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Ben Ratliff

"This singer inarguably lives in the jazz world: she plays regularly with a quartet, writes for it, teaches it. But being Brazilian Ms. Souza, above, also sings samba, and sings it with satisfying care and energy. Her abilities as a composer and bandleader have enabled her to pick and arrange all kinds of sambas for voice and guitar alone, and her first album along these lines, "Brazilian Duos," from 2002, was a display of almost effortless authority. The second helping, "Duos II" - just released on the Sunnyside label - tops it in places. The album was recorded with a number of different guitarists in America and Brazil, but her regular duet partner in New York is the guitarist Romero Lubambo, who gives her the counterpoint and speed and swing she needs. It's an affectionate partnership, and a true pleasure to watch."