

MICHAEL MANTLER



RECORDINGS



COMMUNICATION
FONTANA 881 011

THE JAZZ COMPOSER'S ORCHESTRA

Steve Lacy (soprano saxophone)
Jimmy Lyons (alto saxophone)
Robin Kenyatta (alto saxophone)
Ken McIntyre (alto saxophone)
Bob Carducci (tenor saxophone)
Fred Pirtle (baritone saxophone)
Mike Mantler (trumpet)
Ray Codrington (trumpet)
Roswell Rudd (trombone)
Paul Bley (piano)
Steve Swallow (bass)
Kent Carter (bass)
Barry Altschul (drums)

recorded live, April 10, 1965, New York

TITLES

Day (Communications No.4) / Communications No.5 (*album also includes Roast by Carla Bley*)

FROM THE ALBUM LINER NOTES

The Jazz Composer's Orchestra was formed in the fall of 1964 in New York City as one of the eight groups of the Jazz Composer's Guild. Mike Mantler and Carla Bley, being the only two non-leader members of the Guild, had decided to organize an orchestra made up of musicians both inside and outside the Guild.

This group, then known as the Jazz Composer's Guild Orchestra and consisting of eleven musicians, began rehearsals in the downtown loft of painter Mike Snow for its premiere performance at the Guild's Judson Hall series of concerts in December 1964. The orchestra, set up in a large circle in the center of the hall, played "Communications no.3" by Mike Mantler and "Roast" by Carla Bley.

The concert was so successful musically that the leaders decided to continue to write for the group and to give performances at the Guild's new headquarters, a triangular studio on top of the Village Vanguard, called the Contemporary Center.

In early March 1965 at the first of these concerts, which were presented in a workshop style, the group had been enlarged to fifteen musicians and the pieces played were "Radio" by Carla Bley and "Communications no.4" (subtitled "Day") by Mike Mantler. The Contemporary Center concerts, by this time, had achieved a lot of public recognition, and it was decided that a group could play more than the single night that had been the rule until then, if they so wished. Mantler and Bley took a weekend in April and invited guest composers within the Guild to write and conduct pieces for the occasion. The orchestra, still with the nucleus of regular musicians who had played with it since its conception, now consisted of thirteen pieces. At this occasion it performed "Communications no.5", a new work by Mike Mantler, a repeat performance of Mantler's "Day", a revised version of Carla Bley's "Radio", "Loose Latin" by Bley, and a piece each by Bill Dixon and Burton Greene, conducted by the composers. This was the orchestra's last performance at the Contemporary Center.

Shortly after, the Jazz Composer's Guild discontinued its activities. The orchestra continued to exist under the new name "Jazz Composer's Orchestra". Its next appearances, in July, were at the Newport Jazz Festival during an afternoon presentation of new music which included the groups of Paul Bley, Archie Shepp and Cecil Taylor, and two weeks later at a concert in the garden of New York's Museum of Modern Art together with the New York Art Quartet. The works performed by the orchestra at both occasions were "Communications no.6" by Mike Mantler and "Start" by Carla Bley, written for a small ensemble of eight pieces.



JAZZ REALITIES

FONTANA 881 010

Mike Mantler (trumpet)
Steve Lacy (soprano saxophone)
Carla Bley (piano)
Kent Carter (bass)
Aldo Romano (bass)

recorded January 11, 1966 Baarn, Holland

TITLES

Communications No.7 / J.S. *(album also includes additional compositions by Carla Bley)*

FROM THE ALBUM LINER NOTES

Steve Lacy

Born July 23, 1934 (a Leo subject) in New York City, I studied piano (classical, light, popular, etc.) indifferently from the age of 7 or 8. I began to play soprano saxophone at the age of 16 after hearing a Sidney Bechet disk. I played Dixieland for several years with many of the elder statesmen (Pee Wee Russell, Jimmy McPartland, Eddie Condon, Bud Freeman, Vic Dickenson, Dickie Wells, Charlie Shavers, etc.) in New York City. I was a member of Cecil Taylor's Trio, Duo, Quartet, Quintet, etc. on and off for 6 years. I also did many record dates and concerts with Gil Evans. In 1960 I played in the Thelonius Monk Quintet and later did several concerts in Monk's Big Band. I joined Jimmy Giuffre's Quartet and played in many different groups on my self-recorded 4 LPs under my own name (Prestige, Candid) - and found my way to Europe in Spring 1965, where I played with various rhythm sections in festivals, concerts, clubs, film scores, on record dates and so on - the list is too long.

Aldo Romano

My mother brought me into the world on January 16, 1941. The war forced my parents to leave Italy, and so I did all my studies in Paris. I started playing in 1961 without taking lessons from anyone, making my debut with French bands, later playing with Jacke McLean, Chet Baker, Johnny Griffin, Kenny Drew and Bud Powell. But my real start was in April 1964, when I joined Don Cherry until he left for New York. After that I played with Ted Curson and in Steve Lacy's Trio. I made a recording with Don Cherry in Milan and with the Steve Lacy Trio in Rome. In this LP I have tried to play without thinking about the history of jazz drumming, or about my past experiences. Only the present and the action count.

Kent Carter

I was born June 12, 1932 (New Hampshire, U.S.A) and I am not yet dead.



THE JAZZ COMPOSER'S ORCHESTRA

JCOA 1001/2

compositions by Michael Mantler

Soloists

Don Cherry (cornet)
Gato Barbieri (tenor saxophone)
Larry Coryell (guitar)
Roswell Rudd (trombone)
Pharoah Sanders (tenor saxophone)
Cecil Taylor (piano)

Orchestra

conducted by Michael Mantler

7 saxophones
(Steve Lacy, Jimmy Lyons, Frank Wess, Lew Tabackin, Charles Davis, and others)

7 brass
(Randy Brecker, Bob Northern, Julius Watkins, Jimmy Knepper, Howard Johnson, and others)

piano
(Carla Bley)

5 basses
(Steve Swallow, Charlie Haden, Reggie Workman, Eddie Gomez, Ron Carter, and others)

drums
(Andrew Cyrille, or Beaver Harris)

recorded January, May, June 1968, New York

TITLES

Communications No.8/ Communications No.9 / Communications No.10 / Preview / Communications No.11

REVIEWS

The silver-boxed Jazz Composer's Orchestra double album was one of the most important jazz records in the Sixties some of the most remarkable music of the last decade .
- *MELODY MAKER*

Placed within a framework of truly impressive free form compositions by Michael Mantler, the soloists perform at the very peak of their musical gifts. By any standard of musical excellence, it is a masterpiece.
- *ROLLING STONE*

This is the most forceful sustained performance that Taylor has recorded, and one of his very best as well.
- *DOWNBEAT*

Finally a towering orchestra response from the new music - the complete and hard burn. This is something that anyone interested in contemporary music and thought can't be without. All these forceful movers are channeled toward utter excitation, with a sound so much of now that it turns you around, cuts you deeply and stirs you as nothing before ... Michael Mantler, already an overwhelming mind at the age of 25, has made all this a reality (he's musical director of JCOA). Mike has built meaningful masterworks as features for his soloists; his scores seem intuitive, propelling and cushioning the players. The compositions overflow with the exciting and the unexpected.
- *JAZZ & POP*

This music heralds a new stylistic current, which might have a powerful influence not only on the future of jazz but on the future of the whole of contemporary music.
- *JAZZ FORUM*

The record is a stunning musical success
- *TORONTO DAILY STAR*

JAZZ. ALBUM OF THE YEAR (*International Critics Poll 1968 - JAZZ & POP*)

GRAND PRIX DU DISQUE DE L'ACADÉMIE CHARLES CROS (*France*)



NO ANSWER

WATT/2

words by Samuel Beckett (from 'How It Is')

Jack Bruce (voices, bass)
Carla Bley (piano, clavinet, organs)
Don Cherry (trumpet)

recorded February, July, November 1973, New York, London

TITLES

Number Six (Parts One/Two/Three/Four)
Number Twelve (Parts One/Two/Three/Four)

COMMENT

Jack Bruce at his most, Don Cherry undiluted, Carla Bley in many layers, WATT's second record is the darker side of the deepest end. Mantler's first association with Samuel Beckett's words.

REVIEWS

Instrumentation is sparse and somber, occasionally heavy on Bley's organ drone. Cherry's presence is comparatively brief, but he's his usual compelling, challenging self, the most distinctive trumpet voice around. Bley and Bruce carry the weight with virtuoso performances This is music of great strength, created by a master composer who needs to be heard. Mantler's music demands the support of open, intelligent ears everywhere.

