

**CULTURAL COUNTERPOINTS:  
Examining the Musical Interactions between the U.S. and Latin America**



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**“Walt Disney and Diplomacy: The Musical Impact of *Aquarela do Brasil*”**

**Abstract:**

In a diplomatic attempt to create cultural exchange between Latin American countries and the United States, Disney Pictures created the film *Saludos Amigos* in 1942. The film *Saludos Amigos* was a combination of four independently conceived cartoon shorts regarding Latin America. This paper will concentrate on the final of the four cartoon shorts, *Aquarela do Brasil*.

*Aquarela do Brasil* was created with the specific cultural function of improving relations with Brazil before entering World War II as requested and funded by the United States Government. The strategy of Franklin Roosevelt’s Latin American policy was cultural sharing with the goal of demonstrating how both cultures are similar and to strengthen cultural ties.

In 1941, to accomplish the task of creating *Saludos Amigos*, Disney and a crew of writers, artists, and one musician, explored first-hand a variety of Latin American cultures. Disney and his crew chose to spend the majority of their time in Rio de Janeiro, using it as headquarters for their time in South America. As a result, the cartoon short *Aquarela do Brasil*, based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is much more detailed and accurate.

The cultural impact of *Aquarela do Brasil*’s music was significant and played a large role in the popularization of the samba in North America during the 1940s and 50s. Furthermore, the international popularity of the samba, *Brazil*, which premiered to American audiences in *Aquarela do Brasil*, helped samba to be perceived as the “national sound” of Brazil.

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## Walt Disney and Diplomacy: The Musical Impact of *Aquarela do Brasil*

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In an attempt to improve the United States' diplomatic relations with Latin America, Disney Pictures created the film *Saludos Amigos* in 1942. This film was a combination of four independently conceived cartoon shorts about Latin America which were released in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The final of the four cartoon shorts, *Aquarela do Brasil*, introduced the samba number of the same name also referred to as "Brazil" in English. The samba "Brazil" has continued to be used in films, television programs, and recordings ever since its first American popular culture dissemination in *Saludos Amigos*. In this paper we will discuss what social influences affected the music selections in *Aquarela do Brasil* and what the social implications of those choices were.

The film *Saludos Amigos* was created by the Disney Studios in the early 1940s as requested and funded by the United States Government through the Good Neighbor Policy. The Good Neighbor Policy began in 1933 when Roosevelt stated in his inaugural address, "In the field of world policy I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor, the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others."<sup>1</sup> In the 1930s, much of Latin America viewed the United States as imperialistic because of earlier military actions and occupations. To counter this view, early implementations of the Good Neighbor Policy resulted in the removal of US troops from Haiti and Nicaragua, but ignored social exchanges. By the late 1930s, the policy began focusing on cultural exchange by employing the film making abilities of Hollywood. In the spirit of "pan-Americanism" several films were released in the late 1930s and the iconic Brazilian actress Carmen Miranda was brought to the United States to star in them. Prior to *Saludos Amigos*, *Argentine Nights* was released by Universal Pictures in the 1940s as requested by the Roosevelt administration to continue the policy of social exchange. However, the film's grossly inaccurate presentation of

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<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1933.

Argentinean culture incited riots at the film's Argentinean premier.<sup>2</sup> With the gross failure of *Argentine Nights* in mind, Disney was commissioned to create a film that accurately explained Latin America to United States audiences in order to strengthen Latin American relations with the US Government.<sup>3</sup> Due to the Disney Studio strike, bank financing was unavailable so the entire project was underwritten by the Federal Government.

