

 PRAGDA | SPANISH FILM CLUB

DISCUSSION GUIDE



MIÚCHA: THE VOICE OF BOSSA NOVA

A film by LILIANE MUTTI & DANIEL ZARVOS

Brazil, France, USA / 2022 / 98 min
Portuguese, English, French, and Spanish with English subtitles

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BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country that film comes from. Learning about the filmmaker is also a relevant way to gain insight on the context in which the film was produced. You can learn more about Liliane Mutti at <https://pragda.com/film/miucha-the-voice-of-bossa-nova/>

INTRODUCING THE FILM

A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film's marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this synopsis for *Miúcha: The Voice of Bossa Nova*:

Known as the sister of Chico Buarque, the pupil of Vinicius de Moraes, the second wife of João Gilberto, the musical partner of Antônio Carlos Jobim, and the vocal accompaniment to Stan Getz's saxophone, Miúcha was overshadowed by the male musicians in her life. But Miúcha's vibrant spirit couldn't be held back; she managed to earn unprecedented success, becoming a symbol of female resilience and a musical legend forever.

A tour de force, *Miúcha, The Voice of Bossa Nova* spans over twenty years. Starting in 1960s Paris and ending in early 1980s Rio de Janeiro, the film explores many social and political changes of this period through the lens of Miúcha's experiences as a woman and her struggles to find her voice in a man's world.

With Miúcha's own narration, readings from her letters and diaries, her expressive watercolor drawings animated for the film, and magnificent music, the documentary offers a front-row seat to the expansion of Bossa Nova and a very intimate tale of one of the most important female figures of the movement, who, until now has stayed in relative obscurity.

- From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film? From this same text, try to identify the main events of the film's plot and the socio-political context of the film.
- Do you think that the film will have a political message? Cite specific language from the synopsis to support your answer.
- How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- Viewing the marketing materials alone (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images available at <https://pragda.com/film/miucha-the-voice-of-bossa-nova/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

NARRATIVE

- > The film begins with Miúcha as a young adult in Paris, before cutting back to Miúcha's early childhood. Why do you think the filmmakers opted to start at this point in her life instead of going in chronological order? How does this narrative choice affect the film's scope?
- > Although Miúcha's singing career is at the center of the documentary, the filmmakers allocate a significant portion of the runtime to her marriage to João. Why do you think this is the case? In what ways was her marriage intertwined with her career?
- > Miúcha's birthname was "Heloísa" after her grandmother. According to Miúcha, why did her parents adopt the name "Miúcha" to call her?
- > Miúcha describes her mother as being "fascinated" with her father, and that she self-identified as being her husband's wife. What parallels can be drawn between the marriage Miúcha witnessed from her parents and her own marriage to João Gilberto?
- > Upon recounting the dynamic of her marriage to João, Miúcha admits she "wasn't as much of a feminist" as she should have been. What do you think she meant by that? What do you think, if given the chance, she would have changed?
- > Miúcha labels herself as the "problem solver" in her marriage. Describe components of their relationship that support this proclamation.
- > What does Miúcha say is the best source of inspiration?
> Do you agree?
- > What lesson had Miúcha learned from her experience with João that she later applies to her work with Tom Jobim?
- > Despite featuring a cast of real-life people, it is only Miúcha's perspective that the film investigates. How does this inform the narrative structure?

Biographical narrative films have become a staple of modern cinema. What are some strengths of Miúcha's story being presented in documentary format as opposed to a narrative retelling? What are some weaknesses?



CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- > The documentary often utilizes real archival footage of Miúcha to portray even her smallest candid moments. How is this cinematic choice unique in the way it effectively characterizes Miúcha?
- > Miúcha's personal artwork is incorporated into the moving images. How do the filmmakers repurpose Miúcha's paintings and drawings as a cinematic technique to relay her story?
- > Although we hear Miúcha's own narration throughout the film, she is shown only through old photographs and reels. How does this contribute to the focus and scope of the film?
- > The film's music is comprised entirely of Miúcha's own tracks. How is her music used to propel changes in narrative, mood, and theme?



CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES *continued*

- The film includes personal letters written by the protagonist. How does this mode of communication express the protagonist in ways that other modes cannot?
- The beginning of the film includes a montage comprised entirely of photos from Miúcha's passport. What does this imply about Miúcha's life? How does the rapid editing fit the theme this montage is attempting to portray?
- Explain how color is used throughout the film to convey scenes of heightened emotion.

THEMES

- At one point Miúcha recalls a memory from her early adulthood: her brother, despite being much younger, was entrusted with a house key—a sort of symbol for freedom and responsibility—and Miúcha admits she felt jealous at this realization. How does this anecdote epitomize gender politics of the mid-20th century, and how does it relate to the hardships she would later face in her music career?
- The co-director is Miúcha's real-life nephew. How do you think his personal ties to the film's subject informed the film's message? How do you think the film would be different if it were told by a nonfamilial third party?
- Feminism is arguably the primary theme of Miúcha. What makes Miúcha's story particularly compelling as it relates to feminism? How do you think this theme still resonates today?
- The theme of family arises frequently, influencing Miúcha in a variety of ways. Describe the various effects Miúcha's family members had on her as it relates to her music career.
- The film highlights the tragedy of Miúcha falling into obscurity in comparison to her male counterparts since the Bossa Nova wave. Why do you think her story went relatively untold for this long, and how do you think the current socio-political climate has played a role in her rising posthumous fame?
- The film explores how Miúcha's interpersonal relationships with men inspired her artistically, and yet at the same time, stifled the progression of her career. How do you think her career would have been different if her Bossa Nova contemporaries had been women instead of men? Do you think she would have been successful?
- The documentary spans three distinct eras: the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Explain how Miúcha's personal evolution might have been influenced by the cultural changes of this time period.
- Miúcha says working with jazz pianist Albert Dailey taught her to “sing louder, to fly, to improvise.” What are some parallels one can draw between this approach to music and Miúcha's personal development over the course of the film?

