

Helô Pinheiro

the girl from Ipanema myth

By Alessandra Cayley / Translated by Rosemary Baptista

“The paradigm of the young carioca: the golden teenage girl, a mixture of flower and mermaid, full of light and grace, the sight of whom is also sad, in that she carries with her, on her route to the sea, the feeling of the youth that fades, of the beauty of that is not ours alone - it is a gift of life in its beautiful and melancholic ebb and flow.”

Vinicius de Moraes



Myths are created to inspire, to instill a desire for art to flourish and feelings soul of its creator. Not always of flesh and bone like you and I often end up - eternal or not - transcending the creator. From muse to myth, confusing the audience whether such inspiration actually existed or it was just mere imagination.

It is still like that with Helô. Even after decades of ascending from a common girl to a muse by two of Brazil's greatest poets, people around the world still questions its existence. But the young and lovely, the Girl from Ipanema is real, with her own address and mailbox, in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Helô Pinheiro is a carioca (native or inhabitant from Rio de Janeiro) who inspired Antonio Carlos Jobim (Tom Jobim) and Vinicius de Moraes in creating the song The Girl from Ipanema. During a pleasant chat with *Discover Brazil*, she shared the history of the song, which has changed her life.

In the early 60s, Helô would go to buy cigarettes for her

mother and left baffled by the harassment of the boys: “Hey cutie, come here!” She would not comply, she says, but would reciprocate their request with the fanciest booty shake.

Tom Jobim was one of them. The musician and poet, already prominent in the Brazilian artistic scene, were enchanted with the “sweet swing” of the girl Helô. His friend and partner Vinicius de Moraes visited the bar during several days, but she never passed. When he was about to give up, Helô appears in her school uniform.

“Is she not the most beautiful thing, Vinicius?”
“She is full of grace.”

The first drafts of *the Girl from Ipanema* were made that very day on one of the sidewalk tables. Lyrics by Vinicius and Music by Tom.

In August 1962, the song was released in Brazil, but “nobody expressed an appreciation, until it began to play in the United States,” recalls Helô. It was the English version, written in 1963, with lyrics by Norman Gimbel and performed by Astrud Gilberto, that made foreigners and Brazilians fall in love with that girl. “Everyone

wanted to know who was the girl in that song,” says Helô.

Revelation, the real Girl from Ipanema, bears the name of Helô, whom Vinicius described as...

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Since then, the schoolteacher Heloisa Eneida Menezes Paes Pinto ceased to exist in order to give rise to the muse-girl Helô Pinheiro, the official/original Girl from Ipanema. Despite the huge success of the *Girl*, Helô affirmed that she never made money from the music rights. “It was a gift, and you do not get a free ride on a gift.” The muse keeps in shape dancing - her old passion - and working out. “I try to keep in shape in order not to frighten people to the point of saying, ‘Look she used to be a young girl, now she’s an old rag,’” she jokes. ●

Lyrics Girl from Ipanema (Tom Jobim / Norman Gimbel / Vinicius de Moraes)

Tall and tan and young and lovely
The girl from Ipanema goes walking
And when she passes each one she passes goes - ah

When she walks, she's like a samba
That swings so cool and sways so gentle
That when she passes each one she passes goes - ooh

(Ooh) But I watch her so sadly
How can I tell her I love her
Yes I would give my heart gladly
But each day, when she walks to the sea
She looks straight ahead, not at me

Tall, (and) tan, (and) young, (and) lovely

The girl from Ipanema goes walking
And when she passes, I smile - but she doesn't see (doesn't see)
(She just does not see, she never sees me ...)

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