

Silje Nergaard - A Thousand True Stories (2010)

Written by bluesever

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01. Based On A Thousand True Stories 02. Dreamers At Heart 03. Come In From The Garden 04. Frozen 05. Wayside Song 06. Nightroad 07. Old Madrid 08. While You Were Gone 09. Laura Musicians: Silje Nergaard - Vocals, kantele/backing vocals Helge Lien - piano Finn Guttormsen- Bass Jarle Vespestad- drums Håvar Bendiksen- guitars/backing vocals Mathias Eick- trumpet Fredrik Otterstad, - backing vocals Heine Totland - backing vocals Metropole Orchestra, Holland Vince Mendoza, arranger/conductor

Great artists don't arrive on the conveyor belt of weekly TV talent shows. They come once or twice in a generation and follow their own unique path, which makes them so special. The award winning Norwegian singer Silje Nergaard is one such artist, and her latest album *A Thousand Stories* is the finest realisation of her internationally acclaimed singing and songwriting artistry to date.

Recorded in August 2008 and produced by Silje herself aided by Pål Svenre, Silje holds centre stage with her regular group with Helge Lien on piano – “How they melt into my songs” she says – plus the internationally acclaimed Dutch Metropole Orchestra.

With stunning orchestral arrangements by Grammy winning composer, arranger and conductor Vince Mendoza (Joni Mitchell, Björk, Elvis Costello, Herbie Hancock) on seven tracks, *A Thousand Stories* is the sort of ambitious and personalised statement that comes with confidence and experience. “I feel at home in Silje’s music,” says Mendoza, “it resonates with my basic spirit and I think Silje trusts that I’m going to dance with her in her musical world.”

“It’s been a dream come true to work with Vince, who really gets inside my music” says Silje,

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who when she heard Mendoza's arrangement of "Chinese Café" on Joni Mitchell's album Travelogue was inspired her to invite him to contribute two arrangements to her critically acclaimed 2007 album Darkness Out of the Blue, so setting in motion a chain of events that culminated in A Thousand Stories.

In explaining her approach to the album, Silje says, "Music is about story telling. At least the way I hear it. I really want to reach audiences, and tell them stories they can feel, and connect to their lives." You only have to listen to the title track to hear what she means. It tells the poignant story of lovers growing apart, a relationship that's losing its sparkle. "It's not the only couple it's happened to," explains Silje, "It's based on a thousand true stories."

In what is possibly the best marriage of lyric content and melody to be found on any of her albums, Silje's songs have now acquired a universality that makes them sound like tomorrow's standards today. This is down in no small part to her long-time musical partnership with lyricist Mike McGurk. "I've worked with Mike for ten years now, and this relationship is growing," says Silje. "I am really lucky to have such a wise lyricist who tries to read my mind, although this time it was the hardest we've ever worked on my songs. I really wanted to nail the stories, and the lyrics were changing right up to the last day of recording."

A Thousand Stories is an album that reveals both Silje's personal and artistic growth, with the Metropole Orchestra underlining her musical identity with the kind of depth that only a top-notch musical organisation can do. Subtle, sophisticated and melodically accessible, it is the product of a musical vision that follows its own path, a unique voice that has created its own space in today's crowded music scene.

Yet this album is not just the culmination of the months it took to realise a dream, it goes back much further than that. It goes back to when Silje first heard singers like Ella Fitzgerald on her parent's record player as a child, to when she first started singing and writing her own songs. It goes back to her debut at 16 on the Molde Jazz Festival stage, and her debut single that in 1990 that achieved a top 40 placing on the UK pop charts. And it is the culmination of the eleven critically acclaimed albums that preceded it. True artistry, you see, adds up to much, much more than getting the most votes on a TV talent show. ---Stuart Nicholson, soundcloud.com

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