

Arctic

Eldbjørg Hemsing and the Arctic Philharmonic

eldbjørgmusic.com



I began my journey when I heard a track on the internet called **Vårsøg**. At the time I did not know that it was part of an album called **Arctic**. What I did know was that I hoped there was more. The passionate violin piece was enthralling. I could feel the cold. It had light and shadow in the movement. It had muted colors. It had an energy like no other. Vårsøg means “In search of a New Spring” and I wanted to go and look for it. Such is the power of the music. The album has, like many fine Nordic works, an icy purity, a silky texture, and an abundance of mythos

hidden within.

On **Arctic**, her debut album, **Eldbjørg Hemsing’s** touch on the violin is magical. You can hear not only her vitality, but also her angst in the notes. You can understand that the subject is one dear to her. It is spiritual. **Arctic** is her land and her music. The album is a convergence of different composers, diverse styles and dissimilar philosophies. There is a wondrous six-part suite expanding and enhancing the motif. On **Arctic** you can witness classical, post classical, and contemporary elements with a scrupulous touch of the cinematic. **The Arctic Philharmonic**, starting in 2009 is a symphonic institution based in Tromsø, Norway under the direction of Christian Kluxen. Let me cite a few examples on the album.

The collection begins with an arrangement by Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo called **Dawn**. It is as if he took the first few minutes of a golden sunrise and expanded them into an inspiring scenario. Orange and gold fill the sky. Blue ice takes on an inner light. Hemsing’s voice on violin is that of an awe struck observer, ready for more miracles.

Whether looking at the landscape with a telescope or looking at a sample of the ice beneath your feet with a microscope, the wonders of the Arctic await you. So says the second track, **A Hidden Life** by James Newton Howard from his original soundtrack. Little miracles such as newly discovered ancient microbes or the smiling Arctic fox in a white, snowy background are waiting for your discovery. Hemsing’s sharp, finely-nuanced violin is a voice on the wind in this stunning adventure.

Next is **The Arctic Suite** and what a glorious body of work it is. Jacob Shea, the notable “Blue Planet” co-composer creates a 20-minute scenario that exhibits the diversity and beauty of this much misunderstood environment and its importance to the rest of the world. **I. Frozen World** looks at the landscape through blue tinted lenses. **II. Aurora** is a flash of green dust in the northern sky and all the magic it wields. **III. Sunrise** is another look at the daily miracle of light gracing our planet. **IV. A Rush of Life** is the compact close world that exists in its own microcosm that is the Arctic. In this piece the violin chases the theme about, the horns join in the pursuit, and music hurries forward so that everything can be witnessed. On **V. Polar Wind** we

feel the energies generated by the chemistry of the atmosphere. The last track in the suite, **VI. Sea Ice Melting** is innately sad as it represents the effects of climate change on this frozen region. Each tear becomes a musical note, weeping for the plight of the earth. This is spectacular suite and would make a wonderful live presentation. I'd like to reserve my ticket now.

There are two elegant classical selections on Arctic. **La Mélancolie** by Ole Bull and **Last Spring** by Edvard Grieg representing the tentative conditions of the mostly frozen expanse.

Under the Arctic Moon is a melancholy piece by Sami composer Frode Fjelheim. Although the world is not completely dark in this lunar light, the moon stills glows, the tides still ebb, and life, hopefully, goes on. What we fear is the changes that will come. The violin sings a lament for the expected.

Norwegian violinist **Eldbjørg Hemsing** recently exploded on the scene of classical and contemporary music and now she does it again in a big way with **Arctic**. Her performance is stunning to say the least. Her subject matter is a living, breathing environment whose plight is uncertain in this careless world. Every track represents the beauty and uncertainty of the theme. Arctic brings to light this fragile realm and perhaps, if you love the music, you might have feelings for the future of this very important ecosystem. Arctic is not a casual recording that you put on and forget. It is an immersive experience to which you give your attention. And every moment is well spent. Excellent. -R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews