



QUIETUDE
Alastair Penman
 (saxophone)
 Meadowbank Music

This album does what its title states. It's full of relaxing, calming music. Ideal for someone who wants to chill, I could sit back and just let the music wash over me.

There are seven original works and eight arrangements by Penman of works by Satie, Debussy, Mendelssohn, Humperdinck and Bruckner. The arrangements of the three *Gymnopédie* are for soprano saxophone and piano and this follows Satie's original with the chords in the piano and the melody on saxophone. *Beau Soir* where an alto saxophone takes the vocal line at the original pitch takes the saxophone to the top of its range, beautifully played, not a piece I could have managed to play myself.

From Mendelssohn we have two of his *Songs Without Words* Op.30 No.1 and Op.30 No.6 beautifully arranged and just as beautifully played. From Humperdinck we have the famous 'Evening Prayer' from his opera *Hansel and Gretel* performed by saxophone quartet – a great replacement for the original scoring for four horns. Lastly we have *Locus Iste* by Bruckner arranged for a choir of saxophones and clarinets which really suits the original choral sound of this work.

For me, the CD comes to life more through the original music that is featured. Not always knowing where the music was heading was a joy and this is the beauty of music which is new to you. As befits the title of this album, all of the original music is relatively serene and gentle. Tempos are moderate with just one track, *Homeward*, being more lively. For me this expressed the excitement of one returning home after a trip and you can hear and feel the relief in the reflective ending as you arrive, for there is no place like home. *Rialto*, *Be Still*, *After the Fire*, *Quietude*, *Lament* and *A Prayer for Peace*, the other original works featured, I enjoyed immensely. They have some lovely melodies and I did feel really relaxed after what had been a tough week. I must say, *Be Still* was my favourite track; the sound of the soprano saxophone over the taped sounds of electric piano and sounds of nature was really calming.

The recorded sound and all the playing on this CD is superb and I really enjoyed all the music. If you are looking for something more upbeat then this won't be for you – however, if you need a moment of repose in your life then look no further, it certainly worked for me.

Adrian Connell