



Eye for Talent, Inc.

The Best in World Music

Vagabond Opera – CD Review “The Zeitgeist Beckons”

Blogcritics.org
Jordon Richardson
May 16, 2009

There's something fiercely extraordinary about Vagabond Opera, that's for doggone sure. Placed somewhere in the '20s or '30s with pillbox hats and ciggy holders clenched in exaggeratedly lipstick'd mouths, this Oregon outfit will set listeners spinning with their extraordinarily hip combination of opera, burlesque, vaudeville, musical theatre, and comedy. And how!

Vagabond Opera's *The Zeitgeist Beckons* is less an album and more a night out with a blind Parisian prostitute. It brims with countless musical styles, some of which are interrupted by pithy monologues or comedic bits. The record has the flow of a cabaret performance, in fact, and wonderfully pulsates with unusual energy and fashion all its own.

Chock-full of cool tango, Ukrainian folk balladry, Piaf-esque flair, jazz, and traditional opera, *The Zeitgeist Beckons* is one of the most musically diverse and creatively delicious records of the year.

The six-piece Portland band is fearlessly comprised of musicians and neo-bohemians with lashing, amorphous purpose. Operatic tenor/accordionist/pianist/composer Eric Stern is at the front of the Vagabond Opera. He directs the action like an inciter at a gin mill, spinning round in circles while hitting startling notes and channeling sinister, ropey spirits from another world.

Jason Flores, Mark Burdon, Robin Jackson, classically-trained cellist Skip vonKuske, and Ursula Knudson round out the Vagabond Opera, each contributing his or her own faultless technique and instrumental aptitude.

“Chimaeras Be Met” boots things off with a jazzy gait that's the bee's knees. The players show their stuff, strutting through a swanky upbeat piece of music before Eric's rolling tenor scoops in like something out of a Baz Luhrmann picture. The solos are hot, too.

The innovative “Welcome to the Opera” introduces the players in keen fashion, outlining the creative style with a touch of shrewdness that provokes an opera clash “to the death.”

The Zeitgeist Beckons runs through 14 enthralling tracks in 13 languages and countless musical styles. Whether ripping out a sweltering, saw-and-sax-accented cover of Tom Waits' “Tango 'Til They're Sore” that will have your date panting for the backseat or running through a touch of polka and radio theatre on the exuberant “The Party,” this is one record that doesn't let up until the curtain falls.

So grab your giggle water, ditch the wet blanket over there, and make sure your blind Parisian tomato can drive home because *The Zeitgeist Beckons* is a party you don't want to miss out on and you're coming back spifflicated and fried to the hat thanks to the Vagabond Opera.

PO Box 280786, San Francisco, CA 94128
(650)595-2274 fax (650)585-6810 e-mail: support@eyefortalent.com