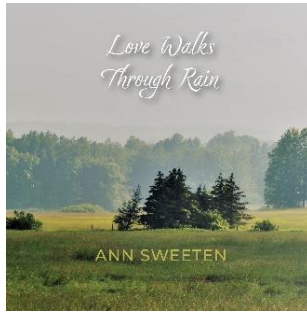


Ann Sweeten

Love Walks Through Rain

annsweeten.com



Listening to Steinway pianist **Ann Sweeten**'s new album **Love Walks Through Rain** reminds me of an old 60s Letterman song with the lyrics, "...so put on your bonnet, your cape, and your glove, and walk with me, for thee I love." Pure nostalgia and romance and that's pretty much the theme of Ann's latest recording. This gift of thirteen tracks of gentle, contemporary piano music is wrapped in the sentiment of time with ribbons and bows of heartfelt emotion. It's a collection of tunes where clement weather and memories are woven together into a fabric of wistfulness.

Just about every track has Ann carefully navigating the music in a deliberate manner. No speedy songs here, just warm meandering music for your thoughts to latch onto and follow along like a trusted companion. The album commences with **Valley Greene** and finalizes with **Valley Greene Orchestra Reprise**. The music ambles like a walk in the grass as sky and dale merge into just the right landscape. Ann's solo piano is tender, offering a pastoral atmosphere. Take your time and indulge. The reprise is a polyphonic version with the violin taking turns with the cello. Both voices as assuring as the sun. A little soprano sax mellows it all out.

Before the day awakens, when the sky is still clear and cobalt, your early morning walk will be guided by the morning star, **Seirios**. Precursor to the sun, the Dog Star is first to light up the day. The unhurried melody on Seirios is bright, lyrical, and emotionally transporting. The tune is made profound by the Electronic Wind Instrument of Premik Russell Tubbs.

Ann gives us the title tune **Love Walks Through Rain** filled with a cascade of notes that suggest the pitter-patter of raindrops. Two lovers and one umbrella ramble through the weather, oblivious to the wet and dampness, but warm in the radiance of love. Casting the umbrella aside, they dance in the rain like children. Love does that to you.

Red - Requiem for an Old Friend is as solemn as it needs to be. With a tinge of classical elements, I found the tune to be bittersweet. Ann's piano represents the sadness of loss, the endless hours spent staring into nothing, and the regeneration of memories that hold back the emotions. This is a beautiful tune.

The song **The Hills of Riversong** is slow and introspective. The tune has a strong sense of yearning, maybe even a sense of *fernweh*, the longing for a place you can never go to. Ann's dreamy score is something out of a modern day Brigadoon.

The Shadow of You is hauntingly nostalgic with a generous dose of melancholy. Sweeten's music suggests that it is not just missing someone that cracks open the heart, it is the knowledge

of that person, whose very existence draws your love. This solo piano tune is a weeper, but it is something that you need to hear every once in a while.

After Ann's expressive piano lead, Nancy Rumbel's English horn offers a voice in the distance on **Out of the Fog**. You can hear the seductive sound call out of the mist. It invites you to journey to a place called faraway or just listen and dwell in this quiet place. Where ever you go your existence will be clearer, more focused. Time to literally, get lost in the music.

The album has great production values thanks to mastering by Tom Eaton at Imaginary Road Studios. Wearing multiple hats legendary guitarist Will Ackerman appears on the album as well as being the co-producer along with Sweeten and Eaton. Side persons include Charlie Bisharat (Violin), Eugene Friesen (Cello), Nancy Rumbel (English Horn), Premik Russell-Tubbs (EWI, Soprano Saxophone), and Tom Eaton (Bass). Ann Sweeten has more than a dozen poignant albums that feature her deeply emotional piano compositions that touch hearts and offer meditative environments to refresh and to heal. This is one of her best. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews www.artisanmusicreviews.com