

## Cyro Baptista: Cultural Impact

Learn more about the Cultural Impact to gain insight into the history of the genre, its development, and some of the artists' perspectives and contributions.

### HISTORY

Two of the most well-known music genres in Brazil are Samba and Forró. According to ethnomusicologist Andy Gleadhill in his article, [The Cultural History of Brazilian Samba Music](#), Samba originated from the “song, music and dance” that enslaved African-Brazilians secretly performed under Portuguese rule. Brazil’s African-descended population today is larger than the population of most African countries as a result of the Portuguese slave trade. Samba music primarily features percussion instruments like the pandeiro (hand frame drum), surdo (bass drum), tamborim (small handheld drum), cuíca (friction drum), agogô (bells), ganzá (rattle), and repinique (a type of snare drum), all instruments with roots originating from the African rhythms brought by the enslaved people to Brazil.

Forró music is believed to originate from singing farm workers in 19th century northeast Brazil. What sets Forró apart from other Brazilian music around this time, is that it voiced the real-life struggles of the working people. Musician David Byrne, a collaborator of Cyro Baptista and several other Brazilian artists, describes Forró on his [website](#) as “party music from people who’ve been through hard times[...] They love their country, their land, probably more than they love Brazil, which has not always treated them well.” Forró combined this storytelling with folk music and musical instruments such as the triangle, guitar, and zabumba, an Afro-Brazilian bass drum.

### GROWTH

As Samba music evolved, it combined influences from Native South American folk music, traditional African dances, and Portuguese military band music. Samba was also inspired by American orchestras after WWII, and began “implementing trombones, trumpets, choros, flutes, and clarinets. Today, Samba is globally recognized as a symbol of Brazil and the Brazilian Carnival.

Similarly, Forró was influenced by a variety of global musicians including Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans. The core instrumentation in today’s Forró music adds the accordion to traditional zabumba drum and triangle. Known for its fusion sound, Forró has been compared to zydeco, the Texas Two-Step, and even the mazurka, which exemplifies its intercontinental influences and development.

### PERSPECTIVE

Born in São Paulo, Brazil, Cyro Baptista experienced the tapestry of Brazilian rhythms, including Samba and Forró, and the more contemporary musical genres of the 80s in NYC. Baptista blends all of these musical and cultural influences into his vibrant global, genre-bending style.

In an NPR [interview](#), Baptista resonates with the Brazilian 1960s-70s movement Anthropofagia or “cultural cannibalism” which shares his belief that “everything that comes from outside [...] we eat and we digest and regurgitate [...]” into our art.

Baptista extends his passion for percussion within his inclusive educational platform, [The Sound of Community](#). This program brings together professional musicians, children, senior citizens, physically challenged individuals, and members of other underserved communities to create music and musical instruments. By not requiring professional tools or expensive equipment, Baptista aims for music to be an accessible part of everyday life for everyone.

## SOURCES

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