

Luciana Souza

The Book Of Longing

SUNNYSIDE 1518

★★★★

Luciana Souza is a singer who needs no adornments. She doesn't lay on thick layers of attitude or vocal condiments; she sings frankly and tends to get the most of out of a song when using sparse accompaniment.

On *The Book Of Longing*, joined only by guitarist Chico Pinheiro and the ink-dark bass of Scott Colley (plus her own percussion overdubs), Souza continues exploring the soft divide between the communicable and the ineffable. It's artistic territory she mined on her previous album, *Speaking In Tongues* (Sunnyside). But this time, without drums and forgoing the wordless vocalizing that defined her last effort, the focus falls hard on poetic language—its sharp power and its limitations.

Souza has put 10 poems to music: four by Leonard Cohen, whose poetry collection *Book of Longing* inspired the project; three of her own; and one each from three eminent poets of the past two centuries—Edna St. Vincent Millay, Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti. Souza's phrasing is direct and unfussy, nearly conversational. The melodies she's written have a warm, discursive flow, sometimes blurring the



Things," then romantic and wistful on "Alms."

On this spare and pensive album, Souza sings Cohen's poem "The Book" with gentle irony and sly harmonic shifts, à la Cole Porter. The lyrics are a solipsistic single man's lament ("I'm living on pills/For which I thank God"). But Souza leaves melodrama at the door, and it pays: As the song's imagery wanders toward abstraction, the feeling grows only truer.

—Giovanni Russonello

The Book Of Longing: These Things; Daybreak; Alms; Night Song; Paris; The Book; Tonight; We Grow Accustomed To The Dark; A Life; Remember. (40:54)

Personnel: Luciana Souza, vocals, percussion; Chico Pinheiro, guitar; Scott Colley, bass.

The Hot Box

Luciana Souza, *The Book Of Longing*

So spare, so lovely. Few vocalists can carry this volume of text and impart so much meaning, with so little accompaniment. Souza never has sounded better.

—James Hale

An intimate literature of self-reflection and interior stories set to Souza's original music. Her contralto has a lonely whispered calm and emotional neutrality, while the poetic content resides in more veiled shadows. A well-crafted, but elusive, concept album.

—John McDonough

Souza's *saudade* heritage gives her empathy for poetic longing, and her expressionistic melodies and phrasing take full possession of even the most intricate lines. Elegant strings favor the blossoming and decaying tones of Souza's accented vowels.

—Michelle Mercer

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The Book Of Longing

★★★★½

★★★

★★★★★

★★★★

Steve Turre
The Very Thought Of You

★★★

★★★★½

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