In 1941, to accomplish the task of creating diplomatic films, Disney and a crew of writers, artists, and one musician explored first-hand a variety of Latin American cultures. Charles Wolcott was the only musician in the staff and had the tough responsibility of interpreting the indigenous music of Latin American cultures. The only background information Wolcott was given in preparation for this trip was a five page article "The Song Makers" written by Carleton Sprague Smith, the chief of the Music Division at the New York Public Library. In this article, there is no mention of Rio de Janeiro's dominant popular music, samba, although *choro* is mentioned. The only reference to African influences in Brazilian music is in the statement "Brazil's folk music is colored by African influences."<sup>4</sup> Needless to say, Wolcott was poorly prepared for the ethnically diverse music that awaited him in Rio de Janeiro.

On their tour of South America, Disney and his crew spent the majority of their time in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, using Copacabana Hotel as their headquarters. During the trip Disney also traveled to Montevideo, Uruguay; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Mendoza, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; La Paz, Bolivia; Lake Titicaca and Cuzco, Peru; Quito, Ecuador; Bogotá, Colombia; Caracas, Venezuela; Chichicastenango, Guatemala; Mexico City, Mexico; as well as cities in Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras. Many of Disney's staff enjoyed the culture and nightlife of Rio de Janeiro and stayed there rather than fulfill their other diplomatic obligations across the rest of South America. Bill Cottrell, one of Disney's writers recalls, "Rio was an exciting, wonderful city...its European architecture; the harbor, which I think is supposed to be the most beautiful harbor in the world; the sidewalks, with their wonderful patterns and colors; and the music, the enthusiasm of the music itself."<sup>5</sup> As a result of the group's affinity for

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<sup>2</sup> "Killing Kindness." *Time*, May 12, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Loren Smoodin, ed., *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Carleton Sprague Smith, "The Song Makers," *Survey Graphic* 30, no.2 (March 1941): 179.

<sup>5</sup> Kaufman, *South of the Border with Disney*, 32.

Rio de Janeiro, the cartoon short *Aquarela do Brasil*, based in Rio de Janeiro, features much more detail than the other Disney cartoon shorts created from this trip.

*Aquarela do Brasil*, or Watercolor of Brazil, centers around two musical numbers both based on popular Brazilian tunes during this time. The film opens with brushes painting tropical images of Brazil while the title song begins in the form of incidental music that later transitions to diegetic music, meaning the characters on screen can obviously hear the music and later see its source. The brushes paint the iconic character Donald Duck as he is introduced to a new Brazilian Disney character, a Brazilian parrot, or *papagaio*, José<sup>6</sup> Carioca (figure 1), who guides Donald Duck on his trip through Rio. José is presented as a stereotypical “malandro” or “a type of hustler or layabout that was a romantic bohemian ideal for some in Rio in the 1930s and 40s. They made their living exploiting women, playing small confidence tricks, and gambling.”<sup>7</sup>



Figure 1. José Carioca.

Throughout the introduction we hear the title song “Aquarela do Brasil,” written in 1939 by the famous samba composer Ary Borroso. This was one of the most popular songs in Brazil at the time of Disney’s visit.<sup>8</sup> To begin the process of creating a film around this song, Disney acquired the rights with U.S. publisher Southern Music, who was already actively acquiring rights to Latin music for more than a decade. A turning point for Latin American popular music in the U.S. was Southern Music head Ralph Peer licensing his entire catalog, including his Latin American licenses, to the newly formed Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI) when the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) was unavailable to broadcasters. This opened the door for commercial Latin American music in the United States. Peer worked closely with Disney to anglicized “Brazil” for the Southern Music edition by S.K. “Bob” Russell.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Joe and José are both used interchangeably for this character’s first name.

<sup>7</sup> Chris McGowan and Ricardo Pessanha, *The Brazilian Sound: Samba, Bossa Nova, and the Popular Music of Brazil* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998), 27.

