

Jazz Club Continues at UCPAC: Maurício de Souza's Bossa Brasil ®

Rahway, NJ- After kicking off with a performance by Jersey City Jazz Collective in February, the Union County Performing Arts Center's Jazz Club series continues on Sunday, April 9 at 7 PM with Maurício de Souza's Bossa Brasil ®. Appearing in a quartet also featuring Anton Denner on alto sax, Jerry Weir on vibraphone, and Anthony Perez on bass, percussionist de Souza has received significant acclaim for his work in jazz music.

Maurício de Souza was born in Brasília, Brazil, where, at eleven years old, he began learning to play drums. Only a few months of practice saw him performing with rock cover bands in local Brasília, before he eventually joined the National Theater's youth percussion group. Later, after deciding that jazz was his style of choice, de Souza traveled to New Jersey the summer of his junior year of high school to learn under Joe Morello. Morello's extensive jazz work includes playing with the Dave Brubeck Quartet, which was known for using irregular time signatures. Some of his other former students include Gerry Polci, the drummer for Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, and Max Weinberg, the drummer for Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band. Enjoying the experience, de Souza decided to attend college in New Jersey and continue his studies with Morello. The rest is history.

Still living in North Jersey currently, de Souza has performed in countless venues in the tri-state area. These include Kitano Hotel, Cutting Room, Smoke Jazz Club, SOB's, Via Brasil, New York Athletic Club, and Bubby's in New York; NJPAC, Tomaso's Jazz Room, Chico's House of Jazz, Moonstruck, Cecil's Jazz Club, and Giamano's in New Jersey; Lily Pad in Massachusetts; and Cubata in Connecticut. De Souza has also performed at the Keyport International Festival, the Red Bank Jazz and Blues Festival, Westfield's Sweet Sounds Downtown Jazz Festival, and Morristown's Music Without Borders, among other festivals. Outside of the United States, de Souza has performed in Canada at the 2016 Festival International de Jazz de Québec, and of course, he has been quite active in his hometown of Brasília. In the latter, he has performed at Jazz Club, Gate's Pub, Restaurante Feitiço Mineiro, Velvet Pub, C'Est Si Bon, and Schlob Bar e Restaurante. The instrumentalist's talent even extends into other genres, as exemplified by his inclusion in symphony orchestras. In New Jersey, he's performed with the Metropolitan Orchestra, the New York Symphonic Arts Ensemble, and Bergen Philharmonic. In Brasília, as guest percussionist with the Orquestra Sinfônica do Teatro Nacional Cláudio Santoro de Brasília, de Souza was present for the recording and world premiere of Cláudio Santoro's 9th and 11th Symphonies and the Brazilian premiere of the opera *La Boheme*, by Puccini.

Maurício de Souza has two groups: the Maurício de Souza group, which performs Straight Ahead Jazz, and Bossa Brasil ®, which performs Brazilian Jazz. De Souza's first two albums, *Here. There...* (2010) and *Different Directions* (2013), were recorded with both groups and released under Pulsa Music. The artist's most recent album is *Trajétórias* (2016), which features live music played by Bossa Brasil ® at Galeria West in Westfield, NJ (under Pitoca Music). All three albums have been highly acclaimed; *Here. There...* reached #17 of Music Choice's top 30 jazz albums and #40 in the Jazz Week chart's top 50 new releases based on national radio airplay. *Different Directions* saw de Souza's work being reviewed by the likes of The New York City Jazz Record, Sirius XM, Music Choice, and Pandora, among others, with a front page feature on Hot House Jazz Magazine. Most recently, de Souza was again featured in Hot House Magazine in January 2017, in an article by Seton Hawkins reviewing the St. Peter's Church (New York) CD release performance. De Souza's radio appearances include a live interview with Maria Vilhena on Rádio Nacional FM Brasília, a recorded interview with Ken Bader at New York's BBC Studio, and an interview with Awilda Rivera on WBGO.

Bossa Brasil®'s April 9 performance will be a CD release party for *Trajétórias*. As such, I decided to take a listen to the album and give my take on a few songs. De Souza, a very kind and incredibly humble person, offered me the CD free of charge for the review.

I didn't realize for the longest time, as I listened to *Trajetórias* at my desk, that I was actually using my pen to play air drums and keep the beat. It was a natural instinct. Every song, arranged by de Souza himself, is almost literally jumping with energy. Take "Inútil Paisagem," for example, written by Antônio Carlos Jobim. The piece begins with a slow, dreamy vibraphone solo for about 50 seconds, calling to mind the sounds one would hear opening a music box. Then suddenly, de Souza's drums burst onto the scene, playing so quickly that the image I saw next was someone running as fast as he/she possibly could. And that beat continues for the entire song thereafter, with the other instruments chiming in with frantic notes played up and down and down and up the scale. At about 3:53, they drop out again for a drum solo by de Souza. The cymbals keep up that constant, frantic beat in the background while the bass drum goes to town, intermingled with a few well placed, hard tap sounds. What struck me most about this solo was the way de Souza used pauses as if they were beats. When my mind, trying to understand the patterns, placed a beat where there wasn't one, I got a jolt of surprise. But, the pauses still made sense in the pattern; the absence of sound was used as a method of creating sequence.

My favorite song on the album is "Vera Cruz," written by Milton Nascimento. Similar to "Inútil Paisagem," this song also starts with a short vibraphone solo. Yet, I feel as if the tone is sadder and more ominous. Another thing that's fascinating about the album: the overall tone is happy and whimsical, yet, when you listen closely, you can hear tones of other, deeper emotions seeping in. It's almost like looking at misfortune through rose-colored glasses; it actually feels soothing. No song better exemplifies this than "Vera Cruz." Once the vibraphone finishes, the drums pick up the pace once more, and the saxophone comes wailing onto the scene. It's upbeat, but something about its melody, as well as how the notes are dragged out, seems sad. It's beautiful. When the saxophone drops out, the vibraphone returns with what seems like a happier message. It's almost as if the instruments are talking to each other and making different arguments. The conversation continues with the saxophone answering back in a flurry of notes, followed by the sensible and slow keyboard (that increases its tempo with time, as if raising its voice to make its point), and then the drums coming out from behind the beat to make their argument. De Souza initiates and perpetuates the longest drum roll I've ever heard within the solo, and when it all slowly grinds to a halt, the vibraphone comes back in with that same sad, ominous melody as in the beginning. Throughout this song, I was hearing different voices speaking and answering each other, all through the different emotions hidden behind how each person played his instrument.

Tickets for Maurício de Souza's Bossa Brasil ® are \$15 and can be purchased online at ucpac.org, over the phone by calling (732) 499-8226 or in person at the box office. Box office hours are Tuesday through Saturday 11 AM- 5 PM, with extended hours of 11 AM- 8 PM on Thursdays. The performance will take place in the Union County Performing Arts Center's main theater, in the comfortable and cozy lobby and café areas. The Union County Performing Arts Center is located in downtown Rahway at 1601 Irving Street and is easily accessible to major roads and public transportation.