-DOWNBEAT

A Beckett-like "Endgame" atmosphere, a feeling of hopelessness, pervades the work ... a very demanding, exceptionally intelligent production

-FONOFORUM



13 & 3/4

WATT/3

Orchestra 1

(3 flutes / 12 saxophones / 9 brass)

Orchestra 2

(4 flutes / 10 woodwinds / 14 brass / 42 strings)

Carla Bley (piano)

conducted by Michael Mantler

recorded August 1975 Willow, NY

TITLES

13 (for piano and two orchestras)
(also includes **3/4** by Carla Bley)

REVIEWS

***** (*five stars*)

"... the finest examples of progressive large ensemble work written and recorded in America in 1975"

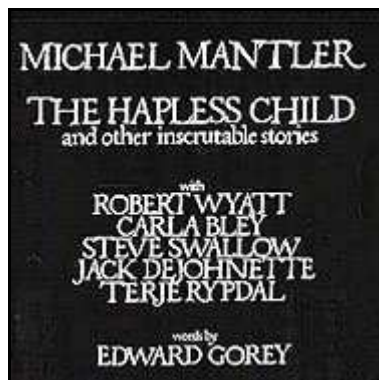
-*DOWNBEAT*

"Performance: Excellent ... Recording: Excellent ... probably the most ambitious compositions ever undertaken by anyone from the jazz field and a great deal more satisfying than the hybrid we have heard from 'third-stream' jazz composers."

- *STEREO REVIEW*

"... (13) leaves one winded and convinced that something has taken place, even if the critical faculties fail to grasp exactly what. Not for the fainthearted."

- *MELODY MAKER*



THE HAPLESS CHILD

WATT/4

words by Edward Gorey (from 'Amphigorey')

Robert Wyatt (voice)
Terje Rypdal (guitar)
Carla Bley (piano, clavinet, synthesizer)
Steve Swallow (bass)
Jack DeJohnette (drums)

recorded July 1975 through January 1976, Willow, NY, and England

TITLES

The Sinking Spell / The Object Lesson / The Insect God / The Doubtful Guest / The Remembered Visit / The Hapless Child

REVIEWS

Unlike most contemporary music, Mantler's destroys complacency and whets appetites. His melodies, strangely, are much more hummable than comprehensible. His rhythmic anomalies underline the blandly bizarre story lines ... Wyatt's vocals are the album's crowning glory. He scats brilliantly and uniquely on "The Sinking Spell" and manages a complete metamorphosis in the awesome "The Insect God". And his thick Canterbury accent, like Gorey's original anachronistic prose and verse, lends a certain adorable whimsy. This album is a definite contender for Mutant of the Year.
- BOSTON PHOENIX

While Wyatt's voice, impeccably British and rational-sounding, declaims the horrors of, say, being sacrificed to giant mantids, DeJohnette is flailing away, Rypdal and Bley interject terse musical comments and Swallow's bass hums darkly ... When the band cuts loose, they produce an inspired fury of sound as intense as any I've heard since Tony Williams' first Lifetime album, "Emergency".
- VILLAGE VOICE



SILENCE

WATT/5

words by Harold Pinter
(an adaptation of the play 'Silence')

Robert Wyatt (voice, percussion)
Kevin Coyne (voice)
Carla Bley (voice, piano, organ)
Chris Spedding (guitar)
Ron McClure (bass)

recorded January through June 1976, Willow, NY, and Wiltshire, England

TITLES

I Walk With My Girl / I Watch The Clouds / It Is Curiously Hot / When I Run / Sometimes I See People / Around Me Sits The Night / She Was Looking Down / For Instance / A Long Way / After My Work Each Day / On Good Evenings

REVIEWS

... ideas once amusing (Gorey's 'Hapless Child') or emotionally absorbing ('No Answer', from Beckett's 'How It Is') are now thoroughly played out. With due respect to Messrs. Coyne and Wyatt, who attempt to salvage this very lame duck, 'Silence' is possibly the least listenable record I have ever heard ...

... Indeed several members of the MM editorial staff have already volunteered to splinter the disc against the filing cabinets here, and I can only sympathize with their reaction .

... imbecilic sing-song treatment ... the musicianship here is uniformly dull ... noodling electric piano rhythms of very little consequence ... every rock guitar cliché in the book ... uninteresting ... inferior ...

- MELODY MAKER

FROM AN INTERVIEW

All your text-based compositions are difficult listening, yet only one has been universally loathed by almost everyone who has heard it. What went wrong with 'Silence'?

It was mostly the English who started it, going on a rampage about somebody messing with Harold Pinter, they really took it very personally. In fact I would think that something like 'No Answer' would actually be a much tougher record to listen to, but 'Silence' was indeed an extremely well-hated record (... laughs ...)



MOVIES

WATT/7

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Larry Coryell (guitar)
Carla Bley (piano, synthesizer, tenor sax)
Steve Swallow (bass)
Tony Williams (drums)

recorded March 1977, Willow, NY

TITLES

Movie One / Movie Two / Movie Three / Movie Four / Movie Five / Movie Six / Movie Seven /
Movie Eight

REVIEWS

Mantler's 'Movies' is probably the most intelligently done fusion, if we must call it that, since 'Mysterious Traveller' 'Movies' presents eight thematically linked pieces, each of which has a distinct mood, a particular emotional focus (hence the title?). While Bley plays with sentiment, some times burlesquing it and sometimes expressing it directly, Mantler's music breathes a different and cooler air. The eight compositions are consistently interesting and personal - Mantler's harmonies are his own - and the ensemble plays beautifully. Of the instrumentalists, Mantler himself is perhaps the least widely known, but it is his steely trumpet playing that dominates the ensemble sound and establishes the emotional climate of the music. To my knowledge he has never before put his own playing so far forward. I hope he does it again. Williams is typically excellent - it's a pleasure to hear him recording regularly again - and Coryell and Swallow could not be better. Carla Bley plays some unison lines on tenor, but her most significant contribution is her wise and subtle use of synthesizer to enlarge the music's space and give it greater dimension and reach. This is intense, stellar music. Miss it at your own risk, particularly if you're into fusion: this is some of the most interesting work being done in the idiom. Certainly it is superior to the more commercial releases around.

- *MUSICIAN*

If the eight segments which make up "Movies" are intended to paint pictures in the mind's eye, they succeed admirably ... Mantler performs with a bright, hard tone, like a more careful Freddie Hubbard, while the focus of the themes restrains Coryell from across-the-fretboard calisthenics ... The whole group comes on like a more mature and musicianly Mahavishnu Orchestra: in place of speed for speed's sake antics is a sense that Mantler has distilled his thoughts down to their finest essence. The result is an album of shining freshness.

- *MELODY MAKER*



MORE MOVIES

WATT/10

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Philip Catherine (guitar)
Gary Windo (tenor saxophone)
Carla Bley (piano, organ)
Steve Swallow (bass)
D. Sharpe (drums)

recorded August 1979 through March 1980, Willow, NY

TITLES

Movie Nine / The Sinking Spell / Movie Eleven / Will We Meet Tonight / Movie Thirteen / The Doubtful Guest / Movie Fifteen / Movie Fourteen / Movie Ten / Movie Twelve

FROM AN INTERVIEW

Are the 'Movies' albums inspired by the silver screen? Many of the pieces seem to resemble soundtracks.

People have said that about my work in general, although I think that's really rather simple-minded. I do like movies though, I see a lot of films and I am interested in them (even in writing for one, if the right one came along ...). Yet for those records, it was only a way of titling something. I've never wanted to give music titles, so I started using numbers and all that. In a way a piece of music can be a short movie, since it is abstract and ambiguous enough for you to have your own scenario. That's why I thought the title 'Movies' would be appropriate.

REVIEWS

... a strong rhythmic emphasis and a well-integrated ensemble. It's an example of rock-based back-beats being used to good effect with Catherine and Windo rising above the rhythm in their solo work, yet still sounding a part of the whole. Indeed these two dominate, with Windo's singular tone reflecting the synthesis of Coltrane, Shepp, Ayler, King Curtis and even Junior Walker ... In all a very effective record which shows that there can be life after fusion.
- JAZZ JOURNAL

Philip Catherine ... plays piercing rock-blues-jazz guitar on an album that truly seems to know what jazzmen can get out of melting jazz and rock together - stark blues power, and brute impact for nightmare tunes written in black light. It's the most exciting more-or-less fusion record I've heard in years ... "More Movies" is a great record.
- BUFFALO EVENING NEWS



SOMETHING THERE

WATT/13

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Mike Stern (guitar)
Carla Bley (piano)
Steve Swallow (bass)
Nick Mason (drums)

The Strings of the London Symphony Orchestra,
arranged and conducted by Michael Gibbs

recorded February through June 1982, Willow, NY; London

TITLES

Twenty / Twenty One / Nineteen / Seventeen / Eighteen / Something There

FROM AN INTERVIEW

How did you choose the musicians on your new album, and why these particular ones?

First of all, they are my friends, and I prefer to work with friends. Carla has produced and played on everyone of my records. I consider her indispensable to my music. Steve Swallow has also been involved in almost all of my projects. Both of them are crucial to the first stage of the recording, where they shape and transform the basic original scores I present them with.