<sup>8</sup> Kaufman, *South of the Border with Disney*, 34.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

The choice by Disney studios to employ the genre samba was probable because Disney and his crew were saturated in popular music of Rio de Janeiro in their diplomatic trip. The choice of samba was also practical because the concept of pan-Americanism already made other Latin American music genres chic and likely appealing to American audiences. However, reasons for choosing samba over other Brazilian genres carried some interesting social implications. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, samba became popular among lower-class inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro, also referred to as *cariocas*, poetically also the last name of Donald Duck's Brazilian friend José. Samba became especially popular during the 1920's, to the extent that artists could make a full-time occupation of composing samba.<sup>10</sup> "Aquarela do Brasil" falls into a sub-genre, *samba-exaltação*, for the way it exalts the Brazilian people.<sup>11</sup> This nationalistic genre was ideal for promoting Brazil to the United States, but because the song in the film is sung in Portuguese no direct message would be delivered to English and Spanish speaking audiences through the lyrics. Initially, Walt Disney insisted that the lyrics be recorded in English; however, after much debate they remained in their native Portuguese.

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<sup>10</sup> Terry E. Miller and Andrew Shahriari, *World Music: A Global Journey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 420.

<sup>11</sup> John P. Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 16.

## **Aquarela do Brasil**

*Ary Barroso (1939)*

Brasil  
Meu Brasil brasileiro  
Meu mulato inzoneiro  
Vou cantar-te nos meus versos  
Ô Brasil, samba que dá  
Bamboleio, que faz gingá  
Ô Brasil do meu amor  
Terra de Nosso Senhor  
Brasil! Brasil!  
Prá mim... prá mim...

*\*The following two verses are omitted from the Disney film:*

Ô, abre a cortina do passado  
Tira a Mãe Preta do serrado  
Bota o Rei Congo no congado  
Brasil! Brasil!  
Deixa cantar de novo o trovador  
À merencória luz da lua  
Toda canção do meu amor  
Quero ver a “Sá Dona” caminhando  
Pelos salões arrastando  
O seu vestido rendado  
Brasil! Brasil!  
Prá mim... prá mim...

Brasil  
terra boa e gostosa  
Da morena sestroza  
De olhar indiscreto  
Ô Brasil, verde que dá  
Para o mundo se admirá  
Ô Brasil do meu amor  
Terra de Nosso Senhor  
Brasil! Brasil!  
Prá mim... prá mim...

*\*The final verse is sung in the Disney film:*

Ô, esse coqueiro que dá côco  
Oi, onde amarro a minha rêde  
Nas noites claras de luar  
Ah, ouve essas fontes murmurantes  
Aonde eu mato a minha sede  
E onde a lua vem brincá  
Ah, este Brasil lindo e trigueiro  
É o meu Brasil brasileiro  
Terra de samba e pandeiro  
Brasil! Brasil!  
Prá mim... prá mim...

## **Aquarela de Brasil**

*(Translation by Daniella Thompson)*

Brazil  
My Brazilian Brazil  
My cunning mulatto  
I will sing of you in my verses  
Oh, Brazil, samba that gives swing,  
That makes people sway  
Oh, Brazil of my love  
Land of Our Lord  
Brazil! Brazil!  
For me... for me...

*\*The following two verses are omitted from the Disney film:*

Ah, open the curtain of the past  
Bring the Black Mother down from the mountains  
Place the Congo King in the congado  
Brazil! Brazil!  
Let the minstrel sing again  
In the melancholy moonlight  
Every song of his love  
I want to see the Bahian woman walking,  
Trailing through the salons  
Her lacy skirts

Brazil! Brazil!  
For me... for me...

Brazil  
Good and savory land  
Of the cunning dark-skinned woman  
With an indiscreet gaze  
Oh, Brazil, green that makes  
The world amazed  
Oh, Brazil of my love  
Land of Our Lord  
Brazil! Brazil!  
For me... for me...

*\*The final verse is sung in the Disney film:*

Oh, this palm tree that gives coconuts  
Where I hang my hammock  
On clear moonlit nights  
Oh, hear these murmuring fountains  
Where I slake my thirst  
And where the moonlight comes to play  
Oh, this Brazil, beautiful and swarthy  
Is my Brazilian Brazil  
Land of samba and pandeiro  
Brazil! Brazil!  
For me... for me...

