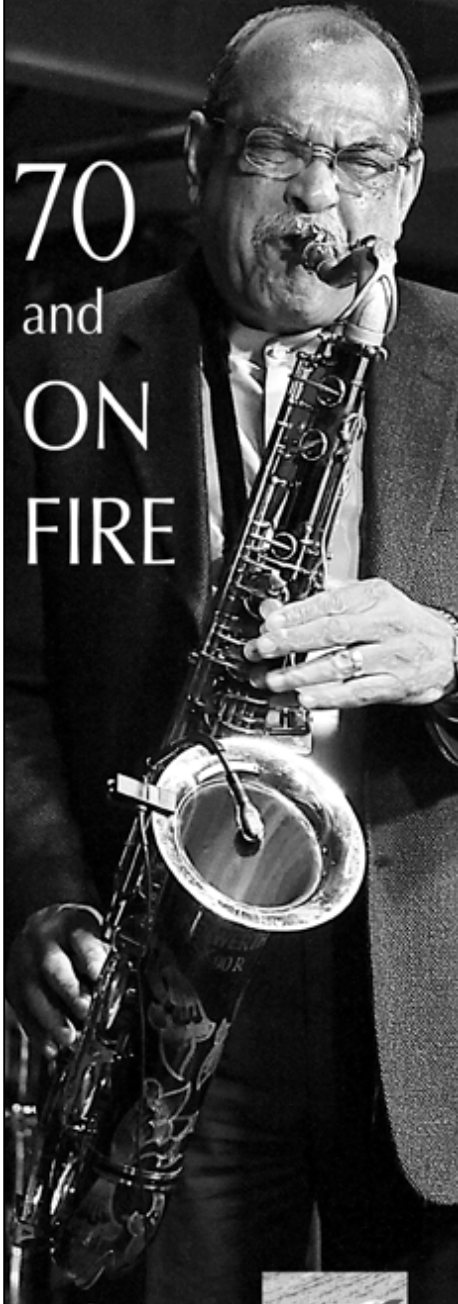


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A Room of One's Own
Yuhan Su (Inner Circle Music)
by Terrell Holmes

In someone else's hands *A Room of One's Own* might have been a monotonous exercise in chamber jazz, but vibraphonist Yuhan Su and her band provide enough variety and substance to save the album from being unremarkable. The songs are nicely rendered by trumpeter Matt Holman, guitarist Kenji Herbert, bassist Petros Klampanis and drummer Nathan Ellman-Bell. The album trends toward fare like deft "Freezing Point", deliberate artistry of "All Kinds of Dreams", Su's lullaby vocalizing on "No. 13 Waltz" and "Anti-Hunger Song", a heartfelt ballad. All of these are on the lighter side but the balance and interplay gives the music greater weight.

The "Valedicere" suite gives the proceedings a start, deepening the relationship among vibraphone, trumpet and splendid (if on the fringes) guitar. Klampanis' soulful pizzicato drives the first part while the second, in spite of its 'scales'-like melody, propels the suite to its measured and valedictory finish. When Holman picks up the flugelhorn for the two-part "What Is, Is By Its Nature On Display" it signals a shift in texture. The music become more intense, such that the vocalizing by Su and Herbert on the first part is nearly submerged. And when Holman blows, the music, at least for a moment, is forceful and passionate instead of introspective. Ultimately, though, one is frustrated because the music ends just as it's gathering momentum.

"Painter's Mind" is the song that ultimately moves the session outside of its comfort zone. This duet with drums and malletkat is wicked. Su is a whirlwind on the electronic percussion instrument, laying down swirling, hypnotic lines over Ellman-Bell's insistent thrashing and using the instrument's range to provide a full band's worth of depth and color.

For more information, visit innercirclemusic.net. Su is at The Living Room Oct. 24th. See Calendar.



Myrrha's Red Book: Act I
Ben Stapp & The Zozimos (Evolver)
by Clifford Allen

Pan-stylism is a major component of creative music and while specificity is hugely important in getting across one's conviction, avoiding the possibilities of varied interests would be anathema to the practice of composing and improvising in a contemporary, evolutionary context. That said, the breadth of sheer music on offer from tuba player/composer Ben Stapp and The Zozimos has surprised this writer on more than one occasion.

Myrrha's Red Book: Act I is the first official release from The Zozimos (a second volume has already been recorded), Stapp convening a 13-piece cast including vocalists Kristin Slipp and Christopher Johnson,

trumpeter Stephen Haynes and reedplayers Vasko Dukovski and Oscar Noriega. The libretto, divided into 7 scenes and 11 components, was written by Peter Bulmer and emerged in a process that was interleaved with Stapp's compositional approach. The basic storyline follows a widow and her doctor in a macabre dance as reality and fiction collide across a series of related improvisations. Slipp portrays Myrrha in turns fragile, cutthroat and beguiling as Johnson gives the Doctor a measured, rationally sinister quality—both contrasted and teased out by purely sonic collaborators.

Following a processional equal parts Toru Takemitsu and Peter Maxwell Davies, the ensemble arrives on a gentle plain, guitar strums met by interlocking woodwind patterns and Slipp's dry soar. The ensemble advances in elemental gestures as Myrrha and the Doctor hold their first session, Slipp's voice processed in glitchy staccato, halting with wiped static as reedy glossolalia and the trumpets' cutting materiality mark the passage of time. The fourth scene finds the Doctor forcefully drawing out themes from Myrrha's past over atonal stair-steps, percussive electronics and the crackle of piano internals heralding the protagonist's manipulated isolation. The story takes on elements of Greek tragedy through courtly ambiguity, Myrrha's character confounded as the music layers in fuzzy, harmonic whirr before her tale emerges amid ensemble agitation, the Zozimos' aesthetic blending surreal, particulate swagger and incisive, panning trills. For all of its diffusive qualities, *Myrrha's Red Book* retains an oblique cohesion, setting a high bar for Stapp's future work.

For more information, visit evolverrecords.com. Stapp is at Roulette Oct. 7th as part of an Evolver Records showcase. See Calendar.



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