



Distant Mirrors

Liner Notes

1. Sweet Simplicity 2:49

(Larson) (*Wood Nymph Music/ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson-- flute
Rob Cookman-- synth harp
Matt Lund-- guitar
Carolyn Koebel-- hammered dulcimer/percussion

The majority of my music begins its life as a solo flute piece, and can be performed exactly as such. Most evolve from there, adding harmony or other instruments. This piece is no exception, though perhaps the allusion to “simplicity” may no longer apply...

2. Santa Maria, strela do dia 2:56

(13th Century Galician-Portuguese/Larson) (*Wood Nymph Music/ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson-- pan pipes, seljefløyte, alto flute, Native American flute, vocals, synth
Nancy Patten-- celtic harp

In my perpetual love affair with medieval music, this melody has been so much a part of my life due to its special allure. I have privately danced solo to it, dressed in full medieval costume, played it a thousand times on the flute trying to “get inside” its magic, and finally created my own version with this opportunity of recording.

3. Anantarivo 2:53

(Bobby McFerrin) (*Probnoblem Music/BMI*)

Rhonda Larson--All Flutes, and Nothing But The Flutes—key hits, tongue hits, air tongues, flute melodies, low whistle Irish flute, seljefløyte, alto flute

I fell in love with this piece several years ago from a Bobby McFerrin/Jack Nicholson release of children’s stories, and began incorporating it into my life by using it as a great warm-up, having to hold the first note for eighteen measures. I loved the piece so much, I decided to go all the way with the flute as all the voices. The rest is history, thanks to the ingenious vocal wizardry of Bobby McFerrin.

4. Armenian Allure 3:41

(Traditional Armenian, Larson) (*Wood Nymph Music, ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—bamboo flute, dizi, Nepali flute, Taegüm, synth
Sam Smiley-- guitar
Rob Cookman—piano, accordion
Tom Knific, bass
Carolyn Koebel-- dumbek, hammered dulcimer, percussion

Music is one of the finest ways I know to peek into other cultures—to dip in and taste, though so limited is this method in and of itself. This is actually a traditional Armenian love song, which gives an impressive insight as to what might be characterized as a “go getter” style of that culture. (By contrast, think of the somewhat watery, comforting love songs of our culture.) Armenia, here we come!

5. **Creator** 4:23

(Traditional hymn melody, Larson) (*Wood Nymph Music, ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson-- vocals, native American flute, crystal flute
Patrick Leonard—piano, keyboards
Tom Knific—bass
Carolyn Koebel—percussion

For about five years, I practiced daily at a beautiful country church in Connecticut, where I was living. The act of composing is often like “the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing” in the sense that I stumble upon things that grab my soul, without particularly noticing any significance at the time. This melody came from a hymnal, and I daily played it to begin my day-long practice sessions at the church, as a prayer, to put my heart in the right place, really. I immediately incorporated my own harmonies and re-invented the piece for myself. It has been a banner song for me. I played this piece in a spectacular little abbey outside of Rome just after Lee and I were married in Italy in 2001—in full wedding dress regalia---again as a beautiful prayer from my heart. The priest appeared promptly and said, “Che cosa fa?”. Lee explained to him in his fluent Italian that, “she needs to do this, it is her prayer of thanks”. The priest completely understood, and left us to complete the expression. Special thanks to Mickey Houlihan for drawing that same spirit from within me in recording this.

6. **The Boatman** 3:30

(Traditonal Celtic/Larson) (*Wood Nymph Music, ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—crystal flute
Nancy Patten—celtic harp
Sam Smiley—acoustic guitar
Rob Cookman—keyboards
Tom Knific—bass
Carolyn Koebel—percussion

Celtic music is another perpetual love for me. This melody comes from Scotland, and is a somewhat poignant expression of a woman waiting for her boatman to return for her, as he has promised he would. I think of my father-in-law, Leo, the boatman now passed over to the Other Shore, who seems to have done exactly this in the mystical, symbolic realm, returning to the Beloved.

7. Be Still My Soul 4:27

(Larson, with allusions to Sibelius) (*Wood Nymph Music, ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson, flute

Rob Cookman, keyboards

Another compositional accident, in the best sense. I was writing a new flute piece that was “misty, mystical”. Every time I would leave these sessions, riding my bike back home, the same melody kept stalking me, day after day. Finally, I paid attention to it, and realized I didn’t even know what it was. Was it Sibelius? I looked in the hymnal to see if he possibly wrote any hymns. There were two listed. I looked up one, called, “Be Still My Soul”. I literally gasped when I read the words. They fit perfectly what I was feeling, as if answering a question I had never asked. Additionally, this was, indeed, that same melody that had been stalking me. This is how it ‘tricked’ its way in to the piece.

8. Slow Tears 3:38

(Larson) (*Wood Nymph Music, ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—alto flute, crystal flute, bansuri flute, keyboards, vocals

This piece originated from an Orlando Gibbons (15th cent.) setting of “Drop, Drop, Slow Tears”, in which I thought the music was much too cheery for the words, so I set out to rectify that. There are no words included in this version, though I changed most of them, and ended up with an entirely new piece. The real story being told is of remorse over our blindness as humans. We see what we lack, as human beings. This compels our truest tears, and these tears drop slowly “onto the feet of Jesus”.

9. The Way of the River 5:28

(R. Larson)

(*Wood Nymph Music/Back Alley Music; ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—flute

Rob Cookman—piano, keyboards

Matt Lund—acoustic guitar

Tom Knific—bass

Carolyn Koebel—percussion

If life is in the “river of living water”, then we must be like leaves floating on its surface. Sometimes we traverse smooth, glassy waters, other times we are catapulted into whitewater. In the end, though, I believe the analogy teaches something called “surrender”, which is the very thing that will bring one to the blissful state that follows: gratitude. As the monk David Steindl-Rast says, “it is gratefulness that makes us happy, not happiness that makes us grateful”. I seek to live that truth. It is the Way of the River.

10. Montana 4:38

(Paul Halley) (*Back Alley Music, ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—flute, native American flutes

Matt Lund—acoustic guitar
Rob Cookman—piano, keyboards
Tom Knific—bass
Carolyn Koebel—percussion

Paul wrote this for me several years ago as inspired by my stories from my beloved home state, Montana. It seems to capture the vast expanse that is so breathtaking out there. This is the Big Sky Country, which is about 90 percent sky, and only 10 percent terrain/mountains, thus putting the human in it's proper perspective.

11. The Gift 3:43

(Larson) (*Wood Nymph Music, ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—flute
Joel Mabus—mandolin
Matt Lund—guitar
Rob Cookman—piano, keyboards
Tom Knific—bass
Carolyn Koebel—percussion

This piece came about in two stages: one, the original melody while I was on one of my solo four-day backpacking trips in the White Mountains of New Hampshire (thus it's Appalachian sound), and secondly, on one fine day at a small cabin where I frequently spent a great deal of sacred time. It is called the Gift, because most pieces take months and even years for me to finish.

12. O'Carolan's Concerto 1:37

(O'Carolan) (*Wood Nymph Music/ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—wooden whistle Rob Cookman—synth harp
Matt Lund—guitar Tom Knific—bass
Carolyn Koebel—Bodhran, percussion

13. Lughnasa 2:18

Rhonda Larson (*Wood Nymph Music/ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—flute Nancy Patten—celtic harp
Joel Mabus—mandolin Carolyn Koebel—percussion

Lughnasa is a feast celebrated in celtic mythology, of the god "Lugh", in the harvest time of year— a song of abundance.

14. Nova Scotia Farewell 3:03 Traditional/Larson (*Wood Nymph Music/ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—crystal flute, flute, and all other instruments

15. Distant Mirrors 6:13 Traditional Sufi melody; 14th Cent. Christian melody/Larson
(*Wood Nymph Music/ASCAP*)

Rhonda Larson—vocals, Dvoyanka flute, synths
Carolyn Koebel—glass bowl, frame drum, percussion

This piece began shortly after the fateful September 11, and took on a life of it's own. I set out to do through Art what cannot really be done in life: marry two different religions/cultures. With this artistic license, I found an exquisite Sufi melody which fit perfectly on my Dvoyanka flute (a double-barreled flute, one side with drone). This particular flute is quite stubborn, which seemed to be symbolic of the task at hand. With this Sufi melody, I experimented vocally and ended up with more of a Bulgarian vocal sound. (So, too, is the Dvoyanka Bulgarian). I found exactly the right medieval melody, "Polorum Regina", sung here in it's original Latin, from 14th century Montserrat. This is from a time in which there was a rich cross-section of pilgrims bringing their own diverse music that was eventually amalgamated into new music as influenced by their individual cultures. Again, I cherish the symbolism here. Finally, the piece took on a meditative quality all it's own, and longs for the eternal ecstasy at the piece's end. The great poet Rumi sums it up: "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other* doesn't make any sense." In the end, as one human race, we are distant mirrors of each other.

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