



Aboriginal Folk Songs of Taiwan



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Susanne Lundeng
Hold Dæ På Vingan
 Heilo
 Review by Chris Nickson

The title of Lundeng's new album (her 12th) translates as *hold on to your wings*. There's a deep irony in that, since so much of the music feels free and unrestrained, as if it's taking flight. The fiddler from the north of Norway has been recording for almost 30 years, first exploring the traditional music of her region, and more lately as a composer and collaborator with others, always rooted in folk and the tradition, but edging at times towards jazz and experimentation. She's won awards, she's a remarkable instrumentalist, but more importantly, she's someone with the kind of questing mind that refuses to stand still. This disc teams her with percussionist Erik Nyland and guitarist/singer Nils-Olav Johansen, ideal foils who mesh well together and with her, whether on the freewheeling, spiralling instrumentals or the more grounded, shorter songs.

Hold dæ på vingan



It's the opening title track that sets the tone, a searching piece that highlights the contemplative mood that Lundeng can draw from her instrument (and her wordless voice), building as the others fill out the sound so it feels like glorious release before diving back in. It's music that moves, that travels (and partway through it's hard to tell exactly what instrument is taking the lead – it could almost be a sarangi) and returns to softness.

Svalgang



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The instrumental tracks are the huge leaps of imagination here, daring demonstrations of the faith the musicians have in each other. And while the songs are good, the structure grounds them and makes them more static. They have no air under their wings. Beautifully sung and performed, yes, and a complete delight, but they never take off the way something like “Svalgang” does. That track mines a simple, raw beauty that often seems formless, meandering, but which hangs together and makes sense. It demands immersion from the listener, but by God, it rewards the concentration by drawing in the mind and letting it fly – spreading those wings and riding a thermal.

Hav



If anything, the final track, “Hav,” is the one that draws all these threads together. There’s breathless beauty in some of the fiddle playing, and the accompaniment is so subtle at times that it seems more like an indication than a fact. But it builds, and finally draws away to nothingness – until all that remains over the last few seconds is the natural freedom of birdsong. – Chris Nickson

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