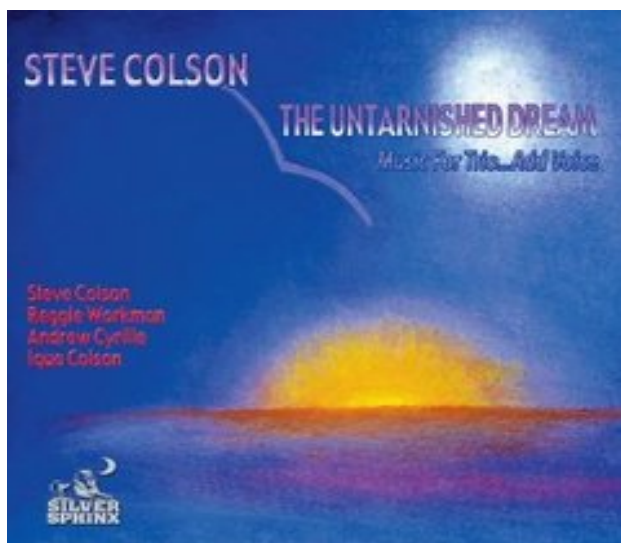




Words About Music
From
Greg Burk & Friends

Reviews: Steve Colson



Steve Colson, "The Untarnished Dream: Music for Trio . . . and Voice" (Silver Sphinx)

Out of Chicago's AACM by way of Newark, Adegoke Steve Colson is an early-'70s revolutionary who conquers evil with the beauty of his pianistics. Along with vocalist Iqua Colson (on four songs) and the deeply accredited '60s-rooted duo of drummer Andrew Cyrille (Cecil Taylor) and bassist Reggie Workman (John Coltrane), he's keeping the dream alive.

In the notes, longtime cohort Amiri Baraka calls Colson's execution "bright and articulate," to which I'll add "original" -- for a man of his time, he's unusually concerned with melody and flow, and he's got an idiosyncratic though natural sense of rhythm. You can hear Cyrille and Workman adjusting to that individuality on the optimistic opener, "Circumstantial": Where exactly is the beat supposed to land? Their brilliant solution throughout is to open up the field with wonderful flexibility, as Cyrille's always delicate and complex cymbals suggest a range and Workman's huge earthworks provide a polymorphous foundation. It's like unconscious, fleshly breathing.

The settings can be abstract, jungly or pretty -- there's even an autumnal waltz. The common thread is the way these three interact, full of surprises and contrasts. Iqua represents the wild card, interjecting elements of irony and astringency in a leaping, virtuosic voice that falls halfway between June Tyson (Sun Ra) and Iren Aebi (Steve Lacy). Steve Colson doesn't record a lot; "The Untarnished Dream" is a fine place to pick up on this distinguished missing link.