



Our Review

Nox Arcana ! Winter's Eve

Gothic Christmas music? Yes, indeed! In 2005, I reviewed Nox Arcana's **Winter's Knight** ([here](#)) and marveled at its uniquely twisted musicality. The release was an eerily eye-opening piece of haunting instrumental creativity for the holiday season. Four years later, Nox Arcana has done it again, bringing forth **Winter's Eve** to enchant and delight open-minded audiences who hanker for something distinctly different and considerably darker than the usual holiday dreck you hear at the shopping mall. Both albums are beautifully executed; the mystical lyricism leaves listeners mesmerized, in a pleasantly creeped-out sort of way.

The generous offering (an hour of excellent music) covers entirely unfamiliar territory, with the exception of Joseph Vargo's reworking of *Greensleeves*. Vargo, in fact, is the prime moving force here; he composed and performs all of the pieces.

The album opens appropriately with Gregorian chants/vocals and a "Winter's Eve" reading by Christine Filipak on *The Messenger*. This brief intro sets the stage for Nox Arcana's offering, which is all about intensely eerie instrumentals and the goth ambiance generated by synthesizer magic. The only "true" vocal comes on the title track, with Jeff Endemann doing the honors.

Moodily magnificent, **Winter's Eve** is all about the atmospherics. This music is positively perfect background music for a holiday event that is out-of-the-ordinary, exploring the mystical, goth side of winter. As for me, I particularly enjoyed the cool percussive touches on *Gifts of the Magi* and the bell-ringing, classically-framed final cut, *Time Slips Away*.

Winter's Eve is the dazed and demonic love-child of Jack Skellington (Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas") and Enya; it combines the contemplative, ethereal nature of new age music with the midnight strains of black-as-night gothic depression. Pretty darn cool!

--Carol Swanson

(Reviewed in 2009)

More

From the liner notes:

William Piotrowski

Joseph Vargo

Christine Filipak

Jeff Endemann

All music composed and performed by Joseph Vargo

Engineered and recorded by William Piotrowski and Joseph Vargo at Phantom Zone Studios

Artwork by Joseph Vargo

Design and layout by Christine Filipak

Words and lyrics written by Joseph Vargo

"Greensleeves" (traditional) arranged by Joseph Vargo

"The Messenger" vocals performed by Christine Filipak

"Winter's Eve" vocals performed by Jeff Endemann

Background vocals performed by the Gregorian Shadow Choir

From the artist's Website:

Explore a spellbinding soundscape of haunting melodies and winter magic. As the first snow mingles with stardust and moonlight, an enchanted kingdom comes to life once again, deep in the Ebonshire forest. The White Queen of Winter returns to cast her ancient spell of slumber, and as the woodlands drift to sleep, she watches over a tranquil realm of wondrous dreams and memories frozen in time.

The band's name Nox Arcana is derived from two Latin words, which roughly translate to "mysteries of the night." It is a great interest in ancient lore, gothic literature and classic horror that unites these two composers, Joseph Vargo and William Piotrowski, in their neverending quest into shadowy and dangerous realms.

Nox Arcana's haunting Gothic soundtracks are often used in independent films, in theme parks during Halloween, and for role-playing games. Their debut album, Darklore Manor, was featured as the musical score for a televised special of the 1922 silent film classic, Nosferatu, and has spawned a book of original horror stories, The Legend of Darklore Manor and Other Tales of Terror.