



## GLOBAL FREQUENCY

### The Exquisite Sounds of Silence

by Rob Vollmar

Meikhāneh  
*La Silencieuse*  
Buda Music

*La Silencieuse* is the second album by Meikhāneh, a musically expansive trio from Rennes, France, that brings together sounds from Europe, Central Asia, and lands further east.

Singer Maria Laurent's voice grounds the album in the tradition of European folk with airy vocals that impress with her pitch precision as the music crosses numerous non-Western traditions. Laurent kicks off the record with "Silencia," singing over a spare accompaniment she provides on the *toyshuur*, a two-stringed Mongolian lute. The track builds, adding first subtle percussion from core member Milad Pasta before guest collaborator Uuganbaatar Tsend-

Ochir comes in with droning lines performed on the *ikh khuur* (a bowed double bass). While that all sounds very elaborate in description, the sum effect is captivating and, for the listener, effortless.

One of the great pleasures of *La Silencieuse* is in the range of sonic textures evoked by the combination of so many different instruments from song to song. Guitarist Johanni Curtet opens the second track, "Talyn Thème," with modernist dissonance that is rounded out with Pasta's agile percussion before three voices begin singing in melodic unison, but timbral harmony as Curtet produces pitches using the Tuvan throat-singing technique, casting alien harmonic overtones into the mix. The result is hypnotic and draws listeners toward considering the mash-up of sounds as a cohesive whole. Other highlights include "Khan

Khökü," which invokes the open grasslands of the steppes with its cinematic soundscape, and "Ayalakhui," which draws some of the album's more exotic instruments into one ambient theme.

As the lyrics draw from language bases all over the world, it's hard to imagine any listener polyglot enough to make the narrative a central and persistent concern of the listening experience. Instead, the mind is invited to relax and consider the voices as just another part of the instrumental riches on display. With all the lutes, bowed instruments, accordions, guitars, drums, and glorious melodies packed into this rich hour of music, it is a sonic meal that will leave the adventurous listener sated but eager to return.

Rob Vollmar is WLT's book review editor.