

# Wind and Wire

## A site for the fan of Contemporary Instrumental Music

KEN ELKINSON

Revelry

August Son Productions (2000)

Pianist Ken Elkinson's follow-up to his acclaimed debut, *Midnight Conversation*, is *Revelry*, an extremely enjoyable collection of solo piano numbers. *Revelry*'s strength lies in the apparent simplicity of Ken's compositions but, of course, it's not simplicity but instead straightforwardness of emotion that is actually present in the twelve songs on the CD.

Beginning with the midtempo "Sunshower," Ken brings a rich, almost lush sense of romanticism to the album. Yet, unlike an artist like Kevin Kern, Ken plays in a more impressionistic vein, allowing tunes like the above mentioned opener to evolve more than the more straightforward pianists (such as Kern). The net result is that his music is accessible without being pop-ish. Not an easy accomplishment.

"Zymic" has a light-hearted feeling to it, but the joy is leavened by a subtle air of regret. "Solutions" is a little closer to "standard" solo piano music in this genre, but even then, Ken throws in enough wrinkles and unexpected changes that someone like me who listens to a lot of music is still pleasantly surprised. It's like getting to the third bite of a meal and discovering that spices are present in the dish that had lay hidden until then. "Solutions" is actually a song tinged with melancholy, to my ears, which makes the title somewhat mysterious (some "solutions" are sad ones, yes?).

"Lakeside Melody" reminds me of the best work of Jim Chappell. It has the same breezy and flowing style of melody. It's very pleasant listening. "Regrets" is a somber tune, meandering and played in a slow tempo. As I listened more and more to *Revelry*, I realized that Ken and William Watson (another pianist I respect highly) operate in the same subgenre, that of piano music which is not just noodling, and also not sing-songy either. Ken plays with more emotional restraint and less drama than William, however that's a subjective analysis on my part.

All the songs on *Revelry* are originals except for a cover of Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing(!)". While Ken brings his "style" to the song, frankly I found it to be the one weak cut on the album. Just my taste, but it seemed out of place amidst the rest of the tone poems.

The CD closes (although there is a "hidden" bonus cut not listed on the liner notes and which will not play automatically on some CD players) with what may be the best cut, "Post Nubila Phoebus." Gentle and subdued, the emotional feel to this song is undeniable. Not enough artists pay attention to placing a powerful song at the end of an album (some don't even make the first song a good one, of course!). Ken concludes *Revelry* on just the right note (no pun intended). This song left me wanting more - and I have to think there is no better thought to have in the listener's mind at an album's end.

Recommended to fans of the genre and people who enjoy warm rich acoustic music.