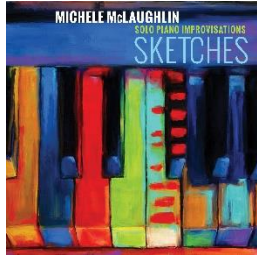


Michele McLaughlin

Sketches



Renowned pianist **Michele McLaughlin** takes creativeness to new heights on her latest release **Sketches**. Based on her YouTube Channel offerings of Monday Morning Improvisations, the album is a delightful baker's dozen of light, contemporary piano music. McLaughlin is one of the more successful and talented musicians to come out of the growth of New Age music around the new millennia. She is a brand unto herself and is imitated and revered by a generation of piano players and a fan base that is worldwide. I have reviewed this artist many times and I am always inspired by the amount of emotion she manages to infuse into her music. While not specifically stated, there is a lot of romance in this music. Just for starters...

At First Sight is a waltz with no steps. It is swaying, a to and fro, of two hearts that bond by a single glance. Think it can't happen? I remember when I first met my brown-eyed beauty smiling in the Hawaiian sun. My heart melted into a sort of lumpy gravy. I just knew. Michele's midtempo pas de deux is a dance to remember.

Anticipating the next sunrise, **Waiting** is a gentle song, but it isn't all sweetness and light. Some dread the light of a new day that brings sadness and grief into the life. Some hold hopefulness in their hands like an unopened gift, afraid to untie the bow. The music captures the sense of apprehension, but with a touch of hope.

With a hint of classical elements Michele introduces **The Traveler** and it turned out to be one of my favorites on Sketches. You can hear the urgency in the music, the fast movement, the obstacles, and the difference in terrain. Whether it be in the wilderness or on the city streets, you meet the obstacles and overcome them just by moving forward.

Forever Yours is a tune right out of a music box. Sparkling, light, sweet, and emotionally rich. There are reminiscences here. The box could be made out of aromatic cedar or walnut wood. Or it could be fashioned out of gifted memories that abide deep in the heart. I'm guessing the latter.

Relief is such a soft tune. You can feel the compassion of the benefactor and the consolation of the recipient. Not all life preservers are made of cork and canvas for an ocean of tears. Some are made of smiles or caring hands. Some are made out of hours given by volunteers and helpful hearts. Michele's minimalistic notes are used to draw the outlines of the grateful as well as the hopeful.

Faith is untouchable. It is unseen. Or as Michele's final tune suggests, **Unshakable**. This Einaudi-esque finale is a rhapsody of joy that testifies to the power of faith. There is a presence in the universe, whether it be cosmic vibrations or a Supreme Being. The label just doesn't matter. The concept does. And don't forget faith in yourself while you at it.

Michele McLaughlin has brought new dimension and depth to the idea of improvisations on Sketches. She offers textures, colors, and shades and hues of happiness and hope. Please Michele, play more. We need this right now. Highly recommended.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews