

A Glimmer of Hope

By

Annie Locke

Written by

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It's a rare but wonderful thing, when you find a solo pianist from the UK in a genre that is usually dominated by the US, the compositions and arrangements are a total pleasure to listen to. She also has something in common with me, we have both worked for the BBC, so let's begin another musical journey right now with **Annie Locke**, and this new realm of music that is opening up before us called, **A Glimmer of Hope**.

The first offering that starts our new sojourn is called **The Story Begins**. I must have listened to this piece at least ten times now, there is something quite emotional about this track that I just cannot put my finger on, but it is the perfect vehicle with which to open up our first musical portal.

The next title has such a deep meaning and no matter where we cast our eyes in the world, even now, it is still relevant, it's called **An End to Hunger, An End to War**. For most of us on this sweet blue and tiny planet, this would be the ultimate dream, and in my opinion Annie has produced an anthem here that expresses that desire. The performance is passionate and imploring, and one can only hope that in the not too distant future, this dream will come to fruition.

There was something a little *Debussy* about this next piece called **River Story**, without wishing to make a pun here, but I will, this arrangement has such a wonderfully warming *flow* to it. I have read that this is improvised, in that case Annie must have been tuned into or channelling her musical spirit guide, as this composition is quite breath-taking and very sun kissed, it's one of my favourites from the release too.

Now although I have been to the US many times, Montana is one place I have never visited. However I can do that thanks to Annie's piece **Riding Through Montana**. I remember once riding on the interstate to Oklahoma City, and whilst doing so writing poetry along the way, there is an essence about that with this track, there is a constant driving narrative of movement here, with a very appealing melody that depicts travelling and watching images pass by the window as we go.

One of my favourite past times, when I lived in England, was to walk in nature, especially through the woodlands. Here Locke goes further and expresses a narrative of a dark night, **Deep in the Forest**. The performance here is sublime; it creates images of two realms coming together in a wonderland of mystery and magic, deep within the realms of the moon caressed forests.

Annie Locke now performs a dedication to her friend *Alan Clarke*, the TV and film director, who sadly died at the young age of 55 on the track **A Man Called Alan**, there is a real longing here that Locke expresses perfectly, one also feels that this composition is a cathartic journey for the artist as well.

Honour (Piano Version) is another dedication piece to the memory of the late *Sir George Trevelyan*. This is a proud arrangement that cocoons many memories within it's over all construction, the performance here was originally on the orchestral based album, *Memories*.

There was something so familiar about this next piece entitled **Natasha** for me, the melody seemed so steeped in memory and flowed with a lush colourful narrative. The performance is once again heart felt, and almost like a tribute to a dear friend.

On **Holiday in Shanghai** we have a horse of a different colour, as we move to the Far East in style, composition and arrangement. Locke creates a wonderful energy of a trip through lands bathed in mystery and vast vistas of lush green valleys and cities that sparkle in an Asian sky.

Now after our long, but most pleasant trip through the realm of this new album, we come across a really attractive moment of musical majesty. This one is called **Towards the Summit**. Once more Locke delivers a piece that depicts perfectly the slow and careful movement onwards up upwards. There is also

something addictive about this piece that makes you listen to the very end to see if this musical journey will be completed.

The vista of a water world and a city with no roads is explored perfectly in this next opus called **Encounter in Venice**. There is a really sweet melody here that engages a European flavour, one that is so enticing; we could easily imagine travelling on a gondola through the many canals and water ways of the city.

The penultimate offering is entitled **Whatever It Takes**. The artist digs in deep here and gifts us a track that has an undeniable essence of determination within its performance. To balance the composition, Locke features a calming mixture into the weave, with that overall sense of dogged will power of resolve being the driving narrative.

Our last doorway is now upon us and entitled **With No Regrets**, this is in my opinion one of the cleverest pieces of the album. Locke rounds off her project here with the perfect ending opus, and a real sense of rounding the circle and mending the hoop can be felt here, as a musical resolution is found, allowing us to leave the album fully satisfied and happy.

A Glimmer of Hope is a release that could be described as a panacea to cure all ills, the music contained within this album touches the heart, gives us hope and leaves us at peace and in contentment. **Annie Locke** has taken to the solo Piano genre like a fish to water and the wait of twenty years has been well worth it. If you're a lover of the solo piano genre, you're really going to want to check this one out; it's an album that has something for everyone.