Music Education.

RESUMO: Esta discussão teórica aprofunda os dados da minha pesquisa de doutorado e introduz novos elementos para refletir sobre o conceito de Salvação Cultural (SC). O texto delinea características centrais da SC identificadas a partir de uma revisão da literatura nas áreas da Educação Musical e das Ciências Sociais. Entre janeiro de 2022 e julho de 2023, realizei trabalho de campo etnográfico no Projeto Social Ilha da Música, localizado na Comunidade África, em Natal, Brasil. Identifico três elementos centrais da SC: o véu metafísico do poder da música, a ordem ritualística e o processo de transformação. Compreender a SC como exercício de poder é essencial para educadores musicais. Essa consciência sustenta uma abordagem crítica e inclusiva da educação musical voltada para crianças e adolescentes em contextos de desigualdade social. O texto conclui levantando questões que buscam reconstruir as práticas musicais no âmbito de projetos sociais, com o objetivo de questionar e superar os fundamentos estruturais da desigualdade presentes na ideia de Salvação Cultural.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Colonização; Salvação cultural; Projetos Sociais Sociologia da Educação Musical; Weber e a Educación Musical.



1. Introduction

Urban landscapes often exhibit a stark juxtaposition of wealth and poverty, underscored by pervasive economic and social disparities. In certain contexts — such as in Natal, Brasil¹ — drug cartels exploit children and adolescents, thereby deepening existing socio-economic inequalities. Concurrently, public policies struggle to enact meaningful transformation, inadvertently exacerbating societal challenges. Amidst this complex backdrop, a noteworthy initiative has emerged: the establishment of children's and youth orchestras in underprivileged neighborhoods. These orchestras convey musical education to individuals from marginalized backgrounds, aspiring to reshape their attitudes, behaviors, and futures. The overarching goal is to rescue these youth from the clutches of disillusionment and risky behavior, ultimately mitigating negative outcomes such as poverty, violence, and crime. This scene could describe the environment of most big cities around the world and the consequent actions created to address these problems. Central to this inquiry is the exploration of whether music can serve as a transformative force, potentially guiding children and adolescents away from behavioral challenges and drug-related entanglements. In other words, can children be steered away from high-risk behaviors and substance involvement through music learning?

To face the challenge of trying to understand these processes, I have employed the lens of Sociology of Music Education to delve into the dynamics of Cultural Salvation (CS) within the musical experiences of individuals, particularly (former) participants of Ilha de Música Social Project. Music classes take place outside regular school hours and are offered through social projects. The content covered includes music theory, instrumental practice, and choral singing. The routine is challenged by limited resources, yet it is marked by strong student engagement and cultural resilience. Most students are children and adolescents from the local community, with low household income and limited access to formal cultural assets. Their motivation to participate goes beyond musical learning — it also involves a desire for belonging, appreciation, and recognition.

Ilha de Música is located within Comunidade da África (Africa Community). This area is an informal settlement situated in Redinha neighborhood, in the North Zone of Natal, which belongs to the city's Administrative North Region. The territorial boundaries of the community are as follows: to the north, it borders the municipality of Extremoz, including the area known as Redinha Nova; to the south, it borders the Salinas neighborhood, also located in Natal's North Zone; to the east, again Redinha Nova, part of the municipality of Extremoz; and to the west, the estuary of the Potengi River. Comunidade da África is an informal settlement established in an environmentally sensitive area that includes dunes, mangroves, lagoons, and the Potengi estuary. Recognized as a "Special Area of Social Interest" (Área Especial de Interesse Social – AEIS) in Natal Master Plan, the community faces significant housing precariousness and a lack of basic infrastructure.

The Comunidade da África is the result of an urban occupation process marked by social vulnerability. The area developed in a peripheral zone, characterized by unplanned growth and lack of State-provided basic services. Its formation reflects historical inequalities, with residents often rendered invisible by the city's urban planning. The population is predominantly Black and Brown. This ethnic-racial identity directly

¹ We have chosen to use the original spelling of the country name *Brasil* instead of its English translation *Brazil* in order to preserve proper names. However, the demonym *Brazilian* will be used in English.

influences how residents are treated and perceived by public policies, often becoming targets of marginalization and erasure discourses (Araújo, 2024).

Social projects constitute important instruments of social action, aiming to include marginalized individuals and groups by providing them with access to culture, education, and music, with the goal of expanding their opportunities for social participation and the exercise of citizenship. According to Geoff Baker (2010; 2021; 2022), these projects go beyond mere technical music instruction, configuring themselves as integrated educational and social processes that consider the cultural, social, and affective dimensions of the participants. The author offers criticism of projects that fail to engage in self-evaluation and end up reproducing logics of inequality and exclusion. Baker also suggests that they can function as spaces of cultural and political resistance, contributing to the redefinition of identities and the valorization of popular cultures.

Drawing upon my exploration of culture, I propose an interplay between culture and religion, specifically focusing on how culture inherits key components parallel to CS. This study involved formulating an Ideal Type termed "Cultural Salvation," which serves as a valuable tool for understanding and interpreting musical encounters within communities facing social vulnerability. My investigation revealed that the emergence of CS hinges upon two essential conditions: material conditions and cultural (kultur) conditions. Regarding the material conditions, I focused on the repercussions of colonization, which marginalized the descendants of Afroamerindians and left them in a vulnerable state. This historical process significantly contributed to their socio-economic and societal subjugation. Concerning the cultural condition, I examined the influence of religious heritage on culture, particularly within the context of learning. It became evident that music held a pivotal role in cultural practices, which can be traced back to the experiences of colonization in Brasil.

Ilha de Música represents one among many similar projects across Brasil and South America. Its primary objective is to rescue young individuals from disillusionment and potential deviant paths, effectively combating negative outcomes like poverty, violence, and crime. It offers diverse classes, including trumpet, guitar, trombone, saxophone, percussion, recorder, and music theory. Every student is welcome to participate in the Orchestra, regardless of their musical proficiency or skill's level.

I identified a transformative process termed "Cultural Salvation." The first step in understanding CS was to identify how it permeates my own life.

2. Cultural Salvation and me

I came from a poor working-class family in Brasil, struggling with financial limitations. My parents were part of the internal migration from rural regions to the urban center of Rio Grande do Norte. They moved to Natal, the capital of the State of Rio Grande do Norte, in the 1970s. When I was a child, I was studying the piano in a free music program in a social project, some reactions were dismissive: the piano was labeled as "fancy" or "chic." However, both then and now, I have always firmly believed that everyone should have the opportunity to study the piano—it is not reserved for a privileged group. At a young age, I didn't fully grasp the undertones of the words "fancy" and "chic"—essentially conveying that music, particularly the piano, wasn't accessible to the working class in Brasil. The cost of a used piano was equal to my parent's income for a year, which made it impossible for my parents to buy one.

Studying the piano gave me opportunities that my parents and family didn't have, like studying at university, going to museums, watching a concert at theater, and sometimes playing music on theater stages. Learning

the piano gave me opportunities that were unimaginable for my social background. In this way, the paradox of being white (from the perspective of Brazilian society) from a low working-class neighborhood was combined with another: I was also a poor child who played the piano.

My mother's family comes from a region marked by land conflicts between the descendants of native peoples and Portuguese settlers—conflicts that began to intensify during the so-called "Guerra dos Bárbaros" (War of the Barbarians) by the colonizers (a term loaded with prejudice), which started in 1650. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, Açu hinterland, in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, was the scene of the "Guerra dos Bárbaros", marked by conflicts between Indigenous peoples—such as the Tapuia and Janduí—and Portuguese colonizers. Native groups resisted occupation, enslavement, and the destruction of their ways of life (Cascudo, 1984).

To this day, the conflict has not been satisfactorily resolved—that is, the land has yet to be returned to the descendants of the native peoples through agrarian reform. My mother is the descendant of poor Portuguese rural workers and Indigenous peoples without land.

My father's family descends from formerly enslaved Brazilians and Portuguese. Historically, they have been somewhat better integrated into today's capitalist society and are part of the lower middle class. My grandmother and great-uncles performed what we refer to as *cantorias*—a form of singing accompanied by guitar or banjo and tambourine. This repertoire encompasses musical traditions of Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous, and European origins, including genres such as *coco*, *embolada*, *sextilhas* and *romances*, the latter bearing strong influence from the troubadour tradition of the Iberian Peninsula. *Samba* is also a cultural passion in my father's family. Every time that we were together, my grandmother, uncles, and aunts would play music and sometimes they hired some samba musicians to play with us.

Unfortunately, these family gatherings were not the most suitable space to play the music that I was learning, such as Chopin, Bach, and Mozart. The atmosphere for playing the European canon was completely different from samba in a family meeting, in which there is no audience separate from the musicians. Music brought me together and at the same time distanced me from my family. Even though they always loved to go and see me play, I felt that my place was on a theater stage and not necessarily in family gatherings.

After adopting cultural practices from individuals in higher social strata in Brasil, I attended an undergraduate program in Music Teaching. Some of my colleagues that were studying music with me had the same music background of my family (popular music), and they encountered problems in not understanding the harmonic, rhythmic forms, score sheet writing, and other elements present in the European canon that were presented as the focus of that teacher training.

In other words, I had the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2007) necessary to be successful at university that my peers from higher classes who had not studied this type of music lacked. Although I felt completely integrated and prepared for the academic environment, the music I learned had little impact on my family gatherings.

The process of integration and non-integration through music of people from the lower classes into society has become a focus in my work as a teacher. Since 2005, the year I started to study at university, I have taught classes in different projects for children and adolescents in socially vulnerable and precarious economic situations.

In my life experience with music, and through observation of my students, I have observed the following: people come from lower social classes, and after acquiring knowledge and adopting cultural practices from individuals in higher social strata, they begin to occupy societal roles and spaces typically inaccessible to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This promotes what I call Cultural Salvation (CS). However, I only realized this after I researched music education in a social project.

3. Culture

To understand CS, I approach culture both as a field within the social sciences and sociology of music education and as a form of human production. Viewed as human production, culture emerges as a powerful force that shapes power dynamics, control, and domination (Weber, 2009).