In the film, only the first and last verses of “Aquarela do Brasil” are sung. This omits the many references to dark-skinned Brazilian women in the second and third verses in favor of more generic lyrics about samba music and Brazilian tropical scenery in the first and last verses. In fact, when “Aquarela do Brasil” was first recorded in 1939, it was almost censored by the Brazilian government because the lyric that referred to Brazil as the “land of the samba and *pandiero*” was viewed as distasteful because of samba’s link to the Afro-Brazilian population.<sup>12</sup> This sensitivity of Brazilian heritage explains why the second and third verses were not used in the Disney film. However, one vague reference to black Brazil makes the cut in the final verse where Brazil is described as “*lindo e trigueiro*” or beautiful and swarthy. In context of the

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<sup>12</sup> Daniella Thompson and Ricardo Paoletti, “Ary Borroso: Stories of Ary,” accessed December 13, 2011, <http://daniellathompson.com/ary/stories.html>.

original lyrics, *trigueiro* is clearly a reference to dark skin. Removed from the context of the middle verses, as it is in film, *trigueiro* can be interpreted simply as the adjective “dark.” As stated earlier, the studio insisted on reducing the title of the song in the film to simply “Brazil” to make it more accessible to American audiences. The Anglicization of “Aquarela do Brasil” to “Brazil” not only features a translation of the Brazilian text, but also a changing of the song’s narrative. Even though Bob Russell’s lyrics to “Brazil” were written to be used in *Aquarela do Brasil*, Disney Studios elected to use the original Portuguese lyrics in the film.

### **Brazil**

(English lyrics by S.K. “Bob” Russell)

Brazil

The Brazil that I knew  
Where I wandered with you  
Lives in my imagination.

Where the songs are passionate,  
And a smile has flash in it,  
And a kiss has art in it,  
For you put your heart in it,  
And so I dream of old Brazil

Where hearts were entertaining June,  
We stood beneath an amber moon  
And softly murmured “someday soon”  
We kissed and clung together,  
Then tomorrow was another day  
The morning found me miles away  
With still a million things to say

Now when twilight dims the sky above,  
Recalling thrills of our love,  
There’s one thing I’m certain of;  
Return I will  
To old Brazil.

This leaves us to ponder what social factors contributed to the use of Portuguese lyrics rather than the English lyrics in *Aquarela do Brasil*. Practicality necessitated that only one version of the song could be recorded because of the need to coordinate animation with the music. This left Disney Studios with the choice of forcing American audiences to listen to a Brazilian samba with English lyrics or forcing Brazilian audiences to listen to a Brazilian samba in English with possible Portuguese subtitles. As mentioned earlier, the previous Good Neighbor film *Argentine Nights* was a failure because of its misrepresentation of Argentinean culture. This failure was no doubt a factor in the United States government citing “authenticity” as a goal for the Disney films. The choice to use the Portuguese lyrics over the English was likely an attempt to make *Aquarela do Brasil* more authentic. The possibility that Brazilians would have considered the English adaptation of “Aquarela do Brasil” distasteful because it reduces a Brazilian nationalistic samba into a generic American love song would have also contributed to the retention of Portuguese lyrics.



Another social factor with the use of *Aquarela do Brasil* was the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas that was transitioning Brazil from an agricultural plantation state to industrialized nation through funding from the United States Government. Populist imagery was important in Vargas' government even though most of his policies benefited the upper class. Samba, a song genre born of the Brazilian lower class, served this purpose well. Becker and Becker assert “metaphors gain power—and even cease being taken as metaphors—as they gain iconicity or ‘naturalness.’” They continue by describing how the “naturalness” or comfort-level that a culture has with an aesthetic, in our case samba music, is directly related to its “iconicity” or non-arbitrariness in that culture.<sup>13</sup> The iconic imagery of Rio de Janeiro in *Aquarela do Brasil* juxtaposed with samba was significant in that Brazilian viewers heard samba as representing Brazil itself. Therefore, among the citizens of Brazil the connection of nationalist imagery with samba in an internationally released movie was important in helping establish samba as the national sound of Brazil. In other words, even though most Brazilians would have been familiar with samba, samba's prominent role in *Aquarela do Brasil* with other familiar images of Brazil, served to reinforce the idea among its citizens that samba represented Brazil. In this way, samba in *Aquarela do Brasil* can be viewed as propagating a populist message about Brazilian nationalism through genre.

After the opening musical number “Aquarela do Brasil,” José claims he will introduce Donald to the land of the samba. When Donald Duck asks “What is samba?” the example given to him is the song “Tico-Tico no Fubá” (Bird on the Cornmeal). This “samba” is actually a number originally written in 1914 by Zequinha de Abreu. In its original form, “Tico-Tico no Fubá” is actually a *choro*. The subtle historical differences between the *choro*, a music heavily influenced by Bohemia, and samba were most likely lost to Disney and his crew. Performances of “Tico-Tico no Fubá” heard by Disney and his crew during their visit were probably in the then fashionable style of samba featuring Afro-Brazilian instruments. So while the reference as a samba is not entirely accurate, the more up-beat, rhythmic performance in the film is in keeping with samba style. Both “Aquarela do Brasil” and “Tico Tico no Fubá” are reinterpreted by an American studio orchestra in this film. The combination of this reinterpretation and *Aquarela do Brasil's* conflicting roles of both entertainment and enlightenment cause the authenticity of the

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<sup>13</sup> Alton Becker and Judith Becker, “The Musical Icon: Power and Meaning in Javanese Gamelan Music,” in *The Sign in Music and Literature*, eds. Wendy Steiner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 203, 212.

music in the film to slightly suffer, but not to the point of blatantly misrepresenting Rio de Janeiro's culture.

The closing musical number begins when José offers Donald a drink of *cachaça*, a Brazilian spirit made from fresh sugar cane. Donald reacts in a predictable cartoon idiom: blowing fire out of his mouth and hiccupping. The ensuing hiccups form the beat to what becomes diegetic music, a recurrence of “Brazil.” As Donald hiccups, Latin percussion instruments enter every four bars to form a basic samba rhythm (Figure 2). As the rhythm unfolds, semi-authentic cartoon musical instruments enter both the music and the film, informing North American audiences of the percussion instruments used in samba (Figure 3).

□ In performance, entrances are staggered from top to bottom and the parts are repeated until all instruments have entered.

The musical score is written in 2/4 time and consists of eight staves, each representing a different instrument or sound. The instruments are listed on the left: hiccup, tail, matchbox, block, reco-reco, pandeiro, mele, and jongo. The score shows the staggered entrances of these instruments over four measures. The 'hiccup' staff starts with a quarter note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a quarter note in the third measure. The 'tail' staff starts with a quarter note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a quarter note in the third measure. The 'matchbox' staff starts with a quarter note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a quarter note in the third measure. The 'block' staff starts with a quarter note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a quarter note in the third measure. The 'reco-reco' staff starts with a quarter note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a quarter note in the third measure. The 'pandeiro' staff starts with a quarter note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a quarter note in the third measure. The 'mele' staff starts with a quarter note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a quarter note in the third measure. The 'jongo' staff starts with a quarter note in the first measure, followed by a half note in the second measure, and then a quarter note in the third measure.

Figure 2. Author's depiction of samba rhythm in “Brazil.”

