Rebecca Luker - Greenwich Time (2009)



1. That Something Extra Special 2. Ohio, 1904 3. Billions of Beautiful Boys 4. Killing Time 5. Greenwich Time 6. Remember 7. Unusual Way 8. Lovely Lies 9. He Never Did That Before 10. Out Of Love 11. What The Living Do 12. Birthday Horoscope For B.R. 13. Have Had 14. Summer With You Musicians: Rebecca Luker - vocals Kevin Kuhn (guitar) Antoine Silverman, Entcho Todorov, Christian Hebel (violin) Andra Voldins (viola) Clay Ruede (cello) Richard Heckman (reeds) Joseph Thalken, Joseph Thalken (piano) Dave Ratajczak (drums, percussion)

Broadway star Rebecca Luker has made two solo albums previous to this one. The contents of the first, Anything Goes: Rebecca Luker Sings Cole Porter (1996), are self-explanatory, while Leaving Home (2004) combined covers of pop songs from her youth and newly written theater songs she had discovered. Greenwich Time mostly continues the second part of that last description; as Luker writes in her liner notes, "Over the years, I've slowly collected these songs," which are "not only classics by some of Broadway's best, but many are also little-known treasures by the next generation of brilliant songwriters."

Actually, most of the songs come from that next generation, and while only a couple are said to be from a specific show (only when that show has already had a stage production), it seems likely that most were written for shows. For example, Paul Loesel and Scott Burkell's "Ohio, 1904," written in the voice of a young girl commenting on the Wright brothers, must be from a musical about the invention of the airplane. The songs aren't always so historical, however; usually they seem to express the observations and impressions of some contemporary female character about the travails of her life and loves. Jeff Blumenkrantz and Beth Blatt's "Lovely Lies" is sung by a woman looking back on her upbringing in the South and must have hit home for Luker, an Alabama native.

Among the more familiar songs are "He Never Did That Before," a woman's speculation about where her lover learned some new tricks in bed, from the 2005 Off-Broadway musical Songs from an Unmade Bed, and "Unusual Way," which Luker got to sing (but not record) as a replacement cast member in the 2003 Broadway revival of Nine. Combining an old hand and a new song, she concludes the album with the world premiere of the elegiac "Summer with You," written by composer John Kander, penning his own lyrics in the absence of his late partner Fred Ebb. The overall effect of the collection is of a series of character and art songs drawn from a batch of musicals and song cycles that, for the most part, haven't yet been produced, but which, by the evidence of Luker's powerful performances, deserve to be soon.---William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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