

# Luciana Souza brings in high 'Tide'

By Bob Young / MUSIC REVIEW: Luciana Souza

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Whenever Brazilian singer Luciana Souza comes home to Boston, she brings a few surprises with her. Friday night at Sanders Theatre, it was her two accompanists who helped spark those moments.

A native of Sao Paulo, Souza studied at both Berklee College of Music and New England Conservatory, and also taught at Berklee before moving to New York and then Los Angeles.

From covering a Joni Mitchell song with jazzman Herbie Hancock to soloing with locally based superstar composer Osvaldo Golijov, Souza has proven to be one of today's most inventive and stylistically far-reaching vocalists.

She returned to town courtesy of the Celebrity Series, and the trio setting was inspired. Not just because she's on a roll - her latest album is up for a Grammy, her fourth CD nomination - but because she set the stage for a night of surprise with longtime collaborator Roberto Lubambo on acoustic guitar and percussionist Cyro Baptista on myriad instruments.

Covering songs from her most recent CD "Tide" and prior duet albums, Souza quickly warmed the audience with samba and bossa nova rhythms, and took a few risks.

Not every singer adapts songs from such poets as Elizabeth Bishop and e.e. cummings, yet Souza has turned a number of their works into the same sensual musical poetry she did at Sanders reinterpreting cummings' words on "Tide."

Her airy, unstrained alto, surrounded by Lubambo's gorgeous phrasing and Baptista's luscious muted drumwork, was stunning.

Souza sang most of her pieces in Portuguese, and the language further underscored the delicate passion Souza brought to classics such as the opening "Adeus America," and a beautiful cover of Jobim's "Aguas de Marco."

In between, she turned a Lubambo duet on a wordless song by Paul Simon, "Amulet," into a breathy, scat-propelled journey to a place only she knows, and another duet with the guitarist, "Sai Dessa," into a celebration of samba.

Souza also gave Baptista, who counts sonic adventurers Caetano Veloso and Phish's Trey Anastasio as collaborators, plenty of leeway to color her songs. Using everything from a saw and shakers to whistles, hand drums and the stringed berimbau, Baptista was a jolly dervish of rhythm, happily dropping in unexpected sounds that managed to further inspire Souza and Lubambo.

If the night wasn't the perfect balance of imagination and virtuosity, it sure was close.

*Luciana Souza at Sanders Theatre, Cambridge, Friday night.*