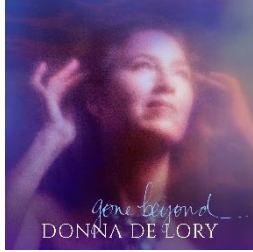


Donna De Lory

Gone Beyond



Is being alone with oneself too much? Is silence ever a burden? Can isolation produce something positive? The proof is in the listening as singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist **Donna De Lory** offers up her latest album called **Gone Beyond**. Her inspiring, meditative eight track gift is an improvisational marvel of New Age and World music chants, prayers and modern day hymns. The album is over an hour long and perhaps it should be longer. There are no simple Om Padme Om mantras here. De

Lory's compositions are quite intricate and layered in otherworldly vocals embellished with lavish, complex orchestration. Everything is just a little bit different here. Every song is a journey.

So Hum/Breathing, the first mantra gives voice to oneself. It means among other things, "I am that". De Lory's voice, a blissful, universal harmonic, acknowledges the self in a mournful prayer of gentle flowing energies. Layers and layers of voices, like gossamer veils, shroud the song in blossoming beauty.

Most of the songs on *Gone Beyond* are more than eight minutes long, but the period is spent in suspension of time and place. **Ma Song** is this liquid, languid paean with woeful cello by Jamie Sieber and bass by Tony Levin. It lives in praise of Mother and is based on the Jennifer Berezan chant "Returning". It sounds only modestly like the original, but the deep devotion that both songs have in common is evident. At nine minutes, it is so beautiful that playing it repeatedly only makes it more so.

Forgiveness Prayer is a seraphic hymn with angel voices. The pealing of a Tibetan bowl, the harmonium's sigh, and Donna's soft, tender voice offers one of the greatest gifts in humankind's emotional repertoire, forgiveness. I have always tendered that forgiveness is sometimes stronger than love. It is a gift that costs very little and results in emotional dividends like no other act of charity. The mix of voices and music makes this piece dreamy and transcendent.

One of my many favorites on the collection is a rapturous mantra called **Om Gate Gate Paragate**. Taken from the Heart Sutra, De Lory literally goes one step beyond the corporeal gate of the physical and crosses over into the world of calm and peace. The cello is great here as is the weightless feeling of unburdening the soul. This mesmerizing flow translates into something like "Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone utterly beyond, Enlightenment, hail!"

"Gate Gate Gate Para Gate Para Sam Gate Bodhi Swaha."

Asatoma Sadgamaya is a recognized plea of peace. De Lory's haunting voice gives new life to an ancient prayer. The vocal is agonizingly enthralling in its simplicity as well as its delivery.

*"Lord lead me from the unreal to the real
Lead me from darkness to the light"*

*From the earth to the open skies
Lead me from death to eternal light.”*

If you are fearful, this mantra shall give you strength. If you are lost, this mantra will shine a light for you. Of all the songs on the recording this one has some keyboard electronics mixed in that seem to mesh well with the heartfelt chant.

The final cut, **Unbreakable**, features John Wubvenhorst on Bansuri flute with ethereal vocals by De Lory. The song is her attestation that her faith is indeed “unbreakable” and that the love she feels is the bond that ties her to the “Prana”, the very existence of all matter in the universe. De Lory’s beseeching voice echoes like sound waves overwhelming a vacuum.

In my later years I find myself to be an omnist, a person who appreciates all religions. I reached this point after more than two decades of listening to music based on numerous religious viewpoints and I hope I am the better man for it. Music like De Lory’s *Gone Beyond* confirms my faith in the beauty and love found in all religions. De Lory is sometimes an angel and sometimes a shaman, but always an inspiration. Her love of God and life and her innate ability to create songs to celebrate that love humbles me. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews