

ANDREA TONOLI - *Met by Moonlight*

First things first: this CD is not an EP, because 1) it's rich, full, and luxurious in lustrously sparse fashion, and 2) it's 32 minutes long, short of standard full-release modus but well beyond EP status. The lead cut, "Funeral for the Blackhearted", establishes the pristine chamber beauty of the disc in measured cadence via consummately sensitive fingers fully engaged with an extended depth of perception and quietly resonating ethereality. Because the track, despite the ominous title, is light, airy, and almost scholastic, the presence of far-end intelligence is cleverly obscured until one realizes the sad Satie-vian song is absolutely perfect, not a note out of place; the painstaking arrangement could not be other than as it is, else it would have been lost.

"South Cross Player" follows that and maintains a Windham Hill vibe and tenor (esp. the textures and stateliness of Will Ackerman's later opuses), a somber but luminous exposition devoid of, for me, the interferatory human presence. Even the rendition of the later "Greensleeves" travels from its established domains of courtly love and loss to a landscaped pastorate wherein terrene elements contemplate themselves well outside the pensees of the troubled ambiguous human mind.

Met by Moonlight, it swiftly becomes apparent, is an exceptional release by a gifted piano player and composer, mostly solo but with judiciously chosen accompaniment or, as in "Aurora", wrought for strings that will knock your ears off, unspeakably wistful, and tearfully angelic but highly cerebral, reminiscent of a cross between King Crimson's uncharacteristic but magnificent "Song of the Gulls" and Stomu/Hisako Yamash'ta's "Wind Words". "Il Pianto Degli Dei" intersperses a number of Phil Glass' trademarks, particularly from his marvelously delirious *Solo Piano*, while exploring Tonoli's own territories, lyrical and then some.

Should you find yourself longing for a meditation immersed in pure aesthetics completely eschewing the saccharine conventions of New Age foppery and such, then you've come to the right place, and if you think blood might not upon occasion pulse archly, hidden within this issuance's recesses, then lend an ear to "Dark Whisper Lullaby" (which appears with an alternate version) and rest a bit more fitfully. Had I been earlier apprized of this late 2015 release, it would most definitely have made it to my *Perfect Sound Forever* Best Of list for the year.

Mark S. Tucker, critic

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