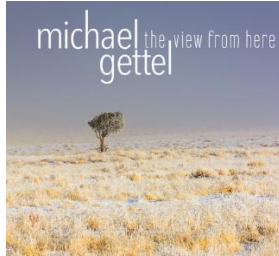


Michael Gettel

The View From Here



It has been some time since legendary pianist **Michael Gettel** has released new material. I remember him for his many works for the Narada label back in the nineties. For more than fifteen years Mr. Gettel has remained behind the curtain so to speak, re-evaluating his priorities as a teacher and musician, but he has finally come forth to gift us with **The View From Here**. This twelve track remarkable album of contemporary piano music is his observations in the moment. Every song is a time and a place that has made an indelible mark upon his memory. Fortunately for us, he has an amazing ability to turn memory into music. Like George Seurat who used dots to make his incredible images, Gettel uses sharp, positive notes to paint bold, vivid paintings of what his heart and eyes once witnessed. Only this time, we get to hear it.

The title tune **The View From Here** is the epitome of mindfulness. Living in that moment and taking in every sight, every sound, and every feeling that is to be had is what the music is all about. This memorable theme with its even cadence and sparkling melody sets the musical tone for the snapshots that Gettel uses to chronicle his experiences.

Odiles Garden replete with bird calls and green, growing things is an intricate lacework of discovery. In the melodic garden are paths for every mood. Sunny, thoughtful, even gloomy, but that mood won't last long. There is too much to see and enjoy. Bienvenue en France.

Rise is one of the more lively tunes on *The View From Here*. I can almost hear the words of Maya Angelou's *And Still I Rise* as I listen to this modern day marshalling theme. Gettel's masterful music translates for me into "let no tribulation, no hindrance stop me from achieving my goals". Let me keep my faith and remain stalwart. I honestly needed this reminder in my life just as I write these words.... so thanks, Michael.

One of my many favorites on the album is called **Medano Creek**. It is no small irony that this song has a wonderful flow to it. The creek isn't always running, but when it does, it provides so much to so many. Most of all nurturing waters and endless entertainment for the spirit. Snowcapped mountains draw your eye to the skyline even as you wade in the muddy waters of the creek. Michael's message is that water brings life to all in ways seen and unseen.

Vincent van Gogh may have been well known for his painting *Starry Night*, and his cerulean skies had a magic of its own. Michael's rendition of **Van Gogh Sky** reminds us that sunshine, those warm breezes, and those cloudless heavens have to make way for the night. When the sun sets, the palette of crimson, copper, and gold is the treasure our spirit seeks. Michael's dusky theme transports us from light to dark in a most dreamy manner.

What Americans call "last round" is defined by an old Scottish tradition called **The Parting Glass**. Gettel takes this old custom and translates it into a melancholy ballad. It has a doleful

brogue that makes the last toast and the reluctant farewell seem almost heartbreaking. In these days of uncertainty, these times of war and pestilence, who knows? Hold your cups high, my friends.

Aerial has a contextual sound that is like bells, but it is really the tinkling of cascading piano keys. This jaunty final tune is a look up or a look down suggestion depending upon your preference. Looking up into the sky and you can see the clouds as they border an endless horizon. Your imagination can go as high and as far as it wishes. Look down and you can see people as they go about their everyday lives. Some in the forests, some on the mountains. Some in the streets and many on the backroads. Everyone is looking for some of the same things. Security, quietude, and peace of mind. Gettel's refrain, like our lives, is not without a bit of stormy weather, but the sun shines once more in the end.

I am glad that Michael Gettel is back to making his kind of music. *The View From Here* reminds me of the kind of imagination and inspiration I heard on his *San Juan Suite* album back in 1999. On it he found an inspiration, looked at it from every angle, and composed music that best described it. On this album he does much the same. Perhaps he instills a bit more emotion in this one, but the results are rewarding for the listener in both cases. Highly listenable.

-R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews