

LUCIANA SOUZA - SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Speaking In Tongues is a suite of musical poetry with the theme of language at its core. Luciana Souza's stunning new album for Sunnyside Records, draws on the talents of four of the most creative musicians working in Jazz today; players who, along with Luciana, come from five different places on the planet, and have five different languages as their native tongues. Together with the extraordinary vision of producer Larry Klein, they have melded their creative voices into an exciting new tributary of Jazz; one that breaks down compositional and sonic walls, and treads onto fresh ground in every sense. The Grammy Award winning vocalist and composer describes her new project as "*a musical inquiry into language and conversation.*"

Luciana Souza grew up in Brazil in a musical household where ever-present musicians and friends introduced her to the joy of expressing herself through participation in communal music making. It was her godfather, the eclectic Brazilian legend Hermeto Pascoal, who encouraged her to sing along with instruments and enmesh herself in the ensemble. As she evolved as a singer, Luciana understood that the primary force in Jazz was listening, which is the basis for learning any language. Luciana's musical education and development has taken her from Brazil to Boston, New York, and now Los Angeles. Her artistry reflects her distinctive upbringing and her devotion to developing music that communicates without boundaries - her ventures into Jazz and Brazilian, as well as Classical and Contemporary orchestral music, have always been imbued with a sense of adventure and respect for tradition, while consistently searching for the "new."

Speaking In Tongues brings together Souza and a tremendous new ensemble, whose members she had never previously worked with, creating a unique and moving collection of new pieces. "Equality is paramount in language - for people to understand each other truly, they have to feel permission to share, to create," Luciana says. Hailing from Benin, West Africa, guitar master Lionel Loueke has a remarkable voice, combining Jazz and African music, along with a childlike openness to experimentation. Swiss born harmonica virtuoso Grégoire Maret serves as an exceptional vocal foil because of his extraordinary talent and the singularity of his instrument's sound, one that for Souza is a metaphor for the recurring presence of the accordion in Brazilian music. Massimo Biolcati brings his incredibly empathetic sensibility and cosmopolitan taste and experience to the bass, as well as a bridge that emanates from his many years as a member of Loueke's trio. Kendrick Scott embodies the voice and attitude of a generation who grew up listening to everything, with no boundaries around the music that we call "Jazz," but who also approaches this expanse with a focus on refinement and musicality.

Souza says, *"I think we all felt like we could transcend the need for translation - we all knew what we needed to do - we lowered our guards and embraced melody and rhythm. It sounds so basic, but it really allowed us to arrive at something beyond our own personal experience."*

Souza composed the majority of the pieces, drawing from her strong experience singing on more than sixty records as a side singer with artists like Kenny Wheeler, Maria Schneider, Danilo Perez and Herbie Hancock, and having written many of the compositions on her previous releases. All members of the ensemble took an active role in the character of the music, accepting each others' musical gestures and choices, resulting in the sound of a collective, rather than the hierarchy of an artist-led project. Much of the time in the studio was used to explore and experiment until the compositions had arrived at their own destination - a meaningful story had been told, words included or not. This all happened with the creative input and expert guidance of four-time Grammy award winning producer Larry Klein.

For Luciana, singing without words is a way of articulating her own humanity and the human experience with others; of communicating beyond the particulars of language. It draws the listener in towards a more direct connection with the intensely emotional quality of her sound as a vocalist. Souza felt that if lyrics were to be included on the album, they should be composed by a true master of the poetic possibilities of language, thus "Split" and "No One To Follow" feature words written by the incomparable poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen, of whose work Souza says, *"Something happens with poetry, which again, goes beyond language. Something hits your soul - some crazy truth about yourself or your life gets spoken. Leonard does that - he hits the depth of a scene or a feeling; he distills the human experience down to these moments... moments that articulate the tragedy, joy, and eternal questions of life into a couple of lines of simple language."* These two works, from Cohen's collection *The Book of Longing*, were set to music by Souza with his blessing. *"I think that this recording captures something new for me, says Luciana - "the intensely collaborative, intuitive, and conversational nature of Jazz, and in doing so creates a music that transcends the borders and boundaries of genre, beyond the specifics that we many times are compelled to impose upon art. This was possible with these guys - the idea of music being a descriptive dialog, one that is the first step toward some type of understanding that is both honest and beautiful."*

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1. AT THE FAIR (Luciana Souza)
2. HYMN (Gary Versace)
3. STRAW HAT (Luciana Souza)
4. SPLIT (Words by Leonard Cohen & Music by Luciana Souza)
5. FILHOS DE GANDHI (Luciana Souza)
6. A PEBBLE IN STILL WATER (Kendrick Scott & Mike Moreno)
7. FREE AT LAST (Luciana Souza)
8. A.M. (Lionel Loueke)
9. NO ONE TO FOLLOW (Words by Leonard Cohen & Music by Luciana Souza)