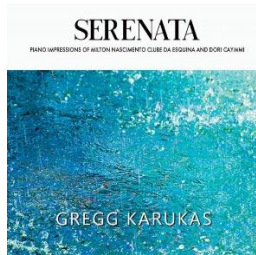


Gregg Karukas  
Serenata



I am going to describe **Serenata**, the new album by **Gregg Karukas** in one word - sentimental. Now I'm going to add some more words. Not sentimental as in Hoagy Carmichael or even Sammy Cahn. More like modern day Karukas sentimental. Mr. Karukas has a long and remarkable career as not only a soloist, but also as a Grammy winning keyboardist, composer, and producer. Partaking in numerous collaborations and producing countless artists, Karukas knows how the music is supposed to be. Rule One: it touches the heart. And of course Rule Two: See Rule One. Karukas' new 15 track contemporary music album **Serenata** follows the rules resolutely and imparts a high degree of emotion that is hard to come by in present day offerings. But he has had years of practice. **Serenata** is by and large, a tribute to days gone by, gigs with old friends in after hour clubs, and music created, played, and appreciated just for the joy of it all.

The album starts with the tune **Travessia**. It is a musical crossing into a world that is going to let you rest for a while. Yes the world is turned upside down right now and it feels as if an unseen hand is trying to shake you off, but you can cling to hope with a little music in your heart. This is that music.

The sound and feel of nostalgia fills the air as Gregg performs the song **Ponta de Areia** (Naciemento/Brant). The melody is light, lyrical, and warm. Memories shared, walks under the stars, and nights that last a lifetime. Feel free to cross over.

**Serenata**, the title tune and a Karukas original has a rhythmic flow and a wistful ambiance. The only witnesses to this rendezvous are the selenium moon and the whispering wind through the trees. Gentle caresses are a most precious gift. Karukas theme is full bodied and yet, he doesn't clutter it up with unnecessary runs or riffs. Straight from the heart.

We all hope for **Better Days** and Karukas has the sound track for that in an original piece that reflects the yearning wishes of just about every soul on the planet. A little peace, if you please. The tunes prays let us catch our breaths, let us heal. The notes hide hope with every nuance of this warm tune.

**Sound of Emotion** is a poignant, pensive tune crammed with an abundance of memories. It is one of the lighter tunes on **Serenata** and it feels like Gregg is at the piano and that someone is sitting nearby, big brown eyes shining shyly, and the sound of two heartbeats can be experienced within the vibrations of every note.

**Paisagem Da Janela** or Window Landscapes is a Lo Borges/Fernando Brant tune originally recorded by Naciemento. The opening lyrics are "*From the side window, of the bedroom I see a church, a sign of glory*". Although Karukas plays it somewhat blithely. The rest of the story is a long history lesson of how evil men do what they do, yet, the tune seems to remain hopeful. This

was my favorite on the album. It sounded like an anthem for a promising tomorrow and I liked it for that.

Hidden in the retro-smooth jazz section is a tune called **Clube De Esquina No. 2**. The tune comes from Brazilian composer Milton Nascimento's 1972 innovative double record album *Clube de Esquina*. It is a time when late night turns into early morning. The chairs are going up. There is only one patron in the bar, but the piano player plays like it is Carnegie Hall.

With enough space, I would review every one of these 15 tracks. Gregg Karukas' retrospective originals combined with his homage to some of the greatest songwriters the world has ever known is a breath of fresh air in a polluted environment of dissonance, strife, hate, and hunger. It is music of the poets full of hope and happiness. I suggest you partake deeply and often. The final word is the Portuguese word "Saudade". Yeah, you'll have to look that up. Highly recommended. - RJ Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews