

## Our Review

# Nox Arcana ! Winter's Knight



Talk about the nightmare before Christmas! No, this is not Tim Burton's ghoulish tale about the Pumpkin King; this is royalty of an entirely different sort. Nox Arcana is Joseph Vargo and William Piotrowski, musical masters of darkness. Their intensely creative *Winter's Knight* takes listeners on a gothic fantasy to the blackest parts of midnight. Although most pieces are instrumental, there are several sinister vocals to chill the soul.

This ample album (over an hour of music!) travels through 21 holiday numbers that are unlike anything you have ever heard. The orchestration is elegantly creepy and musically astute; these gentlemen know their stuff. Most pieces are inspired originals, but more intriguing are the ghostly and ghastly renditions of well-loved carols. Although these holiday chestnuts once were harbingers of hope and grace, Nox Arcana reworks them to cast the eeriest glow across the haunted landscape, all the while retaining the coolest sort of inner beauty.

Most definitely, *Winter's Knight* is not for everybody. Nox Arcana throws dark shadows across the brightest time of year, and unless you have a solid sense of humor or, at the very least, an open mind and/or a fondness for all things goth, this album will puzzle and perhaps even offend. On the other hand, if you have heard five billion renditions of "Deck the Halls" in your neighborhood mall, and you long for something a bit more daring, Nox Arcana's *Winter's Knight* may well be your cup of tea, so to speak.

As for me, great music attracts me, and I have considerable admiration for talented musicians who are willing to walk a different path. *Winter's Knight* will take you down that bizarrely distinct trail for the holidays, but Nox Arcana will make the journey well worth your while.

--Carol Swanson

## More

From the liner notes:

As snowflakes drift from the heavens, a strange magic fills the air, stirring distant memories. 'Tis a night of undiscovered dreams, but also a night to remember ghosts of the past. . .

All original music composed and performed by Joseph Vargo and William Piotrowski.

Traditional carols arranged by Nox Arcana.

Guitar arrangement on "Coventry Carol" by Jeff Endemann.

Recorded and mixed by Nox Arcana at Phantom Zone Studios.

Engineered by William Piotrowski.

"Vigil" narration written and performed by Joseph Vargo. Vocals performed by Joseph Vargo, William Piotrowski, Christine Filipak, Eric Gustafson and the Gregorian Shadow Choir.

Guest Vocalists:

Michelle Belanger: "Past Time with Good Company"

Jeff Endemann: "Coventry Carol"

Nox Arcana presents a haunting collection of original melodies, symphonic orchestrations, and gothic renditions of traditional carols to weave a musical ghost story for the winter season.

From the Web site:

WINTER'S KNIGHT Celebrate the spirit of the season with this darkly enchanting symphony that weaves a musical ghost story for the winter holidays.

JOSEPH VARGO, aside from being a talented composer, is an internationally acclaimed artist whose visions of gothic fantasy have graced book and cd covers, the pages of numerous publications, and the set designs for productions by NBC, Universal, 20th Century Fox, A&E and The Discovery Channel. He began his professional artistic career in 1991 and achieved worldwide status by 1993 with the release of a series of art collections entitled "Born of the Night." In 1998, as a member of the band Midnight Syndicate, Vargo applied his musical influence and trademark title "Born of the Night" to the band's breakthrough release, which he conceived, directed and produced, as well as the 1999 follow-up release "Realm of Shadows." Vargo radically altered Midnight Syndicate's sound, giving the band a new direction and streamlining their experimental mix of styles to focus exclusively on a darker sound that would appeal to his established gothic audience. In the following years, he created various artistic and literary projects; most notably to date is "The Gothic Tarot" and the illustrated gothic anthology "Tales from the Dark Tower." Since 2001, Vargo has been the cover artist for "Dark Realms Magazine," a gothic publication which has been instrumental in promoting the talents of hundreds of other bands, writers and visual artists. In 2003, Vargo returned to the music arena with his new band Nox Arcana to compose the haunting melodies and darkly themed orchestrations that are a trademark of his gothic realm.

WILLIAM PIOTROWSKI began his professional music career at the early age of 15 when he was hired to create the musical score for an independent video production entitled "Ghosts of Ohio," a video documentary about the original "Ghost Whisperer," now a televised series on CBS. In 2003, he joined forces with Joseph Vargo to compose and engineer the foreboding orchestrations for Nox Arcana. William plays several instruments including guitar and keyboards, and is well versed in midi and digital recording technology. William's interests in the realm of the supernatural are reflected in his dark, symphonic compositions and his expertise as a studio engineer enables him to bring Nox Arcana's artistic visions to life.