

# JazzdaGama

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As I write I am listening again to a recording that has marked me in ways that are difficult to describe. It is like experiencing an airy nimbleness matched to a richness of sound which sometimes seems impossible from the human voice. I want to say that it is partly due to the dynamic range and balance, so much colour, detail and air rarely, if ever, heard by a singer since Abbey Lincoln. But there is more. The music hits me where the heart is. I am drawn into the world of its characters; I experience their elemental sadness and their joy so much so that each song becomes something of a rush of blood to the head, causing me to gasp, every so often, in disbelief. It is, however, real, because I am listening to June Garber's *This I Know*.

It's a radiantly beautiful performance and it reminds me that I am in the presence of a sublimely gifted chanteuse. The apogee is 'Don't Cry Out Loud'. Melodic lines are beautifully moulded, the return of the opening chords, hushed, the climax gorgeous and the dying fall of the song subtly atmospheric. But there is more. There is always more to a June Garber performance. In 'Malaika', for instance, a song I remember from childhood, I hear details I've never noticed before. And then there is 'Fever' and the grim beauty of 'Meadowlands'... Of course that's the miracle of June Garber; her instinct for capturing and delivering the details of a story and the nuances of emotions – the combination of sensuous luxury, effortless precision, characterful interpretation and the warmth of empathy. It must feel like that moment of almost drowning, but somehow surfacing for air must feel like this, the miracle of returning to life from the brink of death.

June Garber gives such a finely judged account of music, you feel as if you are on the journey that she has been, to Africa, where she grew up, then to Europe and the Americas and to her life of song. Garber takes you on a breathtaking voyage across the topography of music as you come face to face with a complete range of human emotions. She works a very special kind of magic on this repertoire, much of which becomes so new that you feel you are listening to the music for the first time. Clearly when a musician can make a song so completely his or her own, it can only come from lived experience. However, infusing music with such beauty is the exclusive purview of musical genius. And that is something June Garber has been born with. The performance on this recording only serves to reinforce that feeling.

- Raul DaGama