

Sharon Fendrich

Sapphire Oak



Bridging the realms of magic and music, composer **Sharon Fendrich** created her new album **Sapphire Oak**. With eleven spirited orchestral tracks of music that span several genres including the cinematic, she weaves a story of an earthly faith and a power that has deep roots and high grasping hands into an unseen kingdom. *Sapphire Oak* is Fendrich's second album, her first being *Red Sky Prairie* that dealt with neo-classical themes. In *Sapphire Oak*, Sharon takes up the tightly woven Celtic mantle with some classical embellishments and tells the stories of ancient mysteries and inexplicable magic. You're going to want to take the journey. Follow me.

Cast your eyes upon the land and you can see the dark green leaves are a **Sea of Oaks**. Sharon's piano and orchestral work paints a verdant picture of the vast forest that hides the magic and holds the power in this first tune. Hidden among the gnarly trunks and leafy canopies are Druids who carry out their rituals among the oaks. For an oak, a century is but a brief rest. The world changes little.

We materialize in ancient Greece and into **The Grove of Dodona**. Daughter of a Titan, Oracle of the Gods, Dodona listened to the rustling leaves of the oaks and heard the voices of the Gods interpreting them as their messages. Sweet flute drifts about as the melody builds in intensity when those messages are reflected in the ethereal vocals and soft piano themes of Sharon's tune.

Wood decays, rocks crumble, and earth turns to dust. But the **Call of the Ruins** is strong on the wind. Sharon's dynamic vocal in combination with a marvelous violin lead reminds us that what was once powerful still retains a kind of magic. The lyric says, *"Here in this place where you walked, where you prayed and where you cried, I hear your prayer and taste your tears"*.

The lighthearted melody **The Oaken Door** is a portal, an entryway into a strange fantasy world. The music with harmonically-rich classical elements transforms into a wondrous waltz of misty, magical forests, dancing fairies, and freedom from earthly cares.

One of my favorites on *Sapphire Oak* is called **Dryad's Rejoice**. The tale is spun in true Celtic components of flute, violin, and piano as they weep, telling you the story of the dryad. This gentle tree nymph is the spirit of the oaks whose delicate fairness inspires the dreams of women and men. Sharon's fragile pas de deux is a dance around the trees in celebration of love, of beauty, of life.

This place is safe. This place will succor you. Dulcet Gaelic vocals and touching piano form the tune **Under Her Canopy**. Fendrich's moving music suggests that it is a place where dappled sunshine and blue sky mix overhead. Where strong roots and branches will defend you. Where the glossy green leaves will hide you from all danger.

The title tune **Sapphire Oak** has a beautiful vocal, some of it sung in Sharon's invented language. With a swelling orchestral construction it turns into an epic theme. I would have thought that it closed the album, but the last song is called **Carry the Oak**. However, the old story of taking up a leaf, a twig, or an acorn and carrying it in your pocket and it will guard you on your journey is not to be ignored. In a leaf, there is the power of growth. In a twig there is strength. And in the acorn, there is promise of a future. All of these properties are admirably demonstrated on the final tune. And it makes one a believer.

With newly discovered vocal grace and lush orchestrations, Sharon Fendrich has demonstrated her strong, bold compositional skills and delivered another fine album chock full of mystery, music, and inspiration. On *Sapphire Oak* her colorful, complex Celtic inspired vignettes invite us to embark on a great adventure or maybe just get lost for a while. The journey is all. Highly listenable. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews