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“The Music of my Surrogate Country”

Jason Lee Bruns

One of my very first music teachers, John Taylor, introduced me to Brazilian music over 18 years ago. I recall finding the rhythms challenging, but was inspired and wanted to learn the rhythms correctly. In no time at all the Brazilian rhythms became my favorite rhythms to play! I was 12 years old, and my teacher had planted a seed. Little did I know I would embark on a lifelong journey sparked by the love of Brazilian music and culture. This love would cultivate my entire musical career.

I attended the University of Miami on a music scholarship and upon graduating in 2002 I was honored to attend USC to earn a Masters degree in Music. While studying at USC a classmate of mine, Jeff Lesh, reunited me with

Brazilian music. Jeff was an American musician who had traveled to Brazil. He had many Brazilian friends, and soon they became my friends too!

Through these friendships I learned there was much more to Brazilian music than Bossa Nova and Samba: there was a culture, a lifestyle and deeply rooted traditions – my love of everything BRAZIL began to grow.

In my mission to learn everything about this beautiful and mysterious culture I came across an article on the great “panderista”, **Carlinhos Pandeiro de Ouro**. To my delight I discovered he lived near me right here in Los Angeles! I became a dedicated student of this two times

Golden Pandeiro winner who guided me through countless rhythms. Soon I too was a great panderista. My love grew and I wanted more Brazil.

During the summer of 2007 I was fortunate enough to spend three months in Brazil. I studied with Bira Show of the Mangueira Samba School, Alegria of Zona Sul in the Morro de Copacabana, as well as private lessons with famous Pandeirista Marcos Suzano who has played with Sting. After several weeks in **Rio** I then headed to **Pernambuco** to learn about Forro music at *BL Music* (Like a Musician Institute of Berkeley), Maracatu at Daruê Malungo School, as well as private lessons with Tarcísio Soares Resende, author



of the Maracatu Book "Batuque Book". I was very fortunate in my travels in Brazil to study with great teachers and meet many trusting people; not that I didn't have my share of "malandros" to deal with ;-)

I returned to the U.S. just in time to start a new school year as a professor at **Campbell Hall**, where I am honored to hold the position of "Director of World Music." It was my calling to share my passion for Brazilian music with these students. I couldn't wait to plant a seed within them and cultivate a new crop of Brazilian music and culture enthusiasts. With overwhelming support from the school's administration and my boss at the time, Jim Whiting, I was awarded a grant and given generous private donations from student's families. With this I started my own Samba School, in doing so ordered all traditional instruments directly from my friends in Brazil.

I am now in my fifth year as director of the Campbell Hall Bateria, a 15-member ensemble of high school students who learn all about Brazilian culture through the styles of Maracatu, Forro, Samba Batucada, MPB, Samba-Reggae and Axe music. These students and myself are very blessed to have access to a complete set of tradition instruments specific to each style and region of Brazil. The group has performed in the past with percussionist Carlinhos Pandeiro de Ouro, singer Renni Flores and guitarist Angelo Metz. In 2009 the group was featured with the Sambala Samba School in the 9th Annual Long Beach Street Carnival. In 2010 the group has performed with Sambala in the Annual Pasadena Rose Parade and at the 7th Annual Santa Barbara Brazilian Carnival Cultural. I am looking forward to my next trip to Brazil and cultivate my deeply rooted love this country, its culture and its music. ■



* Jason Lee Bruns is a percussionist, producer and teacher. He has worked with Louis Price of the Motown group the Temptations and many other national and international acts. Recently he released four albums on the Panout Music Group record label, one of which was recorded at the Famous Egrem Studios in Havana Cuba. He is also the founder and Musical Director of the World Music Program at Campbell Hall, The L.A. Caribbean Ensemble and the JLB Jazz Collective. To know more about the author visit: www.JasonLeeBruns.com
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