

Newnham International Cultural Programme; Celebrating Diversity

=====Michaelmas 2011: Brazil=====

Having now begun its fourth year, Newnham International Cultural Programme (NICP) has steadily been increasing its popularity. The country of Brazil as its theme for the term, NICP successfully organised three events this term – Brazilian Food Tasting Session & Cocktail Workshop, Brazilian Drum Workshop & Capoeira Workshop and Speaker’s Event – in conjunction with the newly founded Cambridge University Brazilian Society (CUBS). Details of these events are reported below, together with some pictures. All these fruitful activities could not be realised without the support from the Guild of Friends and Newnham JCR.

Newnham Freshers’ Fair (8 October, 2011)

Like previous years, the NICP held a stall at the Newnham Freshers’ Fair. In addition to many freshers, there was quite a number of second- and third-year students who had not been aware of the programme but who showed interests and signed up for the mailing list.

Event 1 – Brazilian Food Tasting Session & Cocktail Workshop (11 November, 2011)

NICP events involving food and drinks have always been popular. But this one was exceptional. Newnham Bar was packed with people keen to ‘taste’ Brazilian culture. With the support of Cambridge University Brazilian Society (CUBS) and Patisserie Christine, the event offered participants a rare opportunity to enjoy typical Brazilian foods and drinks. People enjoyed tasting coxinhas, pão de queijo and bolo de fuba (see the pictures below) as well as making caipirinha – Brazilian cocktail – themselves with the instruction of Brazilian students. Over 50 Newnham and non-Newnham students attended the event throughout the evening.



Event 2 - Brazilian Drum Workshop & Capoeira Workshop (17 November, 2011)

In this event, the NICP invited Negaça Capoeira Group for capoeira demonstration and Jane Hollingworth for the participatory drum workshop.

In the first half of the event, Negaça Capoeira Group demonstrated dynamic and breathtaking Capoeira techniques that impressed all participants. Negaça Capoeira Group was founded on 3rd March 2005 by Mestre Chitãozinho and his students. It is dedicated to stimulating the practice, and the cultural and intellectual development of Capoeira.

In the second half, Jane invited everyone to experience the beat of Brazil. Jane has been teaching conga technique for over 15 years and is well known as a jazz drummer in Cambridge and Colchester. She runs conga workshops specialising in Brazilian material, candomble and Haitian vodou rhythms, and has led workshops all over Europe and in Rio Grande do Sul. For this workshop, she brought a folkloric maracatu rhythm. Each participant had a chance to try different types of drum. Harmonious and lively Brazilian rhythm surrounded the Newnham Old Labs for good half an hour.



Event 3 - Talk Dr Lucia Villares on BRAZIL: RACIAL DIFFERENCE AS TABOO (24 November, 2011)

The term ended by a Pudding Seminar-style Speaker's event, by Dr Lucia Villares, an Affiliated Lecturer at the Department of Spanish and Portuguese here at the University of Cambridge.

It is only after the 1930's and the government of Getulio Vargas that we are able to say that a discourse on a Brazilian national identity was finally established. The idea of an homogeneous povo brasileiro, resulting from the mixing together of different ethnicities, gained credibility and seemed perfectly justified by cultural activities such as Carnival, samba and football. In this process, the notion of difference, especially racial difference, became taboo. This, in turn, made it difficult for the struggle of movements such as the Movimento Negro to be seen as legitimate and relevant. Some authors, however, insisted on making difference visible. She discussed one of these authors, Clarice Lispector. She showed the audience how, in one of Lispector's texts, the idea of racial difference triggers a personal crisis in the mind of the protagonist and throws her in a spiral of self doubt and self questioning. Her analysis drew some light into one of the 'blind spots' in Brazilian culture, the issue of racial difference. Her talk was followed by a lively Q&A session with a number of Newnham students, enthusiastically asking questions to Dr Villares.



It has been very encouraging to observe how far NICP has been able to fulfil its original purpose through the events of this term. The willingness of Brazilian students to contribute their ideas and skills meant that all occasions were recognizably authentic. More than this, they were genuine examples of students taking joy in telling others about their own backgrounds. Many thanks once more to the Guild of Friends for their kind funding of NICP's activities this term. Without such help none of the above would have been able to take place.

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