

REVIEW OF AN ALBUM BY

LISA SWERDLOW

“Lasting Impressions”

Review by Kerry Barnes

TRACK 1.

“Listening From The Heart”

The solo piano version.

This gorgeous piano piece is in spiritual tribute, to the folks who have profoundly touched Lisa’s life in some way, throughout her healing processes.

It’s quite rhapsodic and voluptuous, and explores a wide range of pianistic dynamics, from pianissimo to fortissimo.

The longest piece on the album, and forms a kind of 'abridged-concerto' movement.

The main thematic material contains some 'devilishly difficult' right hand passage work!!, and only a well co-ordinated hand can execute it. The 521-421-31 pattern!!.....and even more impressive is that at those precise moments she also plays 3 against 4!!!

Lisa makes light work of 'octaves' which carve out her beautiful melodies with ease.

Oooh, was that a little Cathy Oakes I hear??only fleetingly though!!

This is heart wrenching stuff.

Lisa also cleverly combines wet & dry pedalling techniques to great effect, and this provides a natural punctuation.

When she plays in the higher registers of the piano, it really does sound like sprinkling chocolate sprinkles over ice cream.....delightful.

However, when in the middle thickness and with minor tonality, the lushness smacks of Rachmaninov or Brahms.

Lisa takes us to euphoria-land at around 5.20, before a slower, softer episode comes in to being, so poignantly felt.

Lisa brings the piece to rest on a pedalled chord which has a natural life of 11 seconds. Just lovely.

TRACK 2, 3 and 4.

“Dream Trilogy”

A suite of visionary slumber, lucid in it's message and definitely no pipe-dream for Lisa. In her unconscious mind, she finds herself slipping, flying and waking up to an uncertain world, that she struggles to make sense of.

A profound nocturnal sense of health and just being in that moment, and taking every day as it comes, really hits me.

I pay tribute to her strength and resolve, and I pray for her spiritual healing.

The first movement "Slipping into Dreams" has a feeling of surreal reverie.

Lisa beautifully fills the opening notes with plummeting triads which lead me to a sense of spinning round in a Georgian dress, about to fall. The tender melody is beautifully decorated, not in fun, but in melancholy. I hear flashes of Nino Rota.

Heart aching modulations, sometimes surprise, but they are divine musical interventions to treasure.

Lisa, now fully slumberous, catches notes other than in the triad, pointing to heaven, in her last pedalled sleep.

The 2nd movement “Dreams in Motion”, is full of energy, driving forward as Lisa rides the ‘carpet of destiny’. In six-eight, (or twelve-eight) the accents fall on beat 6 and 1, and also ride, but ride the wave like arpeggios in the left hand. There’s a flawless and even tone between the hands as they too, ride the rapids.

Lisa punctuates a statement like ending, not sure if she’s asleep, or awake, but definitely cut off. Brilliant!!

The 3rd movement “Was it all a Dream”, Lisa asks a question here. Because she really is struggling to make sense of this Trilogy so far. Has it all been a sleepless reality?? She just can't imagine the truth yet.

Lisa starts us off with a very 'uncertain' bass line in unison between the hands. I get a fleeting glimpse of a 'Schumanesque' mood. She sounds confused, where is she?a single note thread of beautiful melody in the right hand eventually leads us to a 'hiatus' where she holds us in her hands, but still questioning.

A crescendo in fortissimo looms now, as Lisa feels the weight of this dramatic episode, luscious and interesting, full bodied in tone, hairs standing on end!!

I particularly love the melodic fragments in unison between the hands, slightly reminds me of Shostakovich, where in his concerto works, he plays the melody in unison between the hands but two octaves apart!!!

The higher echelons of the piano play us out, in exquisite touch, and sound quite rested. So Lisa's struggle is no more, she has her answer, all is well.

Her eyes open slowly, and adjust to the light. A reassuring, gentle light, bathes her in a golden hue, warming her face with love and contentment.

I wish I could have travelled this journey with you Lisa, just to hold your hand.

God Bless.

TRACK 5.

“Dawn Contemplation”

4.21 of pure frustration and futility.

The music is deep, agonising, and dramatic. Daylight is peeping through the window, saying, “It’s me again, your old friend INSOMNIA”

Lisa plays with such intensity here, with a veil of sadness projecting each glorious chord forthwith which cry “Help me please, I am trying to heal here, and I don’t need all this eyes wide open s***!!!”

There’s a classical quality to Lisa’s amazing playing, and a projection which really is ‘on-point’. We feel the pain of every second, and every heart wrenching note, it’s just not fair. This is too much for one person to deal with.

The dramatic episodes of 'unison' playing really show her musical prowess and her astounding ability to communicate to us, her true feelings.