I've worked with Nick Mason, who is Pink Floyd's drummer, on an earlier album ("The Hapless Child"), for which he did some engineering. We met at the time through Robert Wyatt, the main soloist on that album. Later on we worked together on a more involved project, Nick's own solo album ("Fictitious Sports"), for which Carla had written the music. I have always liked Pink Floyd and his drumming, and I thought it would be interesting to use him in another context.

I didn't actually meet Mike Stern until the sessions, but he had been recommended by a lot of people, also in particular by Carla, who had heard him with Miles Davis' new band. He's a wonderful musician, and I am extremely pleased with what he contributed, both to the basic tracks as well as to the solo sections.

Michael Gibbs has been a friend for twenty years. He was practically the first person I met when I arrived in the United States, but this is the first time we have ever worked together.

Why did you use strings, and why the London Symphony Orchestra?

My music is basically meant to be orchestral, although, for economic reasons, I've recently had to more or less discontinue writing orchestrally. I also thought that my small group writing had been explored enough in "Movies" and "More Movies", and I was tired of using that format again.

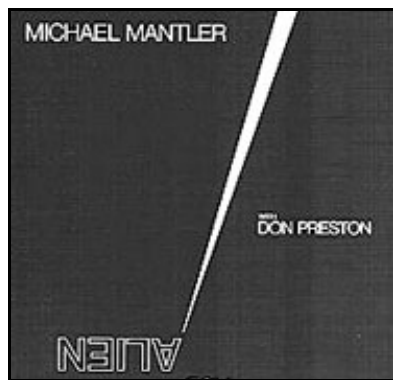
Since I don't particularly like to perform, I don't have to keep in mind the feasibility of a live performance, and so I decided to just go ahead and return to a larger texture. I have always liked strings, but have never used them as a separate body. Nevertheless, I didn't feel equipped enough technically to write for and conduct the strings, so I enlisted Michael Gibbs, who is a masterful orchestrator.

Once he was involved, he suggested using the best string section available, and so, after borrowing a great deal of money, I hired the London Symphony. As it turned out, they weren't any more expensive than an American studio string section, and I was able to use Pink Floyd's Britannia Row studio, which was fortunate, because things were becoming quite complex technically.

FROM A REVIEW

Mantler, a musician's musician among New York and Europe's avant-garde circles, has been a tireless worker for the jazz oriented "new-music" scene ... Here we find Mantler's quintet and, of all things, the strings of the London Symphony Orchestra. In a six-part suite inspired by Samuel Beckett's poem "Something There", Mantler and his friends juxtapose solo and ensemble gestures against the astringent yet sonorous strings, skillfully arranged by Michael Gibbs from Mantler's sketches. The contrasts, sometimes bitter, sometimes sweet are poignantly dramatic. Eerie, perhaps even cataclysmic, it's an eruption of both fire and ice.

- LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD



ALIEN
WATT/15

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Don Preston (synthesizers)

recorded March through July 1985, Willow, NY

TITLES

Alien (Parts 1/2/3/4)

FROM AN INTERVIEW

I wanted to use synthesizers (Don Preston) in place of an orchestra, but without actually imitating an orchestra. It's one of the records I have recorded where I wouldn't change one note.



LIVE

WATT/18

words by Samuel Beckett, Edward Gorey, Harold Pinter

Jack Bruce (voice)
Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Rick Fenn (guitar)
Don Preston (synthesizers)
John Greaves (bass, piano)
Nick Mason (drums)

recorded live, February 1987, International Art-Rock Festival, Frankfurt

TITLES

Preview / No Answer / Slow Orchestra Piece No.3 (Prisonniers) / For Instance / Slow Orchestra Piece No.8 (A L'Abattoir) / When I Run / The Remembered Visit / Slow Orchestra Piece No.61 The Hapless Child / The Doubtful Guest

FROM AN INTERVIEW

Why did you make a LIVE album? Usually that sort of thing is done by people who perform a lot and have a touring band, and isn't it a well-known fact that you hate performing?

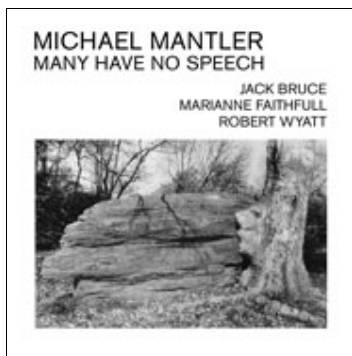
Well, yes, but it would probably be nicer to say that I'm uncomfortable doing it. Although apparently one can get used to anything, and I've actually done a few more concert since, without doing too much damage to myself or others.

Any plans for further live performances?

Touring is too difficult. I think I'll really try and avoid that. But then again, if someone really insists, as was the case with this project who knows?

How did you choose the material? Hasn't some of it already been recorded?

Yes, I thought it might be a good idea to do sort of a retrospective, presenting some older music in a new and different context. And since I had a vocalist, I used a few of the songs from earlier periods, with lyrics by writers such as Beckett, Gorey, and Harold Pinter. And also new music, some of which will reappear, in quite different form, on my next album.



MANY HAVE NO SPEECH

WATT/19

words by Samuel Beckett, Ernst Meister, Philippe Soupault

Jack Bruce (voice)
Marianne Faithfull (voice)
Robert Wyatt (voice)

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Rick Fenn (guitar)

The Danish Radio Concert Orchestra conducted by Peder Kragerup

recorded May through December 1987, Copenhagen, London, Boston, Willow, NY

INSTRUMENTATION

2 flutes or alto flutes
2 oboes or english horns
2 clarinets
2 bassoons or contrabassoons
2 french horns
2 trumpets
2 trombones or bass trombones
14 violins / 4 violas / 4 cellos / 2 basses
harp / piano / vibraphone (chimes)
solo trumpet / solo guitar

TITLES

Introduction / Just As Someone / Ce Qu'a De Pis / Alles Scheint Rand / Imagine / In The End / Vieil
Aller / Rien Null Tant de Temps / En Face / Chaque Jour / PSS / En Cadence / Something There /
Comrade / Den Atem Ausgetauscht / A L'Abattoir / And What / D'où La Voix / Fou Qui Disiez / Merk,
Jetzt / Son Ombre / Reve / Life Connects / Prisonniers / Silence / Viele Haben Keine Sprache

ABOUT THE WRITERS

Samuel Beckett, Irish, born in 1906. Lived in France since the late Twenties until his death in 1989. Best known for his play *Waiting For Godot*, a classic of the modern theater. One of the most important writers of this century, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Ernst Meister, German, born in 1911, died in 1979. Recognized as one of Germany's greatest modern poets, in the line of Hölderlin, Trakl, and Celan, the latter of whom he discovered. He was awarded many literary awards, including the Petrarca-Preis, the Rilke-Preis, and from the German Academy for Languages and Literature, posthumously, the Buchner-Preis.

Almost all of his poems are meditations about death, from his earliest publication in 1935 (*Ausstellung*) until his latest and perhaps most achieved work (*Wandloser Raum*) in 1979. In between he published numerous other volumes of poetry and several radio plays.

Philippe Soupault, French, born in 1897, died in 1990. He founded the review *Litterature* in 1919 with Breton and Aragon, and was the co-author with Breton of *Les Champs magnetiques*, the first Surrealist text. He was active in French Dada and a central figure of Surrealism in its early years, though he eventually drifted away from the movement.

He was prolific novelist and essayist, perhaps best known for one of his early novels, *Last Nights of Paris* (1928), which was translated into English by William Carlos Williams. He traveled all over the world, worked as a journalist, and taught at Pennsylvania State College and Swarthmore College. He was arrested by the Germans in 1942 and spent six months in prison. He has also written pieces for radio and theater, and edited one of the first complete editions of Lautréamont.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Jack Bruce, the voice of Cream, from the heyday of 60's rock, has always managed to work within unusual contexts, from bands with Leslie West, Mick Taylor, Billy Cobham, to Lifetime with Tony Williams and John McLaughlin, Anton Fier's Golden Palominos, and Carla Bley's *Escalator Over The Hill* album. Has also recorded many great solo albums, most notably *Harmony Row* and *Out Of The Storm*.

Marianne Faithfull, a new addition to Mantler's cast of distinctive voices. With a hectic past, full of character, she has come a long way from early stardom with *As Tears Go By* (her first hit, written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards). Reappearing with a series of strong albums, such as *Broken English* and *Strange Weather*. A unique singer with a haunting voice of extraordinary depth, taking up where Lotte Lenya and Marlene Dietrich left off.

Robert Wyatt was originally the drummer with Soft Machine, England's legendary art-rock-jazz-fusion band, then primarily singer-songwriter, pursuing a solo recording career with classic albums such as *Rock Bottom*, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* and *Old Rottenhat*. Extremely reclusive, no live performances, and only rare recorded appearances. Extremely involved and concerned with politics for social change.

AN INTERVIEW

Why are you writing music with words? Why literary texts?

After having written only instrumental music for a period of about ten years, it was actually the desire to work with voices again which started this project. Obviously this required a search of appropriate texts. I don't feel qualified to write words myself and I also know of no writers who I wanted to specifically write for me. So I turned to a wide range of existing contemporary poetry which might represent something that I could identify with. After rejecting a lot of it as unsuitable, I finally arrived at the choice of writers and texts represented in this album.

Why several authors and languages?

I had not intended to write an album based purely on one writer's work, but somehow to find a variety of songs, blended together coherently, both in their musical treatment, as well as in their range of expression. I also found no particular reason to stay with one language. Although I originally began looking for poetry in English, I eventually came across much that was in French, a very beautiful language to be sung, and then also continued to find a lot in German, which is my native tongue, and therefore a natural choice for me. Some of the poems existed only in the original, although I used some translations, where they were available, in order to maintain a balance between the usage of the three languages.

Why do you find these texts particularly suitable for your music?

Besides having the thought content I want represented, they all exhibit a sparseness, precision, and economy of language that I especially like, and that I found very easy to combine with my music. It is also very important for me that the words are abstractions of thoughts and feelings, rather than literal expressions of someone's everyday experiences. I feel very strongly about incorporating a certain kind of ambiguity in order to give the listener as much latitude of interpretation as possible. And I think that the poetry of Beckett, Meister and Soupault exhibit these qualities perfectly.

How did you choose the singers and is there a relationship between the types of voices you use and the poetic and musical content?

The voices I like all have a certain dramatic quality, which I think is absolutely necessary to express the intentions of the words and therefore the music. I want them to have character and to be naturally rough, somewhat unpolished, maybe even broken, with an expressive edge, yet musical. The singers I am using all have these qualities, in varying degrees, yet they are quite different from each other, and I find that they provide interesting contrasts in the musical and poetic sequence of the album.

Voices like these usually come from jazz or popular music, and the only problem is to find someone sophisticated enough to sing difficult music and identify with the equally difficult words. Therefore I consider myself very lucky to have been involved with Jack Bruce, Robert Wyatt, and Marianne Faithfull, singers who I have all admired for years. They had the vocal and musical qualities I needed, and they were not only interested, but also able to sing the music. And each in their own, distinct, and wonderful way.

Does improvisation have a place in your music?

Yes, to a certain extent, but not in the traditional sense of jazz, where improvisation usually dominates as the expression of the player. There is freedom in the interpretation of some melodies, as well as elaboration on them. And there are also some totally improvised sections, which are, however, very specifically based on compositional elements in order to become an integral part of the whole work.

What is the role of the trumpet and guitar on this album?

They act as additional voices in contrast to the orchestra and they accompany and answer the singers. They carry most of the instrumental melodic material and develop all the improvisation and embellishment. As a trumpet player I am assuming the role of sparsely supplying a sound that is not really a solo voice, but one that blends in with the composition as a whole. I have always very much liked the sound of an electric rock-type guitar in combination with my trumpet, and Rick Fenn's playing is used in a similar manner.

After the purely electronic orchestral sound of "Alien", what made you return to the conventional acoustic orchestra?

So far, almost all of my music has been orchestral in scope, even if an orchestra wasn't used as such. In "Alien", that sound was intentionally created electronically, although the idea was definitely not to imitate the sound of an acoustic orchestra, but rather to create a broad spectrum of sounds not necessarily available from a real orchestra, using today's synthesizers and studio technology as much as possible. I was very happy with the outcome, but I generally feel the need to continue with other and different methods once a project is finished. Therefore it was a fairly obvious step for me to again explore the possibilities of a conventional orchestra.

Do you have an audience in mind when writing or producing your music?

I do not think of an audience during that process at all. But I do expect it to have an audience eventually. I am not trying to appeal to anyone in particular, I just want people to be moved and touched by the music, that's what is important to me. If it doesn't do that to the listener, then I wouldn't consider it successful, at least not on my terms. I very much dislike the intellectualizing and analyzing that a certain kind of audience does, I much prefer to reach someone on an emotional level.

You seem to exhibit a strong tendency towards darkness in your music. Why?

I can't really explain why. I don't deliberately write "dark" music, it's simply there. I have no particular desire to write "light" music, and I would indeed find it very difficult to do so. I don't think that life and the human existence in general are such positive events, so I don't feel especially challenged to express the opposite.



FOLLY SEEING ALL THIS

ECM 1485

The Balanescu Quartet

Alexander Balanescu (violin)
Clare Connors (violin)
Bill Hawkes (viola)
Jane Fenton (cello)

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Rick Fenn (guitar)
Wolfgang Puschnig (alto flute)
Karen Mantler (piano, voice)
Dave Adams (vibraphone, chimes)

Jack Bruce (voice)

recorded June 1992, London

TITLES

Folly Seeing All This / News / What Is The Word (words by Samuel Beckett)

ABOUT THE QUARTET

The Balanescu Quartet was formed in 1987 in London, passionately believing in new music that communicates directly with the audience, much of it commissioned for and by the Quartet. They actively seek out new contexts and venues for performance, and have been particularly identified with the music of Michael Nyman and Gavin Bryars, as well as of many other leading exponents of 20th century composition. They have performed with artists as diverse as Keith Tippett, Andy Sheppard, John Surman, Jack DeJohnette, in venues ranging from the Queen Elizabeth Hall to the Knitting Factory, and even received a standing ovation from thousands of Pet Shop Boys fans when supporting them at Wembley. They have also appeared on albums by Kate Bush and Sam Brown. Their own recordings include interpretations of Michael Nyman's quartets, as well as of American music by John Lurie, Michael Torke, Robert Moran, and David Byrne.

REVIEWS

After many years residency in the United States, the Austrian composer, trumpeter and founder of the renowned WATT label has returned to Europe and brought out a new album on ECM. "Folly Seeing All This", like almost all of Mantler's work is distinguished by its pronounced predilection for quiet, almost elegiac, sounds. Mantler's standing preoccupation with connections between literature and music is evidenced above all in the Samuel Beckett-inspired "What Is The Word", performed as a duet between Jack Bruce and Mantler's daughter, Karen.

- *MUSIKMARKT*

For six years Viennese world citizen and WATT founder Michael Mantler had released no new records. His droll explanation: "There was no need for a new production!" Perhaps he had also asked himself the question: How can one simply make music in times like these? ... Mantler lists, in his CD booklet, an A-Z of contemporary threats - from "advertising" and "AIDS" to "war" and "xenophobia" - and creates, in contrast a harmonious music of reconciliation ... The instrumental pieces are fascinating explorations of the field of tension between classical music, jazz, and minimal music, compositions of wonderful fluidity ...

- *FACHBLATT*



CERCO UN PAESE INNOCENTE

ECM 1556

A Suite of Songs and Interludes for Voice, Untypical Big Band and Soloists

words by Giuseppe Ungaretti

Mona Larsen (voice)

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Bjarne Roupé (guitar)
Marianne Sørensen (violin)
Mette Winther (viola)
Gunnar Lychou (viola)
Helle Sørensen (cello)
Kim Kristensen (piano)

The Danish Radio Big Band conducted by Ole Kock Hansen

Jan Kohlin, Benny Rosenfeld, Palle Bolvig, Henrik Pedersen, Lars Togeby (trumpets, fluegelhorns) / Vincent Nilsson, Steen Hansen, Kjeld Ipsen (trombones), Giordano Bellincampi (bass trombone), Axel Windfeld (bass trombone, tuba) / Jan Zum Vohrde (flute & alto flute, soprano saxophone), Michael Hove (flute, clarinet, soprano saxophone), Uffe Markussen (clarinet, bass clarinet, flute), Bob Rockwell (clarinet, soprano saxophone), Flemming Madsen (clarinet, bass clarinet, flute) / Nikolaj Bentzon (synthesizer), Thomas Ovesen (bass), Jonas Johansen (drums), Ethan Weisgard (percussion)

recorded January 1994 Copenhagen

TITLES

PART 1

- Introduzione / Girovago / Intermezzo 1 / Eterno / Stasera / Intermezzo 2

PART 2

- Perche? / Sempre Notte / Inizio (1) / Solitudine / Lontano / Inizio (2) / L'Illuminata Rugiada / Proverbi (Uno) / Intermezzo 3 / Destino / Rilucere Inveduto / Un'Altra Notte

PART 3

- Se Una Tua Mano / Intermezzo 4 / Vanità / Quando Un Giorno / Le Ansie

PART 4

- È Senza Fiato / Intermezzo 5 / Non Gridate Più / Tutto Ho Perduto

ABOUT GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI

The first and one of the most important and influential of modern Italian poets. He was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1888. He studied at the Sorbonne, and while in Paris he became a close friend of Guillaume Apollinaire's. He published his first volume of poetry in 1916, a definitive break with the late 19th-century conventions of Italian poetry. After living in Italy for a number of years, he went to Brazil as a professor of Italian literature at the University of Sao Paulo. On his return he taught at the University of Rome. His work deals with the large themes of human existence: loneliness, love, loss, nature. But above all, his work is a long record of confrontation with death. T.S.Eliot ranked Ungaretti as "one of the few authentic poets" of the century. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. He died in Milan 1970.

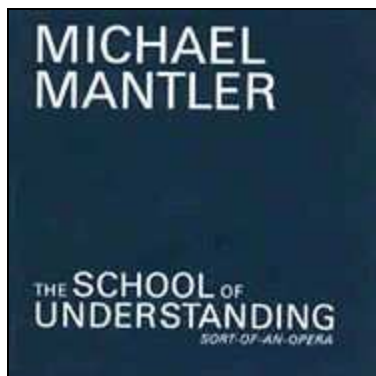
REVIEWS

Mantler has made a song cycle punctuated with bridging interludes which together form a cohesive work every bit as compelling as Ungaretti's plaintive poems ... Mona Larsen sings the poems in the original Italian with a spine-tingling elastic sensuality, airborne and passionate - one of the most beautiful voices I have ever heard. There is a quality in Mantler's work which this voice exemplifies. Something exotic and exuberant. A fine introduction to the recordings of Michael Mantler and a ravishing work in its own right.

- *THE WIRE*

A suite of songs and interludes with words by Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti. Mona Larsen sings these modernist lyrics in a suave cabaret style, accompanied by Mantler's big band plus strings and soloists. An integrated hour of moody entertainment, with hints of myriad influences from classical, jazz and pop.

- *TIMEOUT*



THE SCHOOL OF UNDERSTANDING

ECM 1648/49 (2-CD SET)

Sort-of-an-Opera

words by Michael Mantler

Voices

Jack Bruce (*Observer*)

Per Jørgensen (*Teacher*)

Mona Larsen (*Refugee*)

Susi Hyldgaard (*Journalist*)

Karen Mantler (*Student*)

John Greaves (*Businessman*)

Don Preston (*Doctor*)

Robert Wyatt (*Guest Observer*)

Musicians

Michael Mantler (trumpet, conductor)

Roger Jannotta (clarinet, bass clarinet, flute, oboe)

Bjarne Roupé (guitar)

Marianne Sørensen (violin)

Mette Brandt (violin)

Mette Winther (viola)

Helle Sørensen (cello)

Tineke Noordhoek (vibraphone, marimba)

Kim Kristensen (piano, synthesizers)

Don Preston (synth drums)

The Danish Radio Concert Orchestra Strings

conducted by Giordano Bellincampi

recorded August 1996, Copenhagen

TITLES

CD 1

Prelude / Introductions / First Lesson / News / Love Begins / War / Pause / Understanding

CD 2

Health and Poverty / Love Continues / Platitudes / Intolerance / Love Ends / What's Left To Say /
What Is The Word (words by Samuel Beckett)

ABOUT THE CAST

Jack Bruce, Don Preston, John Greaves, Karen Mantler, Mona Larsen and Robert Wyatt have all worked with Mantler on various occasions before. But in addition, two equally interesting new voices were found for this project, namely Per Jørgensen and Susi Hyldgaard. And among the musicians on this recording, once again, one finds guitarist Bjarne Roupé and pianist Kim Kristensen.

AN INTERVIEW

Why do you call it "sort-of-an-opera"? Is it in fact an opera?

I never intended to write an opera within the generally accepted definition of that term. To me, and probably to most of the world, the word "opera" means something very specific, something "The School of Understanding" is definitely not. Therefore, in order not to confuse anybody and to make that immediately clear, I decided to give it the "sort-of" sub-title. That may not exactly clarify what it really is, but at least it excludes a large conventional musical category. Yet it does make some sense, it is "sort-of-an-opera", since it was originally conceived to be performed as a multi-media "theatrical concert" with a certain amount of visual elements. It was, however, always intended that the music could nevertheless also stand on its own on purely musical terms in a recorded version.

What is it about?

Its fundamental theme is "understanding", communicating, recognizing and considering certain universal problems in today's society. The setting for this was a conversation class in a language school. The original stage production was called "The School of Languages" and included material in several different languages. However, that aspect was eventually eliminated, and it became simply an abstracted school of "understanding".

Does it have a "story"?

Not really, but there is a simple dramatic framework: after the teacher and the students have introduced themselves, a newscaster, appearing on pre-recorded videos in the stage production, presents news reports of various fictitious events as conversation topics. These themes are then discussed, commented on, some personal stories are being related by students, questions are raised, observations are made, but generally no answers are given. In addition, a developing romantic relationship between two of the students threads through the various episodes as a sort of mini-serial.

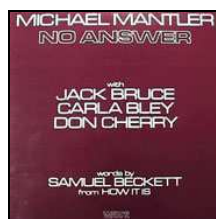
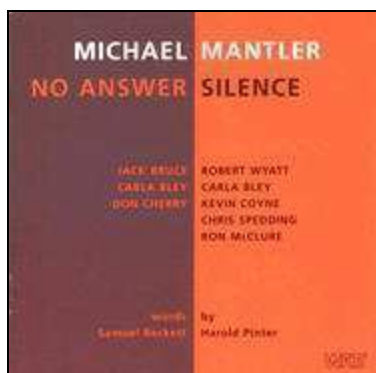
Another consistently recurring and connecting element is that of Jack Bruce as the "Observer". He serves as a somewhat illusory presence, overlooking the proceedings from an outside point of view, injecting reflections, questions and comments on the various events and topics. Robert Wyatt as "Guest Observer" adds additional observations in one central song, which was also achieved through a pre-recorded music video in the stage version.

You have written the words yourself, although in the past you have said not to feel qualified to write words. Why now?

I never intended to write "poetry", the language is deliberately unpretentious everyday speech, almost like lyrics in popular music. In the end I do of course revert to a concluding poetic statement as resolution of the whole work in the form of "What Is The Word", a text by Samuel Beckett, which I have used before, and which to me seems to sum it all up perfectly.

FROM A REVIEW

..... the intelligence of the casting, the coherence of the music and the deft sensitivity of its performance by Mantler's Chamber Music and Songs ensemble render the whole project a triumph for all concerned.
-JAZZWISE



NO ANSWER / SILENCE

WATT 2/5

Originally released on LP WATT/2 and WATT/5
re-released January 2000 (double CD)

COMMENTS

Two albums from Michael Mantler's back-catalogue, repackaged. "No Answer" and "Silence", early instances of Mantler's experiments with the setting of literary texts, from 1973 and 1976 respectively, are issued now as a double album.

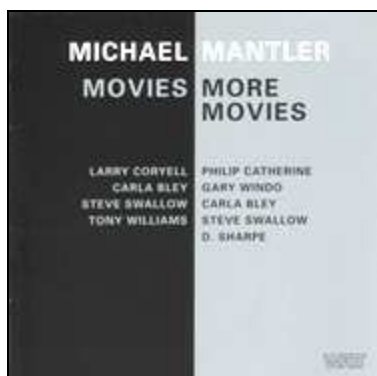
"No Answer" was a bold step into new territory. Jack Bruce, bassist/vocalist from rock group Cream, had proven himself much more than a pop singer on the epic "Escalator Over The Hill", Carla Bley's "chronotransduction", produced by Mantler between 1968 and 1971. On "No Answer" Bruce was given Samuel Beckett's tense/intense texts from "How It Is" to sing, Beckett is celebrated by some commentators for his grim humour. This, however, was never his appeal for Mantler: "I don't care for what people see as the satirical side of Beckett. I don't like the way the plays are produced, for instance. I like to see Beckett's work on a page, printed almost graphically - as a series of events. True, 'Watt' itself is a very funny book, but I never considered putting it to music. I was always so much attracted by the dark side, that was always enough. Enough material for a long time, to stay with that."

Bruce's voice, multi-tracked, soars and dives through Beckett's blackest moods, tellingly set by Mantler. An extraordinary performance. There is also intense keyboard work from Carla Bley, without a trace of the whimsy cultivated in later years, and bubbling, speeding trumpet work from the late, great Don Cherry.

For "Silence", Michael Mantler turned to an author often regarded as an English counterpart to Beckett, dramatist Harold Pinter. The mood of alienation that distinguishes his playlet, set in its entirety by Mantler, is emphasized by the approach taken to recording. Mantler absented himself from the majority of the sessions, Carla Bley produced the album, and two of the main protagonists - singers Kevin Coyne and Robert Wyatt were never in the studio at the same time.

