

Call for papers

International study day

« *Brazilian musical hybridizations:
the musical language of Hermeto Pascoal* »

Friday April 05, 2024

Bordeaux Montaigne University
Laboratoire ARTES (UR 24141)

Argument

Hermeto Pascoal is one of the most prolific composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. His work, still in development, is made up of thousands of pieces. Despite this, it remains, overall, relatively little studied by Brazilian scientific literature, and almost absent from English- and French-speaking works (Rosado, 2019).

Born on June 22, 1936 in the state of Alagoas (Brazil), Hermeto Pascoal experimented at a very young age with the world of sound in connection with nature and with the tools and achievements of his blacksmith grandfather. As an accordion (8 bass) and *pandeiro* player, he was however declared “not gifted for music” by the Director of a Brazilian radio station; nevertheless, he will still end up starting his career there. Later becoming a pianist, then a flutist and finally a polyinstrumentalist, he will successively transform the Brazilian and American musical landscapes, and beyond, to the point of receiving in 2023 the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from Juilliard School (New York).

Different elements of his musical language (harmonic, melodic, rhythmic and timbral) probably come from his childhood experiments (Lima Neto, 2000; Payne, 2022) then from his cultural, social, religious and professional experiences which made him a composer, arranger and musician with an exceptional trajectory (Borém and Araújo, 2010). Experimentation remains at the heart of Hermeto Pascoal's approach, which does not prohibit any sound modality. Used in all its facets, the voice reveals itself to be a fundamental aspect of his creativity; it is used in all its possibilities (singing, speaking, shouting, whispering, praying, coughing, laughing, etc.) alone or associated with other means of sound production (Costa-Lima Neto, 2010a).

From the popular music of the Brazilian Northeast, he borrows the so-called “northeastine” modality (Tiné, 2008) which he hybridizes with tonal language but also with non-functional harmonization (Costa, 2006). His musical language has thus been enriched by sources as diverse as Schoenberg, George Russell, or Dave Brubeck (Araújo and Borém, 2013; Rosado, 2019).

Finally, its relationship to music creates an “intimate relationship between musical and non-musical content” (Borém and Garcia, 2010), mixing “tonality, modality, atonality, polymodality, soundscapes and concrete music” (Borém and Araújo, 2010).

From an analytical point of view, the scientific literature that studies the work of Hermeto Pascoal uses various tools such as, for example, formal, scalar, spectral analysis (Borém and Garcia, 2010) or toroidal analysis. (Chouvel et al., 2002). It also proposes new conceptual approaches through notions such as entropy (Shannon, 1948) invoked by Cabral and Guigue (2016), topics (Piedade, 2013), the “friction of musicalities” (id.) or that of “paradoxical separation-fusion continuum” (Costa-Lima Neto, 2010).

Several questions emerge from this quick overview:

- Does the “work” (in the broad sense, integrating its relationship to music) of Hermeto Pascoal inspire other artists (from Brazil, or outside)? If yes, to what extent and how?
- How does the work of Hermeto Pascoal potentially encourage questioning through a “general musicology” (*i.e.* abolishing the differences between musicology and ethnomusicology)?
- To what extent are the various conceptual tools already proposed to analyze his music sufficiently operational to account for this?
- How do the concepts proposed by Hermeto Pascoal himself shed light on his work?

Through this basis of questioning which can be widely extended, this study day aims at a better understanding of the work of Hermeto Pascoal, but also to arouse interest among French-speaking researchers for an artist whose complexity of musical language constitutes a real challenge for musical analysis.

Indicative bibliography

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Scientific committee

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- Jean-Marc Chauvel (Sorbonne Université)
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Partnership

- Université Bordeaux Montaigne / Laboratoire ARTES (UR 24141)
- Université Fédérale d'Alagoas – Brésil / Centro de Musicologia de Penedo (CEMUPE)
- Sorbonne Université / Institut de recherche en Musicologie (UMR 8223)

Terms of Proposals

Communication proposals must be sent in PDF format to gerald.guillot@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr. They can be in French, English or Portuguese and must integrate:

- title,
- abstract (300 to 500 words),
- bibliography,
- short biography.

Terms of study day

- Discussions mainly in person
- Given its international nature, video-conferencing system to promote remote interventions and participation.

Publishing

- The proceedings of the study day will be published by Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux or Editions L'Harmattan.

Schedule

- Submission deadline: January 5, 2024
- Notification of decision: February 5, 2024
- Study Day: April 5, 2024