

CHRISTMAS SONGS ENJ-9481 2

Heart warming

Christmas Songs – the title is not quite as original as the music behind it. In comparison to Diana Krall's CD Jenny Evans offers more unexpected tones. Her repertoire coincides with her Canadian colleague in two numbers („The Christmas Song“, „Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas“) but apart from that the English woman who lives in Munich gives her Christmas album a definite European touch. Most noticeably in her choice of material: she's searched through European folk tunes and as well as English has also discovered German, Austrian and Czech songs that have never been rendered in a jazzy way. Some go back to the 16th century (e.g. „The Coventry Carol“) for Jenny Evans, who started her career with piano lessons with the Baroque specialist Trevor Pinnock, then sang with the Henrich Schütz Choir and the Munich Motettenchor an ideal area to merge her love of Early Music with jazz by no means stretches the bow too far. She gives a latin groove to „Blessed Be That Maid Mary“ with its Latin and English lyrics, her own lyrics and an Afro-Cuban rhythm to a Czech Christmas lullaby and the Austrian „Still, still, still“ a world music touch with drone and yodelling.

When she does go turn to the American repertoire when it is with a medley of two popular standards („Little Drummer Boy / Nature Boy“) that have never been heard together. With her dulcet voice this vocalist can warm your heart and that is the main thing at this season.

Music* * * * Sound * * * *
Berthold Klostermann, *Fono Forum*, 12.05

The 11 songs on Jenny Evans's CD *Christmas Songs* have almost nothing in common with the common or garden seasonal songs of cheer; they live from their exceptional simplicity and the singer's interpretation as well as the almost minimalist accompaniment of her trio (piano, bass, drums). It's because of this that the intimacy and the intensity of these – in all senses of the word - beautiful songs shine. Jenny Evans's voice is integral and warm, clear and calm; even when she adds a little vibrato she never over does things. She conveys this understatement to her musicians: Afro-Cuban rhythms, a waltz or bossa nova everything is light and airy, Walter Langs lyrical piano never tries to be on top, the same applies to Thomas Stabenow's elegant bass lines and Rudi Martini's drums.

The way the trio accompanies is supremely balanced and the three supporting Jenny Evans whose art is just as supreme: her idea of combining „Nature Boy“ with the song „The Little Drummer Boy“ is pure genius, her voice accompanied solely by drums until the bass joins them. Evans creates a uniquely harmonious nursery rhyme. Of course she doesn't just want to sound quiet and intimate and that's why she brings her CD to a close with a touch of irony: she dismantles the Salzburger song „Still, Still, Still“ sung in German with a hint of yodelling. Jenny Evans's „Christmas Songs“ preserves the seasonal gleam of the music because she takes the key point seriously and does so with utter ease.

Hans Happel *CD-Kritik.de*

Jenny Evans already proved that she has the knack of picking out unusual songs on her „Nuages“ album, On this CD she has also hidden a song in Latin. Apart from that she gives songs like God Rest You Merry Gentlemen made immortal by Big Crosby and since then been done to death a new lease of life with a hard swing treatment. Pianist Walter Lang touches the piano keys with velvet gloves, Thomas Stabenow is an excellent bass player and „Little Drummer Boy“ Rudi Martini produced the CD with great warmth of atmosphere. This is the Christmas CD of the season.

Rolf Thomas *Jazzthing* 11.05

Contemplative Swing

The tradition of going around the houses singing carols is still alive in England. Jenny Evans grew up with it. So it's logical that the Munich based vocalist is regarded as an expert for Christmas jazz concerts. But it's not simply this British tradition that make her the ideal artist for Christmas songs. Early music was her first love as a young girl with the Henrich Schütz Choir in London later with the Motettenchor in Munich. The ex-student of Linguistics, author, lyricist, actress and studio speaker can be described as a woman of words. Ultimately and that is probably the most important thing there is hardly a more sophisticated singer. Her classically trained voice has an incomparably soft and warm timbre and – regarded for many years as one of the Queens of Swing in Germany - a sense of unerring timing.

All that has been shown in a number of noteworthy projects that reached their peak with her Great European Song Book and her CD *Nuages*. Merging totally different elements to a homogenous whole was her chef d'oeuvre. Classical music and jazz, different languages and regions and seemingly incompatible style were harmoniously blended together.

This is what stands out on Jenny Evans's brand new CD *Christmas Songs* in which she concentrates all her experience and documents it. She bridges the gap between the mediaeval „Maria durch ein Dornwald ging“ and English traditionals like „The Coventry Carol“ right up to Mel Thorne's „The Christmas Song“. And like with her choice of material Evans's approach is always unusual, respectful and heartening, as in her wonderful translation in the Czech „Hajejm nynej, Jesisku“: in English „Lulla Lullaby“ and with a light bossa nova tempo. Likewise her combination of „The Little Drummer Boy“ with „Nature Boy“, and at this point the accompanying trio of her producer and drummer Rudi Martini must be praised with the great romantics Walter Lang on piano and Thomas Stabenow on bass. There can be no better way into advent tide and its later unavoidable Christmas trash than this CD.

Oliver Hochkeppel, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*