Music education sociologists Ruth Wright and John Finney undertake an exploration of the concept of culture, drawing on the works of Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu to both critique the concept and relate it to music learning. Based on this discussion, Wright and Finney (2010) make the following points:

- a. They critique the traditional view of culture as something fixed, associated solely with the "fine arts" or so-called high culture—that is, what has historically been valued by elites as a symbol of social distinction.
- b. Culture should not be seen merely as products (works, objects) or superior repertoires, but as a living social process shaped by power relations, everyday practices, values, meanings, and shared understandings among human groups.
- c. There is not just one culture, but multiple cultures that coexist, compete for space, and are constantly recreated. Culture, therefore, is dynamic, constructed through social interactions, and includes not only artistic practices but also ways of life, beliefs, rituals, and everyday languages.
- d. Hegemonic conceptions of culture function as mechanisms of exclusion or legitimation of certain social groups. For example, by defining only Western classical music as "legitimate," education contribute to marginalizing other musical traditions.

In the concept of culture, I identified the following aspects:

- 1) Culture is hierarchical, therefore, it organizes and highlights social positions, which allow the (re)production of a social order, as well as its contestation (Souza, 2020).
- 2) Culture is a form of capital (Bourdieu, 2007; Souza, 2020), representing the accumulation and exchange of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and experiences. This cultural capital can be leveraged to attain social status and gain advantages within societal structures. Culture is concentrated in certain social groups, passed down, valued by social contexts and institutions, it is embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Culture is a formative experience for human beings because it is symbolic and gives meaning to personal and collective experiences.

4. Salvation

The "material condition" that underscores social vulnerability is rooted in the impacts of colonization and has marginalized Afro-Indigenous descendants, intensifying their precarious position.

For those of us who are inserted into society from precarious positions inherited from colonization², what occurred with the arrival of the Portuguese ships on the lands of the Potiguara people (where the city of Natal is now located) was, above all, the imposition of an economic system based on the indiscriminate exploitation of nature. To enable this, on one side enslaved labor was used, and on the other, a religious system of salvation that upheld such exploitation. Paraphrasing my maternal grandmother: Anhangá, with his insatiable thirst for blood, left us with Ôia, which paralyzes and lulls us to sleep.³

Professor Geoffrey Baker, from the University of London, has conducted extensive research on music education in non-formal educational contexts. His work encompasses: an analysis of the impact of colonization on Latin American music (Baker and Knighton 2010); a systematic critique of the "musical miracle" narrative associated with El Sistema (Baker 2021); and the development of alternative frameworks for reimagining musical practices (Baker 2021).

In comparing El Sistema in Venezuela and Medellín Music School Network (Red) in Colombia, Baker also identifies the influence of religion in these social projects. The author argues that both Red and El Sistema display the following religious connotations: they revolve around a founder; they are linked to a system of charismatic patriarchy; they implement a hierarchical structure centered on male authority figures; they develop vertical hierarchies (such as popular vs. classical music; wind vs. string sections; less experienced vs. more experienced students); they require tirelessly hard work, with long hours of study and personal sacrifice in the pursuit of the desired musical "perfection"; they are focused on preparing students for a future life, usually oriented toward careers in orchestras or entry into universities; and students have little social activity outside of rehearsals and music lessons (Baker, 2021).

These religious connotations observed by Geoffrey Baker in El Sistema and Medellín Music School Network (Red) resonate with my own findings during ethnographic fieldwork at Ilha de Música project. Similar to the projects studied by Baker, Ilha de Música also revolves around a charismatic founder and operates within a hierarchical structure where musical authority is often gendered and centralized. The division between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" repertoires, and the promise of a better future through academic or professional insertion are likewise present. However, within the specific historical and cultural context of Brasil—and particularly within communities historically shaped by colonization, slavery, and agrarian conflict—these structures also influence deeper processes of Cultural Salvation. The metaphysical veil of music's transformative power, the ritualistic organization of musical practice, and the disciplining of bodies and desires through music education echo colonial legacies masked by the promise of social mobility in Brazilian context.

The sociologist Florestan Fernandes (1965) was one of the leading Brazilian scholars who studied the societal systems that shaped Brazilian society through the hierarchization, exclusion, and inclusion of Black

² Social and historical contexts are diverse. Even within the same State in Brasil, there are differences, whether through the type of occupation, or in relation to the receptiveness of the native population to the actions of the colonizer.

³ *Anhangá*, in this context, is understood as a malevolent spirit that devours with an unquenchable hunger. In some of the places my maternal family frequents, the name is still considered taboo and is only spoken in very specific situations. In other regions with Indigenous influence, the term may carry different meanings. *Ôia* is a word used more frequently in my family. It refers to a sudden and uncontrollable sleep, a weakness in the body that paralyzes and prevents a person from getting up to do what they must or need to do.

individuals. According to the author, Africans, who were transplanted as slaves to the Americas, saw their lives and destinies become tied to a brutal system of human exploitation, in which they were regarded solely as instruments of labor and capital. The transition from colonization to a competitive social order, based on the free availability of the workforce, was accompanied by equally significant phenomena in the realm of culture and social relations.

Within this system of entrenched inequalities, the Jesuit priests were tasked with the role of integrating marginalized groups—specifically the Indigenous peoples—into the colonial order, positioning them as loyal subjects of the Portuguese crown and obedient servants of the Church. Regarding the relationship between civilization, habits, and learning, the Jesuit priest Antônio de Matos wrote a letter about the musical practices of indigenous peoples in Rio de Janeiro during the 17th Century. The priest interconnected European musical practices and social spaces to the objectives of colonization. In his words, the goal of Jesuits was “to domesticate them [indigenous] in habits [...] so that they know how to promote divine worship, and help celebrate divine services with singing and musical instruments” (Matos *apud* Holler 2010, 177).

