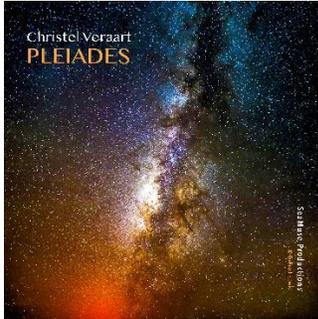


Christel Veraart

Pleiades



Listening to **Taygete**, the first track **Christel Veraart's** new release **The Pleiades** felt like being inside a cosmic cathedral, but with a few exceptions. The height and breadth of this church is endless. The stained glass windows are made out of stars. And there is room for all the faithful of the universe. The capacity is infinite. The amount of grace from the participation in this phenomenon is immeasurable. In many instances Christel's angelic, haunting voice blends with a soft harp to call to you and beckon to you to take part in the experience. I am now a believer.

According to mythology, the Titan Atlas and the ocean nymph Pleione were favored with seven daughters. Atlas, destined to hold the earth on his shoulders, was blessed by Zeus to have his daughter's look down upon him from the heavens as seven stars. We call these stars The Pleiades. Veraart's recording personifies these stellar sisters in an equal number of skillfully produced tracks of space, World, and classically inspired mythological music of stunning proportion. Some of these names will surely be familiar to you.

**Taygete**, the opening track sounds like a hymn, a minimalist's dream with a light drone, Christel's dulcet voice, and muted percussion. **Maia** is ever so soft and sweet. Christel's voice echoes out of the darkness and into the light like a liquid radiance. Fluid, joyful, and intensely ambient. The sinuous song of this Earth Mother has the distinct sound of growing spiritually. Using drum, harp and voice the song **Asterope** has a mysterious tone. Christel's operatic euphony is dreamy and sublime. The lyric is not actually like an Italian aria as I imagined, but blissful vocalise that is quite poignant. I played this one a great deal and it became a favorite.

Often referred to as the Lost Sister, **Merope** is the faintest of stars, but she is special in a way like no other. You see, she married a mortal. This mortal, Sisyphus, was destined to roll a rock up a hill in the darkest place in Hades. Merope, hides behind her sisters, perhaps in shame. Tender orchestration and clear, melodious vocal combine in this somewhat shadowy tune. This is one of the songs that has a strong orchestral foundation and it was well composed and performed.

The tune, **Celaeno** has an exotic theme more than twelve minutes long. Celaeno was called "the Dark One" and Christel's rhythmic, intoxicating music paints her musical portrait as dark, mysterious, and somewhat romantic. She dances under the stars, her lips are like wine, and her spirit is endless. It is easy to get lost in this cadenced characterization.

Silver flute wafts through the air to announce **Alcyone**. She is the brightest star of the Pleiades, out shining her sisters for all time. She appears in the night sky in advance of her sisters, giving light to mankind in the early spring. The final tune, **Electra** is introduced with muted horns, but a strong, almost, sacred song that echoes within a saddened harp. We are probably more familiar

with Electra than many of her other sisters through written word, mythology, and film. Called the “Bright One”, she is often the character of tragedy. Christel gets the tragic part right with her mournful tone and sometimes discordant theme that seems to go on forever.

All seven tracks on *The Pleiades* are hypnotizing, moody, and ethereal. Perhaps they are Sirens in disguise. The tracks flow effortlessly into one another like a soft, art rock opera. If anything, Christel Veraart’s spatial opus brings the stars closer to the aural grasp of mankind. Highly listenable. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews