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Almost Too Beautiful to Bear - Thierry Maillard's "The Alchemist"

It is an album of beautiful agony. It is heart-rending. It is exquisite. Even the opening strings which are then joined by the trio is a ravishingly gorgeous introduction. I was not prepared for this. Even having heard it 15-20 times now, I am still not prepared for this album.

The tracks opens with the song "A New Day" and so it is. The brilliant trio assumes the lead with the orchestra moving to support and a new day is indeed heralded.

Yoann Schmidt on drums and Matyas Szandai on bass combine to form a mesmerizing rhythm section for this adventure. Their contributions are undeniable as Thierry Maillard leads the way on piano.

The second track is "Beyond the Ocean 2" is a gentle and lyrical turn. In fact, the piano trio which backing strings create a tale of agonizing separation and desire. Szandai's bass is sweet and sad before an energetic middle section. The song ends as it began with the feeling of longing continuing past song's end. Such magnificent melancholy!

"For Bela" opens with haunting woodwinds which are joined by the string section. It is a strident piece of delightful determination. Maillard proves himself to be a master of orchestration, as well as composition and performance.

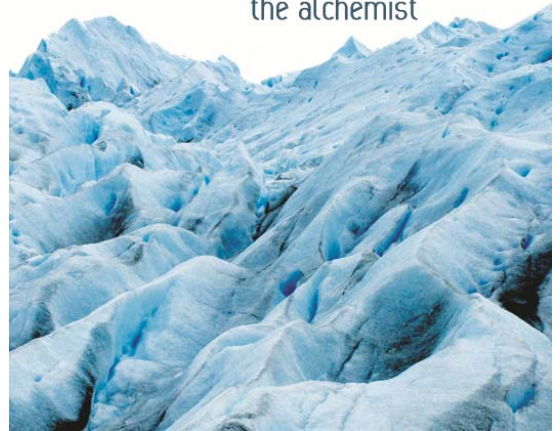
"Les Danse des Vikings 2" sets off with Didren Mahlerbe's woodwind arpeggios. Szandai's bass solos are imaginative with Schmidt's understated drumming. This is the piece that first shines a brilliant light on Maillard as piano performer. A riveting tight swing with Szandai's flashing cymbals and thunderous drumming make this a landmark piece for Maillard.

The twin pieces "Chichen Itza Intro" and "Chichen Itza" are the most impressionistic of all the tracks on the album. The Intro is slow and reminiscent while part two is more alive and vibrant. Part one looks back but part two moves you back in time to see Chichen Itza in its energetic loveliness. It is truly a romance amid the ruins. By the end of part two, we are awoken from our reverie to face the ruins once more.

"Idée Fixe" offers a presto piano trio intro until the cello moves in with a slower pace. The resumed trio plus cello is an adventure in percussiveness. Set up by the bass and drums, Maillard attacks with piano hammers in pounding pulchritude. This is one of the most rewarding tracks of the album.

The thunder surrenders to tenderness on "It's Over." Didier Malherbe again creates—alongside Maillard—a delicate dance of dismay which pioneers the way for the orchestra to follow.

THIERRY MAILLARD TRIO
the alchemist



Once again, Maillard's orchestral arrangement is superb. The joining piano is enchanting and the mournful cello sets up the departure as piano and orchestra close the piece in the simplest and saddest of farewells.

"Montreal," on the other hand, is invigorating and lively. It is a fascinating, even spell-binding, dialogue of piano trio and orchestra. Maillard's compositional skills and approaches are magnificent. In the end, the orchestra is bent to the will of the trio.

"Psycho Tic" opens with Dorothé Cornec's beautiful harp. Maillard's choice of instruments is flawless. The move to flute and bass with piano and harp is brilliant. The passages between flute-harp-piano and the harmonies shared among them is intriguing and delightful. The bass gets a good run with the harp's arpeggios behind. The flighty feel of the flute and jazzy piano are paired perfectly. Better than Rampal and Bolling.

Bruno Bongarçon's guitar is spotlighted alongside the piano on "Albatross." The imagery of sailors followed by the bird of ill-omen is unmistakable. It is impossible to praise highly enough the writing ability of Maillard. The diversity is astounding, the lush harmonies are overwhelming, the melodies are wonderful. Szandai's bass moves are subtle and sublime while Schmidt is perfect in his rhythmic choices.

The album closes with the title track, "The Alchemist." It is the only solo piano piece on the entire album but well worth the wait. Something alchemical truly takes place in the hearing wherein piano structures and the simple metals of melody, harmony and rhythm are transformed into the precious gold of intelligence, emotion and rare beauty.

The final track is a lovely synopsis of the beauty of the entire album. Thierry Maillard's album "The Alchemist" is exquisite. It is more than beautiful, it is painfully beautiful. Sometimes the stirring of emotions are almost too much to bear. The longing goes so deep. The enchantment is so complete.

The mystery of the delicate affection is nearly too fragile. The only thing more painful than hearing this stunningly emotional album...is to never hear it at all.

Travis Rogers

Visit Thierry's web site at: <http://thierrymaillard.com>

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