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*Soundcheck*

*Thuluth*

*One Third Of The Sun, Al Maslakh* CD/DL

Free improvisation can echo the mutability and unpredictable eventfulness of a soundscape in ways sound artists and electronic musicians can rarely match.

Whether intentionally or not, it's a quality running through the debut album by Thuluth, aka Magda Mayas, Ute Wassermann and Raed Yassin. The way they explore acoustic timbre and texture evokes the mixing of stasis and volatility, organic and inorganic, that can be heard if you stop and listen to unquiet surroundings.

At its core, Thuluth's music fits in the lineage of non-idiomatic sound running from AMM and various strains of European free improvisation through to contemporary groups such as "A" Trio (which Yassin is a member of). The outlier, that really gives the record its peculiar sense of being in a park next to a motorway, is Wassermann. Her vocals, mixing sound poetry style glossolalia with a beguiling range of extended techniques, have an animalistic quality, reinforced by her playing a selection of bird whistles. Although the trio don't have a leader, she's the fulcrum around which Yassin and Mayas pivot. The pair play double bass and piano respectively, moving between treating their instruments as percussion, drone generators and rattling, squeaking objects.

The opening title track and "Pluto's Heart" are vibrant tableaux of timbre and movement, not so much alternating between cacophonous and euphonious as shattering their boundaries. On the latter, all three members swerve their instruments into the chattering groove of Wassermann's vocalisations with hypnotic results. Standout "Radiant Geometry" is worthy of its name. Wassermann moves from soaring to growling incantations, as though she's duelling with the bass's low frequencies. Mayas and Yassin join in a strident, caustic shimmer before everything abruptly cuts into whistles and squeaks. It's spellbinding, the three cohering so perfectly it's hard to believe they're improvising.

Daryl Worthington