



***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 Ağryürüyen (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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