

# **On The Other Side**

**By**

**Cathy Oakes**

**Written by**

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**Cathy Oakes** is an artist I have known for a few years now, so it is a delight that I get to review her new album **On The Other Side**. The album is dedicated to her mother who passed in 2014 and is a beautiful testament to that.

We are sometimes blessed to have had people in our lives that motivate us and clearly Cathy's mother must have been a big inspiration on hers, and the following seventeen tracks are an opportunity for us all to travel on a journey of peace, love and dedication with the artist.

There cannot be a more beautiful opener than the calmness created by the opening offering entitled **Hymn for Peace**. It's rare that I get that emotional at the very beginning of an album, but this one really tugged at my heart strings, I guess it's because we all wish for this despite what country we reside in, and this stunningly compassionate beginning is simply divine in getting over the message of a world bathed in a loving energy of peace and understanding.

The cheerful and happy refrains of **From This Day** are now upon us, this is a composition of a different colour indeed. Through her performance one can see such a happiness emanate from the piano, there is an almost sense of unbridled contentment that flows from this arrangement, in the same way as when two people take vows at a wedding, such as hope, happiness and dedication.

Cathy's ability to change course at a whim can be noted with a supreme clarity on this next offering entitled **Echoes of Time**. Here we have a song that seems to pull us back to a time of sun kissed memories of the past, then carries us

back to the current moment, only to once more drift back to an entirely different memory in time again, this is a really crafted performance and one from an artist who clearly is in touch with her musical muse.

**Home with Annie** is a fine example of the reason for the title of the album, as this is a dedication to a lady who has passed and indeed has been reunited with her partner, *On the Other Side*. Within Cathy's pristine performance we can hear such love and unbridled compassion; one also at this point has to applaud the absolute perfection of orchestration within this release and by an old friend of ours in one *Doug Hammer*.

Now come on, there's nothing like a good waltz is there, it seems to be coming increasingly popular with our musicians these days, and here Cathy dedicates one to her Granddaughter on the piece **Kessia's Waltz**, I think there is a certain vibrancy here you will all enjoy.

Interestingly enough I have recently written another review for a single called *Puddle Jumper* and now on this album I find myself doing the same thing, only this time for Cathy's offering called **Puddle Dance**. If you ever wanted to return to the care free days of youthful puddle dancing, this would certainly be the music for it, lively, exciting and truly blissful, and performed with a huge smile on the face I have no doubt at all.

**Flight of a Princess** is one of those pieces that will make you tingle with excitement; it's like going to Disney Land and getting to play the part of a princess yourself. The orchestration of Hammer here is simply sublime and **Cathy Oakes** performance on piano is uplifting and breathtakingly film score in style and quality, this is officially one of my most treasured musical moments off the album, as there is nothing like a good crescendo is there.

We are now at that point of the album that we are about to drift over the half way marker, as we do so we come across a piece called **Lullaby From Afar**. The gentle string sections behind this performance are beautiful and took me back to my younger days of fatherhood, now whilst listening to this tranquil offering I think of my two grandsons who are over two thousand miles away from me, and I just smile, here we have an arrangement that is simply timeless and serene and of course creates the perfect musical lullaby.

**Just Us** is our musical composition that sees us, the ever eager listener, walk happily into the second half of the album. Oakes compassion and performance go hand in hand here, one feels truly moved when listening to this delightful moment of musical love, a love that seems to literally rain from the piano in torrents and one that is as honest and true as the sunrise of a new day.

This voyage of piano with instrumentation has been a thrill to just flow with and on this next piece that thrill is even more abundantly shared, it's a track called **Midnight Tide**. This is a wonderfully clever offering as there is a musical juxtaposition being played out here, one of dark and light, one of shade and sunlight, perhaps this composition is created out of the one thing that is never the same each day, life.

**Sienna's Dream** is actually a really inventive offering as it originally came from one of the artists Granddaughters who created the theme for the track whilst sitting at Cathy's piano. Given that is the case, this 9 year old has some talent, the melody and tune is really fluent and quite beautiful and even builds a really nice narrative of happiness within the overall construction of the piece.

We now find ourselves at the longest track off the album at over six and a half minutes, called **Ripples on the Water**. In ever decreasing circles we live our life, we learn our lessons and we move on, tossing more pebbles into this lake of existence. The performance here is amazing, **Cathy Oakes** manifests a composition so moving and reflective, it has such a depth and passion about its musical narrative that one could easily get lost in the ripples that drift outwards across this vast oasis of time, without doubt the most reflective and emotive composition off the album.

It is truly hard dealing with grief, I have had to do this far too much recently, but now I think I am getting to the point of thinking not of sorrow, but of the happiness they brought into my life, and for me that is exactly what this next arrangement is all about, it's called **Remnant Tears**. The coalescence of sad and happy memories abides within this performance, one that will truly move you like never before.

Now this is an interesting change in course for the artist. **Heal Me** is the offering in question, the gentle tempo and orchestration certainly does inspire the feeling of healing, and one can also feel through the tone, a change in

vibration to affect this occurrence. The arrangement is also perfect to allow a healing session to take effect, one that leaves the listener with a real sense of serenity at its conclusion.

We are now drawing toward the end of the album and as we do so we come across a proud composition called **Beloved Promise**. There is a certain elegancy about this track that I adore, but the performance also gifts us a delightfully honest arrangement, one that I would feel came from a happiness that can only be found from an impressive sense of magnificence. Oakes plays with such a freedom of spirit here, that it is a sheer delight just to listen to the ever increasing energy of satisfaction.

The penultimate piece on the album is up now, our journey through the walk ways of this album has been long but extremely pleasurable, this last but one offering is entitled **Be Still My Soul**. This melody of hymn's takes me back to my childhood and is brought up to date with the precision and respectfulness that only a quality pianist like **Cathy Oakes** can do.

So here we are, at the very last doorway of the album and if we look above we can read the title with ease, yes this is the title track, and of course called **On the Other Side**. One feels here that this has been a cathartic journey for the artist, the angelic backdrop is stunning and the unbridled passionate flow here is totally mesmeric and emotional to the highest value possible, of course it is simply the perfect way to leave the album.

**On the Other Side** is a work of healing for the artist and may well help many of us along the way as well. This seventeen track album is packed with stylish performances and manifested with honesty and a heartfelt love. There are numerous standout moments and magical melodies that will leave you with a lump in your throat and a smile on your face, all in all, **On the Other Side** is a collection of superb piano based music, bathed with some lush and colourful orchestrations, simply idyllic indeed.