

G U I N G A

TO
SAN FRANCISCO
88.7 M

CAZADERO

ELEVATION ·
118 FEET ·

natalie cressman
& ian faquini



T raveling through the lush paradise of Brazilian music, there are few more scenic byways than *música popular brasileira* - the enduring alchemy of fusing genres like *samba* and *baião* within the larger frameworks of Jazz, rock, classical and popular music. Even without a map, exploring this unique terrain with its rich harmonic complexity, elaborate lyrics, and remarkable emotive metaphors, leads musicians towards an inescapable reality: all roads lead to Guinga - the master guitarist, composer arranger and Brazilian pop music legend.

Born as Carlos Althier de Souza Lemos Escobar, Guinga grew up in Rio de Janeiro absorbing Brazilian contemporary and folkloric music as well as classical, rock, pop and Jazz. Having shaped a creative identity that embraces the signature energy of Brazil's diverse artistic enterprise, Guinga's legacy lives within the spirit of crafting a voice that's essentially Brazilian while cultivating a vivacious universal appeal. A spirit lovingly captured by trombonist Natalie Cressman and guitarist Ian Faquini within their brilliant new GroundUP album *Guinga*.

Trombone/classical guitar duos are very rare in Jazz. While few dare to exist beyond the occasional recording or live performance, Cressman and Faquini have transformed their platform into a sophisticated medium showcasing the extraordinary influence Brazilian contemporary artistry has had on music throughout the world. Tagged as the "*Bossa Nova girl!*" while studying at the Manhattan School of Music, Cressman has always been inspired by Brazilian culture, frequently attending the California Brazil

Camp in the mountainous enclave of Cazadero, California where she met Faquini, a Guinga protégé teaching at this annual summer gathering.

In time they discovered the dynamic nature of their instrumental pairing as well as the unique aperture it lends to the intricate nature of Brazilian music. Having mastered a resonant, open, and full bodied sound, Cressman and Faquini utilize a spacious tonal vocabulary, deft harmonic pairings and meticulous arranging that perfectly lends itself to the unique repertoire they've cultivated over the years. Steadied by the Brazilian aural tradition of learning, each has honed the necessary skills that accentuate the rich lyrical nature of *música popular brasileira* with its exquisite storytelling and incisive musical lens.

Organic, improvisational and often initiated by humming out melodies, Guinga's compositional style has played a significant role in shaping Cressman and Faquini's artistic chemistry. Having spent years watching the master at work, both are fluent in the processes that powers Guinga's magic, as his fluid incorporation of musical influences blends seamlessly with the florid temperament of their own creative ambitions. After recording albums exploring their personal relationship to contemporary Brazilian music, it was only a matter of time before Cressman and Faquini decided to focus on Guinga, a musician who's been a mentor, teacher, collaborator and friend throughout the course of their careers.

Unlike most tribute albums celebrating artists long past, Guinga's contributions are central to the process of the recording. Composing, arranging, and collaborating as a lyricist, Guinga's ingenuity is matched only by his evocative and often haunting vocals. Compact, discreet, remarkably positioned with no less than fourteen songs, the

album flows effortlessly like a personal juke box supplied by an endless roll of Brazilian *centavos*, all while unfolding into a delicate mosaic of Guinga's musical world view.

Always fond of compelling song titles, the album begins with *Contradição* (Contradiction), Faquini and Guinga's first collaborative compositional effort. Overdubbing her trombone, Cressman constructs guiding harmonies while Guinga's voice sways with the "*valsa blues*" structure of the song. With its paradoxical title and timeless melody, *Bolero de Satã* (Satan's Bolero) was a hit for Guinga during the 1970's. Romantic, ornate, serenaded by Cressman's gorgeous solo and Faquini's pristine harmonics, *Bolero de Satã* evolves into a superb example of the unique prism this duo applies to Guinga's artistry.