Although its stripped-down instrumentation might suggest otherwise, the album is built up in layers - the vocalists sang to tape rather than to each other. This was artistically and aesthetically appropriate since, as JAZZ. FORUM noted, "The work deal with loneliness and people's inability to communicate. The music has a static feeling, well-attuned to Harold Pinter's words, and even the piercing guitar sounds like a cry."

Long out of print, the re-emergence of "Silence" will be of interest not only to Mantler completists but also to the new audience that has discovered Robert Wyatt only via his critically-acclaimed album "Shleep". "Differences between Robert Wyatt and Jack Bruce are immense," Mantler notes of his longest-serving star vocalists. "Robert can't read a note of music but has an unusual voice, a very good ear and will work hard until he gets what is needed. Jack's a very talented musician with a great voice who hardly has to work at all. He'll sight-read the music and very often get it exactly with the first take. They're totally different, but I really appreciate what each has brought to the music."



MOVIES / MORE MOVIES

WATT 7/10

Originally released on LP WATT/7 and WATT/10
re-released January 2000 (single CD)

COMMENTS

Two albums from Michael Mantler's back-catalogue, repackaged. The enlightened jazz-rock of "Movies" and "More Movies"- from 1977 and 1979 - now fits onto a generously filled single CD.

Michael Mantler's talents as composer have often found expression in the channelling of others' abilities. He consistently provides contexts in which soloists can shine. In this sense "Movies" and "More Movies" are - despite extreme temperamental differences - very much in the tradition of his work with the Jazz Composers Orchestra. If, on his "Communications" compositions of the 1960s, his structural frames guided and edited the liberated and uninhibited sounds of Cecil Taylor, Pharoah Sanders and others, so do his "Movies" pieces draw upon the energies of jazz-rock while directing its exponents beyond the limitations of the idiom.

"At the time I was interested in some aspects of fusion. I liked the power of the early Mahavishnu Orchestra for instance. But you see, I think all these people - the jazz/rock people and the free jazz people - need composers to give the real playing capacity some sense of organisation. Without any interesting structural ideas, fusion got real boring real fast. The players reached a very high technical level but the language itself was so bland."

For the first "Movies" disc, Mantler assembled an exceptional group, with Tony Williams, Steve Swallow, Carla Bley and Larry Coryell, also giving himself more solo space than on his other projects. Critical reactions were very positive.

MUSICIAN: "... it is his steely trumpet playing that dominates the ensemble sound and establishes the emotional climate of the music. To my knowledge he has never put his own playing so far forward. I hope he does it again."

He did. "More Movies" followed two years later. Swallow and Carla Bley were retained from the original line-up. D. Sharpe and Gary Windo, both then playing with the Bley Band, were enrolled. Anglo-Belgian guitarist Philip Catherine - lovingly dubbed "Little Django" by Charles Mingus - came in as Coryell's replacement. "More Movies" was a more controlled record than the earlier disc, Gary Windo's contagious enthusiasm notwithstanding, but certainly no less compelling. In addition to new "Movies" compositions, Mantler reworked a couple of themes from "The Hapless Child" for the group.



SONGS AND ONE SYMPHONY
ECM 1721

SONGS

with words by Ernst Meister

The Chamber Music and Songs Ensemble

Mona Larsen (voice)

Michael Mantler (trumpet)

Bjarne Roupé (guitar)

Marianne Sørensen (violin)

Mette Winther (viola)

Gunnar Lychou (viola)

Helle Sørensen (cello)

Kim Kristensen (piano, synthesizers)

Recorded October 11, 1993, at the Danish Radio, Copenhagen

ONE SYMPHONY

Radio Symphony Orchestra Frankfurt

conducted by Peter Rundel

recorded November 13/14, 1998, at Hessischer Rundfunk, Frankfurt

TITLES

SONGS

Opening / So far / For ever / Interlude / Nothing more / Darker than the light / How long are our nights / Mark, nothing appears / Everything seems / The breath exchanged / Speechless

ONE SYMPHONY

Part 1 / Part 2 / Part 3 / Part 4

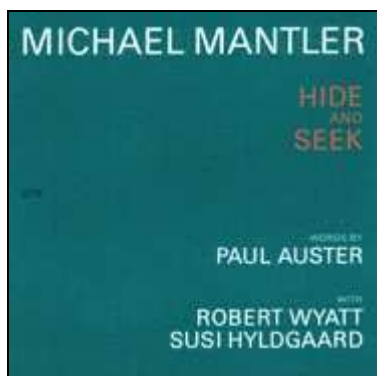
ABOUT SONGS

English language versions of Ernst Meister poems that were first set to music in 1987 and appeared on the *Many Have No Speech* album (where they are sung, in German, by Jack Bruce). This time the pieces are performed by the *Chamber Music and Songs Ensemble*, the group Mantler formed in 1993 after resettling in Copenhagen. The ensemble was previously featured, alongside the Danish Radio Orchestra, on *Cerco Un Paese Innocente*, and formed the instrumental core of the sort-of-an-opera *School of Understanding*.

ABOUT ONE SYMPHONY

As a composer who has come originally from jazz, I have almost always worked with musicians who had been given a varying amount of freedom of interpreting and even improvising some segments of my music. As I continue to feel the need for more control, I have gradually been reducing that freedom, wanting more and more to eliminate the amount of chance in the performance of a piece of music. With this work I arrive at a completely notated composition without any improvisation whatsoever. One Symphony was composed between March '97 and August '98. The basic concept for it was that of "symphony" in its most elementary form - simply the utilization of a relatively large number and variety of instruments to perform musical materials organized to create a larger whole with a logical continuity. No particularly unusual compositional methods were used, and there is no programmatic content or message. It should exist as a piece of pure music, leaving the listeners to arrive at their own emotional interpretations. The neutral title was chosen for that reason as well as to suggest it being one of many possible symphonies.

- Michael Mantler



HIDE AND SEEK

ECM 1738

A Suite of Songs and Interludes for 2 Voices and Chamber Orchestra
words by *Paul Auster*

Robert Wyatt (voice)
Susi Hyldgaard (voice)

Roger Jannotta (flute, oboe, clarinets)
Michael Mantler (trumpets)
Martin Cholewa (French horn)
Vincent Nilsson (trombones)
Bjarne Roupé (guitars)
Susi Hyldgaard (accordion)
Tineke Noordhoek (vib, marimba)
Per Salo (piano)
Marianne Sørensen (violins)
Mette Winther (violas)
Helle Sørensen (cellos)

recorded February - September 2000, Copenhagen and London

TITLES

Unsaid (1) / What did you say? / Unsaid (2) / It's all just words / If you have nothing to say / Unsaid (3) / What do you see? / Absolutely nothing / Unsaid (4) / What can we do? / Unsaid (5) / It all has to end sometime / Unsaid (6) / I don't deny it / I'm glad you're glad / Do you think we'll ever find it? / It makes no difference to me

ABOUT PAUL AUSTER

American novelist, essayist, translator, and poet, born in 1947 in Newark, New Jersey. His first prose work was the memoir *The Invention of Solitude*, followed by the three novels which brought him international recognition as a startlingly original writer: *City of Glass*, *Ghosts* and *The Locked Room*, comprising *The New York Trilogy*.

Since the *Trilogy* his novels include *In the Country of Last Things*, *Moon Palace*, *The Music of Chance* (which was nominated for a Pen-Faulkner Award and also made into a movie), *Leviathan*, *Mr. Vertigo*, *Timbuktu*, *The Book of Illusions*, *Oracle Night*, *The Brooklyn Follies*, and *Travels In The Scriptorium*.

Auster's other writings include the poetry volumes *Unearth* and *Wall Writing*, and the essay collections *White Spaces*, *The Art of Hunger* and *Groundwork*. He has also published the autobiographical works *The Red Notebook*, *Why Write* and *Hand to Mouth* (a collection of miscellaneous writings, which includes the short play *Hide and Seek*, the basis for Michael Mantler's composition), and edited the anthology *The Random House Book of Twentieth Century French Poetry*.

Paul Auster's work has been translated into twenty-five languages, and he is the recipient of several prestigious awards, including the *Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* and the *Prix Medicis Etranger* (for the best novel by a foreign author) in France, as well as the *Morton Dauwen Zabel Award* from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

He has collaborated with director Wayne Wang on two critically acclaimed films, *Smoke* and *Blue in the Face*, and wrote and directed his own *Lulu on the Bridge* and *The Inner Life of Martin Frost*.

He lives in Brooklyn, New York with his wife, the novelist Siri Hustved, and their daughter.

AN INTERVIEW

What is the essence of this work?

Voices, and therefore words, plus a chamber ensemble.

The voices?

