

AND...

PRESS CONFERENCE with Tiganá Santana,
July 14 at 11:00, cour du Cloître Saint-Louis

MILAGRE DOS PEIXES

A rising star of Brazilian music, Tiganá Santana combines African and South American influences in his compositions with rare subtlety, and chooses today to cover a key album of the 1970s resistance against the military regime. With *Milagre dos Peixes (Miracle of the Fish)* by Milton Nascimento, co-founder of the band Clube des Esquina, Tiganá Santana pays homage to what he calls "an unprecedented event in the history of Brazilian music." Accompanied by two musicians, and with new arrangements, he lends his voice to the singer's political lyricism in order to give new perspectives to a movement of resistance against a newly-elected government nostalgic for years of repression. Tiganá Santana, born in the Brazilian black community, puts his personal conscience into the songs, but also his engagement against oppression to express the possibility of a multicultural society which could break free from segregation and exclusion.

TIGANÁ SANTANA

A new voice in Brazilian music led by the moving rhythms of his drum-guitar, **Tiganá Santana** sings in several languages, including African dialects. Born in the black community, he has developed his music in accordance with the imaginative and curious legacy of his elders, adding strong African influences. His compositions have earned him recognition throughout the world, both from lovers of traditional Brazilian music and from jazz or folk aficionados.

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FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 73RD

JULY 14
COUR DU COLLÈGE JOSEPH VERNET

INTERVIEW WITH TIGANÁ SANTANA

Your show was born of the cover you did of an entire album by Milton Nascimento, *Milagre dos Peixes* (Miracle of the Fish). Can you tell us more about this artist, born in 1942, and of this generation of performers who came of age under the military dictatorship?

Tiganá Santana : I grew up surrounded by Brazilian music, and I love many of its currents, but I have a particular admiration for the generation of Milton Nascimento, who worked at the same times as other artists more well-known in France like Gilberto Gil or Chico Buarque. Starting in the 1960s, those singers and musicians brought together different musical genres, in particular with the Tropicália movement, which included Caetano Veloso. Milton Nascimento's generation is more precisely linked to the Clube da Esquina, born in Belo Horizonte. With the help of Elis Regina, Milton Nascimento worked with many musicians from the city: Lô Borges, Toninho Horta, Tavinho Moura, Flávio Venturini, and Fernando Brant, a very important lyricist. Milton Nascimento's *Milagre dos Peixes* was released in 1973. The government immediately banned it. In another version the words, which everyone knew, had been changed to "la-la-la" by the artist himself... Beyond the artistic perspective, those musicians, essential to my journey as an artist, express what it means to be a Brazilian, culturally speaking.

What does it mean?

Milton Nascimento is, within his generation, a particularly innovative performer. First because of his voice, and thus his singing. It's not easy to say it otherwise: his voice was an unprecedented event in the history of Brazilian music. If the word *text* comes from the Latin *textus*, or *cloth*, then Nascimento's music is a creation which had the power to weave together composition, harmony, and melody—but the idea is that everything appeared as already woven together, all at once. The poetry of the words can then find its place within it. Milton Nascimento was first and foremost a musician. He didn't write his own lyrics, but worked with poets. The power of his music resides in the way he opened it to African and Indian sources, and to Latin American influences in general. His songs were therefore messages to the dictatorship, political messages of course, but also aesthetic, artistic, and creative messages. Everything is linked, nothing stands on its own. That's what to be a Brazilian, culturally speaking, might mean.

What was the place of this unique lyricism in the 1970s?

Milton Nascimento's lyricism is his own, and can be found in other songs, other albums. It has its own tradition in Brazil, with a poetic dimension which allows songs to have a "creative through-line," especially in this generation that included Chico Buarque and Gilberto Gil.

It's important to say that if those artists are internationally renowned and are famous in their home country, they were able to distance themselves from "easy" popular currents, to reject musical marketing. In that way, their popularity can't be compared to that of other artists in Brazil; it's different in its originality, it is in a way more "sophisticated." They are real connectors and collectors. Those great artists were able to build bridges without compromising their musical ideals.

You've also studied philosophy. You're currently facing the power of a pro-military government which looks back on the years of dictatorship with nostalgia... What is your vision of today's Brazil?

Brazil was, right from the start, a colonisation project. Despite the presence of African and Indian influences, as well as some from other cultures, we live in a country defined right from the start by oppression and racial segregation. The idea of a mixed country, harmoniously so, remains, but it's not the reality. The fascist ideology associated to a military regime relying on protectionism, including when it comes to the economy, exists to complete the colonial project of Brazil. It's a cycle. Yet History keeps moving forward. We've entered a different phase of History with the presidency of Lula, whose imprisonment was politically motivated. Before, many people couldn't afford to eat, let alone to study. Now it's possible. We have to keep going forward, to live and stand between a fascist government which wants to go back to the initial project of Brazil and those recent changes. To perform *Milagre dos Peixes* in 2019 is to say that art won't back down against Bolsonaro's regime. In spite of this unfortunate political moment in Brazil, we're living with new possibilities, and we must keep going forward.

What are you trying to remain faithful to when covering this album, emblematic of Brazilian protest music?

First and foremost, we're trying to be unfaithful, so as to protect our creativity! However, we're also making sure to ask ourselves the same questions Milton Nascimento did, but in a new political context... In terms of arrangements, we've changed a lot of things. The musicians with whom I've created and performed this show all come from different backgrounds, have different stories. We have to take this singularity into account, use it in our approach. In fact, the arrangements can't be but different: I play my left-handed guitar, called "drum guitar" because of its sound, just like I play the drums next to Sébastien Noniti, who plays the saxophone and keyboard. Ledson plays bass but also acoustic guitar. We try, during our performances, to go outside our comfort zones. That's why I use a song from the live version of *Milagre dos Peixes*, released in 1974 as *San Vincente*, which isn't on the studio album, to create an intertextual interpretation, and at the same time mix this intertextual interpretation with our own subjectivity.

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Interview conducted by Marc Blanchet and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach