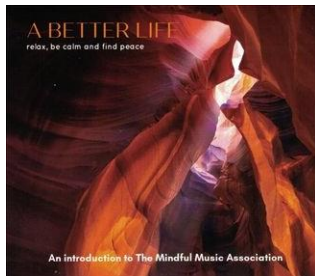


A Better Life

The Mindful Music Association 2-Disc Set



You will hear the term more often now. Mindful, a mindful life, mindfulness, and other like associations. And now Mindful Music. It is a term as well as a philosophy whose time has come. Mindful, in simple terms, means to be aware and in harmony with that very moment of your life. Mindful Music enhances those precious moments to a great degree. When you are immersed in Mindful Music such as what this 2-Disc set, A Better Life offers, you will become aware of your feelings, your surroundings, and the condition of your spirit. Music has never been more important or essential than it is right now. We are all looking for the smallest comforts, the quietest environment, and the tiniest of miracles. This will help. There are 26 distinct and gentle tracks of New Age, contemporary, ethnic, electronic, and atmospheric music by the very people that practice what they preach. Mindfulness. Here is a reviewer's sampling from those albums.

Disc 1

The first cut is called **Gliding the Current** by guitarist Robert Linton. If you listen to this long enough you might sprout wings. The music is entirely, and excuse the pun, uplifting in a way where you feel as if your cares are stolen away and you feel weightless of spirit. Horn, guitar, and violin gently swirl in the sunlight. Don't be afraid to look down.

Lisa Pressman's **Sea of Tranquility** is not filled with endless oceans of salty water. It is filled with stars. As we drift along with the music, we can touch some of them. We can wish on some of them. And we can become one of them. All of this astral power is locked up and then the music gives us entry. Is that sea of stars somewhere high in the heavens or is it closer? Much closer. Perhaps it is inside us. Every star is a thought, a memory, or a wish.

Seay, the sublime New Age songstress renders her original vocal, **Heaven's Gate** as a melodious respite from a tumultuous world. This is a New Age tone poem that anyone can enjoy. Her echoing entreaty implores you just breathe, savor the moment, and then repeat. Deep breath everyone.

Flutist Sherry Finzer's offering is what this music is all about. Her composition, **Breathe**, is a musical mantra full of a rapturous flow and ebbing of wave after wave of bliss. This singular track is the embodiment of mindfulness and its power to release the corporal boundaries that impede our euphoria.

Noted pianist Robin Spielberg offers us a life lesson within the song **Take the Time** (Learning to Knit). Her expansive, emotionally rich message is about taking time to do something for yourself. Something that pleases you. You can spend a lifetime trying to please others, but are you not worthy of the same love and attention?

From guitarist Ken Verheecke, there is a lot to be said for **Be Still** as the track name suggests. Gazing out of the window or just outside sitting on a big limestone rock as I used to do and

looking at your surroundings will bring you more than the colors of the sky and the landscape. It will bring tremendous peace to your spirit.

Equanimity, a soothing sonic sojourn by pianist Jennifer DeFrayne, is a quiet place in a very stormy lifetime. The opportunity for calmness abides in every placid note in this gentle ballad. This is bask in the sunlight and listen to the ocean waves music. Get reacquainted with your heartbeat music.

Additional talents on Disc 1 are Joseph L. Young, Lynn Tredeau, Gary Schmidt, Michele McLaughlin, Joseph Akins, and Tom Eaton.

Disc 2

When I Was Young, from guitarist Neil Tatar is a nostalgic acoustic endeavor with lyrical soprano sax by Premik Russell Tubbs and vocal musings by Noah Wilding. It has a bit of the Bossa Nova cleverly hidden inside the notes, but the sentiment is one of warm memories and pleasant experiences.

The dulcet instrumental from New Age ethereal band 2002 is called **Finding You**. It is slow and otherworldly with the combination of harp, violin, and guitar. I imagined myself drifting along, sorting through all the white, cumulus clouds, looking in the deep, dark recesses of the caves, and opening all the locked doors of my mind, hoping for a sign of you.

Electronic artist Meg Bowles conjures up a hypnotic, flowing trail of stars on her **Berceuse for a Child Star**. This lush, dynamic lullaby is an astral adventure for the soul. There is the sense of not only weightlessness, but also more importantly, timelessness in the waves of sound. Enjoy the mood break.

Looking Back by guitarist Ryan Judd is therapy for the soul. This amazing spatial pause in the action which features a forlorn flute as a companion, calms the spirit and allows the daydreams needed to counterbalance a life of that is normally a flurry of activities. Take advantage of the calm offer here.

Multi-instrumentalists Al Jewer and Andy Mitran's fluid interlude, **Levels of Peace** slows the world just enough so that you can take a much deserved respite. Time to slow the breathing, seek the shade, or count the stars. This is exactly the kind of music needed to block out the distractions and take solace in introspection.

Pianist David Peoples tenders his transcendent tune, **A Thousand Charms**. The pendulous piano notes keep time with your inner clock, making you aware of the moments spent in what ifs and maybes. There is even a tiny bit of chaos inside the music to remind to always seek balance.

From pianist Karen Biehl is the tune **Meditation on a Moonlit Lake**. This opulent ode is a piano melody mixed with synthesizer that shines like silver, yet comforts like silk. The tune is layers of warmth and satisfying giving you a modicum of bliss as you feel the darkness around you. An appropriate closing for the idyllic collection.

Additional talents on Disc 2 are Gina Leneé, Pam Asberry, Lisa Swerdlow, Mary Lydia Ryan, and Jim Ottaway.

Much of the music on A Better Life is New Age music, but it also encompasses a lot of genres. You've heard some New Age music. You liked what you heard, but you want to hear more. Surely there are many different kinds of New Age music out there. The Mindful Music Association's 2-disc set will give you a broad spectrum of what is available and the music is created by some of the top composers and performers of the genres. I guarantee that you will have favorites after listening to this amazing pair of thoughtful music CDs. Highly recommended.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews