



LEARN MORE

Opening Commission

Learn more Opening **Commission**

The opening commission is one of samba schools' oldest segments. Its role is to officially open the parade, greet the public and judges, present the school and introduce the theme. Before the sections, costumes and floats, it establishes the first encounter between the school and the parade avenue.

Its origins are connected to Carnival ranchos and popular processions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In them, small groups went ahead, clearing a path for participants and presenting the association. In samba schools' early decades, commissions were formed mainly by men in tailcoats and top hats and carrying canes, in a presentation marked by elegance, greeting and reverence.

The first officially recognized opening commission in Rio Carnival is generally attributed to Portela in 1935. A few years later, from 1938 onward, the category became part of parade judging. At this time, commissions were still essentially ceremonial. They were made up of older men

and respected community figures, who paraded with simple, solemn movements. There were not yet elaborate choreographies, professional dancers, or complex staging elements.

The transformation gained strength in the 1950s and 1960s, when Carnival began incorporating new references from the performing arts. Theater, dance and musicals began influencing costumes, movements and forms of presentation. Innovations introduced by figures such as Fernando Pamplona and Arlindo Rodrigues at Salgueiro also helped bring the opening commission closer to the theme's narrative. Gradually, it ceased to be only a formal greeting and became part of the story told by the school.

In the following decades, especially from the 1970s and 1980s onward, dancers, actors and choreographers increasingly occupied this space. The opening of the Marquês de





Sapucaí Sambadrome in 1984 created new possibilities. Choreography became more complex and, over time, moving sets, illusion, mechanized structures, technological costumes and other resources emerged, capable of turning the parade's opening into a grand scene.

Choreographers who transformed the parade avenue

Throughout this journey, different artists helped reinvent the language of opening commissions. Carlinhos de Jesus brought his experience with dance, theatricality and bodily expression to work at different schools. Ana Botafogo brought classical dance closer to Carnival. Jorge Teixeira and Saulo Finelon developed memorable work at schools such as Mocidade, Grande Rio and Beija-Flor.

Priscilla Mota and Rodrigo Negri built a

career marked by theatricality, visual impact and the use of scenic resources, working with schools such as Mangueira, Grande Rio and Unidos da Tijuca. At Tijuca, they took part in a historic moment in 2010, in the parade *É Segredo!* (It's a Secret!) Patrick Carvalho also became a benchmark in this segment, with work at Paraíso do Tuiuti, Vila Isabel, Salgueiro and Imperatriz. In 2018, his commission for Tuiuti became one of that Carnival's most striking images.

Fábio de Mello

Among the key figures in this transformation is Fábio de Mello, who profoundly shaped opening commissions from the 1990s onward. His partnership with Rosa Magalhães at Imperatriz Leopoldinense helped build a recognizable choreographic language based on precision, movement through space, advances along the route and geometric formations, including striking triangular compositions.

His work became a reference for generations of choreographers and for the history of the





judging category itself. After his death in 2025, this career received a special tribute at Carnival 2026: in Salgueiro's parade dedicated to Rosa Magalhães, a section recalled their partnership and Fábio de Mello's contribution to the language of opening commissions.

When the commission becomes a spectacle

Some schools became particularly associated with experimentation in this category. Beija-Flor explored scenic resources and illusion effects. Unidos da Tijuca took visual transformations to another level during the Paulo Barros era, with costume changes, mechanisms and effects designed to surprise the public.

In 2017, Mocidade Independente de Padre Miguel presented one of the emblematic

moments of this transformation. In the theme *As Mil e Uma Noites de uma Mocidade pra Lá de Marrakech*, the commission choreographed by Jorge Teixeira and Saulo Finelon surprised Sapucaí by making Aladdin fly over the parade avenue on a remotely controlled magic carpet.

1988: A commission as an act of affirmation

Not every historic commission was remembered for technology. In 1988, the centennial year of the abolition of slavery, Mangueira brought *Cem Anos de Liberdade, Realidade ou Ilusão?* to the parade avenue, a theme developed by Júlio Mattos. The opening commission brought together important Black Brazilian personalities, turning the parade's opening into a gesture of representation, memory and racial affirmation. The guests included Milton Gonçalves, Grande Otelo, Jorge Coutinho, Djavan Andrade, Glória Maria, Ruth de Souza, Jacyra Silva, João do Pulo, Adhemar Ferreira da Silva and Carlos Cachça. Martinho da Vila had also been invited but could not arrive in time after parading with Vila Isabel in *Kizomba, Festa da Raça* (*Kizomba, a Celebration of the Race*).

Because the regulations required fifteen participants and Mangueira entered with fourteen, the school lost one point. It finished second, while Vila Isabel won the championship with *Kizomba, Festa da Raça* (*Kizomba, a Celebration of the Race*). Even

with the penalty, Mangueira's commission made history for the symbolic power of turning the parade's first steps into an affirmation of Black presence in Brazil.

1999: When makeup transforms

In 1999, Mangueira showed that surprise could also come from characterization. In the parade O Século do Samba, the opening commission, choreographed by Carlinhos de Jesus, presented participants made up as great figures in samba history.

Figures such as Cartola, Candeia and Clementina de Jesus seemed to return to the parade avenue. Bodily expression, costumes and, especially, makeup created look-alikes of astonishing resemblance. The commission explored another form of illusion: instead of large mechanisms, it was the participants' own bodies that transformed before the public.

The opening commission today

Today, opening commissions can bring





together dancers, actors, acrobats, gymnasts, circus artists, choreographers and specialists in scenic design and visual effects. Characters fly, disappear, change costumes before the public and interact with moving structures.

The language has changed, but its mission remains: to open paths, greet the parade avenue and present, in the first steps, the world the school is about to reveal.

MINISTÉRIO DA CULTURA E PETROBRAS APRESENTAM



PETROBRAS
cultural



VISITING HOURS

29 OCT – 26 JAN

Tuesday to Thursday and Sundays

10 am to 6 pm

Fridays and Saturdays

10 am to 8 pm

Cidade do Samba – Gamboa

Warehouse 14



Lei Rouanet

PATROCINADOR OFICIAL



PETROBRAS

PRODUÇÃO



YDREAMS
GLOBAL



APOIO DE MÍDIA



APOIO DE CONTEÚDO



INGRESSOS



REALIZAÇÃO



GOVERNO DO ESTADO
RIO DE JANEIRO

MINISTÉRIO DA
CULTURA

