

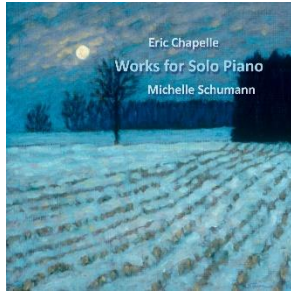
Michelle Schumann

The Music of Eric Chapelle: Works for Solo Piano

Eric Chapelle

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In an unusual turn of events I reviewed **Michelle Schumann** as she interprets the music of composer **Eric Chapelle**. It is rare that you have an album instigated by the living breathing composer himself as he invites the pianist to perform his music. Overall, Schumann is more than up for the task as she adroitly performs Chapelle's twelve tracks of contemporary and post classical music on solo piano.

The first tune, **Place in Landscape (Baga Beach)** is intentionally bright bringing to mind sunshine, azure skies, and breaking waves. The Portuguese influenced the area in India called Goa for more than four hundred and fifty years. Catholic churches with their white spires still stand in the place that was once the capital of the country. Looking west, you can stand on the glistening white sands, and imagine the magic lands of Africa and Saudi Arabia just an ocean away. Schumann portrays the shoreline of Baga as a destination for the body and the soul. Chapelle's title literally places you there.

There is a hint of Debussy on **In the Presence of Beauty**. The tune has an air of the nostalgia as Chapelle's ostinatos are painted vividly under Schumann's hands. Beauty in its many forms is recalled as the music conjures up a woman's smile, a snow topped mountain in the background, and perhaps a day like no other. The melody here is soft and sweet, a dream you can almost touch with your heart.

One of my favorites on the album is called **(Fall) Leaves Falling on a Gray Day**. The music is pensive and anticipatory as we wait for the first few drops of rain to fall. Michelle's deft touch and Chapelle's flowing score combine to make us imagine the wind blowing and the branches in the trees swaying. In the meantime the tune has fallen leaves whirling like a dervish on the ground as the skies getting darker.

Serious post classical elements are forefront on the piece **Prelude in C# Minor (In Remembrance)**. It is a somber work that feels somewhat improvisational at times with Chapelle's tentative theme finally solidify into a kind of lament. There is plenty of room in between the notes to think about the past. It is a contemplative work, a kind of emotional homage.

**Nocturne No. 1** is another remarkable tune with a deep sense of emotion and the theme is really emphasized by Schumann's masterly rendition. The music is somewhat heavyhearted, but the melancholy is presented in a tender, yet sensitive manner. We welcome the night as we know there are stars and dreams in our future.

The last tune is called **Dusk to Dawn**. Chapelle's languid score has a note of finality to it, but Schumann adds all the magic that is to be had when night decides to transform into day. The slow, gentle theme is the "nachtmusik" that the soul craves to grow and to heal. Other songs include First Light, Transformation, Place in the Landscape Moulin de Senlis, Full Circle, Reflection No. 1, and Contemplation at a Distance (Another noteworthy tune).

For decades Eric Chapelle has been composing and producing music. He is known for experimental as well as neo-classical works and has done extensive work for television. He has released a number of albums including a compilation album with other composers for Navona Records as well as his albums *Our Time* and *Across the Water*. Michelle Schumann is currently Artistic Director of the Austin Chamber Music Center and the artist-in-residence and professor of piano at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Some of her albums include *In Memoriam: A Modern Requiem* and *Late Show*.

Chapelle and Schumann obviously make a good team. Schumann's solid performances and spot-on interpretations of Chapelle's moody concepts add deliberate color and contrast to the music. Chapelle's dignified touch on his compositions makes the music inviting and palatable to the listener, capturing the essence of the dream maker. All of it is very good.

- R J Lannan, [ArtisanMusicReviews.com](http://ArtisanMusicReviews.com)