

Of Light And Dust

Contemporary A Cappella Choral

Mari Askvik, s; NOVA Chamber Choir/ Yuval

Weinberg

LAWO 1168—56 minutes

The Kammerkoret NOVA is an excellent Norwegian choir of 36 (11, 8, 8, 9) under Israeli conductor Yuval Weinberg. The works in this program center around the themes of faith and doubt. They “reflect the inner strength found in faith when facing hopeless circumstances”. Several pieces refer to the Holocaust, and both Christian and Jewish traditions are represented. 6 of the composers are Norwegian, 3 are Israeli, and we have texts in German, Hebrew, Latin, and Norwegian, as well as English. To give an idea of the material, here is the complete text of ‘Even When He Is Silent’, set by Kim André Arnesen; the anonymous text is said to have been written on a wall in a concentration camp:

I believe in the sun even when it's not shining
I believe in love, even when I feel it not
I believe in God, even when He is silent

Most of the settings here are pretty severe in style. There is no ear candy, and the only significant tonal references come from the Jewish pieces by Dov Carmel, Knut Nystedt, and Abraham Kaplan. Nonetheless, this is a wonderful, moving program, if only because the NOVA Chamber Choir is absolutely top drawer. They sing with very little vibrato and pinpoint intonation, so the textures, often thick and dissonant, ring clear. Conductor Weinberg deserves high praise for bringing forward such a challenging program and for doing it so well! If contemporary choral music interests you, don't miss this spectacular disc.

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American Record Guide