

Mp3 String Planet - Classical: Contemporary



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Classical crossover meets World Beat - Chapman Stick and viola with lots and lots of percussion - visionary melodies over ethnic rhythms 13 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Contemporary, CLASSICAL: New Age Details: Novi Novog and Larry Tuttle have created a brave new world of music. Their group, String Planet (and similarly-titled debut album), combines two stringed instruments seldom in the spotlight -- viola and The Stick -- for a genre-crossing sound utilizing classical, jazz, new age, pop and world elements. Novi, a top viola session musician, and Larry, a longtime proponent of "The Chapman Stick," have been playing string-music together for the past 15 years in Los Angeles-area groups such as Freeway Philharmonic and SoulSkin. The viola is a little larger than a violin and in orchestras is used more for the inner harmonic voice than the lead melody line (Novi likes to slip back and forth between the two). Larry describes The Stick as "a string section posing as a 2X4" since this long, narrow, upright, electric instrument has six bass strings tapped (not strummed) with the left hand and six melody strings played with the right hand. Since a Stick player can simultaneously play rhythm along with chords, harmonies or melody parts, it often gives the listener the impression of hearing two instruments. On the STRING PLANET album, the viola and Stick are backed by a world music rhythm section including a wide variety of hand drums and percussion with subtle touches of synthesizer for color. One tune features a string quartet and two guest vocals are sung by recording artist Lauren Wood (Novi's cousin). Using The Stick, Tuttle composed all 13 tunes on the album. "Even though this is primarily instrumental music," explains Larry, "my composing mostly comes out of my background in pop music, so I generally write songs with a verse/chorus/ bridge structure, going for that hooky pop song appeal. There is no easy category to put us in, which is both our blessing and our curse, but classical crossover would probably come the closest." Tuttle goes on to say, "There is a concept in science fiction called 'a sense of wonder,'

and I wanted to have that with String Planet's music. Our goal was to make it creative, exotic, unique and exciting. Beauty, imagination and groove were our cornerstones. I wanted to create a showcase for Novi's big talent, especially her gift for improvising. All of her parts began as spontaneous improvisations and from there we chose the best ideas to keep for the finished arrangements. We always try to leave a few sections open, both in the studio and in concert, for her to go anywhere she wants, leaving the door open for magic to happen." Furthering the band's artistic conceptualization of expansive imagination and other-worldly creativity is the ceramic sculpture depicted on the CD cover. Titled "Alien," it was crafted by another cousin of Novi's, the late Elyse Saperstein. Both Novog and Tuttle have impressive credentials starting with extensive early classical training, progressing through recording and touring with major-label rock bands, and then concentrating more on string-oriented ensembles. Novi began playing piano at age four, took up violin at age eight and then moved on to viola. As part of the American Youth Symphony, she studied under Mehli Mehta. Novi attended the California Institute for the Arts on a full scholarship where she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree after studying under Louis Kievman with additional instruction in composition from Leonard Stein and Alan Chaplin. She also won the American String Teachers Association competition. But simultaneously, Novog also pursued a career in the world of pop and rock music. In her childhood, she began playing and recording with her cousin Lauren Wood which led to an album on the Musicor label as Rebecca and the Sunnybrook Farmers. The group evolved into Chunky, Novi Ernie with two albums on Warner Bros. Records. As Lauren began her solo career (see laurenwood.com), Novi continued to be featured on her recordings. Novi went on to record and tour in the rock band Sumner on the Elektra/Asylum label. Within a few years Novi rose to prominence in the Los Angeles session scene as a violist for recordings (albums, films, TV shows and commercials) or concerts. She has a long list of credits highlighted by her viola solos on such big chart hit singles as The Doobie Brothers' "Black Water" and Prince's "Purple Rain" and "Raspberry Beret." Novi also has performed on recordings by pop artists as diverse as Cher, James Taylor, Madonna, Bonnie Raitt, Michael Jackson, Bon Jovi, Neil Diamond, Kenny Loggins, Ray Charles and Julio Iglesias. Novog's talents also extend to working in other genres such as folk (Indigo Girls, Gordon Lightfoot, Dan Fogelberg, Shawn Colvin), country (Willie Nelson, Emmylou Harris Linda Ronstadt, Kenny Rogers), jazz (Stanley Clarke, David Benoit), new age (John Tesh, Nicholas Gunn, Tangerine Dream, David Arkenstone), and blues (John Mayall). In addition, Novi has performed onstage with many other artists

including Everclear, Aretha Franklin, Johnny Mathis, Frank Zappa, Scott Weiland, John Cale, Gladys Knight and Luther Vandross. Some of Novi's film soundtrack work includes "Pretty Woman," "Dead Poet's Society," "Sliding Doors," "Mr. Holland's Opus" and "One Fine Day." Growing up in Seattle, Larry Tuttle discovered the string bass at age nine and embarked on a childhood saturated in music -- playing in school, city and regional symphony orchestras. He played principal bass for a summer at the National Music Camp in Interlochen (the foremost program of its kind in the country) and sat in with the Seattle Symphony as an honor student. He also studied under that orchestra's principal bassist James Harnett at the University of Washington. Larry received extensive private study from such notables as Ron Simon, Ring Warner and Oscar Zimmermann, and took a revelatory ear-training course from jazz great Gary Peacock (Keith Jarrett). Discovering the electric bass and progressive rock bands such as Yes, ELP and Gentle Giant while in high school, Larry went on to play for ten years with the rock group Russia which moved to Los Angeles and recorded two albums for Warner Bros. Records. "When I began playing The Stick," says Tuttle, "it was a life-changing move. It opened entire vistas of musical expression for me. It allowed me to continue as a bass player while adding the opportunity to play melodies at the same time, and it became an ideal instrument to compose on as well." In 1999 Larry released THROUGH THE GATES, an album of solos performed on The Stick. Larry and Novi met when they formed the instrumental string ensemble Freeway Philharmonic with guitarist Robert Stanton. While in that group they recorded four albums -- FREEWAY PHILHARMONIC, CAR TUNES, SONIC DETOUR and ROAD TO JOY. In 2003 Tuttle and Novog joined the part-vocal-and-part-instrumental band SoulSkin which recorded a self-titled album and were featured on National Public Radio. In recent years Novi and Larry have worked frequently creating string arrangements for various artists, performing in classical string ensembles, and playing concerts with Freeway Philharmonic and as String Planet. Now with their first String Planet recording, their years together show a deep affinity for each other's playing and their uncanny entwining-interplay within each song. "I often can sense what Larry is going to play," states Novi. "I love to move around within a song playing the melody, then a counter-melody, then a harmony part, and maybe adding some coloring and inner voices. We try for lots of dynamics. Our passion is the sound of strings working together."

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