

Calvin Jones

Paramount – The Symphony Sessions



There is something exhilarating about neo-symphonic music. Case in point **Paramount - The Symphony Sessions**, a new release by composer **Calvin Jones**. The recording is nine tracks of bright, cinematic tinged compositions that stir up more than one of the senses. Jones' music is lavish and sonorous with a great deal of complexity. With the accompaniment of the Taurida International Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mikhail Golikov of St. Petersburg, Russia, Jones creates this voluminous sound of brilliantly contrived stories. The orchestrations are reminiscent of some of John Tesh's work or that of Tim Janis' and that's not bad company.

The seasonally familiar **Carol of the Bells** opens the album with a lot of pomp and circumstance. It is a celebration that is welcome at any time of the year and Jones' rendition is lively stand up and cheer, invigorating. If this were the first song of a concert, then the rest would be incredible.

The mood completely reverses with the melancholic **Rachel's Lullaby**. It has a sweet flow to it and a warmth of firelight and winking stars. The middle of the song features Jones' piano as an old, wooden music box. The tune is enchanting. One of my favorites on Paramount is **Winter Port**. You can imagine the icy wind as it blasts the landscape and the swirling snow covering the earth. The waves crash onto the shore making eerie ice sculptures. It is the dead of winter, but everything is alive. Perhaps this is a portrait of Kiev, Jones' adopted city. **Compassion** is a beautiful waltz full of grace and muted joy. There is a sense of the strings spiraling around Calvin's piano, the music is light and free spirited. It is the sound of an open heart filled with tenderness and mercy.

Things get pretty lively with the tune **Celtic Joy**. Jones takes Beethoven's most beloved melody, Ode to Joy, and ramps it up. There's more than a little bright piano work and orchestral license on this composition. You'll be toe tapping to this one as the orchestra swells with rollicking elation. Another one of the slower tunes is called **Faith and Hope** and it is an enchanting theme of symphonic bliss. Passionate piano and resonant horns produce a captivating story, an adventure really, and the ending is a happy one.

Finally, Miss Euphemia Allen's legacy a.k.a. Chopsticks, is turned into a showpiece by Jones on the tune **Whitewater Chopped Sticks**. I've always found it to be one of the most annoying piano tunes ever played, but Jones takes the ditty to new heights with symphonic luster. His solo arrangement is now ever popular at recitals and performances, including one by a Miss America Pageant hopeful.

A man with a foot on two continents, America and the Ukraine, Calvin Jones is known as a composer, a pianist, a songwriter, and a record producer. For a man so young, his biography is remarkable and extensive. He is noted for composing music for the second highest grossing documentary ever produced, *2016*. Paramount is the ambitious and successful result of a man falling in love with an incredible woman, an enthralling city, and a world where inspiration never sleeps. Wonderful album. – R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews.