

Mp3 Mark Abel - Songs Of Life, Love And Death

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"Alternative classical" is an apt description of Mark Abel's elegant and imaginative settings of the poetry of Rilke and Neruda -- a new compositional voice strongly delivered through the performances of three stellar San Francisco area sopranos. 14 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Contemporary, CLASSICAL: Orchestral Details: Mark Abel is a self-taught musician who has forged an original and provocative style that blends elements of classical, rock and jazz into a seamless whole he describes as alternative classical. His debut CD, "Songs of Life, Love and Death," is a striking meld of poetry and music powered by high-caliber singers. Mark fell in love with classical music as a young boy and it remained his consuming artistic interest until his early teens -- when it was supplanted for some time by modern jazz and later by rock, the medium through which he first developed his writing talents. As a guitarist, bassist and songwriter in New York City in the 1970s and into the 80s, Mark played and recorded with such seminal figures as Tom Verlaine (Television), Danny Kalb (the Blues Project), Michael Brown (the Left Banke), Nile Rodgers (Chic) and the late Harold Kelling, founder of the pioneering Atlanta fusion group the Hampton Grease Band. He also was a member of City Lights, the first American rock band ever signed by Sire Records; a producer of recordings for two well-regarded new wave bands, the Feelies and the Bongos; and a live sound engineer for Television and the Talking Heads. Marks interest in rock faded in the early 80s, however, due to the harmonic and rhythmic restrictions imposed by the pop song format and frustration with the commercial music industrys ever-narrowing scope. He relocated to California in 1983 and made a vocational shift into journalism, eventually becoming the foreign editor of the San Francisco Chronicle (the second-largest newspaper on the West Coast), a post he held until 2004. During these years, much changed in Marks musical world. As MIDI computer technology began to assert itself, he realized that it offered an unprecedented opportunity to begin working out more complex ideas in woodshedding fashion. This evolving process led him back to classical music and extensive investigations of the work of the important 19th and 20th century composers. His taste is broad, as reflected by a survey of some of his principal heroes -- Ives, Szymanowski, Brahms, Duparc, Strauss, Debussy, Berg, Janacek, Lutoslawski, Takemitsu. ... Several jazz figures have long been inspirational --

among them John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, Eric Dolphy, Paul Bley and the great but little-known California pianist Denny Zeitlin. Early influences also included the innovative rock of Frank Zappa, the progressive British groups Henry Cow and Soft Machine, and unclassifiable originals like Terje Rypdal and Ralph Towner. But the music Mark writes doesn't sound like any of the above. Nor should it be expected to. Artists who prize individuality seek to develop their own solutions and idioms. Those who are moved by "Songs of Life, Love and Death" consider it a successful and unique synthesis of several discrete ingredients: the gravity, gestural elements and pacing of classical music; evocative poetry; an accessible tonal language with a strong emphasis on melody; and the ineffable human emotional arc provided by sopranos Katy Stephan, Elizabeth Eshleman and Karen Hall. One of the CD's most striking and heartfelt features is the memorial set that leads it off. "One Long Peace" is built around a poem written by a childhood friend of Mark's mother after she took her own life in England in 1991. "Mystic Brave Bird" is a tribute to his best friend of three decades, Christian Osborne, a musician of great gifts who played with John Lennon while still in his teens but died in obscurity in Los Angeles in 2004. Mark says of Osborne: He was an extremely talented and charismatic guy whose unflinching and often solitary dedication to his art was a great example to everyone who knew him. As for his settings of the great poets Rainer Maria Rilke and Pablo Neruda, Mark observes: Many of us who came of age during the 60s, when so much of the inherited culture was tossed out the window, missed out on the joys of poetry. It was terribly stimulating to make the belated acquaintance of these artists and, years later, to feel them inevitably inspiring my muse and helping take it to a higher level. Mark regards his use of sampling technology on "Songs of Life, Love and Death" as a pragmatic means to an end and not a component of the alternative classical aesthetic. "I'd much rather be recording with an acoustic orchestra than a digital one!" he writes on his website. "Nonetheless, there's no denying that the advent of computer-based composition programs and sampled acoustic instrumental sounds has been a godsend for me and others who are not part of the serious music 'establishment' but are eager to expand their horizons and love working with the materials of classical music. This technology is not intended to replace performing musicians; on the contrary, it is aiding the creation of new works for those musicians to play."

Searches:Mark Abel San Francisco Chronicle

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