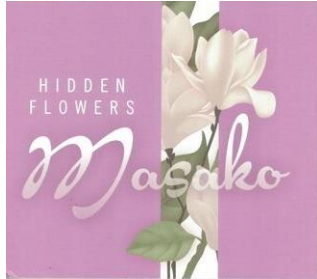


Masako

Hidden Flowers



When I was a small child I used to go on walks with my mother and we would admire the flowers. She told me that flowers are “poor man’s jewels”. If this be so, then pianist and composer **Masako**’s latest album **Hidden Flowers** is an abundance of musical wealth. This 12 track album is blooming with contemporary piano music, some solo and others light, accompanied instrumentals. All are guaranteed to delight the senses. Masako started playing piano at age four, and composing a year later. An award winning pianist, Masako renders a velvet touch on the keys and in this case, her work is augmented by producer Will Ackermann and Master Engineer Tom Eaton. Joining her on the album are some talented musicians from Imaginary Road Studios.

When you exit the doors at Harajuku Station in the Shibuya District outside of Tokyo, the world opens before you in vibrant colors that dazzle the eyes and exciting sounds that defy description. Masako’s opening solo piano tune, **Harajuku Memoir** is an engaging song of treasured memories created in colorful tones and multiple moods; some sentimental, others as precious as diamonds. All are unforgettable.

There is something warmly nostalgic about Masako’s tune **Age of Flowers**. It is the soft fanfare on the first arrival of Lily of the Valley in that shady spot in the side yard. It is a quiet melody of long, dusty rows of nodding sunflowers under an azure summer sky. It is the sonic perfume of honeysuckle that grows wild and hangs on the fence like a leafy curtain. Premik Russell Tubb’s wind synth is just a buzzing bee while Eugene Friesen’s cello lends breezy notes to the scene.

Masako’s solo piano tune **Remember the Rainy Day** is melancholy, but it a good way. It’s the memories. The day you can’t forget where the weather person called for a light misty day, but the clouds opened up and you both got so wet. Still holding hands, you laughed all the way to the car. The positive power of Masako’s melody changes the calamity into a love story that was made in heaven.

Observing M31 became a favorite right away. Mixing Jeff Hayes thoughtful percussion, Tubb’s friendly horn, and Noah Wilding’s transparent background vocal, Masako’s piano voices an effortless, lively tribute to star gazing at its best. The Andromeda Galaxy never looked so good on that night. Sounds good, too.

Another of my favorites on Hidden Flowers is called **Forgiving**. Though bitterness and resentment may be carried about like a bag of rocks on your back, the grace of forgiving is like dropping that burden down a bottomless well. The tune is just Masako’s piano and the delicate voice of Wilding as they combine to make the act light as well as reverent. A beautiful tune.

Cello and piano blend seamlessly on the poetically balanced tune **Suddenly Cherry Blossoms**. You wake in the morning of a late spring day and there they are. The pink/white display of bud

and petal, leaf and twig that is a feast for the eyes. Masako's music touches the senses with sculptural notes of freshness and softness just like the annual spectacle of blushing blooming trees.

I've never been to New York City, but I now think that Central Park sounds like this. In the final tune, **Central Park Retreat** the meandering music puts me in mind of wide pathways, towering oak trees, and people in the landscape of everyday living. The music is the background to a brisk walk, but not without stopping to ...smell the roses.

I found these dozen delightful tracks of instrumental music to be pleasing in every way. They are light, fluid, and fanciful. Masako creates a garden for the mind where thorns are banished and gentleness, warmth, and a plethora of daydreams greet you at every turn. Highly listenable all.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews