

## A MAN: OR THE VENTURE OF BEING TOM

João Maximo

Antonio Carlos Brasileiro de Almeida Jobim, Tom was born in Tijuca, North of Rio on January 25, 1927 and died in Manhattan, New York, on December 8th, 1994. Two geographical extremes that might seem strange to those who always thought of him as the man from Ipanema, and not as the citizen of the world that he really was.

He discovered music when he was 15 years old. His mother bought an upright piano for the college where she was a principal, the Brasileiro de Almeida, and on it the young Tom began, playfully at first, to work out harmonies: "What an interesting thing that was, harmonising sounds on a black and white keyboard.

Soon the toy turned into real study. He studied, first with Lucia Branco and from 1941 on, with Hans Joachim Koellreutter, the German who brought the secrets of atonality to Brazil. If Tom learned them, he never used them in his music: "Not Koellreutter, not the popular American composers, as they like to say. My greatest influences go further back to Chopin, Ravel and Debussy. By 1946, he was already playing the piano in bars and clubs.

Of course, it was the popular music of that time and place: slow sambas, boleros, fox trots and the more digestible variety of jazz. "My mother didn't approve of my life as a club pianist: she thought that all musicians died in misery, drunk, and in the gutter. My stepfather, on the other hand, supported me. This support was very important when he abandoned his architectural course to devote himself entirely to music. In 1949, only 22 years old, he married Tereza Hermany, a teenage sweetheart. A year later their first child was born, Paulo (Elizabeth, the second child, would be born in 1957). That was when the hard time started for the arranger of the Continental Record Company. At the same time, young Tom was composing mainly with Newton Mondonça and Billy Blanco.