In studies of colonialism, culture has been considered a social process to reinforce unequal relationships of power and domination of those who are culturally “developed” (such as priests) over those who are not (e.g. indigenous people) (Araújo, 2024). These aspects are present on the surface of priest Matos' words. The relation of power goes one way: from those already saved to those who are candidates for salvation. Another interesting aspect of Matos's conception is music as a way to participate in colonial society. For this to happen, it is necessary to be domesticated, in other words, to renounce indigenous culture and embrace the colonizers' culture and music.

The Brazilian Indigenous author Ailton Krenak (2019), in his book “Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo”⁴, proposes a counter-colonial approach grounded in the appreciation of alternative ways of existing. Krenak argues that colonization was not merely a territorial invasion but also provoked a profound rupture with diverse modes of living and perceiving the world. By imposing a singular, utilitarian, and market-driven worldview, it transformed lands, rivers, forests, and even people into mere resources to be exploited. The author further points out that this process sought to “domesticate” everything that did not conform to its project, disqualifying the knowledge, languages, cosmologies, and ways of life of Indigenous peoples, quilombola communities, and other traditional groups.

This process of abandoning one's own culture and using music and musical instruments to celebrate the divine services was considered part of the process of salvation. But in everyday life, the native culture was not completely abandoned; I prefer to understand this phenomenon as a multitemporal heterogeneity resulting from power relations, in which music is used both as a means of (re)existence and as an instrument of domination. According to Canclini (2019), despite attempts by elites to give their culture a modern profile, restricting the spread of indigenous and colonial culture among the popular sectors, the interclassist miscegenation resulting from these interrelationships generated hybrid formations across Latin American. But the question here is: which music was imposed as a model of society in a process of domination by sword (military) and by word (priest), and which music needed to adapt itself to survive and resist colonization?

To explore salvation, I trace the history of Redinha District, in the City of Natal, Brasil, the home of Ilha de Música Social Program. Two reasons drive this choice: Firstly, Natal is a peripheral city in Brasil. When

⁴ In free translation, “Ideas to Postpone the End of the World”.

researchers study colonization they usually focus on major colonial centers like Rio de Janeiro, Recife, São Paulo, or Salvador. As can be seen in Image 1, Natal is far from the administrative centers of the republic. The city of Natal is located approximately 1,100 km from Salvador (BA), which served as the capital of Brasil from 1549 to 1763; about 2,500 km from Rio de Janeiro (RJ), the seat of the Brazilian government from 1763 to 1960; and approximately 2,300 km from Brasília (DF), which became the federal capital on April 21, 1960, and remains so to this day. Secondly, I aim to understand the origins of Ilha de Música students, and by connecting with their pasts, I glimpsed meanings of "learning music" in the present.



Figure 1 – Localization of the City of Natal and distance to big centers in Brasil.

Reference: Google Maps edited by the author.

The North Zone of Natal, presently known as Africa Community, was originally settled by the Potiguaras native people. They engaged in trade with the French and Dutch before Portuguese colonization. The Portuguese formed alliances with other Native nations to drive out the non-Portuguese occupants. The agreement with the Potiguaras was that the Portuguese would occupy the southern lands of the Potengi River (uplands on the following map) and construct the so-called Fortaleza dos Reis Magos (Fortress of Three Wise Men) (on the left of the map), while the Potiguaras People would reside in the northern territories (displayed on the bottom and near the middle of the map).

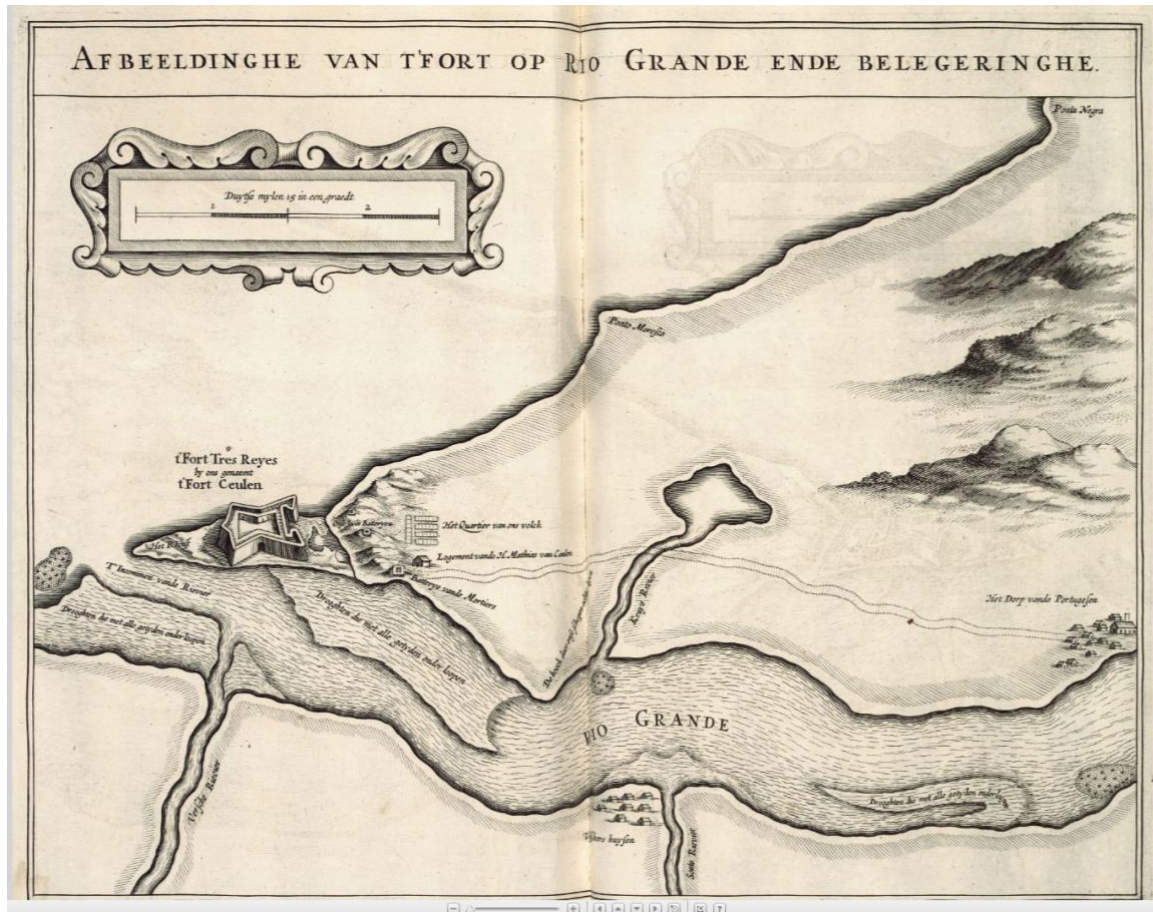


Figure 2 – Bird's eye view of the fort of Keulen near the Rio Grande River and environs. Source: Atlas of Mutual Heritage.

Reference: Atlas of Mutual Heritage; <https://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/nl/Vogelvlucht-fort-Keulen-bij-Rio-Grande-omgeving.6715>.

In the middle of the twentieth century, the anthropologist Camara Cascudo (1999, 49) wrote about this episode:

The conquest by the sword would be consolidated by the catechesis of the spirits. Muskets, cannons, spears, swords, and pillories would do nothing. Once defeated, the indigenous man retreated like a wave and would return, stronger, smashing into the stone walls of Fortaleza do Reis Magos. The process was to put the swords back in the sheaths and to give the word to priests.⁵

The salvation implemented by the Portuguese was not limited to the soul of the “savage”, it was also a colonial undertaking. The domination of indigenous bodies should also be carried out through the imposition of a colonial logic promoted by the priests. Weapons were not enough, it was also necessary to dominate the spirit of the natives, and music was an important part to “domesticate” the body, as revealed by the priest Antônio de Matos.

Portuguese colonization in Potiguara lands was based on three main aspects: a) the expropriation of indigenous people from their lands and transfer to the Jesuit missions, also called Jesuit villages; b) the

⁵ Free translation of: a conquista pela espada seria consolidada pela catequese dos espíritos. Mosquetes, canhões, lanças, espadas e pelouros nada fariam. Vencido, recuava o indígena como uma onda e voltaria, mais forte, quebrando-se nas muralhas de pedra do Reis Magos. O processo era embainhar a espada e dar a palavra ao padre (Cascudo 1999, 49).

process of saving indigenous souls through catechization, which included music education in the service of faith; c) the process of cultural salvation of the native population, based on the inculcation of Portuguese culture, that is, education to make indigenous people into "domesticated" vassals of the Portuguese Crown.

Step by step, the indigenous were expelled from the Northern region of the City of Natal. They were sent to two Jesuit villages: São Miguel do Guajiru and São João Batista de Guaraíras. These settlements were close to sugar-cane plantations. The indigenous population became a workforce for the Jesuit priests, and sometimes they worked in plantations alongside enslaved people brought from Africa (Araújo, 2024).

Throughout the early Republican period in Brasil, salvationists conceptions began to incorporate elements of positivism. This movement, on the one hand, brought a strong hygienist bias, which led, among other consequences, to the gentrification of popular music by the Brazilian elites and population migrations, whether spontaneous or forced — as seen, for instance, in the removal of poor communities from city centers at the beginning of the twentieth century, a process whose effects still persist today. On the other hand, education came to be used as a civilizing veneer, serving as an instrument to modernize Brasil. Within this modernization process, musical expressions of Black and Indigenous origins were integrated into nationalism through the appropriation of elements from these cultures into traditional orchestration, that is, the orchestral practices associated with the elites.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Afro-Indigenous descendants from these villages re-migrated to what had once been the ancestral lands of Potiguara people in Natal. They resettled in these lands but under challenging economic circumstances, seeking refuge from drought and aspiring to improve their lives in the city of Natal. Therefore, the persistent social vulnerability in the Africa Community can be traced back to the enduring impacts of the colonization process.

5. Cultural Salvation

After having discussed the senses and meanings of culture and salvation situated in the colonization process, I outline Cultural Salvation as an Ideal Type that inherits from religion. I argue that it is present in music teaching for people from the lower classes (under domination), though it is not limited to these groups. CS occurs in a directional movement from the saved to the candidates for salvation. The saved are generally teachers, musicians, and those who serve as references for candidates for salvation. The candidates are students considered vulnerable or at social risk, who usually live in favelas and neighborhoods that are labeled as "dangerous".

