

Color Me Home

By

Darlene Koldenhoven

Written by

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I first came into contact with the music of **Darlene Koldenhoven** back in 2014 through a wonderful album called *Tranquil Times*. Today that journey continues with her latest release called **Color Me Home**.

The entire product from music, to cover is immaculate, there is even a colouring book with crayons, total care and attention has been paid by the artist and I personally love that, and respect musicians who give everything on a release.

We open with a real gem called **First Light**; our ears are filled with the sounds of a forest coming to life in the early morning and then, one of the sweetest melodies I have had the privilege of listening to since *Kevin Kendle's* album *Spring* in the late 90's, falls down upon us with startling performances by *Tom Boyd* on Oboe, *Courtney Jacob* on Flute and Piccolo, and the ever inspiring *Charlie Bisharat*, giving us an uplifting presentation on violin. Koldenhoven's mystical harmonics on this piece truly gives us an image of nature waking to a glorious day.

We move to the next piece called **The Pleasure of the Mourning Dove**. I am blessed to live in an area where I hear this luscious bird sound every morning when I awake. Here Koldenhoven creates a song to appreciate that very moment, the piano here is both calming and melodic and Bisharat's incredibly sweet violin manifests a true moment of mastery, this song is so very appealing on many levels, and could easily be the soundtrack for my morning waking routine.

We move to something a little different now on **Kalahari Calls**, an ambient start greets us, one can literally feel the heat rise on this piece, in fact I found that so impressive I have listened to its effect a few times. This track also features the stunning work of South African flautist *Wouter Kellerman* and the flavour of the region is provided by *Rocky Dawuni's* chants and vocalisations. Koldenhoven on keyboards provides us with a constant floating narrative, but one has to mention the talents of *Brent Fischer* on Vibe and Marimba, it's so good to hear instruments like those in albums again, it's sadly a rarity these days.

On **Song of the Swans** we find a lush Celtic motif, covered by the warm loving vocals of the **Darlene Koldenhoven**, the artist has given you six minutes here, to just glide musically with the swans on a mirrored lake. The contributions of both *Gayle Levant* (Harp) and *Tom Scott* (Clarinet) just add a little extra drift and fluency to what is without doubt a supremely delightful song to enjoy, and one with a really emotive melody to float upon.

As we approach the half way marker we come across yet another opus of beauty, this time called **Eternal Love's Song**. Love is the only truth, as music is the only real language, and here the artist has manifested both with an equal intensity into our musical world. The narrative of this composition is pure love and peace, and after all, if we have that, what more would we need? Koldenhoven's vocals are simply outstanding on this arrangement, one that would easily fit into any movie soundtrack.

Indian Summer is now our next stop off point, this is filled with a little Native American magic, with the talents *John Saranto's* on flute leading the way, as Koldenhoven's ethereal vocals bring us a musical interpretation of that lucky moment when Summer holds on, to hold off winters cold claws. Indian summers are precious times, and filled with a mystical moment, when October becomes July for just a couple of weeks. The native vibe here, made this one of my favourite pieces from the album, the added drum and shaker enhanced the overall composition even further.

We now find nestled away in the deeper part of the release, a track called **Embracing This Moment**. There is nothing more important than being in the moment, after all that is all we will ever have and the only thing that is real.

Here is also a composition that contains an old friend of ours, one *Al Jewer* on English horn. We hear the subtle tones of *Lyn Bertles* early on with a delicate performance on both Viola and Violin. There is a certain wide eyed wonder about this piece that makes it so attractive.

The realm of ambience is crossed into again with the track **Ode to Our Orb**; this is probably the most intricate offering on the release. There is nothing more important than the planet that allows us to walk on its back, and as such, this song is a testament to our great mother Gaia. I hope we learn to treat her with more respect as we grow, and perhaps the performances of great beauty and love on guitar by *David Arkenstone*, *Ricky Kej* on Keyboards with Koldenhoven and the earthly percussive heartbeat of *Vanil Vargas* will help to heal the wounds, and bring a little more peace and harmony into the world.

This next track, called **until**, is a piece that continues a theme, for those of us who respect the world we live on; we will understand this mantra of truth. Here **Darlene Koldenhoven** affirms that to be so, in a performance that once again contains the stunning *Gayle Levant* on Harp. There is a certain similarity in theme here to wisdom provided to us by the Cree. A wonderful song created by the artist, perhaps an anthem for the world to finally come together as one, by dropping the fear and embracing love.

So the penultimate piece off the release is called **Open Skies**, this is a particular fan favourite by the listeners of *One World Music Radio* and as soon as I heard the Flugel horn I knew that *Jeff Oster* was in the house, combined with the expansive keyboards and vocalisations of the artist, and the steady, but delicate percussion from *Nick Vincent*, we have a true winner of a track here, pay special attention as well to Koldenhoven's synth solo, its sublime.

Were here, we have reached the final portal to this dimension created by **Darlene Koldenhoven**, of course it's the title track called **Color Me Home**. So let's enjoy this repose with her and feel the homely warmth of this piece as our last musical offering. The artist is partnered on guitar by long time musical buddy *Mike Miller*, a more smooth and restful end to an album you will never find elsewhere. Koldenhoven finishes with a flourish so picturesque, warm and friendly, the perfect ending to the perfect album.

Color Me Home by **Darlene Koldenhoven** must be one of the best releases of 2017 with ease, the vocals and added instrumentation are simply delightful, the compositions and arrangements are so beautifully produced and performed, it's hard to see this album not winning an award next year, and this is Koldenhoven's finest work to date. **Color Me Home** is an album that should appeal to any true music lover; it crosses genres and delivers important messages in a positive vibrant way, a thoroughly recommended release.