



Review of “Pentecost”, Michael Stone, Contributing Editor, Rootsworld.com

The listener may divine just how the conception of “Pentecost” articulates with the eponymous commemorations enshrined in Jewish and Christian tradition -- 50 days after the exodus or after the resurrection. But this flamenco-Balkan-classical Indian-western chamber jazz mash-up is a lyrical, knowing, wide-ranging nod to the postmodern, postcolonial condition. The blend itself is today less remarkable than how well and expertly acoustic guitarist Sacha Silva, classically trained Indian singer Munya B., Royal Academy of Music alum and composer-cellist Drew Morgan, cellist Elliott Green, flautist Eliza Marshall and percussionist Rohin Khemani realize their fortuitous artistic partnership, forged in London from the four corners of the earth.

This is music that unfolds unhurriedly, reflectively, more an act of engaged collective audience and mutual regard than an expression of deliberate artistic audition. Munya’s gorgeous soprano unfolds effortlessly, a brilliant microtonal thread weaving the acoustic ensemble’s restrained polychromatic fabric. Impossible to classify, and good that it is so, “Pentecost” resonates at a more profound register than that to which the casual world-music aficionado may be accustomed, not so much global groove as world-historical perspective. For instance, heard against the backdrop of the recent Japanese catastrophe, “The Shipwreck Song” seems eerily prophetic: “We arrive in a ruined town: in a storm, in the cold, after an earthquake: at an estuary of sorrow...” Or as “The Song of the Way” expresses it, “This is the song of the way: searching for a drifting soul / Twisting in a storm, drenched in life’s tears.”

Finally, this is the music of a contemporary diaspora, as “The Blood Song” reminds us: “Cross the mountains and valleys... Swim the deep rivers... / Cross the seven seas and you will find me... among the people, you will find me.” In the end, the music transcends even the lyrics, as with the extended chorus of “The Percussion Song,” wordless witness to the universal predicament of humanity at large.

[Note: Michael Stone is a cultural anthropologist, writer and translator. He is Executive Director in Latin American Studies at Princeton University.]