Celebrating the life and work of Conceição Damasceno, the founder of the BrasArte Brazilian arts center in Berkley, California, *Lavagem de Conceição* combines the *baião* rhythm from northern Brazil with the ceremonial spirit of *lavagem* or "washing" (a common ritual of the Candomblé religion originally established by enslaved West Africans) supported by background vocals from Guinga's partner Anna Paes and Natalie's mother Sandy Cressman. Exemplifying Guinga's love for angular melodies is *Aria de Opereta* (Operetta Aria), a somber tune lightly adorned by the subtle shades of a classical arrangement.

With no wasted notes, the short and sweet *Delírio Carioca* (Carioca Delirium) delicately soothes via Guinga's "feverish" appeal to all matters of the heart, while *Ramo de Delírios* (Bouquet of Delirium) similarly explores "obsession and passion" representing one of Cressman and Faquini's favorite tunes from Guinga's first recorded album. Pirouetting with intricate sixteenth notes, Guinga again adapts the rhythmic elasticity of *baião* with

Por Trás de Brás de Pina (Behind Brás de Pina), his vivacious ode to a northern neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro. Heavily influenced by Duke Ellington, Guinga takes the helm playing with Cressman on *Par Constante* (Constant Pair). Borrowing heavily from Ellington's *In a Sentimental Mood*, Guinga's love for this era of Jazz is clear as Cressman captures the moment beautifully with her technical dexterity and nostalgic tone.

Circling back to Rio, *Garoa e Maresia* (Mist and Sea Air) speaks to Guinga's ache for the gentle waves of the city's glorious beaches but the album's tour de force of longing resides in *Segredo de Dadá* (Dadá's Secret). Written during the height of COVID, Faquini's ballad to Brazil, and of missing his grandmother, was lyrically adapted by Guinga to include his own desire to see the Bay Area again. On Guinga's medley *Nítido e Obscuro / Geraldo No Leme* (Clear and Opaque / Geraldo In Leme), Cressman and Faquini make easy work of syncopated duple meters proving again their mastery of *baião* based rhythms.

Ellingtoniana unfolds as Guinga's intriguing exploration of the symbiotic relationship between Ellington's contribution to the great American songbook, and the prolific beauty of the melodic paradigms within Brazilian contemporary music. With it's subtle modulations on trombone and delicate counterpoint on guitar, *Viola Variada* (Varied "Guitar") references the agile ways Cressman and Faquini choose to dance within this music as their phrasing allows each to lead before the song quietly comes to a close. Celebrating the end of this glorious achievement, *Guinga* concludes with *Vô Alfredo* (Grandpa Alfredo), a composition built upon the Pernambuco *frevo* rhythm from northeastern Brazil. Combining the energies of Carnaval with the diction of classical music, Guinga's tribute to his grandfather becomes our final glimpse into the elegance of his compositional style, exemplified brilliantly by Cressman and Faquini's elite command for their instruments.

Simplicity can feel like a rare commodity in our increasingly complex world. Knowing this, Natalie Cressman and Ian Faquini recognize that the simplicity of their instrumentation provides an introspective way to celebrate the legacy of *música popular brasileira* and the remarkable manner in which Guinga extends the vocabularies of its exceptional harmonic and melodic systems. Managing the perfect balance of space, pacing and musicianship, Cressman and Faquini have mastered the mechanics of unpacking the deep musical authority that defines the DNA of Brazilian music and the core of Guinga's genius.

Understood as an artistic requirement, Cressman and Faquini clearly recognize the nature of their quiet stage. "It's a very noisy world we live in," they shared, adding "the softer subtleties of the style of our music is like a balm. It's healing and cathartic to play and to experience it as a listener." Within this slender margin comes a delicate responsibility for framing the kind of artistic excellence Guinga epitomizes. *Guinga* does this and so much more. Exploring this legend's proprietary language of life, love and the vivid emotional mindset that transcribes them to music, Cressman and Faquini have crafted a sophisticated space to experience the buoyant resonance throughout the fluorescent landscape of Guinga's storied career.