

## **Rob Curto's Forró For All**

Brazilian *forró*

New York City, New York

The sounds of Brazil's lilting, romantic bossa novas and swaying sambas are known throughout the world, but in the dry northeast interior of Brazil there is a different musical force. Forró for All is dedicated to a distinctive music of the Northeast, traditional *forró pé de serra*, performed with a sensibility born of New York City's diverse and dynamic musical culture. Forró for All's members represent the amalgamation of styles and sounds that make up the Brazilian-American experience. Forró For All plays for Brazilians and non-Brazilians alike, continuing the tradition of creating a celebration for all to enjoy.

*Forró* is social music created at the turn of the last century from a melding of Portuguese button-accordion tunes and African rhythms. In the cowboy culture of the rocky, arid Brazilian *sertão*, the name *forró* became a catchall phrase for the music, the dance style, and the event. A *forró* can last all night long, with couples young and old dancing close, legs locked, rocking to the infectious rhythms emerging from the *sanfona* (accordion), the *zabumba* (a type of bass drum), and the triangle.

The term "forró" may have derived in the early 1900s from the English expression "for all." English construction engineers working on the Great Western Railroad would throw balls on the weekends, some for railroad personnel only and some for the general populace, or "for all." Another theory suggests that "forró" came from "forrobodó," a word meaning "great party" or "commotion." Whatever its origin, the word "forró" became associated with the unique musical style that emerged from the ranching culture of the Northeast. Forró is now one of the dominant styles of folk music in Brazil, enjoyed all over the country.

Accordionist and singer Luiz Gonzaga, the first big star of the genre, brought *forró* to Rio de Janeiro in the 1940s, and became an idol among the northeastern migrants in that city and São Paulo. He blazed the trail for a number of other northeastern musicians who enjoyed national popularity from the 1960s forward, and inspired a new generation of *forró* musicians.

Forró for All is lead by accordion master Rob Curto, who spent years working as a musician in Brazil, where he studied and played with legendary *forró* musicians Dominginhos, Arlindo dos Oito Baixos and Silveirinha. He has worked with a wide variety of musicians such as Lila Downs, Cyro Baptista, David Krakauer and Frank London. Rob is joined in Bangor by some of the finest musicians in the U.S. who are also well known masters of Brazilian music: vocalist and percussionist Nanny Assis, originally from Bahia, Brazil, has been sought out by some of the biggest names in Brazilian music like Vinicius Cantuaria and Cyro Baptista, master percussionist and founder of Brazilian-American dance band Nation Beat, Scott Kettner, and guitarist Clay Ross, who recently released an inspired recording of guitar work influenced by the music of Northeastern Brazil, *Matuto*, on Ropeadope Records.