**Maria Mendes’s “Close To Me”**

***Symphonic/Big Band project with John Beasley***

***BIO***

**Maria Mendes**’s talents have been praised by musical legends such as Quincy Jones and Hermeto Pascoal. She is a Jazz singer in heart and soul, however, for this project, she explores a completely different genre, **Fado** from her native Portugal. The results of this unique adaption are surprising and refreshing and thoroughly engaging.

"A symphonic Jazz approach to Fado", is how singer-songwriter Maria Mendes describes the music on this new project featuring the famous multi Grammy Award winning **Metropole Orkest** (the world’s leading Jazz symphonic orchestra) - in a chamber line up of 25 musicians, led by conductor, Grammy nominated Jazz pianist and composer **John Beasley** (responsible for orchestrations and piano playing).

"It is not Fado," she immediately emphasizes. "I only used the music and poetry from this genre, but made a completely personal interpretation of it, with new arrangements." In addition, she wrote her own songs, all in the spirit of the genre of her motherland. "Fado is in our identity," explains Maria. "It is our way to evoke "saudade": longing for the past and hoping it becomes present once again. But it is also universal: we all have those feelings in life."

Additionally, the Brazilian living legend, composer/multi-instrumentalist **Hermeto Pascoal** has written a Fado song specially for Mendes and this project.

With **Close To Me**, Mendes hopes to attract a wider audience. "This is a gift for the avid listener," she says. “For people who have an eclectic taste. I don't know what the Fado audience will think of it, but I hope they'll listen and appreciate the respectful and refreshing approach I have given to these beautiful songs.”

**Close To Me**, Maria’s third album has been released internationally on 25.10.19 by Justin Time Records. In recent years, she has completed several successful tours with performances all over the world, including the prestigious concert halls: **Concertgebouw** and **Bimhuis** (Amsterdam), **Blue Note Jazz Club** (New York), **Casa da Música** (Porto) and the **North Sea** and **Montreux Jazz festivals**.

***LINE UP***

Maria Mendes (vocals, musical compositions and arrangements)

John Beasley (orchestra’s conductor, producer, arrangements/orchestrations)

Metropole Orkest (Chamber line up consisting of 25 musicians)

Rhythm section:

Karel Boehlee (piano)

Jasper Somsen (acoustic bass)

Jasper van Hulten (drums, percussion)

***SONGS***

Tudo Isto é Fado (Amália Rodrigues)

Foi Deus (Amália Rodrigues)

Asas Fechadas (Amália Rodrigues) – *orchestrated parts*

Barco Negro (Amália Rodrigues) – *orchestrated parts*

Há Uma Música do Povo (Mariza) – *orchestrated parts*

E Se Não For Fado (Mafalda Arnauth)

Tempo Emotivo (Maria Mendes) – *scat* singing

Fado da Invejosa (Maria Mendes) – *orchestrated parts*

Dança do Amor (Maria Mendes)

Verdes Anos (Carlos Paredes) – *scat* singing

Hermeto’s Fado for Maria (Hermeto Pascoal) – *scat* singing

***JOHN BEASLEY*** – Conductor/orchestrator/pianist

John Beasley, is an Emmy and Grammy awarded jazz pianist who has his own Jazz orchestra – the Monk’estra- but has well works actively with orchestras worldwide. Among his work as musical director for the UNESCO International Jazz Day and the Thelonious Monk Jazz Institute’s galas, he has recently premiered his symphonic piece “Simplexity” with the Radio-Symphony Orchestra Vienna at the Wiener Musikverein.

During the presidency of Barack Obama, he has been the musical director of all the musical events in the White House and other relevant events worldwide such as:

• International Jazz Day galas: Melbourne 2019, Saint Petersburg 2018, Havana 2017, White House (DC) 2016, Paris 2015+2012, Osaka 2014, Istanbul 2013

• Monk Institute Tribute galas: Music of Quincy Jones 2018, Quincy Jones 2015, Bill Clinton 2014, George Duke 2013, 25th Anniversary Gala Tribute to Aretha Franklin 2012

• Jazz and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Disney Hall: Youth concert series: Host/MD/Bandleader 2011 + 2014, National Youth Orchestra Germany 2018, Moscow Jazz Orchestra 2017, Sweden’s Blue House Jazz Orchestra 2017.

