

**Prom 52**  
**Sao Paulo Jazz SO/Alsop**  
**Albert Hall**

★★★★☆

A hundred years of Brazilian popular music in 75 minutes? Quite a task, but one that Marin Alsop and her musicians accomplished in some style, reminding us that the barriers separating “serious” music and the rest are not as rigidly observed over there. Listen to Tom Jobim’s compositions and you sense that you are in the company of an artist at ease in both worlds.

It was a pity that *Garota de Ipanema* (*The Girl from Ipanema*) had to be wheeled out to represent his contribution to the repertoire. You might have thought that an audience venturing out to a late-night Prom would have been ready to be pushed that little bit harder. Still, Eumir Deodato’s arrangement sidestepped the hotel lift with the help of some unexpected dissonances from guest pianist Gabriela Montero. And earlier,

the orchestra (the Sao Paulo Jazz Symphony Orchestra, augmented by ultra-crisp brass and percussion, and the string players from the Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra) had fallen silent as Montero, an assured improviser, sketched a rhapsodic version of *Insensatez* which carried Jobim’s theme back to its source in Chopin.

One or two of the pieces (including Chico Buarque and Edu Lobo’s ballet piece *Beatriz*) veered towards the insipid, and there were moments when you wished that the jazz horn section could have been given more openings. Yet, the extracts from Dorival Caymmi’s suite *História de Pescadores* illustrated how snugly the two wings of the orchestra could be blended. Alsop, dancing on the podium, was definitely not playing the part of a tourist.

Caetano Veloso’s groundbreaking *Tropicália* lent itself particularly well to a large-scale treatment. At the close, Ary Barroso’s anthem *Aquarela do Brasil* made a decorous entrance, although the orchestra left its most vivacious playing to the encores on the tantalisingly brief examples of quicksilver frevo rhythms.

**Clive Davis**