

# **Almost Home**

**By**

**Lena Natalia**

**Written by**

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A new album by **Lena Natalia** has much to live up to, especially after the major successes with albums like *Rendezvous and Sundays in Paris* and of course the much acclaimed *Second Youth*. One perhaps might have expected Natalia to produce another high quality solo piano album, but you would be vastly mistaken, as she treads unknown territory and delivers to our doors a release that is bound for fame in the contemporary instrumental and piano with instrumentation genres.

The opening piece off the release is the title track called **Almost Home**, this is smooth and gentle in its build, the keyboards seem to shape a track of expectancy and urgency, and there is a real likeness to the work of *Peter Calandra* here, in what is a very enjoyable opener.

The shortest track off the album at just over 2 and half minutes long is the pristine and delicate **Leaving the Nest**. Through the elegant performance on piano we can truly feel the tentative first steps into a new and fascinating life.

**The Gardner** is a really passionate piece, a full flowing slice of magical musical narrative, the performance here by Natalia is sublime. The artist creates a beautiful and colourful composition with amazing textures and dimensions; the tempo here manifests a persistent sense of movement through its tones.

This constant mantra of a journey through Natalia's music makes her work so very intriguing, you truly feel you are on that voyage with her and we're off to Japan now with the brilliant **Kyoto**. This wondrous piece was one of my favourites from the album; again Natalia paints such a lovely picture here, and

her creativity brings to our tables something that is lush and bathed in mystery.

On my travels I often see old men playing checkers, talking about the past or summers that have long gone and the girls they once knew. Here on **Chess Players** it's not too difficult to see that scenario as well, perhaps in an old coffee shop, the artist plays, while two aged individuals make their moves on the chess board of life. This has a really picturesque motif about its construction, the added touch of melancholy only adds to the mix.

Like life's rich pattern, we weave our way through the album **Almost Home** by **Lena Natalia** and come across a soothing keyboard structured piece called **Acceptance Letter**; this creates a real sense of calm and confidence. The artist has really brought something into our world that is tranquillity based and layered with such a peace filled motif that it's a pure pleasure to just listen to.

It's back to the more familiar role on piano now for **Lena Natalia** as she brings you the first composition that heralds in our movement into the latter half of the album, it is called **Open Door**. I have heard many pianists in my life, many are creative and passionate, many create beautiful melody's and arrangements, but Natalia has that extra special ability that always draws from life, this eternal playhouse that we all partake within, and **Open Door** is a fine example of this genius. This I could play on repeat for hours, the descriptive nature of its construction is just inviting us in through that door, perhaps for us to take a chance and be a part of something greater.

**The Solitary Tailor** is one of those almost dream like arrangements that makes the hairs on the neck stand up. Natalia's performance here is both mournful, but also mystical. There seems to be a slightly spectral essence about this one that really brings the whole narrative into focus. While your listen to the music, let your eyes gaze upon the world of **The Solitary Tailor**, who stands alone, like a hermit comfortable in his own realm, a world he has weaved for too many years now. This is an extremely emotive composition, one that is so easy to get lost in.

Now **St Malo**, the next piece is back to Natalia's roots, the French connection is established, and as she looks over the channel we can listen to this emotive offering and watch the wave's crash against the rocks, while the many small

boats flutter by, like errant clouds on their way into harbour. Natalia is at her very descriptive and creative best with this one.

We love to spend time in our Coffee houses here in *Cyprus*, the perfection of watching a day drift by, people watching and being totally in the moment is always available, now it has a soundtrack too, with this offering called **Coffee House Glances**. You will also find on this short form composition a quite passionate performance here too, with a really graphic European flavour.

Our penultimate offering is the keyboard driven **The Knight**. Almost bordering on the ambient at times, the piece itself contains a very sweet and sensitive nature about its overall construction. This is our longest offering on the album at well over 5 and half minutes. The thoughtful styled presentation here is very beautiful and at times almost moves us into the European chill out genre, one that is still so popular these days.

We have reached our last port of call and come across a final piece called **The Stoic**; this is almost a mirror image of the last track, the same repetitive pattern can be found here, but unlike the last compositions warmth, this one has a slightly harder and more tolerant strength about its arrangement, but never the less, this would fit perfectly into the ambient genre of music with ease.

**Almost Home** is a step into a new arena for **Lena Natalia**; she paints with musical colours and creates works of art that are quite unique within this album. She has increased her range and shifted her direction and has done so with style and class, and as such, has fashioned and crafted something extremely addictive and listenable. **Lena Natalia's** growth path as an artist has just taken a massive leap with this release, and thus has expanded hers and our horizons, which is something that we, the eager listeners can only benefit from. This is a must for anyone who likes piano in all its forms, performed by a musician who has found her musical soul.