

Brainwashed - Silvia Tarozzi, "Mi Specchio e Rifletto"

Written by Duncan Edwards

Sunday, 04 October 2020 18:33 - Last Updated Sunday, 04 October 2020 20:47



This music was inspired by the words of Italian poet Alda Merini, institutionalized away from her family for much of her life, renowned for the unflinching honesty of her work. Years into this project, when copyright problems forced Silvia Tarozzi to create lyrics of her own, she followed Merini's example and drew upon her own experiences and relationships mainly from 2008-2019. During this period, Tarozzi married, had a child, lost family members, and moved to another country, all of which inform this rich, varied, and deeply personal work finely balanced between firm structure and breezy abstraction.

[Unseen Worlds](#)

Tarozzi has collaborated with the legendary Elaine Radigue and Pauline Oliveros and *Mi Specchio e Rifletto*

confirms her virtuosity but also shows the depth of her own vision. One song, "xxx Anna," in which a beautiful yet feverish and dreamlike atmosphere eventually clears, is dedicated to her grandmother whose last years were spent with "a confused mind" yet "wonder intact inside her." Other songs came from the fertile imagination which accompanied her "psychedelic" experience of pregnancy, amplifying and revealing hidden aspects of being.

The idea of visions coming from altered physical states is reminiscent of Simon Jeffe's account of the dream he had when ill which led to his founding the Penguin Cafe Orchestra, so it is perhaps fitting that the opening track here is comparable with the PCO's work. Called "Al Cannello" it starts with slow solo violin then the pace picks up with a repetitive rhythm, plucked strings and bass, are added, before the melody is taken by a flute. Translating as "At The Gate" this beautiful piece conjured into my mind a child in an idyllic landscape, skipping, breaking into a run, and flying a kite.

A great strength of this record is the way in which vocals are used: often isolated, looped, and set against instrumentation which does not obscure them. The plaintive "La Forza del Canto" is Tarozzi addressing Alda Merini directly, acknowledging their shared birthday, giving thanks for

Brainwashed - Silvia Tarozzi, "Mi Specchio e Rifletto"

Written by Duncan Edwards

Sunday, 04 October 2020 18:33 - Last Updated Sunday, 04 October 2020 20:47

her inspiration. The title track "Mi specchio e rifletto/I speak and reflect" illustrates just that, by creating a hypnotic pattern from several layered loops of Tarozzi's voice. The timbre and organization of the vocals across the whole album is such that poor comprehension of Italian need not detract. Translated text is included though.

There is fantastic contrast throughout this release. "Domina" has an atmosphere similar, if smoother and prettier, to some of Wendy Carlos's heavier work on the soundtrack to *A Clockwork Orange*

. Here Tarozzi uses keyboards to create fuzzy bass notes and soaring strings as a backdrop against which she warmly intones "stop listening to them, they will exploit you!"

"Cunning" features only her keyboards and Domenico Caliri's electric guitar with added fuzz and sustain. On "L'assenza" (Absence) Vincenzo Vasi's electric bass is the closest I've heard to some of the work on Brokeback's *From the Cook County Water Table* and combines beautifully with Silvia Tarozzi's violin and accordion.

"La so stanza dell'affetto/The substance of affection" starts with a repeated disintegrating loop giving way to cool vocals and a delicate repeated guitar figure, then finally sounds like a slide guitar outtake from Wim Wenders'

Paris Texas

.

Even with the translated text, the meaning of "Sembra neve/It looks like snow" is unclear. It may be about her new son, Romeo, or an ode to a landscape under the Italian sun. This track may be my favorite. It begins with Valentina Malanot's ethereal voice combining well with Tarozzi's more spoken vocals which give way to ripe squawks from Edoardo Marraffa's tenor saxophone and Tarozzi's organ tone. Eventually gentle plucks upon Enrico Lazzarini's double-bass and Tiziano Popoli's piano provide a base for perfect absurdity and confusion: sampled Dada mutterings by Raoul Hausmann. It is a terrific album.

[samples available here](#)