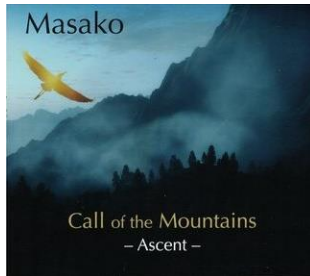


Masako

Call of the Mountains - Ascent

www.masako-music.com



When dealing with mountains, one must remember that mountains have a lot of history. Pianist and composer **Masako** has gathered up some of that history, travelled to the top and back, and recounted the journey and its milestone for us to hear on her latest album **Call of the Mountains - Ascent**. The work is fourteen contemporary tracks of refined, rich piano undertakings with a mix of light accompaniment and solo performances. The music is slightly adventurous with a mostly placid theme about one woman's excursion to literally, new heights.

I caution you not to listen to the first tune **Calling** on a rainy day. It is so sweetly sad that more than rain will fall. Masako's soft ballad suggests a nearby mountain whispering your name and Calling. The voices of the past are inviting and inspiring. Comely cello and cascading piano notes blend harmoniously as they beckon you to explore the slopes, the rocky terrain, and the very apex of the mountain. Here you are welcome.

The days were long. The climb, arduous. Nearing the top you come to the **Final Ascent**. The song is an instant favorite on the album for its simple, yet triumphant theme. Wind flute, cello, light percussion, and exultant piano celebrate the journey together. The reward is to touch the sky. The spirit goes beyond from here.

On the solo piano tune **Conifers** Masako's accomplished score describes the trees along the way. There is rough, scaly brown bark. Lots of wind twisted branches. Endless deep green sprays of needles. And all on trunks that seem to reach up to the heavens. Each one a paintbrush for the Ultimate Artist.

With an "ear" on self-care **Solitude** is a theme that, although somewhat musically muted, gives energy back to the spirit. The music gently repeats like a mantra that solitude doesn't always mean being alone. It is place one goes with one's thoughts to talk it overly in a personal manner. Perhaps, trekking up the mountain is a perfect setting for this.

With a coursing sets of notes Masako makes the water run in the tune **Swift River**. It is serious tune with a melody full of rushing water, hidden pools, and sharp rocks all around. Hidden beneath the water are unseen dangers eroding the expedition. The composer surprises us with a tune called **How to Calm a Bear**. The whimsical tune suggests that if you can get a bear dancing, well, something will happen. **Deepening Autumn** is meditative tune in which colors seem to change before your very eyes. Gone are the solid, dusty greens of summer. In an instant you can see the yellows and oranges unfolding like some gold canopy in the distance. On this mountain, we call this change magic.

The last tune on Call of the Mountains - Ascent is called **Lady's Slipper**. Like some tiny lavender pink ballerina, this pale flower is a reminder of bravery and courage in Native American folklore, but when you come upon it in the woods, it is like a pink jewel that is a delight to the eyes. Masako's music gracefully gyrates like tiny dancers in some magic woods. The path is clear.

Masako is an award winning pianist whose music seems to soothe the savage breast like few others. Her music seems to be suitable whether you are a New Age fan or a contemporary music connoisseur. Her complex, emotionally enriched compositions seem to capture the moment, hold it long enough for our spirit to appreciate it, and then in the next instant, gives us a new one to contemplate. I can't wait to hear about her next journey. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews