

# Information about *Sambeleza!*

“... sveltely swinging Brazilian jazz ... bosses of bossa nova ...”

**Owen McNally**, Hartford Courant

**Laura Volpintesta, vocals • Jeff Fuller, bass & vocals • Joe Carter, guitar**

**Sambeleza** derives its name from two words: *samba*, the national dance of Brasil, and *beleza*, Portuguese for 'beauty'. The group came into being in 2009 as the combined brainchild of vocalist and São Paulo native **Isabella Mendes**, Brazilian guitar specialist **Joe Carter** and jazz bassist **Jeff Fuller**. Together they had the idea to perform and pay homage to the great songs by Brazilian composers - from past to the present - with their own originals added to the mix. The group has performed widely in Connecticut at festivals - including New Haven's International Festival of Arts & Ideas, Middletown Summer Sounds, the New Haven Jazz Festival, and Neighborhood Music School Twilight Tuesdays - nightclubs, restaurants, and public libraries.

The country of Brasil (spelled with 's' in Portuguese) is well known for its rich heritage - a blend of indigenous, African and European cultures - from which the music has risen with fascinating rhythms, soaring melodies and colorful harmonies. **Sambeleza** creates tapestries of guitars, percussion and vocals in both Portuguese and English to interweave the rhythms, harmonies and melodies of bossa nova and samba with exciting jazz improvisation. A typical concert may feature **Tom Jobim's** "Girl From Ipanema" but will also include lesser-known songs, like "Discussão" or "Fotografia." A ballad from **Ivan Lins**, like "Começar de Novo," will be juxtaposed with his first hit song, "Madalena."

Brazilian jazz is represented in the group's repertoire by such composers as João Donato ("A Rã"), Mauricio Einhorn ("Batida Diferente") and Moacir Santos ("April Child"). Music from MPB (Musica Popular Brasileira) artists may include "Num Corpo Só" from Maria Rita, "Da Licença" from Dani & Debora Gurgel, or "Flor de Lis" from Djavan. For good measure, the group adds some touches of more exotic rhythms such as *baião*, *afoxé*, *samba-canção* and *choro*.

The musicians of **Sambeleza** are outstanding U. S. and Brazilian interpreters of the great songs of these traditions, as well as outstanding jazz artists in their own right. **Joe Carter** on guitar and **Jeff Fuller** on bass have been creatively exploring the two worlds for many years, and the relatively younger **Laura Volpintesta**, singing, dancing and playing percussion, adds to the group's appeal. **Sambeleza** frequently enjoys performing with guest artists of the highest caliber. Rounding out the groups sound from time to time have been **Ali Ryerson** (flute), **Tim Moran** or **Paul Lieberman** (flute, sax), **Adriano Santos** or **Ben Bilello** (drums), **Zé Mauricio** or **Nanny Assis** (percussion). The group also did a memorable series of concerts with the **Haven String Quartet**.

**Laura Volpintesta** is a vocalist who specializes in Brazilian music and jazz. She became obsessed with jazz, gospel, African and Latin music while a student at Parsons/The New School in NYC and Paris. Born in Mexico City, but raised in Bethel, CT, she has forged a triple career as musician, fashion illustrator and professor at Parsons in NYC. Besides her musical credits, she is the author of *The Language of Fashion Design*. Coming from a musical family, her mother - a singer of art songs - exposed her to many languages and harmonies growing up. Volpintesta is fluent in Portuguese, French, English and Spanish. While in NYC she sang with the gospel choir of Anthony Evans, the charanga band *Pasión*, and Brazilian musicians Jair Coelho, Carlinhos de Almeida, Ze Mauricio, Arildo de Souza, Euri Meira, Kako Oliveira, Adriano dos Santos and Fernando Saci, among many others.

**Jeff Fuller** (bass, vocals) has long been an integral part of the Connecticut, New York and international jazz scenes. He toured worldwide and recorded with saxophonist Lou Donaldson and with Cuban saxophonist Paquito D’Rivera. He has played with jazz masters from all styles and eras and has led ensembles in many jazz venues. In Latin Jazz, he has toured with D’Rivera’s New York/Havana Quintet, played with the Hilton Ruiz Quintet, Daniel Ponce’s *Jazzbatá* and Orlando “Puntilla” Rios’ *Nueva Generación* (Afro-Cuban folkloric). He has received commissions from both the New Haven and the Hartford Symphony Orchestras and has twice received project grants from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts. Fuller graduated cum laude from Yale College and received his master’s degree in composition from the Yale School of Music. He now teaches at both Yale and Sacred Heart Universities. Since 1995, Fuller led jazz ensembles at ACES-Educational Center for the Arts, New Haven. He also teaches at Neighborhood Music School.

**Joe Carter** (guitar) has performed in such diverse places as Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba and Recife in Brazil, Bombay, Bangalore and Goa in India, Stuttgart and Paris. Joe Carter has used these experiences to form a style that combines North American Jazz with the lyrical and rhythmical aspects of Brazilian bossa nova, samba, choro and MPB. He has recorded and performed with jazz artists such as Art Farmer, Lee Konitz, Cecil Payne, Rufus Reid and others and with Brazilian artists such as Luiz Eca, Mauricio Einhorn, Robertinho Silva, Paulo Russo and others. In addition, he has recorded several CDs through the years; his most recent is *Both Sides of the Equator*, with bassist David Finck and percussionist Zé Mauricio. Joe is currently the Director of the Academic Music Program at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT.

CONTACT: [sambeleza.music@gmail.com](mailto:sambeleza.music@gmail.com)