

Opening Text

Like no other musician in the planet – since the 50's, when he emerged as an accordionist (with Tom Jobim at the piano) and, afterwards, as a pianist, (with Paulo Moura in the clarinet), leading his own instrumental band in the album “*Chá dançante*”, up to the 21st century, where he remains dialoguing with the sounds of post-Modernity -, **João Donato** reverberates bossa-nova, samba, baião, bolero, jazz, concert music, popular song, instrumental themes, electronic sounds, even the funk, the hip hop, rock. João's musical whirl passes through half a century of music and reaches a point beyond him.

Referring to the partner's natural gifts, Gilberto Gil nicknamed him as *João Dó Nato* (in Portuguese “*nato*” is born, then *João Do Born*). And Gil explains: “*Once I made this playing with the name of my dear João to express the clear impression he gives me of having with music a physical connection. Actually it was not a playing because I know that João forms with music a kind of magic egg, him and the music, the egg-yolk and the white of such egg. It's the same old Donato, hatched and born a musical note*”. Together, Donato and Gil composed some of the most permanent songs of the Brazilian music, “*A paz*”, “*Lugar comum*”, “*Terremoto*”, “*Emoriô*”, among them..

According to journalist Sergio Augusto on the book “*Cancioneiro Jobim*”, when João Gilberto was asked where had he taken from the inspiration to create the bossa nova beat, this guy from Bahia used to say “*he had learned it watching João Donato playing the piano*”. Originally a man of instrumental music, little by little João started to see his themes transformed into songs, with lyrics by Gilberto Gil, Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Lysias Ênio, Abel Silva, Ronaldo Bastos, Paulo André Barata, Norman Gimbel, Sidney da Conceição, Ruben Confeti, Gutenberg Guarabyra, Arnaldo Antunes, Marisa Monte, Carlinhos Brown, Martinho da Vila, Cazuza and even João Gilberto. This is the way were born “*A rã*”, “*Simples carinho*”, “*Gaiolas abertas*”, “*Amazonas*”, “*Minha saudade*”, “*Nasci para bailar*”, “*Doralinda*”, “*Surpresa*”, “*Naquela estação*”, “*Até quem sabe*”, “*Everyday*”, “*Ê menina*”, “*Xangô é de Baê*”.

In the words of critic Zuza Homem de Melo, *“his work started to be discovered without any urgency, while the lyrics were incorporated to his themes. He is not anymore the pre-bossa-nova author idolized by the bands, musicians and vocalists of the 50’s, or the Latin jazz player that played in California in the 60’s. Donato converted himself from a theme author into a composer, becoming the Cinderella of the Brazilian music.”*

Zuza further defines Donato’s music as “original, eccentric, heterodox, and essentially harmonic. The childish melody hides a chaining of subtle changes, with logic conduction, a brilliant solution; the deceivingly discordant rhythm has an internal dancing impulse fed by the syncopé. Only after the song is ended the coherence of the singular development is revealed, starting from an idea as simple as that”.

The American writer Allen Thayer stands out that “If a name is lacked for his musical style, Donato’s style has a distinctive sound, immediately recognizable since the first compasses of any of his musics. His compositions are apparently simple, while his arrangements are harmonically complex; (...) they reveal intricate details after they are heard several times”.

To writer and lyrics author Nelson Motta, *“João Donato is one of the great among the great, which had Tom Jobim among his great fans, a perfect Bossa-Nova stylist, with his minimalist swing and his melodies, fluid and flowing like rivers”*. Journalist Ruy Castro sees in Donato’s music *“a permanent musical whirl that incorporated the classic Bossa Nova and, while returning it, generated a chemistry that was so much more ahead that only now, in the new millennium, we are being able to perceive it”*.