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**The heart of
the school**

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In samba schools, the percussion section sets the parade's pace, supports the community's singing and creates each school's sonic identity. That is why every school has developed its own way of playing. Some percussion sections became known by names that turned into symbols: Mangueira with "Tem que respeitar meu tambourine" (You Gotta Respect My Tambourine), Portela with "Tabajara do Samba" (Tabajara of Samba), Beija-Flor with "Soberana" (Sovereign), Mocidade with "Não Existe Mais Quente" (There is Nothing Hotter Than This), Salgueiro with "Furiosa" (Furious), Vila Isabel with "Swingueira de Noel" (Noel's Swing) Imperatriz with "Swing da Leopoldina" (Leopoldina Swing) Unidos da Tijuca with "Pura Cadência" (Pure Cadence) Viradouro with



“Furacão Vermelho e Branco” (Red and White Hurricane) Tuiuti with “SuperSom” (Super Sound), União de Maricá with “Maricadência” (a pun mixing the city of Maricá and Cadence) and Grande Rio’s percussion section.

These names reveal more than sonic signatures. They tell stories about the relationship between rhythm, school, community and tradition. Mangueira preserves a distinctive cadence, connected to terreiro samba and community samba and is especially remembered for the strength of its first surdo drum. Portela is recognized for the rhythmic elegance and classic cadence of its percussion section, Tabajara do Samba, named after the Orquestra Tabajara, led by conductor Severino Araújo. Mocidade played an important role in transforming modern percussion sections and developed very distinctive characteristics: reversed surdo tuning, with the first surdo higher-pitched than the second and the characteristic playing of its snare drums. Viradouro gained even greater recognition under the leadership of Mestre Ciga,



known for musical innovation, striking rhythmic breaks and strong communication between the percussion section and the community.

Within the percussion section, each instrument has a role. The surdo was introduced into samba schools by the samba artists of Estácio in the 1920s and helped create a deep, steady beat suited to a moving parade. Over time, the division into first, second and third surdos created complementary rhythmic layers: the first marks the main beat, the second answers on the offbeat and the third, also called the cortador (third surdo, cutting drum), plays more elaborate variations and rhythmic patterns.

The snare drum is strongly influenced by military bands and the Carnival ranchos of the early twentieth century. Its continuous playing helps carry the percussion section's rhythm and demands great physical stamina from the



percussionists. The repique gained prominence in modern percussion sections through calls, responses, breaks, flourishes and coordinated rhythmic patterns. In many schools, it also serves as the percussion leader's instrument of communication and command. Despite its size, the tambourine (small frame drum) requires great technical skill. The carreteiro, a rapid sequence of strokes creating a distinctive rhythmic pattern, became one of samba's most recognizable sounds, particularly through the innovations developed by Mocidade.

Other instruments complete this mass of sound. The shaker, also called rocar or ganzá de platinela, fills the percussion section with a continuous metallic sound and helps give the ensemble volume. The cuíca, connected to African and Afro-Brazilian traditions, became one of samba's most recognizable sounds through its expressive, almost vocal timbre. The agogô), an instrument of African origin made of



metal bells, reinforces syncopated patterns and maintains links with Afro-Brazilian rhythms and the musical practices of Candomblé. Cymbals, incorporated through exchanges with marching bands and brass bands, appear at moments of sonic explosion, coordinated rhythmic patterns and flourishes.

The history of percussion sections also holds curious episodes. In 1973, Portela's percussion section paraded with around 350 percussionists, a number considered enormous at a time when sections typically had 200 to 250 members and ended up facing difficulties moving along the parade avenue. In 1974, even without Mestre André, who revolutionized percussion sections by creating the famous rhythmic breaks, Mocidade Independente de Padre Miguel gave a highly praised performance. These episodes show how percussion sections already held a fundamental place in the identity, technique and impact of the parades.

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