

Friday, April 20, 2007, 8pm
Wheeler Auditorium

Lura



Joe Wierfel

Lura *vocals*
Toy Vieira (Antonio Vieira) *piano, musical director*
Auras (Aurelio Santos) *guitar*
Jair (Paulino Pina) *percussion, congas*
Kau Paris (Carlos Morais) *drums*
Russo (Edevaldo Figueiredo) *bass guitar*
Guillame Singer *violin*

Cal Performances' 2006–2007 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

About the Artist

Lura

Originally born in Portugal to parents from the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of West Africa, Lura draws on the islands' pungent blend of trade route cultures that have created a unique musical tradition embracing French Afro-pop, Brazilian rhythms and earthy, traditional African music. Just as Mariza has breathed new life into Fado as a contemporary heir to Amalia Rodrigues, so Lura does to this Cape Verdean music first made famous by Cesaria Evora. Lura brings to her music a streetwise, urban sensuality infused with the passionate roots of Africa. Riding on the tide of Cape Verde's rediscovery of its African roots, she has the star quality to bring this music to a wider audience. She mixes the familiar *morna* style with the little-known rhythms of *funana* and *batuque*, styles brought to the fore by a talented new generation of composers, such as Tcheka and Pantera. It is the music of women from the remote interior of Cape Verde, newly infused with jazz and Brazilian influences.

Lura is part of a new generation of musicians rediscovering these hidden traditions of her ancestral homeland. The African musical traditions of Cape Verde are still emerging now after the nation first gained independence in 1975. Prior to that, the Church and the colonial government prohibited certain forms of musical expression. The accordion-driven *funana*, which Lura performs, was considered too erotic. Originally, a dozen or more women would beat the *batuku* rhythm on folded stacks of clothes, called *tchabeta*, held by their knees, while a lead singer improvised poetry lampooning or critiquing community happenings. A very sensual dance called *torno* accompanied the song form. "The women in Cape Verde spend a lot of time together, working and talking and that is how *batuku* started; from the women of Santiago," Lura says. "Now I and others are making a kind of *batuku*, but singing alone, not in a group. I'm a little representation of *batuku* from Cape Verde."

Lura's songs reflect the concerns of this far-flung nation. "In the poems and lyrics of Cape Verde, we speak a lot about immigration," explains Lura. "A lot of people move away to make a better living. We talk a lot about rain because there is so little rain. And we talk about food, because sometimes it is very difficult to get food. A lot of things you have to buy from outside; from Portugal, the United States, Holland. And we talk about the relationship between parents and their children, because so many families are far apart. But the words talk about immigration in a symbolic way."

Lura released her international debut album and two-video DVD, entitled *Di Korpu ku Alma* (Of Body and Soul), on the Escondida/Lusafrika label in May 2005. Since releasing the album, she has been nominated for and received several awards including Best Newcomer at the BBC Radio 3 Awards and Best World Music Album at Les Victoires de la Musique in France.

Since then, Lura has toured extensively in the United States and Europe, sharing the music of the island countryside she calls home. "I wasn't sure how the United States would receive the music from Cape Verde that I sing. American music is inspiring...they have the best music in the world. But they gave me love and wanted to know more about me and my music."

Her new album, *M'bem di Fora* (I Come from Far Away), released by Times Square/4Q Records on March 27, 2007, draws on her family's rural roots while revealing a side of Cape Verdean music that is new to most North American audiences. She throws in a little R&B as a nod to her own generation.

If the prosperity of the islands hangs on the whims of the weather, the true treasure of Cape Verde is the artistry of the people living there. The history of Cape Verde is one of immigration and return. Lura's own journey brought her back to the people and rhythms of the land she left. Now Cape Verde's rising star brings her island roots to world stages, reaffirming to the world the archipelago's unexpectedly rich musical heritage.