To me as a composer, the human voice is one of the most interesting and challenging instruments to write for. Not necessarily in everyone of its many manifestations, but there are always (still and again) voices that I want to hear in my music. The by now familiar one of Robert Wyatt. A voice that's been with me for over 25 years, yet never ceases to touch me. And a person absolutely gratifying to work with, because of his never-ending patience and enthusiasm, and his absolute dedication to give the music his all. As the counterpoint to Robert I chose Susi Hyldgaard, who I first worked with during the *School of Understanding* recording and live productions. She is not only an astounding singer and personality, but also a consummate musician in general, a rare combination. She brings an exceptional professionalism and musicality to everything she does, something that is pure pleasure to witness.

The words?

In my seemingly endless search for words to use, one author had been in the back of my mind for a very long time. I have loved and admired the work of Paul Auster for many years, often searching for ways of incorporating some of his words into a piece of music. However, enjoying his work did not mean that I found a text that would actually lend itself to be successfully set to music. At last, "Hand To Mouth", a collection of miscellaneous writings by Auster appeared, which included his short play "Hide and Seek". Finally it seemed that there might be something suitable for my purposes, and I started seriously thinking if and how this could be set to music. And it did seem possible - not only had the words all the qualities I usually look for in texts I utilize, such as a simple clarity and beauty of language (a kind of "poetic" writing, without being poetry as such), but they also retained a certain ambiguity and timelessness, which is a very important factor for me when choosing texts. So I proceeded by taking only some passages (as I have almost always done in the past with other authors' work as well), whole in themselves, but not necessarily in their original sequence, thereby reshaping the material somewhat, perhaps creating possibilities for other interpretations. Once the texts were found and the segments chosen, it was relatively easy to translate them into music - since they were in fact a conversation between two people, making the vocal duet the obvious choice, and inviting the pairing of a very particular "cast" of interesting and contrasting personalities/voices.

The ensemble?

What has vaguely been referred to as my "Chamber Music and Songs Ensemble" is now expanded, basically adapted from the more or less standard contemporary chamber orchestra, consisting of woodwinds (here all played/over-dubbed by the unbelievable multi-Roger-Jannotta), the string quartet now enlarged (also old cohorts, the three "string sisters"), some added brass, low and high (a reason to unpack the trumpet at least for a short while), and, an important and difficult role for the piano, this time not improvising (impeccably played by Per Salo, pianist with the Danish Radio Symphony, and a contemporary chamber music specialist). No rhythm section/drums (with one digitally created exception), but tuned percussion (vibraphone, marimba) affording not only a rhythmic but also a melodic and harmonic backbone. Plus - an integral part of all my music for some time now - the guitar of Bjarne Roupé, the one element still retaining the largest amount of freedom of interpretation and creative improvisational input. And one additional, very particular instrumental color, an accordion (beautifully played by Susi Hyldgaard).

So once again, the question - what do you call this? What kind of music is it?

The usual questions, the usual problem in finding a suitable answer. Above all - it's certainly not a play set to music. It's a musical interpretation of someone's words, truncated, molded into something else, a personal re-working of the material (this time with Auster's approval by the way, since a personal contact could exist in this case - unlike with some of my past sources for words - Beckett, Meister, Soupault, Ungaretti, etc.) The whole formally assembled into what makes the most sense to me in this instance, the architecture of a suite, balancing sequences of songs/words/voices with instrumental passages, that have their own weight and drama as connecting pieces. In this particular environment, they allow time for reflection, though they could, and were also intended to be able to stand alone as short and concise instrumental pieces. And what kind of music? In general, it should be obvious to anyone who has followed the evolution of my music (again avoiding the impossible categorization, preferably to be thought of as a body of work by an individual that demonstrates an inherent strength and a recognizable and unmistakable character). Specifically, in a shorter-term view, coming directly from and a honing down of the previous recent work with texts and singers, such as *The School of Understanding* and *Songs*.

Live performances?

A theatrical multi-discipline production has been conceived together with director Rolf Heim, involving a fusion of musical, dance and theatrical elements on several levels. On the other hand, the work is easily performable as a concert piece by existing ensembles with added singers/soloists.

FROM A REVIEW

..... I will not hesitate to characterize Michael Mantler's new CD 'Hide and Seek' as a triumph.

Here he is back again in 'rhythmic' music, with a smaller instrumentation, and as so often in the past, where he has taken literary texts of, among others, Harold Pinter, Samuel Beckett and Giuseppe Ungaretti, as a point of departure, it is this time again a poet, the American Paul Auster, who has served as inspiration.

This is music which confirms Mantler's unique, but also vulnerable position, because of the characteristic musical language which has been with him for so many years, and which has made it difficult to tie him to any specific musical genre. But this is also music which surprises with its lushness and an expressive power, which isn't only true of the contributions of singers Robert Wyatt and Susi Hyldgaard, but to an even higher degree of the instrumental environment in which it takes place. And while Mantler's earlier works usually concerned themselves with a slow development or straightforward structures, where the sense of time seems almost dissolved, the new CD is composed as a sequence of short scenes or snapshots.

Six of the in all seventeen pieces are purely instrumental, among them a couple, which show a whole new side of Mantler with their rhythmic pyrotechnics. Equally remarkable is the interplay between singing and orchestration in the other segments, developed with a sense of variation and timbres, which masterfully uses the eleven-piece ensemble. Especially Susi Hyldgaard's accordion contributes its very own color, but Roger Jannotta on flute, oboe and clarinet, Per Salo on piano, Tineke Noordhoek on vibraphone and marimba and Bjarne Roupé on guitar are also heard in prominent parts. The music reaches its emotional peak with 'What Can We Do?', where one can barely listen without feeling deeply shaken.

- POLITIKEN



REVIEW

ECM 1813

RECORDINGS 1968 - 2000

TITLES

Unsaid (6)
I'm Glad You're Glad
from *Hide and Seek*

One Symphony - Part 3 (excerpt)
from *Songs and One Symphony*

Introductions
Love Ends (excerpt)
Understanding
from *The School Of Understanding*

Solitudine / Lontano / L'Illuminata Rugiada / Proverbi
from *Cerro Un Paese Innocente*

Speechless
from *Songs and One Symphony*

Folly Seeing All This (excerpt)
from *Folly Seeing All This*

PSS
Comrade
A l'Abattoir
from *Many Have No Speech*

When I Run
from *Live*

Alien - Part 1 (excerpt)
from *Alien*

Twenty
from *Something There*

Movie Two
from *Movies*

Sometimes I See People (excerpt)
from *Silence*

The Sinking Spell
from *The Hapless Child*

13 (excerpt)
from 13 & 3/4

Number Six - Part Four
from No Answer

Preview
from The Jazz Composer's Orchestra

It Makes No Difference To Me
from Hide and Seek

ABOUT REVIEW

Michael Mantler offers a review of his career (so far), in an anthology that follows his path from the creative heyday of the Jazz Composer's Orchestra through the body of work he has recorded for JCOA, WATT and ECM. Whether juxtaposing players from the worlds of jazz, classical music and rock, setting remarkable words for remarkable voices, composing for instrumental forces from duo to symphony orchestra, or soloing as trumpeter, Mantler sounds like no one else. If the range of his work is its hallmark, his tone, as player and writer, is unmistakably his own.

PRESS

Despite his substantial body of work, Austrian composer and trumpeter Michael Mantler tends to get overshadowed. There's his former wife, Carla Bley, whose early career he did much to foster. He sets words by literary figures (Auster, Beckett, Pinter) who also cast long shadows. And Mantler hires starry performers - Marianne Faithfull, Jack Bruce, the Balanescu Quartet, conductor Peter Rundel - whose names are more of a "draw" than his own.

However, you don't attract collaborators of that calibre without being bloody good. Review, a 75-minute retrospective (1968-2005), is a startling reminder of just how inventive Mantler is, working confidently across contemporary composition, jazz, improv and progressive rock. *Twenty*, for example, features guitarist Mike Stern, Pink Floyd's drummer Nick Mason and the LSO strings. *The Sinking Spell* has Robert Wyatt singing Edward Gorey's words. Mantler deploys his raw materials with poetic intensity, but without artifice or pretension. This collection is too brilliant to ignore.

- THE GUARDIAN



CONCERTOS

ECM 2054

Soloists

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Bjarne Roupé (guitar)
Bob Rockwell (tenor saxophone)
Pedro Carneiro (marimba, vibraphone)
Roswell Rudd (trombone)
Majella Stockhausen (piano)
Nick Mason (percussion)

with the Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin, conducted by Roland Kluttig

recorded November 2007 - February 2008, Berlin, New York, Pernes-les-Fontaines

TITLES

Trumpet / Guitar / Saxophone / MarimbaVibe / Trombone / Piano / Percussion

THE ORCHESTRA

Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin

Rebecca Lenton (flute)
Antje Thierbach (oboe)
Winfried Rager (clarinet, bass clarinet)
Theo Nabicht (bass clarinet)
Naama Golan (trumpet)
Daniel Ploeger (trombone)
Robin Hayward (tuba)
Ekkehard Windrich (violin)
Daniella Strasfogel (violin)
Kirstin Maria Pientka (viola)
Ringela Riemke (cello)
Arnulf Ballhorn (double bass)

plus guests -

Bjarne Roupé (guitar)
Majella Stockhausen (piano)
Pedro Carneiro (marimba, vibraphone)

ABOUT CONCERTOS

Not intended as solo concertos in a strict, classical sense, these compositions, even though perhaps technically difficult, were not conceived as primarily virtuosic gymnastics, and therefore do not ask the near-impossible from the soloists just for the sake of demonstrating technical prowess. I prefer to simply think of them as pieces of music, some completely notated, some involving improvisation, that happen to feature the unique sound of a particular instrument combined with the individuality of the soloists.

