

Luciana Souza returns to SFP to survey her two latest albums

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Last night in Herbst Theatre, Brazilian [jazz](#) vocalist Luciana Souza returned for her sixth appearance in the San Francisco Performances (SFP) Jazz Series, bringing that series to a conclusion for the current season. Souza was SFP Jazz Artist-in-Residence between 2005 and 2010, augmenting her concert schedule with three appearances in Family Matinees Series during that period. Instrumentation consisted entirely of guitarist Romero Lubambo, making his second SFP appearance with Souza, augmented by occasional percussion gestures performed by Souza herself.

The program, entitled *Brazilian Duos*, provided a review of Souza's two latest albums, *Duos III*, released to celebrate the tenth anniversary of her original *Brazilian Duos* CD, and *Book of Chet*, interpretations of ten songs previously recorded by Chet Baker. Both these recordings provide abundant evidence of Souza's talents not only as a song stylist but also as a scat singer with a prodigious capacity for improvisation. Indeed, one feature of her approach to Baker would arise when she used her vocalizations to cover the trumpet solos that Baker would play when not singing.

Last night's duo performance also provided a perfect example of jazz as "chamber music by other means." Lubambo was far from just an accompanist. Particularly during Souza's scat passages, the chemistry was that of an instrumental duo, alternating between exchanges and unison. When that unison converged on a breakneck allegro passage, the result was as stunning as any encounter between a pair of violinists at a meeting of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Collegium Musicum* at Gottfried Zimmermann's coffee house in Leipzig. This "instrumental" side of Souza's talents was equally evident in both the Brazilian and Baker selections.

There were also a few flashes of a comic side of Souza's style. There was more than a little mockery in her handling of those standards that are always in danger of being performed too many times. She built up the anticipation of a new composition by Lubambo, only to have his slightly arcane guitar introduction quickly devolve into Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Garota de Ipanema" (better known in English as "The Girl from Ipanema"), while her delivery of Jobim's "So Danço Samba" reflected the disorientation of a drunk trying to sing "Melancholy Baby" at 3 a.m.

Souza's talents clearly extend beyond the familiar territory of jazz singing, and we are fortunate that she enjoys visiting San Francisco on such a regular basis.