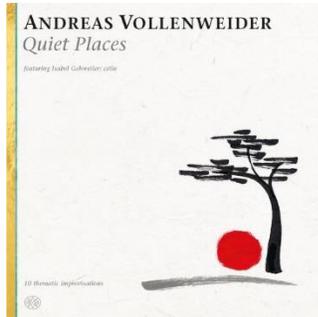


Andreas Vollenweider

Quiet Places



How many times have you said to yourself, “If only I could find a quiet place for a while?” Well, let me direct you to the latest offering by legendary harpist and composer **Andreas Vollenweider** called **Quiet Places**. Vollenweider has been creating contemporary instrumental music for decades using his electroacoustic harp and involving classically rooted elements. I encountered his music around 1983, but his cassette of *Down to the Moon* remains a favorite with *Kryptos* being an equal. *Quiet Places* is a timely travelogue of musical scenarios that gently carry you away from the vagaries of now and place you in the fanciful world of far away. The album is ten tracks of instrumental surrealism created by harp and piano with Isabel Gehweiler on cello and Walter Keizer on drums. Most of the tracks are a pas de deux for Vollenweider and Gehweiler and the dances are both expressive and emotional. Let’s us travel.

The opening tune **Pygmalion** has Gehweiler marginally pushing the lead, but the harp eventually balances the melody on this visit to ancient Greece. We travel to Cyprus and witness the birth of Galatea, the muse of Pygmalion. As the inspirational harp weaves a story of love created by a miracle, the impassioned cello dances about in celebration.

Polyhymina is a lively tune that rejoices in the majesty of the Muse. Mythology tells us that Polyhymina was one of the Muses that watched over the creation of song, dance, and music. Although this goddess is often portrayed as serious, she obviously has a capricious side as brought to life by the harp and cello. The track is a complex, yet somewhat energetic frolic. The cello intro does take on a serious note, but then the melody expands into a warm, poignant instrumental.

Andreas takes to the piano to foster the tune **Entangled**. It is a pensive piece with a call and response motif. The conversation is divided between the voice of the piano which is depicted as confused and undecided and the cello who tenderly tries to supply some of the answers. The music focuses on a quiet place within. There are some dark passages, but light seems inevitable.

Come to the Quiet Place is inviting and delightful at the same time. A bit of light percussion on snare by Keizer sets the medium pace for this journey to the place you have been longing for. The exceptional harp music is at times jaunty as you travel down dusty roads, green forest paths, and bare rocky shores. You can expect blue skies, warm breezes, and endless daydreams.

How can one capture an image in music? Vollenweider appears to have done just that in the sensual tune **Venus in the Mirror**. The voluptuous form of the goddess with pearls and bangles is reflected in the mirror and it seems to doubly magnify the splendor of the subject. The harp melody is sumptuous and meandering as it amplifies the divine likeness of Titian’s most favored subject. Gehweiler’s fluid cello adds depth of color.

Vollenweider returns to the piano for the introspective ballad **Wanderungen** or Wanderings. In it you can imagine the snowcapped mountains, the endless caravan of clouds, and the kind of bountiful landscape that always fills the soul with awe. You walk with a kind of ease. No need to hurry in this daydream. You have all the time you need.

Keizer, Gehweiler, and the maestro get together on the ebullient tune **Sculpture**. This imaginary foray takes you to the Far East and around the world in search of those “Quiet Places”. It is in places like these where imagination takes wing and it is free to explore, to think, but most of all, to dream. Think of this sculpture as the contours of the land, its oceans, mountains, forests, down below and open sky above whilst the spirit soars. I loved this one for its energy and imagery. The music crossed a lot of genres, but it meshed well.

The final tune with Andreas’ signature harp sound is called **Fields of Blue**. It is a perfect Grecian segue from the previous track as those much sought after spaces are discovered. The gentle, flowing music is solace for the soul. I often wonder why the Creator chose blue for so many beautiful things on our planet and now I know that the color soothes the soul of anyone. This final composition seems to bring the album full circle with its interplay of harp and cello.

“We must believe there are places where tranquility still exists and nature is given back her power to speak”

— Nanette L. Avery

Andreas Vollenweider’s last album was Air in 2009. Quiet Places is diametrically different from Air with its attitude and themes. Knowing that we need those times of tranquility in our lives now more than ever, this collection seems perfect as well as timely. There is an overall gentleness to the music that soothes and comforts. Highly listenable. Please Andreas, take me away one more time. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews