



Album Review: Singer Composers Anya Turner & Robert Grusecki
Give Us A Cabaret Gift Tied Up In A Pretty Bow
With MID-CENTURY MODERN

By: Bobby Patrick Aug. 08, 2023

This week's album entry in the BobbyFiles comes from cabaret veteran singer/songwriters, Anya Turner & Robert Grusecki, who just released their ninth studio album entitled MID-CENTURY MODERN, a suite of ten songs written in 2022 and recorded this past Spring. Collaborators for years, Grusecki and Turner have turned out many cabaret numbers, as well as full-blown musicals. The liner notes for the album tell us that "Turner and Grusecki have twice been named finalists for the Richard Rodgers Award for their musicals GREETINGS FROM YORKVILLE ... and AFTER ALL, A MUSICAL MUCH ADO." So, writing and performing music is what these two do. There are a couple of really great things about the album - chief of which is Anya Turner's voice. Her youthful bell-like tone, phrasing, intonation, and perfect diction all work wonderfully together and do not disappear as she fills her voice with emotion - the mark of real talent and professionalism. Her voice is one of those that has a "tear" in it that seems to brim in the eye but never fall. The album is simply produced, with just Turner's pristine voice and Grusecki's piano that goes from a smooth legato to bouncy and rhythmic with great ease, but with no intrusive banging, as can happen on cabaret-centric recordings sometimes.

Opening with their title song, MID-CENTURY MODERN, we hear jazz that pops, as Grusecki's piano expertise meets Turner's vocal dexterity. The tone of her singing blends together nicely with his playing. This is an old-time jazz feel, with a bit of the bebop to it, and the vibe and sound are VERY New York. Cut #3, THE SOUND OF MY VOICE, is the first big emotional investment of the album. This is a nice love song sung from one heart to another. Anya's voice is so liquid here, with that great control, phrasing, and intonation we talked about. The lyrics speak of being safe and loved in the sound of her voice and, indeed, we feel that, listening to her wonderful vocals. Juxtaposed with this is cut #8, INSANITY, an after-the-breakup song where regret bubbles up and memories close in - all about an endless love that actually ended. Anya captures, and then builds, the emotion in her voice, making it all so Bitter-Sweet in the longing. The album wraps up with the lovely ONE LAST TIME, a heartfelt song about togetherness and being in love but with sadness to it, as the words speak of not being together anymore after tonight. The memories of the first time fill the space, as two lovers must part. Anyone who is in love will appreciate this song because of the deep understanding shared with this sad goodbye that uplifts nonetheless.

Another great thing about this album is that all of the songs are individual numbers with their own theme, messages, and stories. Whether it is the novelty number WEIRD LITTLE CLUB (about snobby neighbors), or the simple love song waltz I LOVE YOU, STILL, what you have is an album full of brand-new songs written for cabaret (and cabaret performers) and that's nice. We do say that this album is more than worth a listen for the club singers out there in the dark who might be looking for new material. Turner & Grusecki's MID-CENTURY MODERN makes *bona fide* cabaret songs accessible.