

# **Wandering Soul**

**By**

**Rachel LaFond**

**Written by**

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I had been a difficult last few days for me and I was in the need for something tranquil to soothe my soul, and that wish was soon fulfilled with the arrival of the new **Rachel LaFond** album **Wandering Soul**.

As soon as they first keys were touched I started to relax and enjoy the moment and this first track of course was the title header, the overall canvas that LaFond has created this masterpiece from. **Wandering Soul** is a delightful composition filled full of emotion and passion and a moment in music that you simply never want to end. This is exactly what I needed to bathe in, a classy arrangement, beautifully played and with the most delicate of touches.

One thing we have a lot of here on the island of Cyprus is the sun. So this one is quite apt for a summer theme and called **Spinning in the Sun**. Once more LaFond's sensitivity comes to the fore, but this time it is ably partnered by a sense of happiness and fun, and as such, the confidence of performance shines through like that yellow orb itself.

The shortest piece off the release at just over 2 minutes is the vibrant and energetic **Finding Home**. There is a certain essence of longing and desire built in here and also intensity too. This is well played and creates an interesting narrative which becomes even more stimulating in the second half as the tempo and urgency ceases, perhaps home at this point can at last be just a breath away.

On **Ember Warmth - Twin Peaks**, we have a lovely fluency, an arrangement that does indeed have a great deal of musical warmth within its structures. I

can visualise vast mountain ranges, whilst sitting by the dying embers of a log fire whilst listening to this one. The performance on piano here is at times powerfully emotive, but then calming and restful, and at all times very memorable.

We now approach the half way juncture and come across a composition called **Mystery of the Moor**. This is so gently played and in doing so creates a really intriguing narrative. The slight elevation of tempo and purpose illustrates the subject matter perfectly, it's like the mists have lifted and one can gaze upon this wild and vast landscape.

This whole album to me seems like a journey of souls, through one portal to the next, perhaps a sojourn of many life times and with that thought in mind, we now move from the moor and ask ourselves a question, **Why We Wonder**, perhaps it's the restless nature of our spirit? Here LaFond expands on this theory in music and with a supreme confidence manifests a moment of solo piano mastery, she produces some of the most empowered and also tender passages you're likely to hear, and carries us along with consummate ease on a composition that is over six minutes in duration, and the longest track off the album.

This has thus far been a truly delightful and thought provoking journey with **Rachel LaFond** and as we move into the latter half of the album we come across a track that seems to be quite popular with our listeners and called **Kingfisher**. If you have ever watched a Kingfisher in flight you will note that the tone and performance here is absolutely spot on, there is a real lightness about this track that just makes you smile.

**Loving in the Rain**, a wonderfully imaginative title and one that springs forth some very appealing imagery, the piano is LaFond's brush stroke and with each one she brings forth another composition that is packed with memories that may have at times been both intense and happy at the same time, but all wrapped up beautifully in one very well played package for us to enjoy.

Were in the deepest parts of this quite beautiful project now and come across a journey of another kind, perhaps a walk along the banks of the **Nikko River** itself. LaFond's skills on piano manifest a lush sense of movement as we go along on our way. One must truly applaud her rather wonderful style of

being able to create such wonderful visuals within the mind's eye whilst doing so. This is a remarkable song that will remain a favourite with me for a long while yet.

We now have located the penultimate offering of the album, this is beyond delicate in its nature and called **Whisper in the Mist**. There is a real reflective energy about this composition that I adore, a slight sense of mournfulness, perhaps of a memory that still resonates within the mist, which wishes to still be heard. I keep coming across favourites and this is another, totally sublime in all ways.

**Redemption** is the last track and the seeker on our journey now wishes to round off the debt and make things right. LaFond has done it again and brought into this world something so thought provoking and deeply fascinating, but also reveals a layer of extra musical skill to give us the feeling that redemption has indeed been successful.

I must say I loved every second of this release, now many will know I get many solo piano albums across my desk, but this is a real bar raiser, **Wandering Soul** is a quality album that I feel will reach the heart and minds of all who listen.

In my opinion this rates in the top 5 of my favourite solo piano offerings over the last couple of years, each track is crafted in the most professional way, to bring us the eager listener a truly marvellous and empowering experience, and as such is completely recommended.