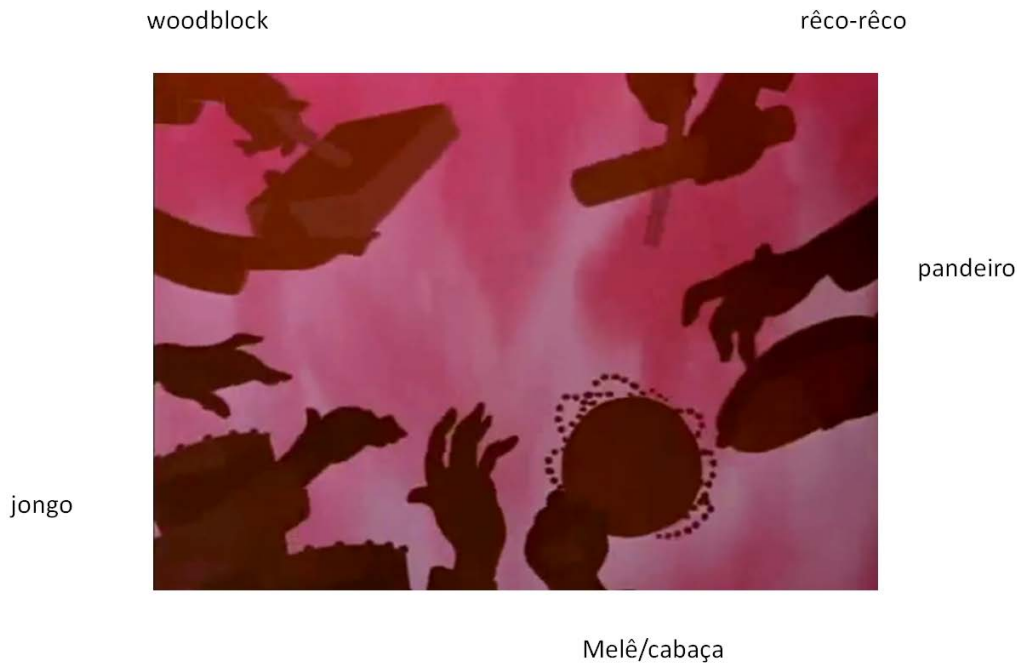


Figure 3. “Brazil” instrumentation.

Several news articles and reviews in *The New York Times* during 1943 described *Saludos Amigos* and the good-will tour as successful. Charles Wolcott was specifically described as providing an “excellent musical score, based upon native melodies retuned for popular taste. His title song is a dandy, and the samba ‘Aquarela do Brasil’ is an air which would limber the muscles and warm the blood of petrified fish.”<sup>14</sup> Throughout 1943, U.S. newspaper and magazine articles for English and Latin audiences wrote with excitement of the film and the success of the tour both in the United States and South America. *The New York Times* also reported that Walt Disney “is the only Hollywood producer who can handle a Latin-American theme in a manner which pleases everybody, no matter which side of the equator they are on.”<sup>15</sup> Also in 1943, the film received Special Mention by The Argentine Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences.

<sup>14</sup> Bosley Growther, “‘Saludos Amigos,’ a Musical Fantasy Based on the South American Tour Made by Walt Disney, Arrives at Globe,” *The Screen, New York Times*, Feb. 13, 1943.

<sup>15</sup> Bosley Growther, “Howdy Neighbors! Some Comments on Good-Will Pictures, Inspired by Mr. Disney’s ‘Saludos Amigos,’” *New York Times*, Feb. 14, 1943.

