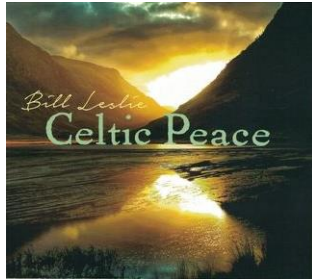


Bill Leslie

Celtic Peace



Composer **Bill Leslie**, on his new album **Celtic Peace** creates a lush Scottish tapestry of orchestral Celtic music. From islands to mountains, from glen to cobble streets, from lamplight to moon light, the sound of flutes and whistles fills the air like a soft wind off Loch Scridain. The music is as inspirational as it is satisfying. Every note will lift your spirits and carry you off to a place of green pastures, the crofting lifestyle, stony pathways, and yearning for Celtic Peace.

The album opens with the wistful tune **Iona**. It is an orchestral journey to the craggy shores of the island that became a holy place under St. Columba, who built his church there. The Picts were conquered not by Rome, but by the Word of Christ and that reverence is in Bill's music. The spirituality abides deep in the rock of that mystical place.

From the seashore we climb the mountain called **Ben Nevis**. In ancient times a volcano, today a destination for those that want peace by literally touching the clouds. Just as in life, you can take the easy way, the stone steps, or you can take the challenge of the twisted Carn Mor Dearg Arête. Bill's piano and whistle tune shows the majesty of that mountain, the throne of Beira, the Queen of Winter. Don't let the cold throw you, Bill's music is a summer trek up the mountain with views as far as the eye and heart can see.

Played like a slow waltz, the title tune **Celtic Peace** swings slowly around like a breezy day. Sunshine breaks through the morning mists giving bright color to the landscape. The sky promises a blue you've never seen before. This is a journey you are going to want to take. Just close your eyes and listen.

Planxty Irwin is a Turlough O'Carolan tune, a gift to a certain Colonel William Irwine. Performed in the right setting this original harp tune can be mischievous or reverent depending on conditions and tempo. Bill's tin whistle and a poignant piano meet in the middle to give the tune just the right posture. It can be a warm, earthy aire or sometimes it comes out like Bach cantata. Either variation is appealing. The arrangement for Planxty Irwin is from Nashville pianist Joseph Akins.

One of the more dramatic tunes on Celtic peace is called **Glencoe**, but it could have been spelled Glen Coe. An area in Lochaber, a particular place in the Scottish Highlands, it is the location of a bloody massacre and the home of ye olde clan rivalry. Bill's touching cinematic offering pays tribute to the people and history of that region. It is a respectful nod to all that the brave, courageous spirit of this land does not go unheeded.

Scottish Lullaby is soft and sweet, with a gentle string accompaniment that winks to the starry night. Soon the dreams of every wee bairn will be filled with the promise of warm sunny days and shady forest paths. There will be games among the hills and the days will be fine.

If you head west on the Brodgar Road on Orkney Island, you will soon come to Skara Brae. It is a place of reverent stone work older than the Pyramids. It is a village where mankind built the impossible at a time that some say mankind was just getting over his birth pains. Bill's melancholy tune, **Skara Brae** is a hymn echoing in a stone church, a musical prayer to recognize the marvelous achievements of an advanced knowledge, an indefatigable human spirit and a miracle of man. This is my favorite on the album. It is a beautiful, wistful tune.

Credit goes to pianist Joseph Akins for his talented contributions to some of the songs on Celtic Peace as well as Jennifer Curtis on violin, Linda Metz on flute, and Melanie Wilsden on oboe. This album is Mr. Leslie's tour de force. From start to finish, his orchestrations are inspirational and even if there is not a dram of Scottish blood running through your veins, it will make you ache for the chance of going there to find Celtic Peace. I would not be in the least surprised if a symphony is not born from the music. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews