

Review from Living Tradition Magazine

BARBARA DYMOCK

Leaf An' Thorn

Liffire Records SCG571

Like a breath of fresh air on a sultry day, this second solo album from arguably one of Scotland's finest singers is currently refreshing the often jaded musical palate of this writer, and catching her at Whitby Folk Week in August was an added pleasure.

In the earliest line-up of Edinburgh-based band, Ceolbeg, Fifeshire-born Barbara left music on the back burner for many years whilst combining a medical career with bringing up her family. As on the first release, *Hilbert's Hotel* from 2011, this latest, quietly engrossing outing boasts vocal and instrumental contributions from producer Christopher Marra.

With judicious use of other musicians it's an impressive offering whose diversity spans Robert Burns (the suitably regretful *Auld Man* and a glorious bass-driven *Tibbie Fowler*), Child Ballads (a loping, funky *Usher's Well*), through John Ord's and Greig-Duncan collections and a wistful reading of a Jez Lowe song from 30 years back, *Brockie Lads*, to a revamped *Banks Of Inverurie* which departs from the usual romantic ending and surely *defines* wounded melancholia!?

Impressive on the American variant (*Katie Cruel*) of *Leaboy's Lassie*, Barbara's voice has a warm nuanced familiarity, by turns reflective, cathartic, spirited and profound. This is music that feels sure of itself, and there is no oversinging here - it's the songs that do the talking and they have a real resonance. Vaughan Williams alluded to folksong as "a feeling of recognition, as of meeting an old friend" – there are plenty of pals waiting on this recording.

Highly recommended.

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Clive Pownceby