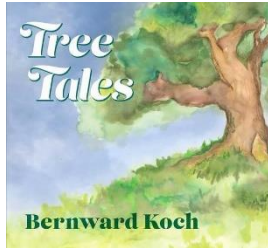


Bernward Koch

Tree Tales



We know that nature talks to us using many voices. On **Bernward Koch's** new album we get to know what the trees have to say. The album is called **Tree Tales**. From their deep, intricate roots to their towering, majestic canopies, we hear in the music the stories of mankind over a very long period of time, for trees live many of our lifetimes and they stand as witnesses to what happens. Koch's fourteen, delicate contemporary piano tunes are the stories we hear rustling in the leaves, the language of trees.

The first tale is called **The Key**. It opens the collection and promises that you are about to have new adventures. A soft touch on rough bark and you can identify the sounds that will let you into the world of the Tree Tales.

**Innerlight** is a soft, flowing tune that glows with gentle notes. Notes that start at the roots, get distributed throughout the heartwood, and result in a leafy crown that delights the eyes. Bernward's music once again proves that illumination, physical or spiritual, starts from within.

You just want to stand there and put your hands up and out and close your eyes and become a tree when you hear the tune **Warm Fall Sun**. The melody is cool and crisp, but there is a definite sense of warmth emanating from the notes.

**Hidden Dream** is one of Bernward's best on the recording. The piano echoes with magic as the melody pulls you in to a fantastic dream world. This may be the only place where you finally learn what the trees know. Ultra-light strings mirror the soft sentiment of this imaginary experience.

**Single Young Tree** is a very gentle tune that sounds as if something loud would disturb the fragile growth taking place. The leaves are a fresh bright green, the bark soft to the touch. Every wave of leaf and branch suggests promise; a future that, with enough tender loving care, could be very hopeful.

One of the more delicate tunes is called **Free in the Air**. Imagine a tiny seed that gets released from a tree and takes flight. Bernward's music box rendition drifts about on the whim of wind and sun. It soars on updrafts and finally, after a small forever, it lands in a place that is welcoming. The seed germinates and the cycle starts over.

One of my favorites on Tree Tales is called **Dark Old Trees**. The longer a tree lives, the more stories it has to tell. Those wide, gnarled branches, the scaly bark, and the long twisted roots are a testament to ages of observing the advancement of humankind. These trees have centuries of tales to tell. All humankind has to do is listen. Bernward's music has an earnestness to it that warrants attention.

You can visualize the falling leaves that carpet the ground in the tender song **Autumn Landscape**. In the distance the trees are painted gold and orange. The sky is a sharp, clear blue. Tomorrow they are calling for first frost. Bernward's song has a lot of textural elements that make you feel like you are about to experience a deluge of dropping leaves.

I liked all the tracks of Tree Tales. Every one of them had a new and different story to tell. Some were earthy narratives, some were leafy rumors, and some of them were cautionary tales. Koch's message is very clear. We must take care of the earth, the trees, and the land if we are to have a lasting planet. Overall the music is subtle and soothing. Perfect for an afternoon of reading, a quiet conversation, or a day in the garden. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews