

Erwilian

Cascadia

[www.erwilian.com](http://www.erwilian.com)



Combining delightfully light Baroque and blissful winter themes, the new album **Cascadia** from **Erwilian** is not only lively, but also wholly entertaining. Erwilian has crafted old world magic into this nine track all acoustic collection of live performances. The music has a sometimes modernistic feel, but the roots are definitely out of the traditional history of prayers, hymns, and folk tunes. Perhaps if we lived in 1750, we would have heard some of these marvelous songs and wished for more.

A single, graceful note soon joined by many others opens the title tune **Cascadia**. It becomes the sounds of daybreak, the time of high noon, or the end of twilight. The notes amble across the musical landscape, wandering and hopeful. It is as if the music is looking for a new home. For the listener the joy is in the journey as we follow the music which is sinuous and somewhat mystical. This is going to be an exciting excursion.

Quiet guitar, humble recorder, and chiming celesta combine on the old French tune, now doublet, **Animaux**. My recollection is that it is dedicated to the animals around the cradle during the birth of Jesus Christ. Erwilian skillfully expands the tune, the first part called La Crèche into a remarkable piece of reverent, acoustic ambience. The timing changes in the middle of part two, La Faune into a glorious work for the violin. I can imagine myself sitting in the audience, maybe performed in an old church, and just surrendering my soul to this soft, old world ballad.

Ralph Vaughan Williams most well know work gets a modern day acoustic treatment in Erwilian's version of **The Lark Ascending**. Poignant piano opens the tune, but the free-spirited violin quickly takes wing in the music and sings for its life. Echoing piano returns with a strong lead as the poetry of the piece emphasizes the hills and meadows of the English countryside.

Dulcimer, harp, and guitar coalesce into the tune **Átta Fossar**. The dynamic result is a virtual cascade of flowing notes that conjures up a towering waterfall in winter. Water still flows, but the ice it creates is rendered into bizarre shapes and crystal clear icicles. The singular spectacle is a source of beauty where barren tundra is the predominant feature. The music runs, it splashes, and, despite being frozen, it becomes a living thing.

I recognized the next tune, **Wandering**, as a take on an old folk song, The Wayfaring Stranger. Mellifluous recorder leads the way in a somewhat solemn direction and then violin joins in as a welcome confidante. Together, and with some instrumental company, the tune expands joyfully into what is called a little traveling music. This is a fun piece and one that shows off the talents of all the participants, perhaps Erwilian's way of introducing the band.

**Minuit** is another doublet with traditional French roots. When the music plays, you can feel that it is a sort of traditional carol taken out of its comfortable context and made new by this Erwilian

rendering. Especially notable is the recorder lead that gives the song its immense depth and tuneful qualities. The music is a slow dance for lovers who dwell in a different time, perhaps even a different dimension. The string arrangement is idyllic, the melodies, for there are two, are wistful beyond ordinary dreams.

The final track is called **Masters in This Hall** and it is one of the brightest tunes on Cascadia. This ebullient roundelay is a fanciful celebration and if you are within earshot, you cannot help but tap your toe and much more. Erwilian's finale is taken from composer Marin Marias' petite opera *Alcyone* and it has become a Christmas carol in the following years. I don't know if the band is stomping their feet in the recording, but I know I was.

On Cascadia Erwilian has managed to take a live recording and make it into an album that entertains throughout its nine tracks. From emotional hymns to a multitude of instrumental madrigals, the album will add cheer to any gray winter day or merry holiday celebration. Highly listenable. - R J Lannan, [ArtisanMusicReviews.com](http://ArtisanMusicReviews.com)