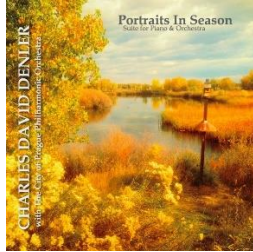


Charles David Denler

Portraits in Season



It has been some time since I've heard such dramatic music. Composer **Charles David Denler** slows the passing of time so that we may enjoy his latest album, **Portraits in Season**. I was just remarking the other day that I measure time in my life by the seasons, so this contemporary score granted me a whole year in just under thirty minutes. Denler's gentle hand pens eleven thought provoking tracks of cinematic, modern day, classically tinged refrains to while away the hours in some much need *me* time. Each vivid, finely textured tune is time well spent.

Seven of the tracks are live versions while others are variations on the themes. Denler's music is made lush and deeply dimensional with the benefit of the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Richard Hein. I understood every note and nuance of Denler's themes. They reflect his youth in the forests and fields of New England. It is an experience we share, but at different times. Denler's compositions capture the verdant spring time and the freezing cold winters and everything in between just like I remembered it.

The experience begins with the track **Season's Overture**. Horns and piano herald the arrival of the seasons. The music is like opening a box of musical crayons. You can hear sky blue, sunny yellow, cardinal red, and leafy growth green. Get ready for the verdant fields, labyrinthine forests, and lofty monadnocks that will thrill your imagination.

The sun rises and light and warmth return to the land. Denler's next song is a promise of new energy after the deep cold of winter and the long slumber of life. **The Return of Spring** opens the windows and doors of your soul and prepares you to step outside into the day. It is a complex melody with ascending notes that are a metaphor for the emerging green wood.

Echoing flute resounds in the tune **Woodland Flowers**. Be ready to explore all the colors of the wild woods. The pure white of the oxeye daisies. The bright yellows of buttercups. The ruby red of the hedge roses. This blithe, orchestral expansion is the opening of a hundred flowers that you don't know yet, but you are ready to make new friends. Every one a jewel for the eyes.

Denler offers a handful of happy piano notes and begins the tune **Mid-summer's Intermezzo** and the day turns out to be warm and sunny. Just a hint of a breeze and those cloud seemed to be drifting every which way but over you. It might just be the day for catchin' a fish, riding a bike, or kissing that special someone. Summers are like that. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "*Live in the sunshine. Swim in the sea. Drink in the wild air.*"

You remember that old oak tree in the front yard. You watched it from the window as the leaves turned from dark green to dull red and into the rusty brown foliage that lasted until the first snow. Then one morning you woke up and there it was. **Autumn's Last Leaf**. Denler's

brehtaking refrain is about holding on. Not giving up. And getting ready for the next time. As the little brown leaf lazily swirls to the ground, you know there will be more to come next spring.

Dulcet strings introduce **A Wintery Memory** as the first snow falls. The wind hardens and flurries fill the air at about the time the whole family stacked the wood on the pile and scrambled inside for some cocoa and the comfort of the fireplace. Anyone who gazes into the fire can remember a thousand and one memories of a time when the world was just right. Charles' nostalgic tune stays with the soul for a very long time. Like one of those lingering memories.

Season's Finale, like the first tune, leaves us with a hopeful longing for the cycle to start all over. Every season brings on something new, especially hope. The world needs that hope right now. Hope that the little girls will make some wonderful mud pies and the little boys will find the perfect quartz crystals. Maybe the grownup can also share in those dreams.

Listening to Portraits in Season is like watching a movie, but without a screen. Your mind hears and creates the drama, the beauty, the fantasy of dreams that the hard working soul so richly deserves. Denler's textural orchestrations and their myriad of variations are a promise of new a beginning. I'm going to listen to it again. Somewhere, Vivaldi is blushing. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews