

Album Review: ALIKE – My Mother’s Dream by Allison Charney
Reviewed by David Fogel
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Soprano Allison Charney’s upcoming album, *ALIKE – My Mother’s Dream*, is more than a beautiful collection of music, which it definitely is — it’s a deeply personal project rooted in a lesson her mother taught her long ago: We have to focus on what unites us, not what divides us.

This idea comes to life in seven operatic tracks that feature Charney’s incredible vocal prowess, blending new classical works with reimagined pieces. The album includes four contemporary compositions and three orchestral pieces from the Romantic era — each chosen and arranged to tell stories of sadness, empathy, remembrance, and connection across cultures and generations. Four of the compositions feature works by composers from Russia and Ukraine, as well as Iran and Israel – placed side by side rather than in opposition – in harmony rather than in conflict.

The tracks progress as follows:

Track 1: Songs My Mother Taught Me (Antonín Dvořák - Czech)

Released as a single on July 11, this beautifully lyrical piece (lyrics by Adolph Heyduk) opens the album with a fitting tribute to Charney’s mother. It was recorded in Prague, the composer’s hometown, and connects mother and daughter.

Track 2: Song of Songs (Vasyl Barvinsky – Ukraine)

Barvinsky’s music survived only because he painstakingly recreated it after spending over a decade in a Soviet gulag from the late 1940s through the 1950s. His setting of the biblical Song of Songs adapted from “Song of Solomon” has been rearranged tenderly by composer Chris Prather with full orchestra, harp, violin, celesta, and soprano — giving a new voice to what was nearly lost years ago.

Track 3: Kaddish (Marianna Rosett – Israel)

Rosett composed this piece to the words of Brooke Bailey Johnson in memory of the half-siblings she never met — children lost in the Holocaust. The music, built around the traditional Jewish mourning prayer, featuring cello and piano, is provocative, evoking a sad longing for what would never come to be.

Track 4: Jephthah’s Daughter (Amy Beach – USA)

This is the first English-language recording of Beach’s long-lost dramatic piece, based on a biblical story of tragic sacrifice of a hero’s daughter. Thought lost for over a century after being confiscated during WWI, the score was recently rediscovered and re-orchestrated for this album. Charney’s powerful performance of the tale of tragedy reaches a pinnacle of grief and lament.

Track 5: Morghe Sahar (Bird of Dawn) (Kian Ravaei – Iran)

Ravaei reimagines a traditional Iranian protest song in a modern setting, honoring the memory of Jina Mahsa Amini and the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement. The arrangement — for

soprano, alto flute, cello, and piano — is full of sorrow for the oppressed.

Track 6: Invocation (Kim D. Sherman – USA)

Sherman sets a single phrase — “Make peace on all your lands” — or simpler, the concept of peace itself – in 15 different languages, reflecting the voices of real people from her diverse melting pot of a New York City neighborhood. The result is in essence a global prayer wrapped in music. Her arrangement is new for this album and Charney’s gorgeous vocals bring forward the positive inspiration regardless of the language.

Track 7: Postscriptum (Lera Auerbach – Russia)

Wordless and evocative, Auerbach’s closing piece feels like a memory you can’t quite place. It ends the album on a quiet, reflective note — a reminder that even when peace feels far away, we’re still responsible for adding what goodness we can.

Charney is accompanied on the album with great sensitivity and musicianship by pianist/conductor Benjamin Loeb and a talented ensemble of featured musicians, including violinist Kelly Hall-Tompkins, cellist Peter Seidenberg, flutist Allison Loggins-Hull, harpists Kirsten Agresta Copely and Gaye LeBlanc, and the National Symphonina Orchestra. The album is produced by Kitt Wakeley, Christina Giacona, Patrick Conlon, Jeff Keswin, and Charney herself.

ALIKE – *My Mother’s Dream* offers something rare: a deeply personal, emotional, accessible operatic experience with music that can build bridges where words and actions have often failed us. It’s an album rooted in grief and yet with ever-present hope, and the belief that what makes us alike is far more powerful than what divides us.

-- David Fogel, Ph.D. is CEO of The Symphonina Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission of promoting the joy of symphonic music to young audiences around the world.