



Roger Thomas

Mariza was born prematurely. Her mother was six months into her pregnancy when on a fine Sunday afternoon in 1973 she interrupted a family gathering, demanding to be taken to the hospital as she was feeling her first contractions. Mariza's father didn't take his wife seriously and dismissed her appeal as a false alarm, an occasional anxiety symptom – due to previous miscarriages – and kept on preparing the *feijoada* everyone was waiting for. But she knew better than that and came back with her maternity bag ready to leave. He then took her to the hospital in Lourenço Marques (Mozambique) but had so little faith in an untimely birth, he returned to eat the *feijoada* and have a drink with the rest of the family. When he finally got back to the hospital the baby had already been born, although in such a fragile condition that after first laying eyes on his still unnamed daughter, he headed to the hospital chapel. And there he made a promise: if the tiny girl was to survive, she would be named after the Brazilian singer Marisa Gata Mansa, and she too would be a singer.

"Up to this day," Mariza confides to me, "I'm still keeping my father's promise. It's his promise but it's my job to carry

my luggage all around the world." She may look serious for a couple of seconds, but we all know she's not really complaining about her life. There's no suffering or sacrifice involved in this decision of choosing music as her daily commitment. *Mundo* (World), her new album, is Mariza singing as a woman overcome by happiness.

And so we head back to motherhood. A lot has changed in Mariza's life since she released *Fado Tradicional* in 2010. She gave birth to her son four years ago, got married and drastically changed her lifestyle. Farewell those *fado* nights stretching from dinnertime to dawn – now she's welcomed a new wellbeing into her life and her music. Music stopped being an obsession and became more of a pleasure. "Before all this," she says, "all I had was my music. But that has changed now." This new state of mind first started to come forth in the comeback tour where Mariza revisited the *Terra* (2008) repertoire. Instead of staying on the stage, she suddenly felt the need to get closer and share her happiness with the audience. The concerts turned into "something more intimate" and she started to shorten the distance between the stage in big halls and the spectators: stepping down, talking to

Mariza performing with her band at London's Barbican in March 2015