Religious salvation, which acted as a tool for imposing the dominant culture during colonization, has left residual symbols and shared meanings in present-day education. CS in music emerges from the historical intertwining of two distinct yet interconnected universes: religion and culture.

I identify three significant elements of CS in music education:

1. the metaphysical veil of the power of music;
2. the ritualistic order;
3. the transformation process.

The metaphysical veil of music's power: This element encompasses the perception of music as having a profound and transcendent influence, something akin to a metaphysical force. According to Weber (2009 33, free translation), Power (Macht) "means any chance to impose one's own will in a social relationship, even against resistance, regardless of the basis of that chance."⁶ Thus, power does not depend on people's acceptance of the exercise of will. Max Weber defines power as the ability to impose one's own will in a social relationship, even in the face of resistance. This means that power does not necessarily depend on the consent of the people over whom it is exercised; The metaphysical veil is a way to exercise the power and the to conceal the negative effects of the exercise of power in mists formed by salvationist discourses.

The ritualistic order involves the establishment of a structured and ritual-like approach to musical practices and education, embedding a sense of order and tradition. The ritualistic order concerns the incorporation of the colonial paradigm into everyday life through education. For Basil Bernstein (1996), the school, in a metaphorical sense, can be seen as a mirror that either reflects or obscures both positive and negative images. In this reflection, the school reproduces the projection of a hierarchy of values—class-based values—highlighting the power dynamics that permeate its functioning. Within the historical context of Jesuit colonization, the school was used as a strategic tool to instill European culture in indigenous peoples, replacing their original traditions and cultural practices. Now, as then, the soundscape within the school reflects this inequality, as the sounds it promotes often lack meaning for a significant portion of students. Schooling serves as an ordering and ritually through which society provides mediation of the world, while simultaneously influencing the reproduction of dominant values, as Bernstein suggests.

CS is understood as a ritualistic process that also manifests in the construction of a study routine beyond the boundaries of learning music, fostering a sense of duty and responsibility within the child toward themselves and the group. Thus, ritualization not only structures the learning process but also establishes a meaningful connection between the musician, the instrument, music, and society.

This systematic study approach is complemented by a ritualistic order that permeates artistic performances. Numerous examples of essential ritual prologues, many of which have been perpetuated for centuries, illustrate this practice. Among the most noteworthy are:

- the sound signals indicate the beginning of activities in theaters, a practice also observed in schools;
- stretching and musical warm-ups, incorporating specific techniques at the start of instrumental lessons;
- in symphonic bands in the countryside of Northeast in Brasil, the ritual associated with the conductor's presence, where their entrance into the rehearsal space imposes non-verbalized yet understood restrictions among the members;
- the orchestra conductor traditionally enters the stage from the left side after the tuning led by the concertmaster, with musicians and the audience positioned in an arrangement established since the Renaissance;
- the pianist who, upon taking the stage, adjusts the bench to their height, breathes silently, and raises their arms before playing the first notes.

⁶ *Poder "significa toda probabilidade de impor a própria vontade numa relação social, mesmo contra resistências."*

The final element of CS in music education that I identified in Ilha de Música is the Belief in the Transformation Process. According to Weber (2009), while power is the exercise of will over individuals, domination (Herrschaft) is the acceptance and subordination of individuals to the power exercised by someone. In this sense, the belief in the Transformation Process serves to legitimize the acceptance of the exercise of power.

In Ilha de Música this element underscores the belief that engaging with music can lead to personal and societal transformation. Believing in a process of transformation (such as a cultural, social, or ideological process) can be a way to justify or legitimize the exercise of power. In other words, this transformation process would be seen as a collective good, helping to accept and internalize the authority or imposed changes.

The transformation process is linked to the idea of "saving": What does it mean "to be saved"?

Under colonization, to be saved was to leave behind the native culture, become Catholic and follow the Portuguese Crown. This also meant to participate in colonial social spaces (such as the church) and to be part of the colonial economy, working in a situation analogous to slavery.

In contemporary CS, transformation maintains a connotation of integration into a different social position for those who have experienced it. It often centers around a figure of power, evoking gratitude from the transformed individuals towards their "savior". This kind of transformation is personal rather than social, and distinct from social mobility. In my research in Ilha de Música, I detected the former students largely maintained in their social class, even if they obtained certain privileges and distinctions compared to others not "saved" in their community. Notably, their neighbors recognized them as "saved" from the dangers of drug involvement. In this context, transformation does not mean change in the mode of social reproduction of inequalities; what occurs is an ascension in the same social class.

In interviews, former students, coordinators, and teachers articulated distinct archetypes of former students. They serve as fundamental reference points for understanding the dynamics and nuances of education within the context of Ilha de Música, shedding light on the varied perspectives and experiences of former students and their relationship with music. The archetypes are: the unsaved (the lost and the deviant), and the saved (the enchanted and the present⁷).

The unsaved people, the lost and deviant, are students that studied music in the social program but for some reason left: some simply gave up music, some became a criminal, some even died. In field research, I heard frequent stories about how someone gave up classes and after that was coopted by criminals as a dealer – in other words, took the wrong pathway. The unsaved are counter-examples: pathways that the children should not take.

