Somei Satoh - Mantra Stabat Mater (1988)

1. Mantra 2. Stabat Mater Jane Thorngren – Soprano Somei Satoh - Composer, Electronics, Vocals Pro Arte Chorale George Manahan – Conductor

Starting with mere cricket whispers that crescendo to a glorified choir of Tibetan monks, the opening piece, "Mantra," is technically an electronic piece (utilizing a seemingly endless supply of Satoh's own voice) that is wholly organic in nature. The F note washes over the listener like a rich tide of drones that the composer builds on for 23 minutes, inducing a trance-like state. One item of note: this piece is featured twice as a theme to the original soundtrack of Ron Fricke's beautiful film Baraka (not to be missed), and it's deceptively simple structure coaxes the ear into a meditative state. What follows is a slightly more traditional composition, "Stabat Mater," a piece for choir that inches its way tensely through several movements, interjected by stabs of sound from versatile members of the "Pro Arte Chorale." A mostly quiet and beautiful trilogy in its own right, but less original than the first. If anything, one would hope for an extended rearrangement of "Mantra" for an independent and essential re-release, because it's that good by itself. --- Ken Tataki, Rovi

SOMEI SATOH was born in 1947 in Sendai (northern Honshu), Japan. He began his career in 1969 with "Tone Field," an experimental, mixed media group based in Tokyo. In 1972 he produced "Global Vision," a multimedia arts festival, that encompassed musical events, works by visual artists and improvisational performance groups. In one of his most interesting projects held at a hot springs resort in Tochigi Prefecture in 1981, Satoh places eight speakers approximately one kilometer apart on mountain tops overlooking a huge valley. As a man-made fog rose from below, the music from the speakers combined with laser beams and moved the clouds into various formations. Satoh has collaborated twice since 1985 with theater designer,

Manuel Luetgenhorst in dramatic stagings of his music at The Arts at St. Ann's in Brooklyn, New York.

Satoh was awarded the Japan Arts Festival prize in 1980 and received a visiting artist grant from the Asian Cultural Council in 1983, enabling him to spend one year in the United States. He has written more than thirty compositions, including works for piano, orchestra, chamber music, choral and electronic music, theater pieces and music for traditional Japanese instruments. --- lovely.com

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