Lisa takes us through a wide ranging palette of dynamics, perfect for this musical message, and I just want to rest my hands on her eyelids and say "sleep now, lovely lady, sleep now". Be still oh beating heart, and just listen to these delicate, gentle little butterfly notes, rising ever higher in their pianistic beauty. What an artist, this lovely lady Lisa.

TRACK 6.

"Still Here"

Lisa is in defiant mode!!

“I’m still here!!!”

“Deal with it!!”

There is an extremely high level of technical skill at play here!! We have fast scale passage-work, switching from simple time, to compound time, where crotchets suddenly become dotted crotchets as a main beat, Lisa’s own embellishments that are a glorious mixture of abridged mordents, turns and trills, and bravura octave playing in one hand!!! Wow!!!

The piece starts with a very pretty opening, somewhat reflective of course, how could it not be. Further developments are quite grandiose and Brahms-like in timbre.

It’s passionate, emotional and sends a message to God on high!!

Very skilfully executed, beautiful presentation, and a closing flourish of high notes rippling to the very top, in the shape of a flame.

Bravo Lisa!!!

TRACK 7.

“Pentimento”

Lisa’s ‘artistic expression of that which is hidden from view’. Could this perhaps be the struggles that she endures whilst not showing to people???’Pentimento’ speaks of the ‘act of layering’ so this title is perfect, as this is the first track on the CD that is orchestrated. Lovely strings work here from Kim Autry on violin, and Alexandra Roedder on cello.

Lisa's arranging talents are first class. Sometimes the strings play in 'unison' with the piano part which fortifies the musical message, and at other times beautifully harmonised and layered, complimenting Lisa on the piano.

I love the little piano fragments where Lisa plays in 3rds, very pretty.

The piece is also characterised by a 'driving left hand pattern' which is in a kind of unique Alberti-bass form.

I'm getting Nino Rota again, so painfully romantic.

Lisa, your canvas is complete!!

Beautiful!!

TRACK 8.

"Lasting Impressions"

(the title track)

A lovely blend of strings with the aforementioned artists, and soft, sandy, strokes on snare drum, from Paul Kraushaar, who also gently and tastefully adds electric bass guitar which plays beautiful 'portamente slides' especially near the end of the track.

I know it's impossible, but this track in four-four time somehow makes me want to dance a slow waltz!!!! It would make great music for film, like a slow dance scene in a Godfather movie!! (music with an ulterior motive).

On the piano, there is a standout moment for me, where Lisa plays a light descending motif in a time all it's own, like a Chopinesque waterfall, just delightful.

This music gives me a slight '*dragging*' sensation, especially when Lisa adds 'chordal-triplets' in the upper part. What a very interesting work of art!!

TRACK 9.

"Listening from the Heart"
(orchestrated version)

Wow!!this is knockout beautiful!

4.36 of soul-searching too, and again sounds like music for a film. Lisa, I think you should seriously think about creating music for film, you'd be brilliant at it!!

What a lovely 'twinkly-stars' opening, very enlightening, very light, and shows us a glimpse of the musical narrative to come.

Am loving the orchestration, so full and rhapsodic, what a great job done by Paul Kraushaar!! I don't think there are any mass-vocals on this, but the sounds fill the space beautifully, as if there are.

Lisa's right hand patterning here is truly the back bone of the piece and adds cohesion throughout.

The piece grows to be, expansive, panoramic and cinematic.

A lovely touch from 'pizzicato-strings' (the plucking of) to add another colour.

This track happens to be my daughter Penny's favourite!she is often by my side when listening, I think she'll learn a lot from this!!!

FINAL TRACK 10.

(orchestrated)
“Sing Me Of Winter”

I LOVE THIS TRACK!!!!!!!!!!

I just want to skate circles on a frozen pond!!!!.....dance.....anything!!

The sound world of this brilliant work matches it's title perfectly!!

I'm immediately transported to a Disney scene of winter, with little creatures, skates and all, bright happy faces and a lot of love to spread around.

What an ice-waltz it is, complete with glockenspiel frostings, sometimes actually in unison with the piano and other instruments.

There's a very pretty energy in this work,
moving forwards and saying to us all
“come on folks!....keep up!!” Love it!!

Lovely little woodwind entries of clarinet
and oboe, and wait.....is that a telephone
ringing I can hear???...(maybe it's Santa
taking early present requests).

A magical golden harp sweeps through a
cascading scale of light to bring a perfect
ending, to a perfect piece!!

ENCORE!!

Thank you Lisa for sharing your music with
me, and the world. So privileged are we.
I pay tribute to your strength as a woman,
your courage and determination, and we
will all find nourishment by the very sound
of your music.

You have certainly made a 'Lasting
Impression' on me. God Bless.