Craig Armstrong - The Space Between Us (1997)



1 Weather Storm 6:03 2 This Love (Vocals – Elizabeth Fraser) 6:25 3 Sly II 5:17 4 After The Storm 5:08 5 Laura's Theme 5:27 6 My Father 2:03 7 Balcony Scene (Romeo And Juliet) 5:16 8 Rise 4:24 9 Glasgow 5:21 10 Let's Go Out Tonight (Vocals – Paul Buchanan) 6:01 11 Childhood 5:38 12 Hymn 1:19 Piano, Keyboards, Arranged By [Orchestra], Conductor – Craig Armstrong Written-By – Craig Armstrong (tracks: 1 to 9, 11 to 12), Marius De Vries (tracks: 4, 7, 9) Orchestral Leader – Gavyn Wright, Perry Montague Mason

You may be familiar with Craig Armstrong, if not by name, then by some of his work. He's worked on the score for the recent Romeo and Juliet remake that featured Leonardo DiCaprio. He's done string arrangements for many artists, including some of Madonna's recent material. Armstrong arranged the strings on Massive Attack's first album, and they repay the favor on The Space Between Us by aiding in the songwriting, as well as releasing this album on their label, Melankolic.

However, their influence is barely noticeable, because The Space Between Us primarily shows off Armstrong's skill at creating some powerful and evocative string arrangements. While trip-hop beats and sounds are sprinkled throughout this album, and guest vocalists Liz Fraser (Cocteau Twins, and who turns in a performance that sounds like a kinder, gentler Portishead) and Paul Buchanan (Blue Nile) lend their considerable talents, everything takes a definite backseat to Armstrong and his arranging skills.

It shouldn't surprise the listener to learn that Armstrong has worked on film soundtracks. All of these songs sound like they were written for films, primarily tragic love stories, I think. There's even a piece from his work on Romeo and Juliet, titled "Balcony Scene." At first, I was expecting something with oodles of mushy dialogue from the film. This is actually one of the

more lovely pieces on an album full of them. A very Windham Hill-ish piano melody gently plays throughout, until overtaken by one of the gentler string arrangements of the album. Slowly building, with playful filigrees around the edges, this piece positively soars, giving away to some faint film dialogue at the very end, which is tastefully done.

The only downfall that I could find is that some of the songs seem too melodramatic at times, but Armstrong keeps the music from getting that way too much. Rather than letting the arrangements go on and on, he reigns them in so that you don't get tired of them. That way, none of his work seems contrived. He uses string arrangements the way they should be used, not as an accompaniment to give an already-weak song some more weight, but to accentuate and augment the emotion of the song. ---opuszine.us

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