

Hypnagogue
<https://hypnagogue.net/2017/01/22/onewayness-drachemusik-mirrors-to-the-bonfire/>
John Shanahan

Mirrors to the Bonfire

Over the course of three albums, this being the third, I have been following and enjoying the seamless, innovative, and sometimes strange chemistry that happens when you put Onewayness (Adam Holquist) and dRachEmUsiK (Charles Shriner) in the same room. As they did on Immeasurable and The Sound of Thunder, the duo lay down a thoughtful flow that can vary from dark to light and from challenging to easily immersive, always retaining an in-the-moment edge that suggests a bit of improv may have been happening. Mirrors to the Bonfire is made of three long pieces that cover an hour's time.

The opener, "Your Invisible Power," is the most raw and challenging of the three. After a few minutes of the duo adjusting and tweaking and sending random electro-sounds off into the air, this piece settles into a thrumming, dark minimalism. This winds down to a very sparse, whispering place that sets the stage for a recitative vocal snip from the text that gives the piece its name. (These gents are very fond of the vocal insertion.) Overall the piece is darkly meditative, though its grim tone may lose some listeners. I find a lot of intensity in it, and that's part of what pulls me in. That bass-rich thrumming sound, which comes and goes, is hypnotic.

Things get a touch lighter and softer in the two parts of the title track, which cover a solid 40-minute stretch. Part 1 opens with wavering tones and electronic sweeps, moving itself in a lightly spacemusic-oriented direction. The background builds in layers and there's a feeling of Holquist and Shriner tossing ideas back and forth to one another, tugging and warping them as they go. It's an active piece in that regard as we're always listening to it change and shift without leaving its central idea.

By comparison, Part 2 spins down into a more ambient space, with less textural changes but bringing in the ease of a calm flow. Shriner takes the front on electronic wind instrument, breathing sweet, smooth lines into being over a sleepy wash of pads. In the midst of this, you begin to see the narrative, how we moved from that dark, uncertain place, through waves of change and reconsideration, and ended up here, meditating and breathing, safe and warm and at peace. It's also where you realize that Holquist and Shriner handle all of those aspects confidently and with equal ease. The longer this track goes, the deeper it goes, and the deeper you go. A truly gorgeous ambient piece.

This is another excellent dose of aural chemistry from this duo. I've seen them play live, and it's very cool to watch the interplay at work. They both thrive on the idea of improv, and while Mirrors to the Bonfire may be a fully scripted voyage, it still keeps some of that where are we going now? edge, especially in Part 1 of the title track. Trusting the person on the other side of the stage is vital in moments like that, and there is nothing but pure musical trust at play when Holquist and Shriner launch. While I do think the first track may present a barrier to casual listeners, Mirrors to the Bonfire is one that ambient fans will want to dig into, especially if your tastes also tolerate an experimental edge. I'm ready for the next excursion from Onewayness and dRachEmUsiK.
Available from Bandcamp.