

The extraordinary voice of Lucio Sanfilippo

A modern minstrel

Daniella Thompson on Brazil

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My acquaintance with Lucio Sanfilippo's voice was made via the disc *Cordel das Fitas*, a surprise favorite that came my way in 2003. I can't think of another contemporary singer who employs minstrel-like vocals in popular music, and Sanfilippo manages to do it effectively and memorably.

Having sung professionally since the age of ten and received some classic vocal training, Sanfilippo was for several years the vocalist of the popular carioca group Dobrando a Esquina, which plays samba and choro in well-known Lapa venues. In addition, he is a long-time participator in the Popular Culture project of the Forum of Science and Culture at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. As a result of these explorations into Brazilian musical folklore, Sanfilippo is well versed in a variety of musical genres and lends his voice to a wide cross section, from samba, jongo, and maxixe to afoxé, coco, and ciranda.



All the above are present on the singer's debut solo album, *Canções de Amor ao Leo*. Leo is Sanfilippo's baby son, whose untrained voice is also present on the disc. Here are the artist's comments on the CD tracks:



Bar do Ernesto, Lapa, RIO : 1. Lúcio Sanfilippo com dois fãs; e 2. Lúcio e platéia empolgada.

"Queijo com Melado" [a traditional mineiro dessert] was composed by Regina Rocha, with harmonic arrangements by Ana Costa and percussive arrangements by João Hermeto. These include flutes, violas, acoustic bass (also with bow), guitar. We also make sounds that recall rural surroundings, using original percussion with instruments like the ilu [large atabaque], creating sound patterns inspired by the *agueré* [percussive signature] of Oxossi, the orixá king of Ketu.

"Aço de Navalha" is by Pedro Holanda and Magrinho. This is a maxixe recorded with a *caixa* drum that is heard right from the start. There are also flutes, bass, cavaco, and banjo. Bianca Calcagni and Dedé Alves from the group O Roda (to which Ana Costa also belongs) play percussion with the flavor of a *batucada*. They also give a touch of grace to "Chora" and "Malageta."

The samba **"Chora"** is a masterpiece by Mauro Duarte and Adélcio de Carvalho that is one of three covers in this album. This tune possesses a stirring melody and strong lyrics. Here you can hear the bandolim of the precociously great Nilze Carvalho.

"Malagueta" was recorded with the swing of gafeira, marked by the drums of João Hermeto. The song was written by the late Mãe Edi, who wasn't properly a mãe-de-santo [in candomblé] but was called Mãe by everyone who knew her.

The other two covers on this disc are **"O Cantador"** by Dori Caymmi and Nelson Motta and **"O Verde É Maravilha"** by Ruy Maurity and J. Jorge. The first was immortalized by Elis Regina, who sang it in 1967 at TV Record's third Festival da Música Popular Brasileira and won the Best Performer award.

Canções de Amor ao Leo includes a couple of presents received from two bulwarks of samba and of Brazilian popular culture. One is the waltz **"Rancho da Fé,"** which shows why I consider Wilson Moreira as one of the world's best composers. The other is the toada **"Maldita Cancela"** by the equally best-in-the-world Délcio Carvalho. This song was suggested by Marcelo Menezes, virtuoso guitarist and composer, who with Marceu Vieira contributed to this disc the fantasti **"Bolero de Copacabana."** This is an irreverent story that pays tribute to the beautiful Rio district and its famous seaside pavement. The melody is bohemian, and the lyrics contain inventive passages like "...vive pela noite a rodar sua bolsa em sutis translações...".

My own debut as songwriter is represented by **"Festa pra Logum Edé,"** recorded with *agueré* and *ijexá* rhythms to recall the love of Oxossi and Oxum, father and mother of Logum Edé, prince of the forests and waterfalls. The drums and the harmony tell a little of the story of this orixá, quoting elements linked to him and to the vodums who rule our miscegenated nation.

Drums also announce the lovely **"Razões Africanas."** This is a collaboration of mine with Lazir Sinval and Luiza Marmello, who with Dely Monteiro fill our hearts with hope while lending their beautiful, strong, and vibrant voices to this track. They are *jongueiras* of the first order from *Serrinha* and help me tell a little of the Afro-Brazilian history, being direct representatives of this marvel.

Also mine is the song **"Canção de Amor ao Leo,"** written for my son Leonardo, who every day transforms my life into something far better. I also created the humble **"Aprendendo o Coco"** to demonstrate the *batuque* of the people of Pernambuco. I had the advantage of the presence of Quinho Caetés, a percussionist with a tranquil but moving groove, and of Beth de Oxum, who plays with force, magic, and grace a *zabumba* made of macaíba wood [see *alfaia*] that is over a hundred years old and belonged to Quinho's grandfather.



Ending the disc in grand style is the matriarch of *ciranda* *Lia de Itamaracá*, who even bestowed a blessing on me. The song is called **"Ciranda Sem Fim pra Lia,"** and I had planned to record it along as a tribute to the Queen of Itamaracá. But she came and made everything so much better and more beautiful.

Listen to [audio samples](#).

Lucio Sanfilippo: *Canções de Amor ao Leo*
(Zambo Discos ZD 0001/Ro; 2005) 51:06 min.

01. Queijo com Melado (Regina Rocha)
02. Aço de Navalha (Pedro Holanda/Magrinho)
03. Canção de Amor ao Leo (Lucio Sanfilippo)
04. Maldita Cancela (Délcio Carvalho/Osório Peixoto)
05. O Cantador (Dori Caymmi/Nelson Motta)
06. Bolero de Copacabana (Marceu Vieira/Marcelo Menezes)
07. Razões Africanas (Lazir Sinval/Lucio Sanfilippo/Luiza Marmello)
08. Festa pra Logum Edé (Lucio Sanfilippo)
09. Rancho da Fé (Wilson Moreira)
10. Chora (Mauro Duarte/Adélcio de Carvalho)
11. Malagueta (Mãe Edi)
12. O Verde É Maravilha (Ruy Maurity/J. Jorge)
13. Aprendendo o Coco (Lucio Sanfilippo)
14. Ciranda Sem Fim pra Lia (Lucio Sanfilippo).

