

Brazilian Sound: Luciana-Lubambo Duo Thrills Manhattan Audience

Contributed by Ernest Barteldes
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The sky was quite overcast at Manhattan's Madison Square Park on a Wednesday evening, but there was no rain as Luciana Souza took their small stage on the eve of her flight to Miami.

In Miami she would perform two dates, going on to Spain for the European leg of the tour in support of her recently released album, the intimate, personal "Duos II" (Sunnyside).

Backed solely by the acoustic guitar of the fantastic Romero Lubambo, she began the performance with a personal take on one of her favorite songs, the Antonio Carlos Jobim/Newton Mendonça bossa nova classic "Chega de Saudade" (No More Blues), which included some incredible guitar improvisation followed by some scat by Souza.

A great moment came when they performed a song from the American Songbook, the cleverly selected Gershwin tune "But Not For Me".

In their rendition, they started off with a slow-tempo groove that quickly changed into a swingy, up-tempo beat that gave Lubambo some space to play some walking-bass notes, showcasing his East Coast-meets-Charlie Byrd guitar style.

When performing Djavan's gorgeous hit "Flor de Lis", she explained the audience what the lyrics were saying - the sad story of a jilted lover who sorrowfully compares the end of a love affair to the death of a once-lush flowery garden.

She took the tune's samba beat up a notch, giving it more of a jazzy feel, and the magic fingers of Romero Lubambo wowed the entire audience, who clapped enthusiastically after his improv solo.

In what was one of the highlights of her performance, she played a medley of Northeastern Brazilian songs in which she played triangle.

The audience was totally involved by Lubambo's technique, and I also noticed that at times Souza herself seemed to lose herself into the sound of the guitar.

"Sonnet 49" is one of the love poems included in Souza's "Neruda" album, which featured songs written after the legendary Chilean poet's love verses.

Souza performed this one by herself (she played an African thumb piano) in honor of a couple that was celebrating their upcoming wedding there.

The audience received it very well, remaining silent while listening to every note from Souza's beautifully trained voice.

Closing the show was a fun take on "The Girl from Ipanema" (everyone around me half-guessed she would play that one when she invited everyone to sing along to a song that "everyone knew"). She received a standing ovation as she exited the stage.

Souza is not very well known among Brazilians, who feel a bit resented that her sound is "too Americanized", so there were only a handful of her compatriots there. She does deserve a broader audience, and her new album and tour might just do that for her.

Concert Review:

Luciana Souza
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