***MARIA MENDES*** – Singer/composer

With enthusiastic reviews from international critics who consider her one of the most stablished young voices of the European Jazz scene, Maria Mendes has studied in New York, Brussels, Rotterdam and Porto. Her talents have been praised by musical legends such as Hermeto Pascoal and Quincy Jones: “I see a promising shining future for this young talented singer” (at the Montreux Jazz Festival 2010)

The Rotterdam based, half Portuguese/Brazilian jazz vocalist, has won several international jazz awards and sold out an international tour of 44 concerts in the Netherlands (Concertgebouw Amsterdam, De Doelen, North Sea Jazz Festival), Switzerland (Montreux Jazz Festival), Portugal (Casa da Música and CCB), Belgium (De Bijloke and Handelsberus), France (Sunside Jazz Club Paris), Brazil (SESC Pompéia) and in New York city at the world’s famous Blue Note Jazz Club, marking the debut of a Portuguese artist at this legendary jazz club.

Recently, one of her songs, "Inverso", was part of the soundtrack of the Portuguese soap opera "Ouro Verde" (winner of the international Emmy 2018).

**Close To Me**, Maria’s third album has been released internationally on 25.10.19 by Justin Time Records (the same label that launched Diana Krall to international stardom). Her previous releases include her 2012 debut *Along The Road* (Dot Time Records NY) and in 2015 she released the successor, *Innocentia* (Sony Music Portugal).

***PRESS QUOTES***

**USA:**

“A jazz singer of the highest order. Her poise is as impressive as her power” DOWNBEAT

“Nothing here disappoints! Graceful vocalist” JAZZTIMES

“Priming need not be provided to understand the beauty of Close To Me” ALL ABOUT JAZZ

A delightful break from the norm” MIDWEST RECORD

“Maria has one of the most engaging, enchanting vocal approaches to her music that exists today” EXCLUSIVE MAGAZINE USA

**NETHERLANDS:**

“Mendes’ voice and improvisation are paramount art ” NRC

“You hear the merging of Fado in all elegantly swirling notes, while the music gets wings through Mendes’ great sense of timing and well-dosed scat ” DE VOLKSKRANT

“Mendes immediately profiles herself as a strong jazz singer. Intimacy and beauty from the first track” JAZZISM

“What Mendes express with her voice is art and a real treat for the heart and ears. Impressive!” DRAAI OM JE OREN

“Her vocalically shows it all, really perfect” JAZZZINE.NL

**GERMANY:**

“Portuguese jazz singer Maria Mendes comes up with a Fado album of superlatives” JAZZTHING

“Her voice alone is worth buying this CD: she is blessed with an incredible young sounding beautiful voice that doesn’t seem to be from this world”MELODIVA.DE

“Her voice expresses the most different feelings fascinating the listener with playful lightness, cheerfulness up to sophisticated scat interludes. Maria Mendes can do the simple perfect: inspiring, ethereal vocal art”KULTKOMPLOTT.DE

**UK:**

“Crystal clear voice, strong and confident (…) has the courage to make the classic Fado sound absolutely contemporary and of the moment” JAZZVIEWS

**SWITZERLAND:**

“Longing, love, nostalgia are the themes, performed with a voice that is unsurpassed in purity and variability” JAZZ ’N’ MORE

**AUSTRIA:**

“Mendes is one of the most promising voices of the European jazz scene” CONCERTO MAG

**BELGIUM:**

“Breathtaking. A dazzling version of a versatile ode to Fado” JAZZHALO

**FRANCE:**

“Maria Mendes singing charms anyone” JAZZ À FIT

**JAPAN:**

“Gently beautiful. Excellent album” SERAI MUSIC MAGAZINE

**BRAZIL:** 5\*\*\*\*\* O GLOBO

***QUOTES BY THE TEAM***

**METROPOLE ORKEST:** "As Metropole Orkest we are always looking to combine music styles. This project intelligently combines Fado and Jazz in a well-balanced and vibrant manner. John Beasley’s charts are rich and his work on this recording can be compared to that of a great fashion designer. Maria, her incredible voice and her songs are his muse in creating a garment that fits perfectly and makes the Metropole Orkest shine.”

**JOHN BEASLEY:** “Fado music needs an impressionistic voice that can express the longing and loss in these stories of melancholy. Maria Mendes surprised me with her stunning timbre of voice. She also has the charisma and personality that is needed to connect the music to the words and context of the songs.

My heart opened up making this album “Close to Me” with Maria, her band and the voluptuous orchestral sounds from the Metropole Orkest. Maria gave me the license to reimagine these classic fado songs with modern jazz sensibilities. I was captivated by the story lines and my film-composing instinct kicked in leading me to score each song like a movie. And, with Maria’s soul-reaching voice, which is clear as a bell and can trigger a wide range of feelings, when you listen, you are left with how to handle the beauty and artistry of what you just experienced.

Listening back to the album, I hear how elastic and open minded the musicians were with our writing. They took what we wrote beyond our imagination.

With “Close to Me”, you hear two genres –fado and jazz– infusing each other creating a new blend –a new musical appetite that stirs your soul.”

**Bookings USA & CANADA**

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