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"With dozens of possible choices for hearing jazz on any given night in the Southland, it may seem over the top to suggest that there's any single set of performances not to be missed. But that's precisely the case this week at the Jazz Bakery, where singer Luciana Souza and guitarist Romero Lubambo are offering a stunning display of culture-spanning, improvisation-driven world jazz.

Sao Paulo-born Souza has lived half her life in Brazil, half in the U.S. and every note she sang resonated with the musical confluence of cultures that is at the heart of her music. Lubambo has a similarly diverse background, making their partnership all the more extraordinary in its capacity to smoothly blend a rhythmically dynamic, colorful panorama of styles.

Some of the music was familiar: Antonio Carlos Jobim classics such as "Chega de Saudade" and "Corcovado" as well as an intensely intimate rendering of the standard "All of Me." Other songs reached in the Brazilian world of samba, bossa and forro. Jobim's art song-like "Mondinhas and Carlos Lyra's "Lamento e Um Homem So," as well as "Amanha," a high-spirited plena by Souza's songwriting parents, Walter Santos and Tereza Souza.

In every number, the virtuosity of both artists was placed fully at the service of the music. Brilliant, rapid-fire duets and improvisations in tunes such as Lyra's "Se e Tarde, Me Perdo," were rendered with a combination for technical skill and sense of sheer joy in the pleasure of making music. Lubambo's solo number "Influencia de Jazz" was a wild-fingered romp through distinctly Brazilian interpretation of music. And Souza's "Sonnet" - her pensive take on the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop - added yet another facet to an endlessly rich tapestry of music.

It was, in other words, an evening of inspired excellence, utter musical involvement and constant willingness, even insistence, on creative chance-taking -- all reason why the Souza/Lubambo performances represent a must-see and must-hear musical destination."