

***Invisible Threads* (Omni Sound)
Sunrise (Meta)
Adam Rudolph
by Ariella Stok**

Adam Rudolph's music has long behaved as if geography were something sound could pass through.

On *Invisible Threads*, recorded in Istanbul, a shaker opens the first track, "Dreaming of the Skyway", while flute and guitar drift through a wide interior space. Drums move around the stereo field almost sculpturally. Later, on "Archaic Imaginations", electronics begin shadowing acoustic sounds so closely that source and treatment blur. On "Ascensions", a repeating figure gathers force, suggestive of ritual, without hardening into a fixed groove. By "Nightingale", voices have become ghostly presences. The music seems less to occupy or emanate from a specific place than to suspend one.

That suspension is beautiful, even transcendent, but it raises a question. Hacı Ahmet Tekbilek's ney, the traditional Turkish flute, carries the history and devotional associations of Turkish Sufi practice; Okay Temiz (percussion), Sumru Ağırürüyen (voice), Özlem Kaya (violin) and Sıla Gerbağ (flute) bring other, equally particular histories. Rudolph surrounds them with prepared and electric guitar, bass, drum machine and live processing. What happens when culturally situated sounds are loosened from ceremony, geography and

use, and recast as atmosphere, texture, vibration? Rudolph's relationships with musicians outside the Western canon go back more than fifty years; Tekbilek and Temiz belong to a network around Don Cherry and the Creative Music Studio that Rudolph entered in the '70s. *Invisible Threads*, originally commissioned for the 35th Akbank Jazz Festival, is his 63rd album as a leader and is now released in Tekbilek's memory, following his death just two months ago on August 3. These are not anonymous suppliers of exotic color, but rather deep collaborators who arrive to the music with their own hybridity as both improvisers and musicians steeped in tradition.

Sunrise pushes the same approach further, almost beyond history. Rudolph's notes invoke "Paleolithic music." With Alexis Marcelo and Kaoru Watanabe, plus Stephen Haynes (cornet, flugelhorn and conch shell) on three of the album's eight tracks, the spontaneously composed music moves among hand drums, piano, keyboards, melodica, Japanese flutes and taiko, electric koto, mouth bow, Mbuti harp and electronics. "Clouds of Joy" is sparse and airborne; "Stumbled Upon" slowly thickens as hand drums accumulate beneath it; Haynes' reverb-soaked brass gives "Tide Activity" sudden depth; "Nebula" approaches Cagean stillness.

Here Rudolph's idea of the universal becomes almost metaphysical. He is searching not just across cultures but beneath them, toward a pre-religious zone of pulse, breath and awe. The risk is that the invocation of universality can have a flattening effect: history thinned into atmosphere, difference into essence. Yet the music resists its own abstraction. The taiko still sounds like taiko; the ney still breathes with its own history. Rudolph's achievement is to make transcendence and abstraction feel less like opposites than neighboring possibilities.

For more info visit adamrudolph.bandcamp.com. Rudolph's *Invisible Threads* album release concert is at ShapeShifter Lab Oct. 3. See Calendar.



***Soliloquy*
Sylvia Brooks (SBM)
by Marc Medwin**

"A soul is mirrored in the eyes..." Sylvia Brooks doesn't simply sing the altered adage—she intones it, her rich contralto elevating the line dynamically, but just by a hair. All has been leading to the word "mirror," which is highlighted just enough to demonstrate the life experience making the moment possible. Pianist Christian Jacob supports every nuance. Like that dynamic arc, the alteration is integral to her conception of the tune and to all of the tunes on *Soliloquy*, her newest album, equal parts originals and contributions from a wonderfully broad version of the "standards" book.

Brooks is no stranger to such instants of illumination. In one of the originals, "Lizzie's Dance", the whimsical expression of a dancer with Down syndrome illuminates her own moon-movements. Brooks' voice takes on the innocence of abandon in the opening lyrics, a deeply moving tribute to



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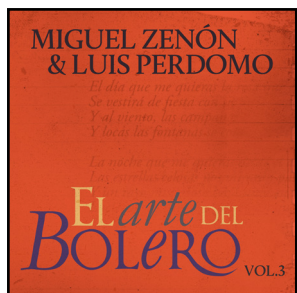
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artistic individuality. The album is rife with similar moments. Every time Brooks sings the titular word on Tom Waits' raw, groovy "Temptation", a slightly different meaning is manifested, and the word "bad" infuses "Talks a Good Game" with all the layers of smooth sludge infecting a "Killer Joe" descendant's personality. Brooks often discusses her classical theater training as paramount to her singing, and it couldn't be more apparent here. Her character shifts are never overstated or intrusive, as she changes timbre with staggering rapidity, but only enough to make the point and move along.

An album of such ambitious scope as *Soliloquy* could fall flat without excellent playing and arrangements, fortunately present in all cases. Dig the beautiful choral writing on "Fragile", Farzin Farhadi's scintillating saxophone solo on "Lizzie's Dance" and Kevin Axt's slinky bass interjections on "Talks a Good Game". Kevin Winard's subtle cymbals support "Letter to Sophie" with as much delicacy as the turns of phrase in its lyrics, and Grant Geissman's acoustic guitar seasons those melancholy utterances in just the right way.

The album moves from concision to emotion, each musician an ensemble player or soloist when necessary. Brooks' unique artistic vision guides it all, and it's not to be missed.

For more info visit sylviabrooks.com. The album release concert is at Drom Oct. 4. See Calendar.



El Arte Del Bolero, Vol. 3
Miguel Zenón & Luis Perdomo (Miel Music)
by George Kanzler

When alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón and pianist Luis Perdomo invoke the term "bolero," they take a wide-angle view of the subject, one that begins with romantic songs and lyrics (in Spanish) in a style originating in Cuba in the late 19th century, which evolved into the "quintessential Latin American romantic song of the twentieth century." But *El Arte Del Bolero, Vol. 3* embraces romantic songs from South America, Puerto Rico and Nuevo York salsa as well.

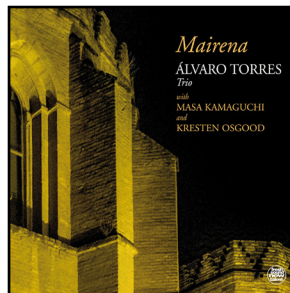
Zenón and Perdomo explore their expansive concept of bolero in a unique jazz setup: the duo. The most intimate of jazz group configurations, the duo demands rapport and reciprocity more than any other format, as the two players create a whole while remaining exposed as solo players. The two achieve that rapport, their music blending into a rapturous whole and capturing the romantic spirit of their concept of bolero, starting with the first selection, "La Gloria Eres Tú". Opening with a sumptuous cadenza from Zenón's saxophone, the composition quickly reveals a different side of a musician who is often praised for his bop-like ferocity. He then intones the melody over Perdomo's feathery, rippling piano. The engaging melody suggests American standards from the '30s. It is hard to forget and begs for an English lyric.

The other seven tracks travel far and wide, geographically and chronologically. Spain is represented by a roundelay melody on "Señora". Argentina's tango master, Carlos Gardel, is represented by the delicate melody of "El Dia Que Me Quieras". "Sombras" is an Ecuadorian "pasillo," with bouncing piano in 3/4 time under cheeky sax prancing. The pair represent the "Filin era," when bolero was infused "with harmonic cadences and progressions from the jazz world," with

"Convergencia". And they evoke the vibrant salsa world of Hispanic New York with Héctor Lavoe's hit song "Un Amor De La Calle" and with "Verdad Amarga", a staple in the book of Jerry González and the Fort Apache Band from The Bronx. The Puerto Rican band La Sonora Ponceña's version of Cuban Pablo Milanés' "De Que Callada Manera" is the duo's inspiration for their lively, salsa-driven version of the tune.

El Arte Del Bolero, Vol. 3 is a peripatetic journey through the romantic boleros of Latin American music, distilled into captivating, intimate, lyrical music by Miguel Zenón and Luis Perdomo, an empathetic pair of jazz musicians.

For more info visit miguelzenon.com. The album release concert is at The Jazz Gallery Oct. 17. See Calendar.



Mairena
Álvaro Torres Trio (Fresh Sound New Talent)
by John Sharpe

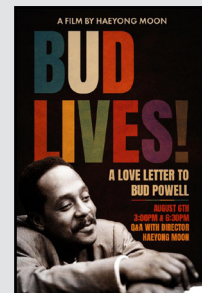
The disparate paths followed by the musicians on *Mairena* converge in a trio whose music is anything but itinerant. Madrid-born pianist Álvaro Torres took a decade to arrive in NYC, taking in Nepal, Barcelona and Copenhagen on the way. It was in this last location that he connected with Danish master drummer Kresten Osgood, who has since become a regular collaborator. Japanese expat bassist Masa Kamaguchi followed an almost opposite trajectory, leaving NYC for Spain in 2006. All three appeared on Torres' 2024 release, *Live in Barcelona*, which also featured unruly tenor saxophonist Tony Malaby.

