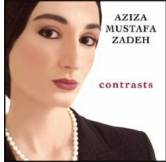


Aziza Mustafa Zadeh - Contrasts (2006)

Written by bluesever

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01 - Singing Nature (Zadeh) 5:09 02 - Night Life In Georgien (Zadeh) 3:28 03 - Stars Dance (Zadeh) 5:23 04 - Dreaming Sheherezadeh (Zadeh) 2:50 05 - Bachuana (Zadeh) 1:45 06 - Last Day Of Chopin (Zadeh) 3:38 07 - Past Of Future (Zadeh) 5:12 08 - Contrasts (Zadeh) 5:36 09 - Egocentric Bumble-Bee (Rimskij-Korsakow/Zadeh) 1:30 10 - Jazzerei In Trumerei (Schumann/Zadeh) 4:30 11 - Bolero (Ravel/Zadeh) 5:43 12 - The Way To The Palace (Zadeh) 1:38 13 - The Mirrow Of The Miracles (Zadeh) 1:45 14 - The Naghtingale & The Rose (Rimskij-Korsakow/Zadeh) 4:45 15 - Cloudy Evening (Zadeh) 3:26 Aziza Mustafa Zadeh - Grand piano and vocals

Aziza was born on 19 December 1969, in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, into an immensely musical family: Her father, Vagif Mustafa Zadeh, an established Jazz legend throughout the former USSR, of whom BB. King said "people call me the king of the blues, but if I could play the piano like you do, I would call myself God," was a pioneer in as much as he was the first musician to incorporate the traditional music of his homeland, known as "mugam" into popular Western Jazz music. Mugam, itself a highly improvisational style, refers to a modal system of music of which there exist over 70 types, all defined by their specific pattern of intervals, range, as well as direction of melodic movement and rhythm. With her father as architect of the Azerbaijani Mugam Jazz Movement, and her mother Eliza Mustafa Zadeh (in Soviet times known as Eliza Khanom), herself a professional singer and one of the first women to sing in the new Mugam Jazz style, it was only a question of when and how Aziza would express her musical heritage, never an if...

Still, she came a long way from the headstrong child fascinated by any kind of art-form (be it music, dance or painting, but bored and annoyed by her early musical teachers, who demanded more commitment to her practicing) to the disciplined professional pianist/singer/composer. Not that she would have lost any of her self-determination. She always liked to have things her way, a philosophy that did not necessarily go down well with her teachers at Baku conservatory where she received classical piano training. While her all too obvious talent was never under

dispute, her handling of musical icons was: neither Aziza's transgressive "additions" to Beethoven Sonatas, nor her improvisations on Bach fugues were very much appreciated. "I'm sure Bach would have agreed with it," she said with a smirk at an interview. It was in this same self-confident fashion that she would later on recruit Jazz celebrities such as Al Di Meola, Stanley Clarke, Omar Hakim or Bill Evans as supporting guests on her CD Dance of Fire. The fact that they all came to play her music is not a small achievement for a then 25 year old, not exactly well-known musician. Asked whether she was in the least intimidated by the famous lot she replies: "No. Not at all. In fact, I think I intimidated them a little. It took a lot of time to record and the music was very different. We had to stay up long hours and even then we recorded for the best part of a month."

Aziza started playing the piano when she was 3 years old, gave her first concerts with 14, and won her first international prizes with 17. "It would have been a sin not to use this god-given gift," she muses. Next to God her parents are Aziza's most important musical leaders, especially her father. He tragically died at the early age of 39 of a heart attack after a performance in Uzbekistan, an event both devastating and strangely motivating for the ten-year old girl: With Vagif's death she not only lost her father but a source of inspiration and a gifted mentor for whose unceasing creativity Aziza continues to have the highest appreciation. "He was a genius. A true genius." Vagif continued to influence his daughter beyond his death it seems. Commenting on his death she muses: "For me, my father has never died. He simply has left this earth. I still feel his energy surrounding me. Sometimes, it's like his soul is flying around me, you know. There are times when I give concerts that I feel his presence so strongly, it's almost tangible. It's like I could reach out and touch him." Little surprise that her father is omnipresent in Aziza's work, be it in the form of one of his compositions or in a song dedicated to him.

She first recorded in Ludwigsburg for German Columbia, an eponymous solo album '91 of her own music except for her father's 'Quiet Alone'; Always '93 was a trio with Chick Corea sidemen John Patitucci and Dave Weckl, again all her own except for her father's 'Vagif'. She played at the Brecon Jazz Festival '95; Dance Of Fire '96 incl. Al Di Meola, Stanley Clarke and others, and played solo at Queen Elizabeth Hall early '96. One critic described the album as 'a supercharged Eastern-flavoured fusion' and her solo playing as a 'mixture of Bud Powell, Rachmaninoff and the Arabian Nights'; she sang somewhere between 'Betty Carter and the top of a minaret'. Seventh Truth '96 featured photos of her exotic self half-naked; she multi-tracked herself singing harmony and playing congas on some tracks as well as piano, with percussionist Ramesh Shotam on three tracks and drummer Ludwig Jantzer on one. Some of the songs were based on Azeri classics and some had English lyrics by Aziza; there was Middle Eastern flavour in the vocal style, but the total effect smacked of New Age rather than Bud Powell, complete with dubbed sounds of surf and birds. Jazziza '97 showcased singing, incl. jazz standards plus her own 'Sunny Rain' and 'Character', with Toots Thielemans, Philip Catherine, Eduardo Contrera on percussion. ---home.online.nl

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