

# JAZZTIMES MAGAZINE



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**Luciana Souza**

Speaking in Tongues

**Sunnyside**

By **Christopher Loudon**

Though its title is borrowed from *Corinthians*, referencing how an unfamiliar language speaks not to man but to God, Luciana Souza's outstanding *Speaking in Tongues* also aligns with another Old Testament reference. For, in its synthesis of varied cultures and mixed influences, it seems the anti-Babel: demonstrating how multiple musical languages can come together in audacious harmony, creating an entirely unique yet universal dialect.

Produced by Souza's husband, Larry Klein, the album unites the Brazilian singer-pianist-composer with four artists she'd never previously worked with: from Benin, guitarist and vocalist Lionel Loueke; from Switzerland, harmonica virtuoso Grégoire Maret; from Italy via Sweden, bassist Massimo Biolcati; and from Texas, drummer Kendrick Scott. Together they weave a capacious tapestry, crafting seven wordless poems—four written by Souza, one by Loueke, one by Scott (with Mike Moreno) and one by Gary Versace. Their varied hues are as bold as they are vibrant. Among them: the hushed glory of "Hymn," the meditative sanctity of "A Pebble in Still Water," the joyous cacophony of "At the Fair," the tribal-cum-barnyard-cum-space-orbit clamor of "Filhos de Gandhi" and, with its powerful African underpinnings, the explosive, euphoric "Straw Hat."

The two remaining tracks feature actual lyrics. Souza reasoned that if she was going to incorporate real words, she needed to seek an esteemed source. So, fitting music to two Leonard Cohen poems, she amplifies *Tongues* with the surreal, bilateral romanticism of "Split" and dark disconsolation of "No One to Follow."