

## Bio Juliana da Silva

To connect with your audience while your eyes are closed – not every singer can do that as remarkably as Juliana da Silva can. It's a matter of expression, the Brazilian singer is convinced. And it is not only her own opinion: the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* sees her appearances as “musical full body sensuality”. Da Silva has a stage presence that loses nothing of its captivating power even next to her idol Bart van Lier. When the Dutch star trombonist ignites a brilliant jam of fireworks between jazz and bossa nova with the da Silva's band, there's no doubt: This woman even sets the tone when she is silent and swaying to the beat, lost in the music.

Da Silva, the daughter of an Italian-descendent mother and an Afro-Brazilian, has been singing since she was just learning to speak. For that reason, there was one big rule in the da Silva home: no singing during meals. But that didn't deter Juliana: she sings in the church choir, stands on the stage for the first time with her school band at the age of twelve and in her early twenties marries a German musician, for whom she leaves São Paulo for Germany.

There follow further band projects, collaboration with various artists and innumerable gigs. “I haven't released many albums, but I have gained a lot of stage experience,” says the self-taught musician. And even though she was only meant to sing Lambada at her first gig in Germany, her musical spectrum quickly expands: the heroes of her youth like Elis Regina, Chico Buarque, Tom Jobim or Elizeth Cardoso are joined by jazz greats like Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Kurt Elling. More and more, old and new influences, Brazilian tradition and the diversity of jazz blend together to make da Silva's own musical signature.

Of course, the symbiosis between bossa nova and jazz wasn't invented by da Silva: already the collaborative projects of the 1960s between Stan Getz and João Gilberto and Tom Jobim were a sensation. The latter was also supported by the jazz guitarist Charlie Byrd, and Miles Davis invited the drummer Airto Moreira to join his band. But, as with most musicians, what counts for da Silva isn't so much the genre she plays as the feeling she gives it. “It's everything together: expression, feeling, the processing of emotions,” the

singer says about her music. And yes, you can also call it soul. That that sounds more like fado than funk is due to da Silva's fondness for fateful stories: "They don't have to be sad songs, but melancholic texts."

There are all kinds of those on "Vai Samba Meu". But if you think that Juliana da Silva is the "Girl from Ipanema" in jazz form, you are mistaken. On "Vai Samba Meu," you'll find not only songs by legendary and contemporary Brazilians like Tom Jobim, Moacir Santos or Dorival Caymmi, but also compositions by da Silva and her band members themselves.

"Casa de Caboclo" was written together with the Cologne bassist André de Cayres, who has musically accompanied da Silva for more than ten years. It is a seven-minute piece that is driven by shimmering piano chords and pulsing percussion in the background. It is da Silva's homage to her favorite uncle, who she once visited with her family on a Sunday outing in the countryside.

The trio's stringent playing is penetrated by the tenor sax sounds of Tony Lakatos, da Silva's life partner, who supplied several horn solos and the song "Le Babe", as well as contributions made by the legendary jazz trombonist Bart van Lier. Da Silva can't say enough about their collaboration. The same goes for the Hungarian musicians Mihály Farkas und Roby Lakatos, who complement "Vai Samba Meu" with cymbal and violin. "This is what I call world music," says da Silva with a laugh.

Moreover, da Silva does a cover of the song "Popó" by the young Brazilian musician Chico Pinheiro about the Brazilian boxer Acelino Freitas – a song about picking yourself back up after being hit hard. Da Silva had seen Pinheiro play "Popó" live and knew immediately that it was made for her: "The right song sung with the right feeling makes the magic," she says to explain the choice of her repertoire.

When asked, what say her band – besides bassist de Cayres also consisting of the multiinstrumentalist Henrique Gomide and percussionist Bodek Janke – has in the music, da Silva laughs: "But I always have the last word."

Be that as it may, “Vai Samba Meu” shows more than just the singer’s fascinating power of expression: there’s no song that doesn’t put the solos of the instrumental trio in the foreground. Here and there, lonely and sporadically clanging drums, undulant basses and virtuoso piano playing, then again as a team lively seesawing and gently ebbing away – in the end, the communal feeling wins. Surely, too, because da Silva has played many of the songs on “Vai Samba Meu” live numerous times. She’s been a house act at the renowned Frankfurter Jazzkeller for more than 15 years – with her monthly concert series, she’s (practically) an institution.

An experience which da Silva’s album only profits from: the devotion that she brings to the stage is felt in every single moment. The fact that the eleven songs are in Portuguese does nothing to diminish their magic: “People don’t understand a word of what I’m singing, but still they understand what I want to tell them with the song,” da Silva says about her music. In the end, it’s all a matter of expression.