The second category is enchanted (encantados): The enchanted are presented as central elements in the Afro-Indigenous religious practices present in África Community, which we had the opportunity to visit through ethnographic fieldwork activities. These spiritual entities perform important symbolic and communal functions, reinforcing bonds of belonging and cultural resistance in the face of a historical context marked

⁷ Presente in Portuguese has different meanings: one who lives or is among us (presença); a verb tense (presente); a gift - give a gift, or someone could be a gift for his community. I flirt with all these meanings.

by erasure and marginalization. In Afro-Indigenous religions, these beings possess human characteristics but live in another dimension. They are generally associated with natural forces—such as rivers, forests, and winds—and appear in places of worship as spiritual entities that guide, counsel, and heal. The enchanted were once people who lived in this world but, for some reason, transcended into the spiritual realm. At times, they return to the earthly world and exert influence over reality. The presence of the enchanted within the daily life of the community—especially as related to the notion of Cultural Salvation—operates as a form of cultural affirmation and symbolic resistance, opposing historical attempts to silence Afro-Brazilian religious expressions. The appreciation of these spiritual entities challenges the logic of Cultural Salvation and the subalternation of local practices, particularly in the field of music education. The category of the enchanted stood out in discussions with students' families during field research, representing a significant portion of the former student population. The enchanted of Cultural Salvation are former students who have achieved prominent positions in society but who moved to another neighborhood, city, or country to perform in orchestras, big bands, or other ensembles. They serve as important role models for current music students. So, they are considered saved.

The final category is the "presents". They too are considered among the saved. These individuals have acquired musical education and continue to reside within the community. They have been "transformed by the power of music" and actively engage in the daily life of the Africa community. The "presents" perceive a *beruf* or calling to replicate salvation experiences, so they are gifts too.

6. Perspectives and possibilities pathways about Cultural Salvation

Cultural Salvation should not be seen as a conclusion or a classificatory end. It is constructed as an Ideal Type, following the Weberian approach, and, therefore, should not be used to fit distinct music teaching practices into contexts of vulnerability that have undergone a process of colonization. On the contrary, it should be understood as a tool for comparison, approximation, abstraction, and interpretation, helping to analyze different realities, reflect, and act on cultural and educational transformation processes.

My future intention is to compare data from educational contexts and communities that have undergone colonization processes. As a work perspective, the field research carried out in 2023 in El Sistema South London-Canada is currently being analyzed, through the collection of materials and interviews with its founder. The approximation between the context of a Canadian musical project and the Brazilian Ilha de Música can be revealing, since both societies went through harsh processes of colonization, segregation and colonial imposition through education. On the other hand, Canada and Brasil went through different forms of colonization (occupation and exploitation respectively) and have different development and social organization.

There is another research in progress of analyses about music as a tool to combat drug addiction. In this research a student of the Music Degree Course is writing his own story with music as a tool for salvation. He was considered lost to society but at a certain point in his life, music emerged as an instrument for recovery from drug use. In this sense, I believe that CS has a broad analytical potential for musical practices.

As music educators, we must recognize that CS is not merely an element rooted in the histories of colonized nations or confined to the past. Instead, it remains an exercise of power embedded in various contemporary

musical practices. This reality places upon us the responsibility to engage critically with this concept and more of this, to engage the history of our students.

As individuals engaged in social projects, we find ourselves at a crossroads, facing at least two divergent paths. The first is one that rejects all negative elements of colonization that persist in musical practices; this path ultimately perpetuates systems of inequality and hierarchy, while continuing to promote the mystical veil surrounding music and excluding the "unsaved." The second path, aware of the complex elements inherent in Cultural Salvation, seeks to deconstruct practice through critical reflection. This latter path not only questions the harmful consequences of colonial legacies but also acts upon the systems that sustain the reproduction of inequalities.

My propose is to deconstruct salvation influence while simultaneously reconstructing a more inclusive and equitable environment for teaching music to children and adolescents in socially vulnerable contexts. In another words: It's crucial we challenge *Ôia* to keep moving. Only by challenging *Ôia* we can change our practices and inequalities presents in our contemporary society.

It is therefore essential to critically reflect on the mechanisms that reproduce hierarchies and inequalities, which are often linked to the notion of Cultural Salvation. Among these, it is possible to highlight the widespread disregard for so-called unsaved students—those labeled as lost or deviant. Understanding the reasons why certain students are not "saved" is a necessary step. This reflection must extend beyond the Brazilian context to include all societies whose social structures have been shaped by colonial legacies, especially in Latin America.

Transforming practices that reproduce inequality and exclusion is not an easy task, as the forces sustaining entrenched social structures are deeply resistant to change. Yet, I remain convinced of the potential for transformation. The present and future of music education are collective undertakings. It is imperative to critically examine and reimagine the structures that continue to perpetuate hierarchy and inequality in the 21st century. More than a theoretical endpoint, Cultural Salvation should be understood as a call to action.

In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Paulo Freire (1992) reminds us of the importance of critical enthusiasm, a deep understanding of social reality, and the recognition that society is both materially and symbolically constructed—therefore, neither immutable nor natural. We must understand ourselves as historical, political, social, and cultural beings. If it is possible to construct systems, it is also possible to deconstruct them.

