

and television, doing shows, working with innumerable musical partners, taking part on other artists' records and touring overseas. On route he indeed became a national institution. He won prizes, tributes, commendations (one of them in France) and went on to achieve in Brazilian music - here without distinction between popular and erudite - the status only reached before by Villa-Lobos (who, curiously, also had to face criticism, incomprehension and intolerance, till he became a prophet in his own country).

The change in the man was even more imperceptible than that in the artist. It was also slower and more gradual. In 1976, already separated from Teresa, and already with a grandchild from Paulo's marriage, he married Ana Beatriz Lontra. This wife, 25 years younger than him, the children from that marriage (João Francisco, in 1980 and Maria Luíza, seven years later), forced Tom to recycle, to remain young, in his music as well as in his life. In Tom's case, the new family forced him to keep the ball rolling, betting on new projects, always working more and more. Tom, during this period, however, was only young on the inside, and so the change was hardly noticed. Externally, he aged, grew fat, neglected his appearance and his health. He left behind that handsome youth to become a dissipated man, almost physically unrecognisable. In a certain way, such neglect would shorten his life.

But the inner Tom shone through. The Tom of the last years became - like his partner Vinícius had been some time before - a central figure of bar and restaurant talk, assuming a proverbial posture amongst friends who joined his table. The majority of the verses he created and passed on to us are from this period, always intelligent, almost always generous, sometimes wise, other times complaining. He did not forget, for example, the critics of the past and the strange country that he loved. "Brazil persecutes those who are successful". Or: "The more Brazilian the music I create, the more they call me Americanised." Or again: "You love your country and your country tortures you, taking things away from you".

The inner Tom of those last years is also in love with nature, ecological even before the first professional ecologist went green: "I don't see any hope for the indians, animals or plants in Brazil". Or: "We are selling God, or should I say, selling nature, that is, selling something we did not make". Or again: "Without forests, air and animals, there is no music".