

As a rule, I rarely read an artist's bio before listening to their work. The music often tells me enough, even on the first listen. When I do read the bios, they fill in all the missing information, and the music becomes even richer with the musicians' backgrounds. In the case of Galliano Somnavilla, however, I accidentally opened the bio first, and the phrase that caught my eye immediately was "musical landscape." Even alongside all the other interesting snippets about Somnavilla, such as his innovation as a young child, status as a prodigy pianist, those words still stuck out.

When I eventually listened to his single, *Songday 266 The Lonely Wanderer*, it turned out that "landscape" is the perfect description both for the instrumentation and the mood of the tune.

The entire piece feels like stepping into a somewhat magical garden, or reaching the very top of a mountain, or arriving in a misty clearing at the edge of a forest. The instruments layer slowly, with earthy bass tones at the opening, paired with a high wooden flute that, in both its rhythm and pitch, sounds a bit like a song bird. When the snare drum enters, it disappears immediately after one beat, making room for stronger melodic lines played on what sounds like a cross between a bagpipe, bassoon, and oboe. Adding to the background bass are low guitars and a rain-stick sound—slow and peaceful—deepening the "landscape" of this soundtrack for the natural world.

The tempo doesn't shift at all until the middle of the piece, around 2:21, when the snare drum (or a synthesized variation) arrives back on the scene, shifting the tune into double time, and cuing that earthy bass to syncopate. As the music speeds up, the mood shifts from grounded and earthy to dancing and powerful, like a river or a rushing tide.

The most interesting bit about this piece to me, is when one instrument fades in volume, it never really disappears. Another instrument simply rises to the surface, catches my ear. All of the sounds weave together, take turns, claim importance at different times, just as in nature. *Songday 266 The Lonely Wanderer* is as accurate in its representation of beauty as it is beautiful, and is as skilled as it is imaginative. I can honestly say I was transported, from couch to forest, from city to landscape.

Artist: Galliano Somnavilla

Album (single): *Songday 266 The Lonely Wanderer*

Reviewer: Alice Neiley

Rating: 5 stars out of 5