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ACT

JANNE MARK - Pilgrim

ACT: 9735-2

Janne Mark: vocals; Arve Henriksen: trumpet; Henrik Gunde Pdersen: piano, celeste; Esben Eyer mann: bass; Jesper Uno Kofoed: drums; Gustaf Ljuggren: lap steel.

Recorded May 4th and 5th, 2017 at Nilento Studios, Kallered.

It is fitting that this review appears so close to Easter because this is a set of contemporary devotional music in which Janne Mark has worked on a reinvention of Danish hymns. If you think that this suggests a particular 'churchy' sound, then you'd be quite wrong. Mark regularly sings in the Brorsons Church in the centre of Copenhagen (images of the interior, on the internet, remind me of the sort of Methodist Chapels I was taken to as a child in Cornwall), and her perspective of what constitutes a church underpins this music: 'The church is the house of slowness. I am interested in slowness, silence, the sounds of slowness and silence.'

The sound of the world in the form of a hymn.'

The music here is delicate, inspiring and uplifting – even when you don't speak the language in which Mark sings. The singing has little if any vibrato or other effects that you might expect in jazz or folk inflected music, and the clarity of the singing helps convey the sense of stillness and slowness of which Mark speaks. The haunting musical phrases combine the mix of sadness and hope that is the Easter story (and, of course, are about Mark's relationship with her faith, its festivals (particularly Christmas) and the world). This just goes to show that, contrary to popular belief, the Devil doesn't get all the best tunes.

It is brave performer who risks sharing the bill with a trumpeter of Henriksen's unique abilities. For the most part, the voice and trumpet alternate. The band create the musical space for Mark's singing and Henriksen's deeply moving trumpet (at times sounding like a bamboo flute on the moving ') to grow and develop. On track 7, 'Syng for alverdens urolige hjerter', the piano introduces the sedate theme which Mark then sings before the bass plays the theme with minor variations in its solo. In terms of musical styles, a couple of the tracks carry a feeling of Gallic folk songs (particularly 'Verden er en salme', track 2, and 'Vinter', track 8), but the overarching feeling is one of contemplation and peacefulness.

Reviewed by Chris Baber



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