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CD REVIEW

“PART OF A PAINTING” CD features Paul Spencer Adkins- tenor and Jay Fluellen-piano

“If music is the food of love, then this record is a hearty meal. Paul Adkins puts his polished voice to the service of ardent statements of love and devotion. No equivocation here: love itself is subject and object, the world, the only world worth inhabiting _ and singing about.”

Pop singers may or may not have some idea of the technique of singing, but Paul Adkins is one whose technical polish establishes the basis for every song in his repertoire. This record celebrates power of the musical line as well as the weight and color of the words he sings. In a dozen ballads, solidly abetted by pianist and arranger Jay Fluellen, Adkins explores the serious side of love. His lovers are at the threshold of love, dazzled by the wonder, the horizons and the timelessness of budding love. Most of the material has long been part of the language, but “Part of a Painting,” by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul frames the teacher-student perspective Adkins has with the composer. The text ennobles a student’s realization that love in a Greek fishing village mirrors the love he has for a girl back home. The music touches the notes of nostalgia in long-lined phrases.

Not everything here is so ardent and serious. “Lullaby of Birdland” is a surprising rhythmic bump that shows love can be a laugh and a joke. The ballads are not obvious choices, not the usual selections from *South Pacific*, *The Music Man*, or *Bloomer Girl*. Adkins mixes music from films and theater. And, in Irving Berlin’s “What’ll I do?” Adkins reminds listeners of the range that composer managed.

Dan Webster, former Music Critic for the Philadelphia, Inquirer