

## Such Gorgeous Music

### *A Review of Patrick Bernhardt's Atlantis Angeles II*

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I have long been a proponent of Patrick Bernhardt's music. The Algerian-born composer (who now resides in Canada) has been typically classified as a "New Age" composer, but anyone familiar with Patrick Bernhardt's music will agree that his musical compositions transcend that particular genre. Many "New Age" composers with their ethereal compositions on synthesizer have come and gone and have rarely stood the test of time.

My first exposure to Patrick Bernhardt's music was *Solaris Universalis* twelve years ago. Part One especially resonated with me, providing a sense of serenity and deep peace, especially with his singing. Not only is Bernhardt the composer a masterful guitar musician, he also has an unmistakably identifiable and infectious voice. I had played Part One of this very same music during a Reiki Level I class I was conducting. One of my students, a Hindu, commented to me that he was not singing in the usual sense with lyrics that tell a story, but was chanting the sacred names of Hinduism, like mantras being put to music.

I should quickly point out that there is nothing *sectarian* about Bernhardt's music. From my own experience, I have found my students agreeing that his music connects with them in a deeply personal and profoundly spiritual way, irrespective of one's journey of faith. Moreover, while Eastern influences pervade Bernhardt's compositions, make no mistake about it: his music is thoroughly Western.

Patrick Bernhardt's compositions, like classical music, are the kind of works that require repeated listening. And unlike most "New Age" music, repeated listening does not become tired and familiar. Over the years, I have listened to Bernhardt's music again and again and have never tired of listening.

*Atlantis Angeles II* is the second composition to bear that title. The first, *Atlantis Angeles*, demonstrated a ripening of Bernhardt's music and in many ways became my personal favorite. So when *Atlantis Angeles II* appeared in 1999, I was both eager and reticent to listen. I have not been disappointed with any of his compositions, but I was hoping for more than just a re-doing of the earlier work.

From the opening moments of Part One, *Archangelis*, it was apparent to me that this was not only a unique and wonderful composition that stood on its own but also Bernhardt's maturity as a composer had taken a quantum leap forward. Musical genius is a term thrown around loosely to describe many composers in different genres, but in Part One of *Atlantis Angeles II*, it became clear to me that here was an important work of art. As I continued to listen to Parts Two and Three, I became convinced that this was a composition that should be given serious musicological study. As I continued to listen, I found myself comparing this work to other great spiritual works of music.

I am prepared to say that *Atlantis Angeles II* is worthy of the same recognition we accord to Mozart's *Requiem*. As in the Mozart, one does not need to know the actual words to feel the spiritual impact of the music. So it is with Bernhardt's music. In fact, I would recommend that one *not* try to translate the words into one's language. The liner notes are sufficient to give one a suggestive idea as to where his music is transporting the listener.

As one who is very familiar with such diverse works as the Beethoven *Missa Solemnis*, the Mozart and Verdi *Requiems*, the Janacek *Glagolithic Mass*, and the Chichester *Psalms* of Bernstein, to cite but a few examples, I want to declare that Patrick Bernhardt can and should be discussed in the same breath. I know that assertion may offend some classical music purists, but if *Atlantis Angeles II* were ever to be performed by more widely, it would become one of the most galvanizing contemporary and spiritual *musical* experiences imaginable. Patrick Bernhardt's music is gorgeous and powerful. So let me say it again: the man is a genius!