

Album: *One Song 2*

Artist: Galliano Sommovilla

One thing I have noticed during this global pandemic is the extreme difficulty of finishing projects. This clearly includes music reviews, as Galliano Sommovilla contracted me to review his two one-song improvisational albums, *One Song* and *One Song 2*, at the same time, and I'm just getting to *One Song 2* now, despite having started it over 2 weeks ago. Coincidentally, the album itself feels like it contains a similar (though markedly more beautiful) pattern of impulse and delay.

Like *One Song*, *One Song 2* is actually one 45-minute improvised song, but unlike its predecessor, it's less immediately melodic and more overtly experimental. The beginning actually reminds me a bit of Arvo Part compositions in its spare, light affect, but as it nears 1:30, the tune thickens and speeds up, the improvisational aspect becoming especially clear. At 1:56, the full-bodied timbre continues, and dynamics shift to forte—a dramatic crescendo! This level of intensity continues until around 2:30 when the tempo slows and timbre becomes more minimalist again, but only for a moment. After a few seconds, Sommovilla slides back into a lush rush of low notes. In fact, the transition between minimalist and full is reminiscent of a rocky stream opening into a river—a beautiful shift, and one that Sommovilla repeats throughout this piece, as well as the general alignment of low register with full, emotional chords, and high register with minimalist, light, floating single notes.

There are many, many beautiful, perfect original and melodic excerpts in *One Song 2*, so many, in fact, that part of me wishes Sommovilla would expand on each one of them, creating a million more compositions based on the accessible loveliness. Perhaps he will. That wish, however, is why the album / improvisation as a whole feels somewhat unfinished—every time one of those melodies arises, I want it to continue, and though the theme sometimes reappears, the full melody never does. Most of my favorite melodic moments happen after 15:00. At 15:30, for example Sommovilla moves chromatically down the scale with a light touch, and I wished it had gone on longer the moment he moved on to something else; at 16:13, the fingers on his right hand move between two notes so quickly it's almost like a trill on any other instrument, but the way he plays it on the piano, it brings to mind a person running through the night—he could certainly create a composition based on a combination of that 15:30 melody and the slightly more intense trill.

The trill returns at 19:00, and a similar melodic theme to that of 15:30 resurfaces at 19:25, leading into yet another beautiful melody at 22:13, yet another moment that could be expanded into a brilliant full composition with Galliano Sommovilla's creative mind and heart.

The amount of melodic taste tests between 15:00 and 30:00 makes me believe they will stay forever, so when, after another such taste at 30:06, the tune dives back into a full wall of chords and fast moving improvisation, I'm caught off guard and slightly disappointed, despite its dramatic beauty. I almost felt that the tune could have ended in the softer mood established at 30:00, and we may not have missed the return to escalating tension.

The fact that these melodic loose ends are interspersed into an overall blanket of big, dramatic chords, crescendos, and increasing tempos makes this album feel a bit more one-dimensional than *One Song*, and slightly less satisfying as a whole. However, the potential for so many compositional offshoots may make up for that!

The actual end to the album is a series of shifts between the lullaby-like line at 38:00 and the drama of building dynamics and pace at 39:00—a pattern that repeats at 40:00 and 41:00, finally dispersing back to a minimalist spacing of notes, much like at the very beginning of the album.

As I said about *One Song*, I have reviewed many of Galliano Sommovilla's albums over the past 7 years, and they all have their own individual strengths and beauties. *One Song 2* strikes me as a journey of an album in and of itself, but will serve especially well as a collection of moments, a palette, if you will, of colors and melodies and absolutely perfect glimmers of new songs, whole gorgeous worlds into which Galliano Sommovilla can lead us.

Review: 4/5

Reviewer: Alice Neiley

