

"ARABESQUE"



Cæcilie Norby *About the Songs*

Track by Track - October 2010

1. The Dead Princess

(M. Ravel / C. Norby) - from 1899

On the outside she was one colorful lesbian female... but when the spotlight was off, her opposite side was revealed: The saddened, feminine, and fragile. Ravel's "Pavane for a Dead Princess" is a tribute to the phony princess Winnarette de Polignac, who lived in the 1880's Parisian artist environment. She had inherited a lot of money (partly from her father's sewing machine company "Singers" and partly from her mother's rather peculiar job as a model for the Statue of Liberty!) She spent her heritage financially sponsoring the composers Ravel, Satie and Stravinsky.

2. Wholly Earth

(A. Lincoln) - from 1999

The charismatic jazz singer Abbey Lincoln has written this humoristic and wise text about the Earth's graciousness as seen from the universe - made by nature and man. It's about nature's circular timeline. About ghosts of the past waving on the horizon and that everything goes 'round and 'round. Perhaps, now after her death, she is seeing all in that perspective. Maybe her soul is gently haunting this song somehow. All glory to her memory.

3. No Air

(E. Satie / C. Norby) - from 1888

"Gymnopedie No. 1" has always made time stand still for me.

Even if the world is falling apart around me or if a loved one/boss/teenage daughter is yelling my ears full (as I'm envisioning with these lyrics) this beautiful theme from Satie will always be as a cocoon of peace and harmony for me.

4. No Phrase

(E. Satie / C. Norby) - from 1893

Ry Cooter meets Erik Satie, who meets us on a blistering hot summer's day in the Focus Studios located in Vanlose near Copenhagen. I had a hard time sleeping during those warm nights. Laid awake in the moonlight and imagined a female body invaded by her miniature lover; he lives on and in her as a parasite.

5. Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen

(S. Secunda / S. Cahn) from 1932

"Bei Mir Bist Du Schjein" (Secunda/Cahn) was played on "high rotation" in the old steam radios just before and during World War 2. People hummed along right up until the Nazis realized the composer was the Jewish Salmon Secunda. No one in Europe heard the song after that. But in the US a completely unknown trio, The Andrew Sisters, recorded the song and it became their first major hit. The first hit ever with a female vocal group.

6. The Tears of Billie Blue

(C. Debussy / C. Norby) from 1890

"Clair de Lune", French for moonshine, is 3rd part of a romantic and melancholic suite of music from Claude Debussy. It reminds me of an old jewelry box with faded photographs of bygone unhappy love, preserved dried out rose petals and heavy perfume. The Norwegian pianist Bugge Wesseltuft construes Debussy's classic in a new and breathtaking way.

7. Women of Santiago

(L. Danielsson / C. Norby) from 2004

A Dane, a Swede and a French man records a Spanish inspired track after they've consumed Italian food and Chilean wine. The wine has an apparent connection with the scene from the text: A gypsy market place in Santiago, card games, dance, gun powder and alcohol mix with sinister jealousy. Lars Danielssons temperamental guitar and cello creates the stage.

8. Pavane Opus 50

(G. Fauré / C. Norby) from 1887

To sing Fauré's "Pavane" was like being carried on a swaying accompaniment through an alluring but unfamiliar landscape. With the melody in focus, which came natural, I had images of magnificent sand dunes, caravans, and rousing music that vibrate in the earth below us.

9. Scheherazade

(N. Rimsky-Korsakov / C. Norby) from 1888

"Scheherazade" is the name of a brave woman, who challenged the great Sultan Shahryar. The Sultan had decided to get engaged to a new woman every evening and decapitate her the next morning if she couldn't entertain him sufficiently with her vocabulary.

As the story goes, Scheherazade told the fairy tale "1001 Nights" which was so captivating that the Sultan dismissed his notion of beheading and married her in the end.

The Russian composer Rimsky Korsakov wrote a grand orchestral arrangement from this theme.

I challenged myself and wrote about Scheherazade's secret, Hans Ulrik blew the tune to new heights, Xavier placed his Persian drum under his arm and Lars made magical Arabian sounds on the piano.

10. I Will Say Goodbye

(M. Legrand) from 1963

It was February and minus 25 Celsius outside. Inside, in the studio, time stood still when Palle Mikkelborg began playing this beautiful melody of love by Michel Legrand. The tune deals with love pulling a Coyote trick: "I say goodbye only because you want me to. Not because I want to go. But because you say I must. And I love you."

11. Simple Theme

(C. Norby) from 2009

I had a dream that gravity slowly disappeared. At first it was intimidating... but after further contemplation, liberating!

We jammed in Bugges studio to a snippet of a melody originally scribbled on a train ticket. We started with chaos and played our way to a cohesive theme.

12. Hvirvelvinden

(M. Legrand / retelling: C. Norby) from 1967

Lars and I recorded this song the day before my father passed away.

Those moments in my life where I've been closest to time dragging slowly by is in conjunction with birth or death. It's in such times 24 hours feel awfully long. The lyrics, which I've freely translated from Marilyn Bergman, depict a subtle chaos of images from a life time. There's no order. No linear hierarchy. The law of time has ceased to exist. Are the images that pass by in the mind's final hour, highlights from your life? I don't believe so... it's just random fragments of thoughts which, just like piles of leaves on the ground, end up being part of the bigger picture.

13. Forever You

(L. Danielsson / C. Norby) from 2000

Early morning in our house in Sweden. Ulf, Lars and I pour some coffee. We don't say much but play this very first "take" slowly, as fresh as dew, and on fasting ears.

14. Nocturne

(C. Norby) from 2009

I had an annoyingly micromanaging but clear idea of how I wanted this piece of melody to sound... tone by tone, dynamics, phrasing and so on. I speculated how on earth I would be able to explain my thoughts to the pianist Katrine Gislinge. I could, of course, start out by letting her choose how it should be played... and there it was! The melody as I had envisioned it in my head! Later Palle, Lars and Bugge gave their contributions which was differently "dusty" and raw; hence the fusion.

15. How Oft

(E. Norby / W. Shakespeare) from 1981

Shakespeare's very poetic poem inspired my father to compose this melodic 12 tone hymn. It's a love poem for a lute playing virgin. Her fingers only interest is the magic of the strings and not the rejected "Knight" who can do nothing but listen to her playing...

Reformulated for nowadays, the poem could be about a man who is real tired of lack of attention, because his guitar playing girlfriend has to practice all the time...