

Mp3 Cirkestra - Alice



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Original eclectic instrumental circus music with an eastern European influence. 10 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Weird Jazz, POP: Quirky Details: "An unbelievably diverse collection of songs, themes, and musical moments woven into a seamless circus tapestry." -Jeff and Julie Jenkins Directors-Smirkus Through the Looking Glass Founders and Artistic Directors-The Midnight Circus Notes From The Band Leader: In June 2004 I started to write these tunes. I'd taken over the barn loft at Circus Smirkus in Greensboro Vermont. The theme of the circus was "Through The Looking Glass" and I had 3 weeks to create wall-to-wall music for the two-hour show. I didn't know I'd come up with this. The invitation to this award winning international youth circus came from director Jeff Jenkins earlier that year. He's an old classmate from Clown College who was scouting venues for his own circus Midnight Circus. He found himself in the seats of The Bindlestiff Family Cirkus where I was a substitute musician for Raja Azar whom I knew by way of Adam Kuchler who is another Clown College grad who I met while clowning in Kinomakea Circus Japan which hired me on Kelly VanCleave's request because I knew her when I worked on the Ringling Show in the late 80s. That's a hard sentence to read but there's no other way to say it; it's been a long ride and Jeff asked me if I'd go with him for part of it. In the loft with my accordion and a pile of manuscript paper I had the "Alice in Wonderland" Books, the acts themselves, and the guidance of Jeff and his amazing wife Julie to draw inspiration for these melodies. I was trying to capture the spirit of the characters, performers, and the acts they were doing. In the opening number, "Charivari", the darkened circus ring fills with acrobats portraying the characters of Wonderland. The audience is transported through the looking glass while the big top brims with movement and flight. I wrote an Eastern European styled circus romp. Listeners have likened this to Klezmer but it's interesting to note that my introduction to that rich body of traditional music is mostly the similarity in my own writing to it. Kathe brought in the

notion of how to play this; with the emphasis in the fourth beat of the measure moving toward the first beat. The first time we played it this way it felt extremely challenging and unusual to do. The rising crescendo at the end of the song marks the point in the performance where the entire cast formed a huge barrel pyramid in the ring. From the center Alice, having just eaten magic cotton candy grows to height of the big top, her huge blue dress like a big top itself and her head just below the Cupola. As she descends the ring darkens and gives way to "Alice", a circus waltz for a girl on the trapeze. From everything I wrote up in the loft I picked material for this recording that stands on it's own. Much of what I wrote only made sense in the context of the performance. Some of it would be diminished without the amazing talent of the Smirkus Troupers. A couple of things were added after the summer tour ended. These are the tunes about my experience backstage. "Ramona" is a song about an old circus wagon who lives out at the Circus Barn. "Jana" is the girl who lives inside. Late at night when the troupers are sleeping in their bunks she is up making costumes for them. "Stoney" gave me the blue accordion. Mom says "Water Spitting" is a Czardars, I played it when the clowns were spitting water on each other. Although it stands as an expression of my feelings and my world I failed to tell the story of Alice in Wonderland on this recording. Other themes emerge and I lose my point if I ever had one. This morning I wondered if I should just go ahead and do a recording of tunes with girls names as the theme, but in the moment I set my pen to paper other things come to me. The notes are all out there and I'm just picking them like dandelions and blowing them up into the air. It's all very quickly out of my hands. (And into yours). Thanks for listening.

-Peter Bufano May 24, 2005

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