

World Music Reviews

By Francesca Nemko

Recreation by Zap Mama, Heads Up HUCD3159

This is a CD for the times we live in: it's multi-cultural, a great showcase for women, and containing an important message,

delivered in a whimsical and tantalizing way. Marie Dualne, founder of Zap Mama, is of Congolese descent, raised in Europe and well-traveled to many parts of the world. Vocals alternate between French and English, with a little African chanting thrown in, too.

Dating back to 1990 when Dualne assembled four other vocalists, the group has numerous recordings under its belt. All compositions on this current one are by Dualne, who sings and plays percussion throughout. There are guest appearances by such other international names as Bilal, G. Love, actor Vincent Cassel. The latter is especially appealing in a duo with Dualne en Francais, on "Paroles Paroles," which translated means approximately "...allwords, all words." He's also slyly subtle on "Non Non Non," a song about flirting. (I have to admit, as an easily swayed woman, I'd be saying "oui, oui," myself!

However, to continue...the album opens with a charming unaccompanied vocal by Dualne's 15 year old daughter, singing in French, and is immediately followed up by "Vibrations," which brings in the many talented vocalists and musicians that Dualne has surrounded herself with.

Other notable tracks include "The Way You Are," with guest Bilal, sounding as if he's making love to all the women in the studio - ahem, with his voice, that is. He's adorable to my ears; "Once Upon A Time in Africa," with its lion's roar intro and its story depicting disagreement between man and woman (so, what else is new?); but it all resolves nicely.

It's important to note that, as the press release states, "In addition to her role as an artist and performer, Dualne continues to devote much of her time and energy in working to protect human rights and fight global poverty." This album, in its own way, is a testament to that work.

Peace in Progress, by Manisha Shahane, www.manishamusic.com

Although born and raised in the U.S., Manisha Shahane displays much of her Indian roots on this, her debut album. She depicts it as "rooted in folk, jazz, classical and Indian traditions" and all these elements are displayed throughout. A track-by-track assessment shows an opening of traditional

Indian instruments with Shahane singing in the Marathi language. This is followed by 45 minutes of her beautiful, lyrical voice on very meaningful lyrics - most sung in English. On track #3, she also is heard on vibes and piano, while #4 asks such interesting questions as: "Why do you laugh when you look at me, I'm only a little bit clumsy," the title of the song.

On #5 there is an acoustic bass solo by Blake Newman, offering another flavor; next she has overdubbed her voice for a choral effect; then she moves into another Marathi piece, "Nachre Mora," one of the few non-original pieces. Her low, smoky voice is well suited to "Something In Your Voice," which also features flutist Dominique Gagne. Retuning to Marathi, Shahane accompanies her voice on acoustic piano, which is followed by a delightful childlike "Willows;" then closes with "Love Sheets," which speaks of her childhood home and her parents and what she most cherishes about those times.

Manisha is a true "find" in the musical field. She's capable of many moods and colors, and she, too, is concerned about our difficult times. She says "I used to believe that conflicting internal commentary, misunderstandings in our homes and communities and wars, obstructed peace, until I realized that navigating this terrain is part of our collective peace in progress." Her music and words do indeed reflect a way of being involved in change. •

The following is an excerpt from a larger piece called "Shared Living—When Home is a Community" by Carol Pimentel (which will appear in the fall issue of Communities Mag.)

ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY Reskilling, Dumpster Diving and the Church of the Holy Swap By Carol Pimentel

Eventually I married one of my housemates. When two of the original owners chose to move on, Don and I purchased their interests and Casa Caballeros entered a new phase as a shared home. Don was a remarkable artist/builder who transformed the yard with small outbuildings and tree plantings. Living in the outbuildings allowed us to include more people in the main house. The rental income covered most of our expenses, so we rode out the financial downturn of the 80's without blinking an eye.

Valuing frugality, we lived well on the cast-off treasures of others. We seldom paid retail price for anything since with patience anything could be found at swap meets or garage sales, everything from boots to vacuum cleaners to table saws to glittering sequined gowns.

Every Sunday at 6 AM-no kidding, every Sunday—Don was up and off to what we

called the "Church of the Holy Swap," the weekly swap meet, flashlight in hand, to inspect the offerings of the day, coming home a few hours later to display his bounty. He had a great eye, and the skills to repair and upgrade virtually anything. I remember when he brought home a plastic grocery bag of dirty looking sticks of wood and some rusty springs, which he assembled into a lovely Mission style rocker. Friends would place orders with Don, and sure enough, within a few weeks he could usually come up with the item.

Don was not alone in his dedication to reuse and recycling, many of us held these values. Others in the household learned to be "bottom feeders" right along with us. Sometimes we'd toodle around construction sites scavenging building materials. Those materials went into tidy resource piles to be used as needed for building projects on the property.

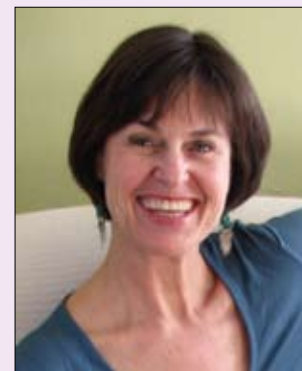
When the local university let out for the summer, we invited friends to join us with their trucks for the annual dumpster dive day. Armed with rubber gloves and dressed in garbage clothes and throwaway shoes, we went from dorm to dorm and behind student apartment buildings on a mission to rescue usable items students had predictably tossed in the trash. We loaded up on enough unopened sundries like dish soap, shampoo and cleaning supplies to last for months. We scored so much—clothing, appliances, office supplies, furniture and even jewelry—that we couldn't use it all. Some items we sold second hand for cash, but we'd donate much of it at the end of the day. Sometimes we'd take a few kids with us. It was a fun adventure to be allowed to get dirty and find so many cool things for free. We'd talk about the extravagant waste they'd seen and how they felt about donating to the homeless shelter. It was a great learning experience.

When a household is made up of people with a variety of skills, everyone is enriched. Physical skills, interpersonal skills, and creativity are all valuable contributions. Don

was indisputably the swap meet king, our procurer of goods for very little cost. Allen was a consummate host and chef extraordinaire, often spontaneously firing up the grill and inviting anyone who was home to participate. I was the nurturer, communicator, and mediator, attending to relationships and dynamics in the group and willing to confront problems when they arose. Terry brought music. Kari was a gardener. Elizabeth, our elder, was the "ground." While the rest of us were busy with work, activities and multi-tasking, her days were filled with reading, caring for the

chickens, and deadheading the flowers. Her deep centeredness and quiet spirit permeated the atmosphere and brought peace to us all, while our activity enlivened her. Everyone pitching in with chores meant less burden on any one individual. •

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Carol Pimentel

When she was living in SLO, Carol was often referred to as the Queen of Voluntary Simplicity. I'm privileged to have received an article from her. This excerpt isn't just a memoir piece of trivia but a way for people to not only make ends meet, but to have tons of fun in the process!



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