

CD Review

'Live at St George's' by O'Hooley and Tidow

Reviewed by Sandra Lawes

This live CD was recorded by the Yorkshire-based duo Belinda O'Hooley and Heidi Tidow just before we all went into lockdown in 2020. They regard their sold-out concert in the beautiful St George's in Bristol with its magnificent Steinway Model D piano as one of the most memorable of their entire 10-year career. For many of their audience, the concert in the former Georgian Church was the last live music event for the duration of the pandemic.

Each of the thirteen tracks was lovingly crafted by Belinda and Heidi – devising arrangements, writing lyrics, composing melodies, interpreting complex words. All the songs tell stories about something that has affected them personally in a deep and moving way and many of them are about inspiring characters from recent and past history. The whole album is dedicated to their little boy Flynn who listened to the songs even before he was born!

The CD captures the atmosphere of a live performance, with audience participation at times. But overall, it is their striking, soaring harmonies, infused with empathy and gentle passion, and mainly accompanied by the simple yet skilled, evocative piano accompaniment that characterise this album. You will also hear Belinda's accordion, Heidi's bells and the kazoos (yes – real kazoos!) that they both play. You can catch every syllable of the vocals but as the lyrics are intricate, I really appreciated the well-produced booklet that details all the words of all the songs.

Now that live music is slowly returning, Belinda and Heidi are touring again (with Flynn of course) and you can find details on their website at <https://ohooleyandtidow.com/>. They also have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ohooleyandtidow>

