

Deborah Martin & Jill Haley

## The Silence of Grace



There's more that meets the ear on the new release by the partnership of **Deborah Martin** and **Jill Haley**. **The Silence of Grace** is eight tracks of unexpected ambient goodness. Both Deborah Martin and Jill Haley are multi-instrumentalists whereas Martin is ambient and Haley is acoustic, but on *The Silence of Grace* the twain did meet. It collaborated and it heartily succeeded. The music is a wonderful convergence of electronic and acoustic journeys, each with a story and a musical theme. The music is more than soothing. It is immersive like a warm blanket in the morning or the sensation at night when you can't sleep and decide to count the stars again. Although all the titles suggest an earthy refuge, the music acts as a conveyance to some place you've never been.

**The Silence of Grace**, the title tune, opens the album while opening the mind. If you consider that everything around you is a gift of the Great Spirit, from God, from Allah, from Yahweh, from the ALL, then you know the Silence of Grace. The deep, intense beauty of this tune wraps you in a sense of calm, of quietude, and a subliminal feeling of safety. The music is every creature on the planet, every mountain, every sea, breathing simultaneously in prayer. It is a compelling experience.

**Indian Heaven** is a vision quest over bone dry desert and scorching sun. The heat is an unseen dimension that affects the body in strange ways and allows the spirits to speak. The music allows for a connection to the land like a plant. Above is sparse vegetation, but below the ground, the roots sink deep, deep down. Not all heavens are found up in the sky. Martin's synth music comes to you in waves, but in this instance, there is no mirage.

In the cleft of the mountains, surrounded by forests of black hemlocks and shrouded in misty mornings you might find your **Verdant Sanctuary**. Martin & Haley's soft, wavering tune with spangling notes reminds me how much I love to sit in the quiet forest and take in the cool, oxygenated air and hide in the dappled sunlight. Everyone should have their own Verdant Sanctuary.

**Fountains** is like a dreamy, classical music interlude or perhaps it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement from a glorious, earthly symphony. The water in this music is made out of blue, white, and transparent glass. With the help of the imagination it flows like any liquid and seeps and fills all the crannies of the soul. Refreshing, revitalizing, renewing.

**Earth Stone Water Sky** are the elements that make our world and Martin & Haley have created a canorous landscape of what it was like before humankind walked on Mother Earth. Earth is verdant, cool, sweet smelling. Stone is mountains to explore, to ascend and hope to get closer to the Spirit. Water is to nourish, to cleanse. And Sky, blue and endless, to dream. This is a beautiful song that can be played endlessly for meditation or relaxation.

Of all the tracks on *The Silence of Grace*, the final cut **Water Flows of Clouds and Thunder** is the most primordial, the most raw, and certainly, the most poignant. With swelling horns and pendulous strings the story of the perfect storm is not one of rage and anger, but one of gentleness, of life giving rain, of swirling mists, and the sense that this is a new beginning. It is the longest cut of the album, but the music is so free flowing that you forget all about time. The claps of thunder in the very end awaken you to the present. Hold on, I'm going back.

Additional tracks are *The Stillness of Forest Bathing* and *From Fire into Water*. On *The Silence of Grace* Deborah Martin plays a number of synthesizers and keyboards, Taos drums, and various percussion. Jill Haley plays oboe, English horn, keyboards and some percussion. I honestly can't remember when two such diverse talents have come together and produced such a completely balanced, cohesive work. Once you get engrossed in this music, it is hard to step away. This is an album for which you should just close your eyes, listen to, and surrender your soul. No harm will come to you. Instead, your spirit may soar to new heights, your horizons might become endless. And after that? *The Silence of Grace* is just that powerful. Excellent recording. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews