

Brazilian performer heats up dance party



Daniela Mercury headlines the Afro-Brazilian Dance party at Eastern Michigan University Convocation Center.

BY LINDA ANNE CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Daniela Mercury may not be a household name in America as yet but Latin music lovers could care less. They're just excited about dancing the night away.

Elizabeth James bought a new skirt just for the occasion. For those like James who live to dance, the University Musical Society party is the place to be Saturday, April 12. That's when Eastern Michigan University's Convocation Center turns into a giant party.

"I went last year to the Afro-Cuban Dance Party with Celia Cruz and it was fabulous," said James, program director for the Afro-American & African Studies Center at University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. James lives in Northwest Detroit and frequently visits clubs in the Latino community in South Detroit.

"I was totally unaware of what I was coming into. It was lively people in great spirits. It was great to walk out on the floor surrounded by all these people dancing. This is a super version of the clubs in Southwest Detroit. People have flowers in their hair. I can't wait. It's going to be fun. I go with a group. We buy a block of tickets and invite the students to go see the drumming and hear polyrhythms. It's so educational. Students say that's

a beat I heard in hip hop. They see how the history of music moves."

Like the majority of the audience James will hear Mercury's Brazilian rhythms for the first time. Known as the Queen of Axé (pronounced "ah-SHEAY), the singer fuses samba, reggae, pop, funk, hip hop, and techno in her music.

Mercury grew up in listening to blues, jazz, classical, and opera. By age 15 she was singing Brazilian popular music and at 18 was performing in the carnival of Bahia, a province in northeast Brazil. The parade draws some 2 million people and lasts eight consecutive days.

Ypsilanti is Mercury's only American concert until she returns in June to promote her latest CD *Eleto-domestico*. She has recorded 10 CDs, two with a group, eight as a solo artist. She brings a band of 11 musicians and dancers with her to the Convocation Center.

FLASHY SHOW

Mercury's flashy show is what's made her popular with Latin American and European audiences. Expect lots of flashy dancing from the singer who grew up in Salvador, Bahia's capital. She is quite proud that even though she is white, the city is 90 percent black.

"My songs speak about

AFRO-BRAZILIAN DANCE PARTY

What: University Musical Society throws a dance party with music by Brazilian singing sensation Daniela Mercury

When: 9 p.m. Saturday, April 12

Where: Eastern Michigan University Convocation Center, 799 N. Hewitt, Ypsilanti

Tickets: \$35. (734) 764-2538

Related event: Artist reception and interview with Mercury, 4 p.m. Friday, April 11, University of Michigan School of Social Work Building, International Institute, Room 1636. No charge

moments of choreography in a group and moments that I dance alone more freely."

Like James, Linda Yohn isn't familiar with Mercury's music or show but is planning to "get familiar with her music" before the party. That shouldn't be difficult for Yohn, WEMU Radio music director and afternoon host. WEMU Radio plays two hours of Cuban music followed by two hours of Brazilian music on Monday evenings.

"It's good music, the rhythm, melody, passion, the spectacle, the authenticity. It's not white bread, homogenized, middle of the road clap trap," said Yohn who was at last year's Afro-Cuban Dance Party. "People should come to experience something new, different, to come out and feel energized and full of life. It's fantastic sweating up a storm. Dancing to really good live music is truly missing from our lives. Today young people can go to the clubs. This is for people of all ages including gray hairs."

"The convocation center is a lot more than a basketball court. It's multi-use with an excellent sound system and a cushioned dance floor so your feet don't hurt. There's also comfortable seating for those who just want to sit and enjoy the music."

"I alternate the shows with

Brazil, about the love, about the fight of classes, about the Afro-Bahian groups and the assertion of black culture, about the importance of celebrating life with joy," said Mercury.

"I alternate the shows with

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VIVACE SERIES

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"It's not a heavy program. They're short pieces, a lot of different styles. I think they're going to like everything. Stylistically, people have fun at parties, but variety is the spice of life."

Liberson and Conway will perform a variety of music by composers ranging from William Bolcom to Claude Debussy including Pocket Size Sonata No. 2 by Alec Templeton.

"I mixed it up," said Liberson. "The Petite Piece by Debussy I knew about forever. The 'Templeton is light and jazzy. I looked for pieces with small, short or petite in the title. These are musical miniatures." It's easy to hear the love for

chamber music in Liberson's voice. The Vivace Series gives him the opportunity to share that with the audience. Except for concerts with Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings of which he is a charter member, Liberson rarely performs with small ensembles. That's why he's enthusiastic about the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival June 14-29 - and the Vivace Series. The Festival features a series of concerts with internationally known chamber musicians like violinist Ton Kawafin and members of Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings. The Vivace Series spotlights chamber music at least once every season.

"In school, I remember recitals being dull affairs with heavier work," said Liberson. "I wanted something thematic and on the lighter side. You'll be hearing music you've never

heard before. The second half nobody will know any of the music.

"We'll do an encore of James Scott's 'Frog Legs Rag' only if they clap."

Leave it to Liberson to end

on a note of humor.

Know of an interesting story? Call Observer & Eccentric arts reporter Linda Anne Chomin at (734) 953-2145 or send e-mail to lchomin@oe.hometeam.net.

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STAR FAIRLANE 21	STAR GRAYTOT	STAR WEST LANSING
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what a girl wants

PG

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