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DECEMBER 2018

***The Snowghost Sessions* (Songlines)**
***Those Who Remain* (National Sawdust)**
Wayne Horvitz
by Mark Keresman

When it comes to eclecticism, John Zorn has few rivals—one is pianist Wayne Horvitz. They have made music together in Naked City and Sonny Clark Memorial Quartet and, like Zorn, Horvitz has engaged in bebop, free jazz, through-composed composition, film scores, fusion, you name it. Here are two very different Horvitz albums, both skirting stylistic barriers.

The Snowghost Sessions is music for the piano trio format with bassist Geoff Harper and drummer Eric Eagle, Horvitz playing not only acoustic and electric piano but Hammond B-3 organ, Mellotron and assorted electronic keyed devices. It has a mostly subdued hue but not exactly mellow; "55 6 (21) Variations" has a pensive, ominous melody but the reverie is interrupted by a spurt of bluesy Hammond organ. "Northampton" is a slow, Dave Brubeck-ish blues with a doomsday beat and interjections from other keyboards. "No Blood Relation #1" begins as a bittersweet ballad, Horvitz sensitive and forlorn over wafting swing, other keyboards overlaying embellishments, but the piano is the one guiding us down the darkened hallway. "For James Tenney" is driven by stormy drumming while piano provides a calm-in-eye-of-the-hurricane motif and wave after wave of electronic keys offer surreal counterpoint. Not a typical jazz piano trio set, but a slyly 21st Century one.

Those Who Remain is a different beast entirely, consisting of two extended compositions for classical ensembles—an orchestra and a string quartet—and improvising soloists: guitarist Bill Frisell and clarinetist Beth Fleenor. The title composition evokes works by classical composers Aaron Copland, Igor Stravinsky and Leonard Bernstein, a turbulent, rhythmically driven, very American work, with rhythms suggesting the insistence and clangor of industry and hustle-bustle, jazz-flavored noir sounds of big cities. Frisell's tantalizingly concise, Americana-tinged solos are rich with crystalline jazz phrasing, cinematic Western twang, downhome pastoral idylls and bluesy asides. "These Hills of Glory" is even more powerfully rhythmic, with melodramatic phrases (in a cinematic sense) and warm, soulful clarinet. The elegiac final movement has some virtually heartbreakingly sad passages, with Fleenor's upper-range, almost flute-like performance providing rays of hope.

For more information, visit songlines.com and nationalsawdust.org. These projects are both at Roulette Dec. 5th. See Calendar.