The reception of *Aquarela do Brasil* in Brazil was overwhelmingly positive. Brazilians were thrilled to have their own Walt Disney character, José Carioca—despite his less-than-pure characterization. *The Los Angeles Times* reported, “When ‘Saludos Amigos’ was shown in South America—before U.S. audiences saw it—Disney was bombarded with cables, letters, phone calls from ambassadors, consuls, [and] chambers of commerce. All of them wanted to know if he couldn’t do for their countries what he had done for Brazil—create a character like José.”<sup>16</sup>

“Tico-Tico no Fubá” became a standard Latin tune recorded by many famous musicians including Carmen Miranda, Ethel Smith, Charles Wolcott and His Orchestra, and the Andrews Sisters.<sup>17</sup> The conductor Daniel Barenboim often uses an orchestral arrangement of the piece as an encore for his concerts. “Brazil” not only became one of the first internationally known sambas but also has the distinction of being the most recorded samba of all time. It was used in several films during the 1940s, on best-selling records by Les Paul, Jimmy Dorsey, and Xavier Cugat and again in 1975 by the Richie Family.<sup>18</sup>

The cartoon short *Aquarela do Brasil*, while not a perfect representation, was a good faith effort to represent Rio de Janeiro’s culture and music to the United States. After seeing a preliminary version of the film, Rockefeller wrote to Disney “...I showed it that night to the Bolivian Ambassador, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of National Economy and other guests. They praised it enthusiastically as did [Madam] Martins, wife of the Brazilian Ambassador, who saw it later...We all feel that *Saludos* is a great contribution to our program of inter-American relations and it quite exceeds our highest expectations.”<sup>19</sup>

Some are quick to dismiss Disney movies as kitsch and, therefore, unimportant. However, in *Aquarela do Brasil* samba is portrayed as the iconic sound of Brazil. Steven Feld views a culture’s aesthetics of style as being formed from icons within the culture.<sup>20</sup> The imagery of José Carioca, the smooth talking parrot smoking his cigars in a beige suit, beautiful

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<sup>16</sup> Jerry Mason, “Ambassadors from Hollywood,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1943.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas S. Hischak and Mark A. Robinson, *The Disney Song Encyclopedia*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 201.

<sup>18</sup> Hischak and Robinson, *The Disney Song Encyclopedia*, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Kaufman, *South of the Border with Disney*, 100.

<sup>20</sup> Steven Feld, “Aesthetics as Iconography of Style or ‘Lift-up-over Sounding’: Getting into the Kaluli Groove,” *Yearbook of Traditional Music* 20, (1988): 75.

tropical birds and flowers, the Copacabana Hotel, an assortment of Latin percussion instruments and samba dancing visually represent Rio de Janeiro as the word “Brasil” is sung repeatedly in the samba of the same name. Connecting these images with the samba was profound to United States audiences—especially considering the majority were just introduced to the concept that Brazil was culturally a separate place from the rest of South America through this film.

While representing Brazil as a separate place in South America by using samba was a significant improvement in the Good Neighbor Films, it also created a new misconception for American audiences. *Aquarela do Brasil* was a good-faith presentation of Rio de Janeiro’s music culture, but Rio de Janeiro is only one of many regions within Brazil. To American audiences, samba was portrayed as representing all of Brazilian music. The popularization of samba in the following years no doubt contributed to pushing out other music traditions across Brazil.

Before *Saludos Amigos*’ release, promotional events began to take place. In one of these, for *The Coca-Cola Hour*, Disney was quoted as saying “While half of this world is being forced to shout ‘Heil Hitler,’ our answer is to say ‘Saludos Amigos.’”<sup>21</sup> Walt Disney succeeded in his mission of strengthening cultural ties by showing the United States that Latin America was not a single place that should be lumped together culturally. By showcasing Rio de Janeiro, Brazil’s distinct music culture, with *Aquarela do Brasil*, Disney helped lay the groundwork in building a cultural interchange between the United States and the rest of the Western Hemisphere. Disney should receive some credit for the popularization of samba in the United States, but what Disney did was much more significant. Walt Disney was best at creating icons. The significance of *Aquarela do Brasil* is that Disney went to Rio de Janeiro and absorbed elements of its culture. Complex cultural entities such as *papagaio*, tropical fauna, *malandros*, and most importantly samba music and dance were repackaged into one, easy to consume and equally complex icon.

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<sup>21</sup> Kaufman, *South of the Border with Disney*, 100.

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