It is along this path of deconstruction that Baker (2021) proposes a shift in the way we conceptualize music education, advocating for the rejection of ready-made solutions. Professor Baker conducted an insightful and critical analysis of the Red de Escuelas de Musica in Colombia. His work involved diagnosing key structural issues that demanded reexamination, while also proposing reformist actions aimed at disrupting entrenched patterns. Baker identifies within the schools a disposition toward change—an institutional and pedagogical openness that allows transformation to become an integral part of both classroom practices and the broader administrative functioning of the Red. This case stands as a powerful example of how, in the Latin American context, it is not only possible but necessary to pursue processes of reconstruction that consciously resist the reproduction of colonial legacies, and the systems of inequality historically embedded in formal music education.

Building on the discussions presented in this article, I propose the following questions, to be considered not only by music scholars but also by educators, parents, and advocates of social projects operating within the framework of Cultural Salvation—a context that often demands critical reflection and structural rethinking:

1. It is essential to adopt a critical stance that rejects any educational practice which promotes the exclusion of the "unsaved," and any mythologization that places music within a metaphysical veil of power. Social projects should not be reduced to a "lifeline" in which poor children are encouraged by adults to cling to music in order to avoid a life of crime. Poverty does not equate to criminal propensity.
2. Cases of success in social projects should be understood as unique life stories that offer diverse pathways for children from various backgrounds—economic, ethnic, racial, gendered, and otherwise. However, these cases must not be transformed into mechanical models of success to be replicated. Overemphasis on success stories can obscure the everyday challenges, psychological abuses, long rehearsal hours, and personal interests of children and adolescents.
3. It is crucial to consider everyday life. In many Latin American countries, children do not have access to full-time schooling. Social projects contribute not only to musical development but also to combating child malnutrition, providing recreational activities, and fostering social spaces for community engagement. Race, gender, and ethnicity must be understood as pedagogical elements essential to the creation of inclusive musical practices that promote children's self-awareness in relation to their own cultures.
4. From the perspective of social action through music, it is fundamental to seek mechanisms of transformation connected to the educational sphere. These may include psychosocial support for families, the creation of economic development opportunities, and improvements in housing conditions. This does not mean that music educators must become psychologists, social workers, or politicians, but rather that they should establish partnerships with social development networks such as education and social assistance services.

I am likewise convinced that this may not be the sole path forward; it is essential to remain open to dissenting perspectives and to scholarly research that presents counterarguments. Nevertheless, in light of the data presented, the cultural legacy of colonization in Latin America, and the urgent need to overcome the inertia and initiate transformative action, I contend that deconstruction constitutes a necessary course.

On one hand, the issues outlined above serve as catalysts for structural reflections that allow for a critical examination of the metaphysical veil surrounding the symbolic power of music—a power that often inhibits self-criticism within musical practices and reinforces an exclusionary logic in which only the "saved" are acknowledged as legitimate participants in music-making. On the other hand, such reflections open pathways for new generations of students to break away from the apathy represented by the "slumber of Ôia" and to engage actively in the musical life of their familial contexts—something that, in my own experience, was inaccessible during childhood and adolescence. The dismantling of systems that reproduce inequality, through a musical practice committed to social transformation, thus becomes not only necessary but urgent.

7. References

- Araújo, Andersonn Henrique (2024). A salvação cultural no ensino de música em projetos sociais (Tese de doutorado, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte). Repositório Institucional da UFRN.
- Baker, Geoffrey. 2021. *Rethinking social action through music: the search for coexistence and citizenship in Medellín's Music Schools*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.
- Baker, Geoffrey. 2022. *The Power of music: advocacy in disguise*. Geoff Baker, [s. l.], 30 Sept. 2022. avalie in: <https://geoffbakermusic.co.uk/2022/09/30/the-power-of-music-advocacy-in-disguise/>. Acesso em: 30 ago. 2023.
- Baker, Geoffrey and Knighton, Tess (ed.). 2010. *Music and urban society in colonial Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bernstein, Basil. 1996. *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: theory, research, critique*. Londres: Taylor & Francis, 1996.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2020. "Os três estados do Capital Cultural". In: Nogueira, Maria and Catâni, Afrânio (org.). *Escritos de Educação*. Petrópolis: Vozes, p. 71-80.
- Canclini, Néstor. 2019. *Culturas Híbridas: estratégias para entrar e sair da modernidade*. 4a. edição. São Paulo: Editora da USP.
- Cascudo, Câmara. 1999. *História da cidade do Natal*. Natal: RN Econômico.
- Cascudo, Câmara. 1984. *História do Rio Grande do Norte* (3ª ed.). Natal: Fundação José Augusto.
- Freire, Paulo. 1992. *Pedagogia da esperança: um reencontro com a Pedagogia do Oprimido*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Fernandes, Florestan. 1965. *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes. Vol. 1 - O legado da raça branca*. São Paulo: Dominus/Editora Universidade de São Paulo.
- Holler, Marcos. 2010. *Os Jesuítas e a música no Brasil colonial*. Campinas: Unicamp.
- Krenak, Ailton. 2019. *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Souza, Jessé. 2020. *A ralé Brasileira: quem é e como vive*. 3a edição. São Paulo: Editora Contracorrente.
- Weber, Max. 2009. *Economia e sociedade: fundamentos da sociologia compreensiva*. Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília.
- Wright, Ruth; Finney, John. 2010. Culture, society and music education. In: WRIGHT, Ruth (org.). *Sociology and music education*. New York: Routledge, p. 245–262.