

Jesper Sivebæk

Ta` Mig Med - Songs by Kim Larsen for Classical Guitar



I learn something new about music every day and it is my blessing. Today I learned of two important names. Jesper Sivebæk and Kim Larsen. Let's take Larsen first. Kim Larsen was a prolific songwriter and performer from Denmark who sold more than five million albums. He passed away in 2018, but left a legacy of music that is as exciting as it was oftentimes controversial. Larsen was like the Neil Diamond of Denmark. Jesper Sivebæk is a Danish guitarist and associated professor of music at The Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. Note that Larsen is famous for pop and off the wall rock music and Sivebæk is a classical guitarist.

Sivebæk's album TA` MIG MED (Take Me Along) is a homage to Larsen and I don't think it was an easy task to complete. I've listened to a lot of Larsen's music and frankly, there seems to be a lot gained in transcription. Larsen's choppy, carillon infused, and sometimes anti-protest vibe seems to be ameliorated by Sivebæk's thoughtful, deftly-produced renditions that have a lot of restraint and add a lot of color to the rock 'n roller's works. Ta` Mig Med offers a dozen re-imaginings of Larsen's popular music on Spanish guitar and, although the results are difficult to catalog, they are easy enough to listen to.

I thought the entire album was going to be like the opening tune **Kvinde Min** (Lady Oh Lady) which was a gentle, intoxicating, bluesy piece with a light classical influence, but not so. There are other elements involved, but the outcomes are undoubtable.

What could only be described as a ditty, **Hvis din far gi'r dig lov** – (If your dad says okay) is an upbeat tune full of fun and frolic. You can imagine the teenage boy standing out on the front porch, hopeful that she'll come out without Papa in tow. Then it's hand in hand and down the road they run.

**Masser af Success** is one of the more complex works on the album and a favorite. It puts me in mind of Rodrigo or Tarrega pieces, but with a more refined flow. Sivebæk renders a beautiful balance of folk history and neo-classical embellishments.

What played out as an aire, a sort of lullaby for all ages, was the tune **Der er en Sang** (There is a Song). It is a languid, gentle tune that drifts along in a very casual manner imparting a kind of soothing vibe to the listener. Hidden in Sivebæk's notes is a kind of nostalgia or what Danes call *hygge*, the comfort of quiet. It is old friends or old memories that touch the heart in a unique way.

**Dire Lige Vej** (The Narrow Road) is a poignant piece with a warm structure and sense of wanderlust that cannot be denied. Jesper's finely-crafted tune is a guide that you want to follow just to see where you end up. Another favorite on the album for me.

**Flyvere in Natten** (Planes in the Night) is a memorable tone poem filled with altitude and attitude in a melodic way. It is at times jaunty, and at other times it takes off right in front of you. You can trace the night flyer's course as you watch each star wink out in the black sky. Your imagination may never come down.

Jesper Sivebæk, through his talent and choice of subject matter, has given the post-classical world a large gift in transforming these folk and rock tunes into palatable sound on a very different level than their original intention. The exotic strains of his passionate Spanish guitar create an old world European vibe, but his complex compositions satisfy the eager and imaginative classical mind of the modern day audiophile. Highly listenable. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews