

True Life Trio, Home - A review by Ginger Murray, SF Weekly

What do a Wailing Woman, a rebel fighter and a mountain all have in common? They are the subjects of traditional folk songs that have now been re-envisioned by the True Life Trio on the CD Home, a collaboration between Briget Boyle, Leslie Bonnett and Juliana Graffagna.

La Llorona, the 6th song on the album tells the story of a woman, who for the love of a faithless man, murdered her children. An old legend of Mexico, it is said that on certain nights her crying can still be heard. La Llorona has been depicted as a horrific figure, a monster and is often used to caution children and young women against bad behavior. In the True Life Trio's version it is instead, her grief, aching and remorseful, that is evoked. The violin rasps with a deep throb, adding an Irish quality to the folk tale. It is an interesting musical choice as the legend of La Llorona shares a similarity with the story of the Banshee, the female Wraith of Ireland whose baleful wailing signals death to those who hear it.

Not all the songs on the album are so tragic. The Old Home Waltz, originally written by Cajun musician Shirley Bergeron, steps lightly and brings a warmth to the opening of the album.

Despite the fact that all the songs on the album except Butterfly Dream are renditions of traditional songs, this is not a cover album. Nor is it an ode to 'world' music. True Life Trio has created unique musical journey that gives a timely immediacy to the enduring spirit that originally inspired the songs.

On the border between Italy and Slovenia, rises a mountain that has, over the centuries, inspired many a song. Da Pa Canen E Se Zmudow, the fourth song on the album is an *a cappella* rendition that is both haunting and arousing in equal measure.

The Trio singers know well the power of the unaccompanied voice as they are all former members of Kitka, an all female vocal ensemble, and have also spent much of their life studying Eastern European and Balkan singing styles. Particularly harmonic, Balkan singing is often the grounding center piece to the rhythm of the songs, coming, as it does, straight from the gut.

Because of the power of each of the songs, this is not the CD to listen to while throwing a dinner party. The Albanian wedding song might fit nicely on a playlist but each song is a small work of auditory art meant to be intently listened to. Each is meant to provoke a different emotional experience.

In an age of American Idol and nasal irony, the True Life Trio have brought us back to the cathartic power that music can possess. That sparse yet resonant musical orchestration and the mixing of powerful voices is all that is needed to help us release our pain or to spur us on towards acts of beauty.