The trio recorded *Mairena* during a tour of the Iberian Peninsula last year, capturing five Torres originals alongside one standard. In the liners the pianist talks about his attempt to reconcile his musical roots, which lie in a combination of classical music and Spanish folk traditions, with his background in jazz and improvisation. However, it is the last which comes across as the dominant force on this album, where his sparkling runs and minimalist repetitions at pace often assume a blue tinge. Kamaguchi's nimble counterpoint and adroit straddling of the melodic/rhythmic axis reinforce this notion, while Osgood guarantees drive and sensitivity, with just the occasional provocation betraying his maverick personality.

Two sprightly themes bookend the program, crisply executed and generous in their distribution of solo space. On the opening "Llum Verda", Osgood appropriately uses his sticks to evoke the clack of castanets between more tuneful figures, then on "The Good Life" he sets up a galloping tattoo to introduce the Ornette Coleman-like head. Between times the trio leans into the Bill Evans model of responsive three-way interplay. Hope and melancholy vie in the title cut, while the aching but propulsive "Calabosito" offers a richly dramatic portrait of its dedicatee, flamenco singer Camerón de la Isla. Cole Porter's "Everything I Love" (also covered by Evans) swings lightly, but the lyrical extemporizations only partly reveal the tune's full glory towards the close. Pick of the bunch, though, is the lovely ballad "Lisbon Mood", dedicated to Torres' mentor at the Manhattan School of Music, Aaron Parks (who moved to Portugal several years ago).

For more info visit freshsoundrecords.com. Torres is at Bar Bayeux Oct. 23. See Calendar.

ON SCREEN



Bud Lives! A Love Letter to Bud Powell
A Film by Haeyong Moon (s/r)
by Paul Gaita

The aptly titled *Bud Lives! A Love Letter to Bud Powell* is an unabashedly affectionate tribute to pianist and bebop founding figure Earl Rudolph "Bud" Powell (born 102 years ago September 27th) and to the staying power of his influence, now sixty years after his death. Director Haeyong Moon brings together a wealth of jazz luminaries in her film, who contribute heartfelt testimony to the impact of Powell's music on their lives. The result is, as its title suggests, a love letter, concise, brimming with emotion, and in its best moments, moving and memorable.

Bud Lives is short on hard data, as all good love letters should and tend to be. Through conversations with those who knew Powell's significance best—drummer T.S. Monk is, in particular, a font of information about the pianist's personal life as it intersected with that of his father, pianist Thelonious Monk—Moon touches on Powell's prodigious early skill as a performer, the streak of musical ability that ran through his family, and the emotional and physical turmoil that took his life and cut short his remarkable career at the age of 41. The historical elements serve as guideposts, not anchors; they're handled with skill and taste, but the focus of the film is, quite naturally, the music.

Moon corrals a great deal of stellar audio and visual material to underscore Powell's talent. We see clips of Jorgen Leth's dreamlike short *Stop for Bud* (1963) and footage of Powell playing with Charles Mingus in Paris circa 1960, and hear Sherman Fairchild's 1955 recording of Powell with Marian McPartland, along with many live and studio takes and interviews with the pianist. Moon lets the music play in long takes, showcasing Powell's remarkable dexterity and ear for both emotion and silence; one segment highlights the challenge of playing at Powell's level by having several musicians try their hand at one of the pianist's most challenging pieces, "Un Poco Loco".

Love letters are, at their core, about putting emotion into words, and as such, the interviews in *Bud Lives* are its highlight. Moon features both new and archival comments from, among others, Art Tatum, Sonny Rollins, Monk, bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Roy McCurdy (who both played with Powell), and the pianist's children, Celia and Earl. All speak about Powell not as a figure from the past but as an entity that remains present with them; pianist Jason Moran tears up to think about what he'd say to Powell were he alive today. An artist that generates such an emotional response deserves memorializing, and *Bud Lives* provides it in the most affecting way.

For more info visit budpowell.com. "Bouncin' with Bud: A Bud Powell Birthday Celebration" is at Birdland Oct. 2-4 (with Uri Caine).