

Arianna Savall, Petter Udland Johansen – *Hirundo Maris (Chants du Sud et du Nord)* [2012]



1. *El Mestre* 06:33 2. *Buenas Noches* 05:49 3. *Ya Salió de la Mar* 02:36 4. *Om Kvelden* 04:38 5. *El Mariner* 06:14 6. *Le Chant Des Étoiles* 03:44 (Arianna Savall) 7. *Morena Me Lllaman* 06:10 8. *Bendik og Årolilja* 07:01 9. *Ormen Lange* 02:50 10. *Tarantela* 04:46 (Lucas Ruiz de Ribayaz) 11. *The Water Is Wide* 05:24 12. *El Noi de la Mare* 03:32 13. *Josep i Maria* 03:28 14. *Penselstrøk* 05:19 (Petter Udland Johansen) 15. *Halling* 02:53 16. *Yo M'enamori D'un Aire* 05:35 17. *Trollmors vuggesang* 03:13 (Margit Holmberg) Tracks: 1,6,12,13,16 - Catalan Traditional Tracks: 2,3,7 - Sephardic Traditional Tracks: 4,8,9,15 - Norwegian Traditional Track 11 - Scottish Traditional Arianna Savall - voice, Gothic harp, Italian triple harp Petter Udland Johansen - voice, hardingfele, mandolin Sveinung Lilleheier - guitar, Dobro, voice Miquel Àngel Cordero - double-bass, voice David Mayoral - percussion, voice

The title means “sea swallow,” a bird that flies from Catalonia to Norway, linking the two singer/players and their respective countries. The links include the music of both countries, heard here from an ensemble led by Savall and Johansen with three supporting members. My previous acquaintance with Arianna Savall began with some programs that she recorded with her parents, Jordi Savall and Montserrat Figueras (she dedicates this disc to the memory of her mother), but her training and performing have extended far beyond what she learned from the family business. She has not appeared with them since 2008, focusing instead on this ensemble.

The program is a cross between early music and folk music, or a little of both. Virtually all of this music comes from traditional Catalan, Sephardic, and Norwegian sources. Savall previously recorded *The Mariner's Song* on her *Bella Terra* disc, reissued on *Invocation à la Nuit*. Indeed, that song about a future king of England, no mariner he, abducting a Catalan girl is cited as the origin of this project. Five voices joined to varied strings and percussion make a haunting program of music unfold effortlessly. Seldom does unfamiliar music appeal so directly. Savall conveys the same evocative sense of a story that her mother did so memorably. This is a disc

to enjoy over and over. ---FANFARE: J. F. Weber, arkivmusic.com

Hirundo Maris is dedicated to the memory of Montserrat Figueras, the legendary advocate, researcher, and performer of Renaissance and Baroque music, particularly that of the Mediterranean basin, who died in 2011, after the album was recorded but before it was released. It features her daughter, singer and harpist Arianna Savall, in arrangements of folk repertoire from the Catalan, Sephardic, Norwegian, and Scottish traditions. The title, Latin for Sea Swallow, refers to the centrality of the sea in all these traditions, and its subtitle, "Songs of South and North," to the connections between the traditions that sea facilitated, connections that are evident in the similarities between the songs. Savall and singer Petter Udland Johansen, who also plays a Hardanger fiddle and mandolin, made most of the arrangements, and are joined by Sveinung Lilleheier, guitar, dobro, and voice; Miquel Àngel Cordero, double bass and voice; and David Mayoral, percussion and voice.

Savall has a pleasing, sweet, pure voice, not as expansive or as penetrating as that of her mother (to whom she bears a striking physical resemblance), but especially well suited to this folk-style repertoire. She and the other singers perform these evocative, melancholy songs with clear, focused tone and terrific intonation, and with the unmannered directness of folk singers. The tone of most of the songs is understated but poignantly yearning, and that mood is beautifully expressed in the delicacy and sensitivity of the performances. The accompaniments are lovely and simple but sophisticated; they reflect Savall's lifetime exposure to her parents' disciplined and lively approaches to early music interpretation and its relation to folk traditions. The sound of the ECM New Series album, produced by Manfred Eicher, is characteristically immaculate and natural. The recording should appeal not only to fans of international folk music but of historically informed performances of early vocal music for which Savall's family is famous. ---Stephen Eddins, AllMusic Review

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