
The One Ensemble, "Wayward the Fourth"

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Thursday, 25 January 2007

The One Ensemble of Daniel Padden released two fantastic records before *Live at VPRO Radio* upped the ante immeasurably. The comical and the sublime tendencies of Padden's previous work were married effortlessly in those recordings. *Wayward the Fourth* is a continuation of the musical environment showcased in those songs: a small step forward from a nearly perfect performance and a chance to hear more songs in that style.

Secret Eye

The One Ensemble's music comes in waves: smokey ones that dance and weave in and out of audible frequencies until they fabricate a space all their own with rules that don't exist for other compositions and definitions that betray the very term. The exotic brew of the east and Padden's own Volcanic whimsy allow the music on *Wayward the Fourth* to go any direction it pleases and often the instruments and voices employed take sudden turns and execute acrobatic maneuvers that'd make the most talented contortionist wonder about their constitution.

The opening "Joker Burlesque" announces itself quietly, floating into existence on a wave of buzzing strings and odd hums. With the addition of sharply plucked guitars and unmistakably One-ish vocal calls, the album begins to take off, stepping deftly about the room like some hypnotic dancer with seductive intent. As the song washes through the remainder of its nine minute duration, a strange and unsettling calm begins to settle in and *Wayward the Fourth* sounds as though it might come to an early and quiet end, harkening back to the Ensemble's debut release. "Neither One Thing" quickly erases that notion with a quirky chorus of high-pitched voices, a walking acoustic guitar, and the simple flourishes of other stringed instruments. There's something truly child-like about the music and as "Shapes Disguised as Sizes" begins to stomp about it becomes difficult not to imagine this as the soundtrack to some very imaginative child's mind. Being carried away by all the sensuous arrangements, off-kilter voices, and dance-inducing rhythms is easy and imagining a world of strange creatures inhabiting the world this music exists in is even easier.

"Smok," for instance, brings to life a world of sailors weary from the sea and drunk on the docks, celebrating the chance to relieve themselves from work for one night. The music rotates and swings to and fro before engaging a cinematic aura and developing an entire story about the history of the sailors and their voyage. The second-longest piece on the record, "Resonant Kings," sounds precisely as it is named: it swells and whispers gently underneath the steady playing of a circular acoustic melody highlighted by dramatic and urgent strings literally propelling the song along. The sharp rhythmic dynamics and brisk cadence thrust this song to the center of the album and give it a heavy weight. This is less a reverie and more an intense moment replayed over and over again, with the consequences always held just out of view. Padden and company do a superb job and switching between these moods and between various modes of expression, whether playful or serious. This easily matches the performance on *Live at VPRO radio* as a whole and presents a whole range of ideas that sit extremely well next to each other. It's proof that the genius heard there was no mere fluke and that Padden and his band still have a lot of music left in them.

samples:

- Joker Burlesque
- Smok
- Horsehead Waltz