



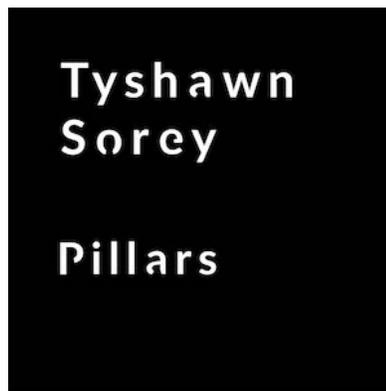
TYSHAWN SOREY - PILLARS

October 8, 2018

Label: Firehouse 12, 2018

Personnel – **Tyshawn Sorey**: conductor, drum set, percussion, trombone, dungchen; **Stephen Haynes**: trumpet, flugelhorn, small percussion; **Ben Gerstein**: trombone, melodica; **Todd Neufeld**: electric and acoustic guitar; **Joe Morris**: guitar, double bass; **Carl Testa**: double bass; **Mark Helias**: double bass; **Zach Rowden**: double bass.

Drummer/composer/bandleader Tyshawn Sorey is a genius of modern composition. Embracing a completely different lineup and instrumentation when compared to his previous piano-trio session



Verisimilitude (Pi Recordings, 2017), Sorey sculpts his forthcoming CD, a nearly four-hour, three-CD set opus entitled *Pillars*, to be quite an experience. However, it requires patience from the listener since the electro-acoustic octet he conducts digs deep into the abstract with a combination of sounds that can range from minimalistic hushes to ominous shouts and slashes to relentless machine-like sonic cycles. It's difficult to say which parts are improvised and which are scored, but his willingness to

try new things yields unpredictable outcomes on this particular work.

Part I kicks in with a long section of resonant ruffs with changing frequencies and overtones, morphing into a variegated patchwork of acoustic guitar and cymbals. This happens before the bassists are brought to the forefront and, whether bowing or strumming, create buzzing drones that support Stephen Haynes' trumpet bursts designed in the upper register. Later, he is joined by Ben Gerstein's trombone for a long conversation. Tweaked electronic vibes help to describe an unsettled cosmic reality through eerily phantasmagoric incursions or extraordinarily luminous points. Somewhere closer to the end, I could hear a bomb being dropped, an ambulance, a final blow... the trombone screams and the jittery percussion give the final touch to a dystopian scenario.

Part II is launched with a coalition of double basses - dented bowed reflections, cutting scratches and loose pizzicato sometimes create odd grooves. Then it's time for electrical guitar rumination with effects, strident pointillism, harmonics, and drones. It precedes the war-like battalion that is arriving, emulated by melodica and drums. Water sounds with frenzied trumpet atop end up in a more accessible passage with trombone, guitar, and percussion.

Well-coordinated guitar plucks join the bowed basses to form eccentric chords in the solemn ritual that opens *Part III*. The trombone wails sound sweet when compared to the following lethargic section marked by cavernous arco bass, cymbal shatters, thumping toms, and electronic reverberance. The climax arrives with riotous attitude, softening again with the addition of acoustic guitar before diving into the haunting low-pitched sound waves that always return at the end of each part.

Sorey and his bandmates don't reinvent but rather create from scratch with no preconceptions. This type of sound design would work wonders in movies like Malick's *The Tree of Life* or Guy

Maddin's experimental docufictions, offering sinister textures and timbres with sensorial intensity, instead of easy melodies on top of chord changes with perceptible rhythms underneath. I cannot say I would listen to this music every day (you have to be in that particular mood), but there is always something to be discovered when I do it. I'm still adjusting to Sorey's bold new sonic shapes.

Favorite Tracks:

01 - Part I ▶ 02 - Part 2



Grade **B+**