

Robert Thies & Damjan Krajacic
Blue Landscapes III: Frontiers
Music from a Quieter Place



Our planet is often referred to as the Blue Planet and for good reason. The surface is 74% water, some of it is frozen, and the rest is land. There is much to be inspired by on our beautiful, rocky blue ball and **Robert Thies & Damjan Krajacic** on their third installment of their Blue Landscapes Series, **Blue Landscapes III: Frontiers** use a broad and passionate brush to paint vivid soundscapes for all to enjoy. This album is fifteen tracks of contemporary and ambient themes featuring poignant piano and evocative flute. Robert is the pianist, Damjan is the flutist. Both are globetrotting virtuosi with many degrees and international awards. The music is organic in the sense that it replicates natural phenomena; the flow of water, the breath of wind, the warmth of the sun on a flat rock. The miracle that you hear and feel, but don't see is that the music is almost entirely improvisational. No smoke and mirrors here.

A simple, melodic phrase opens the first tune, **Drifting**. Thies' piano theme is buoyant against Krajacic's itinerant flute. A sense of vastness is made up of clouds and blue sky, endless and infinitely beautiful. No salty oceans abide here. The sensation of weightlessness transforms into a kind of newfound freedom.

Using a *prepared piano* concept, that is, objects placed on the strings for a desired effect, Thies uses a puttied piano for the tune **Forest Path**. There is much green on the blue landscape and this jaunty tune guides us along on a favorite mossy trail and into some tall trees. We can still see the sky against dappled sunlight and the canopy above glistens like green stained glass.

You can just hear the murmur of vespers in your mind as you visit **The Abandoned Monastery**. It is one of my favorite tunes on the recording. There is a sustained reverence in the piece, as if one can feel the blessings and peace of a bygone era. I imagined tumbled down stone walls, deeply worn paths, and places of quiet contemplation in Thies and Krajacic's harmonious rendering. Kyrie eleison.

We travel to the shores of France for the next tune, **Le Musicien**. This troubadour is brooding, somber, and with a note of melancholy. He does not lighten his mood until Damjan's flute saunters into the music. Even then, there is a seriousness to it, as if it says, "You can follow me, but there are consequences". We follow anyway for the music is strong in our hearts.

The title tune, **Frontiers** has a sense of movement and urgency. For some, frontiers are made up of rocky borders and craggy coastline, but for others they are made out of challenges. This is a song of the undiscovered, the new, and the unheard music. Sometimes the mountains we traverse, the rivers we wade, and the distances we travel are not on colorful paper maps, but calculated by our own heartbeats. The leagues we travel might be measured without leaving our armchairs.

The next cut is called **Infinity**. I did not expect this tune to be so delicate and so gentle, but it changed on me. The melody transforms when Krajacic's bass flute swoops in to alter the temperament of the song. The flute wavers and bubbles, almost like an electronic instrument, giving the piece an inorganic, disembodied feel. It is one of the longer cuts on Blue Landscapes and by its finale, it loops back to an animated gentleness. Full circle.

A billion silver mirrors reflect the warmth and power of the ocean on the tune **Waves on a Moonlit Sea**. Of course, each mirror picks out a star and returns that reflection to us. There is more light here than on a cloudless day, inspiring us, keeping us afloat. Robert's piano is soulful and soothing, Damjan's flute reserved and ethereal.

How can you put anything new in your cup if it is already full? The last tune on the collection is called **Letting Go**. It is just plain sad, but the message in it may be subliminal. Damjan's flute haunts the tune like a wraith and Robert's piano plays out as if time has stopped. We sometimes hold onto things out of fear. Fear of change, fear of loss. It is okay to say goodbye to some of the old memories and hello to the new. But you have to have room in your cup.

Every track on Blue Landscapes III: Frontiers is a comfort, a balm for the scarred, weary soul that needs renewal and restoration. Thies and Krajacic have found a marvelous balance between their instruments. I believe their equilibrium stems from a common belief and a kindred spirit. All the angles are complimentary. On the one hand, the music is quite peaceful and on the other, it is perceptibly thoughtful. This is excellent music. Highly recommended. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews