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"Brazilian jazz vocalist Luciana Souza is well-known for turning poems into songs. She garnered critical praise for her 2000 album "The Poems of Elizabeth Bishop and Other Songs." With Neruda, Souza dealt herself a challenge - setting several of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's poems to music (sung in English). Souza's voice is a superb instrument, and Neruda was a world-class poet, but neither of these realities guaranteed this project would be a success.

Souza has pulled it off in splendid fashion, though, blending Neruda's pensive words with themes from Catalan composer Federico Mompou's Songs and Dances. The finished project consists of 10 songs, notable for their graceful, almost stern minimalism. Instrumentation is limited to Edward Simon's piano and Souza's voice (she also handled percussion). Souza's vocals are beautifully pliable - fragile one moment, quietly robust the next. "Neruda" is the sublime realization of an inspired artistic vision."