

## Aga Zaryan - A Book Of Luminous Things (2011)

Written by bluesever

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### Aga Zaryan - A Book Of Luminous Things (2011)



1. *Music like Water* 2. *Like a He-Bear and She-Bear/Falling Asleep/Eyelashes* 3. *This Only*  
4. *Eye Mask* 5. *Autumn Quince* 6. *Meaning* 7. *A Gift* [play](#) 8. *A Parable of the Poppy* 9. *I*  
*Talk to My Body* 10. *A Song on the End of the World*

[play](#)

11. *On prayer* 12. *This Word*

Personnel: Aga Zaryan vocals Michal Tokaj piano Larry Koonse guitars Darek Oleszkiewicz  
double bass Munyun Go Jackson percussion

Polish Radio String Orchestra Krzysztof Herdzin – conductor

New album by Aga Zaryan which we announced not so long ago in this note (there is plenty of information there which I will not repeat here) is already available in shops in Poland and worldwide through Blue Note distribution. Aga Zaryan's last record "Looking Walking Being" (2010) was a great success and she was universally acclaimed as top jazz singer in Poland but she also starts to be recognized by audience abroad. That album brought not only great singing by her but also stellar play by her sideman of whom two are present also on her newest album: Munyungo Jackson whose play on percussion enlivens greatly this music and Michał Tokaj who not only is accompanying on piano but co-creates music on this album since he composed all tunes.

So what we have in this pot and what is the outcome? Whole album is focused around texts which are very deep and moving indeed: most of them are penned by Polish Nobel Prize winner poet Czesław Miłosz and some of his favourite poetess (Jane Hirschfield, Anna Świrszczyńska, Denise Levertov). Tunes are all composed by Michał Tokaj and they are melodious, relaxed and bluesy. On the other hand unlike on "Looking Walking Being" where compositions were of different authors (apart from Tokaj, Larry Koonse, Zbigniew Wegehaupt and David Dorouzka), "A Book of Luminous Thing" lacks the diversity of the previous album though gains on artistic unity. There is also no immediate hit like title track on previous album

and closest to that is "Music Like Water" flowing gently and lazily which is good example how Aga Zaryan's music change on this CD: from accessible, optimistic, energetic to more ambitious, pensive and complex.

On top of Miłosz texts and Tokaj writing lays singing of Aga Zaryan's and I bet few jazz vocalists in world will venture on task as difficult as she did on this album. And yet her singing flows so effortlessly, graciously and is yet so communicative that I cannot say anything else but simply praise this splendid effort!

Last but not least is play by Aga's companions: Michał Tokaj apart from composing all tunes supplies her with elegant and lyrical accompaniment on piano, Larry Koonse play on guitar is no worse or better than David Dorouzka's on previous album, Darek Oleszkiewicz lays usually deeply hidden in the background (due to frequent use of strings I suppose) while Munyungo Jackson percussion rides are one of the best instrumental moments in this music. Excellent strings of Polish Radio Orchestra supply a film-like setting for most of the tunes.

So what is my final position on this album? I simply admire it because Aga Zaryan showed truly jazz spirit by totally renewing her musical concept although retaining her own, individual language so well known and appreciated from many of her previous albums. In the result she is providing us with significant achievement that will most probably bring as many approving as disapproving opinions. But that is what is good art all about, isn't it?

PS. BTW birds are singing that sooner or later we will get this music (or similar) with Polish texts. That will be great news for Polish speakers! --- Blue Note, 2011

Nasza pierwszoligowa reprezentantka klasycznego jazzowego śpiewania, tym razem w repertuarze sugerującym już nie klasyczne, a wręcz konserwatywne podejście, bo w interpretacjach anglojęzycznych wersji poezji Miłosza oraz poetek Jane Hirshfield, Anny Świrszczyńskiej i Denise Levertov – autorki tekstów z poprzedniej płyty Agi Zaryan. W dodatku z towarzyszeniem Polskiej Orkiestry Radiowej, co czyni z tej płyty rzecz mniej kameralną niż ujmujące interpretacje wierszy z Powstania Warszawskiego, które wokalistka wydała przed pięcioma laty (tam z kolei pojawiła się poezja Świrszczyńskiej).

Nie obyło się bez kompromisów: tu nastrojowość za cenę różnorodności, tam dostojność za cenę swingu. Ale gdy autorka śpiewa mocnym, soulowym tembrem „Autumn Quince”, w „On Prayer” przyspiesza na chwilę tempo, albo gdy wchodzi orkiestra w pięknym „A Song on the End of the World”, jest więcej niż tylko perfekcyjna technicznie. Gdyby jeszcze udało się sprawić, że ta jej druga firmowana szyldem Blue Note płyta tym razem wyjdzie również za granicą, byłaby ciekawym eksportowym produktem Roku Miłosza. ---Blue Note

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