In a way, some forty years later, these concertos represent a return to as well as a re-thinking of the original concept of my work with the Jazz Composer's Orchestra, the soloists now from contemporary new music (non-improvising) as well as from new jazz and rock (improvising/freely interpreting), supported by a classical, though musically flexible, chamber ensemble.

- Michael Mantler

PRESS

Want to explore Mantler, but not sure where to start? You could try [here](#).

A famously reticent performer, Michael Mantler is also a musician easy to underestimate, yet the sheer unpredictability of his output (want to hear Jack Bruce and Robert Wyatt singing Beckett? Then Mantler's your man) is there for the discovering, while the quality of his collaborations will be evident from those featured on this disc. 'Concertos' consists of seven movements - lasting between five and 12 minutes - that between them offer a conspectus of the idiom, distinctive yet elusive in its subtle melding of modal and chromatic harmony, which he has been evolving over the past quarter-century.

As presented, the sequence gets underway with Mantler's elegant yet often elegiac soloing in *Trumpet*, proceeding to the invigorating gestures of Bjarne Roupé in *Guitar* and Bob Rockwell's typically bracing dexterity in *Saxophone*, then to the endlessly resourceful mallet-work of Pedro Carneiro in *MarimbaVibe* and Roswell Rudd's soulful yet deadpan playing in *Trombone*; taking in the alternately cascading and terse figuration of Majella Stockhausen in *Piano*, before ending with Nick Mason's understated kit-work in *Percussion*. Such a lineup of individual and intensive showcases could so easily have cancelled itself out over the hour-long recital, thus it is a tribute to the contribution of Roland Kluttig's Neue Musik Berlin that there is never a lack of expressive context. Detailed yet wide-ranging sound and stylish booklet presentation as expected from ECM, and a disc that can be cordially recommended to all those who, drawn to the diversity of Mantler's catalogue, were unsure where to start.

- GRAMOPHONE



FOR TWO

ECM 2139

Bjarne Roupé (guitars)
Per Salo (piano)

recorded June - October 2010
Copenhagen and Pernes-Les-Fontaines, France

TITLES

Duets 1 - 18

THE MUSIC / RECORDING

The concise and relatively short pieces featured on this new recording continue Mantler's basic concept of creating music that is in part completely notated, but also involves improvisation. It is here reduced to a minimum, possibly his simplest and most economic interpretation of that idea so far, with only two instruments: the piano representing his basically orchestral compositional concept with a soloist from contemporary new music (a "classical" non-improvising pianist), combined with a second player coming from jazz, the guitarist (improvising/freely interpreting).

Per Salo's piano tracks were recorded during June 2010 at Studios La Buissonne at Pernes-les-Fontaines, France and Bjarne Roupé's guitar tracks during August at his home in Copenhagen. The material was subsequently edited by Michael Mantler, and mixed and mastered September/October 2010 at Studios La Buissonne with engineers Gérard de Haro and Nicolas Baillard.

THE MUSICIANS

Bjarne Roupé

Born in Sweden in 1952, but now based in Copenhagen, he is a well-known and immensely experienced musician who has performed and recorded with his own groups as well as with a multitude of international musicians and groups: The Danish Radio Big Band, Palle Mikkelborg and Miles Davis (*Aura*), Ocean Fables with Marilyn Mazur, Bo Stief's Chasing Dreams, Dizzy Gillespie, Eddie Harris, Bob Brookmeyer, Jimmy Smith, Toots Thielemans, Hermeto Pascoal, Clark Terry, Van Morrison, Georgie Fame, Johnny Griffin, Art Farmer, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and many others. He also works freelance in the theaters and recording studios and teaches at Copenhagen's Conservatory for Rhythmic Music.

He continues the tradition of guitar soloists in Mantler's music as a member of his "Chamber Music and Songs" Ensemble and participated in the *Cerco Un Paese Innocente* and *School of Understanding* recordings and performances, followed by appearances on the *Songs and One Symphony* and *Hide and Seek* albums. His latest collaboration was as soloist on the "Guitar Concerto" during its premiere performance at the Berlin JazzFest 2007, subsequently released on Mantler's latest ECM recording *Concertos*.

Per Salo

Born in 1962 in Copenhagen Denmark, he studied piano and organ in Denmark, Italy and USA. and graduated with an Organ Diploma from the Royal Danish Conservatory of Music and with a Masters Degree in Piano Performance from the Juilliard School of Music in New York.

Very active both as a soloist and as a chamber musician, his repertoire includes many contemporary works and his concert activities have brought him to many European countries, Korea and the USA. Recently he appeared as a soloist in Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony* at concerts in Germany and Denmark.

In 1996 he formed a duo with violinist Christina Åstrand, which released recordings of the violin music of Carl Nielsen, winning two prizes at the Danish Music Awards. 1997 the two musicians formed The Danish Horn Trio together with the French horn player Jakob Keiding. The trio has played in many festivals throughout Scandinavia and Europe and recorded horn trios by Johannes Brahms and Gyorgy Ligeti, which was chosen as "CD of the Month" by the BBC Music Magazine.

As a piano soloist he has recorded numerous CDs with music by composers such as Charles Ives (*Concord Sonata*), Niels Viggo Bentzon (*Piano Works*) and Rued Langgaard. In 1997 Chandos released Per Salo's recording of Per Nørgaard's *Concerto in Due Tempi*, which he premiered with the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra when the composer was awarded the Leonie Sonning Music Prize. He has previously collaborated with Michael Mantler on his *Hide and Seek* CD.

Per Salo has received many awards, among them the Artist Prize of the Danish Music Critics. Since 1989 he holds the position of pianist and organist with the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen.



Photo: Fie Johansen

REVIEW

Vienna-born composer Michael Mantler came to prominence on the American free-jazz scene in the late 1960s, with challenging music for the improv piano virtuoso Cecil Taylor. Since his return to Europe in the 1990s, however, he has favoured a territory between contemporary classical music, avant-rock and improvisation (he likes the freedom from jazz baggage that non-jazz improvisers have), sometimes using quirky singers such as Robert Wyatt and Jack Bruce. For Two is a set of 18 short pieces written for a classical pianist (Danish chamber musician Per Salo) and a jazz guitarist (the Copenhagen-based Swede Bjarne Roupé, who played on Miles Davis and Palle Mikkelborg's cult European album Aura). There are brisk and pristine piano melodies punctuated by echoing guitar chords, sprawling, low-end phrases echoed or challenged by Roupé's weaving ascents, whimsical treble themes with humming electric undercurrents, and occasional episodes close to unison playing. The jostling Duet Seven and the stuttering piano against singing long lines on Eight show how sympathetic the partnership is - as do the dark and prowling Thirteen, the rumbling Seventeen, and several undulating, slow tone poems wreathing through the session. It's contemporary chamber music with improv input rather than jazz, but Mantler is a composer of pungent melodies who welcomes their manipulation at the hands of improvisers.

- John Fordham, GUARDIAN



THE JAZZ COMPOSER'S ORCHESTRA UPDATE

ECM 2391

with the Nouvelle Cuisine Big Band, conducted by Christoph Cech

and soloists -

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Bjarne Roupé (guitar)
Wolfgang Puschnig (alto saxophone)
Harry Sokal (tenor saxophone)
David Helbock (piano)
radio.string.quartet.vienna
Bernie Mallinger (violin)
Igmar Jenner (violin)
Cynthia Liao (viola)
Asja Valcic (cello)

recorded live August / September 2013 at Porgy & Bess, Vienna, Austria

TITLES

Update One / Eight / Nine / Eleven / Five / Six / Ten / Twelve

THE ORCHESTRA

instrumentation & personnel -

Manfred Balasch (soprano sax, flute)
Clemens Salesny (soprano sax, clarinet)
Wolfgang Puschnig (alto sax, flute)
Fabian Rucker (alto sax, clarinet, bass clarinet)
Harry Sokal (tenor + soprano sax)
Chris Kronreif (tenor sax, flute)
Florian Fennes (baritone sax)
Aneel Soomary (trumpet)
Martin Ohrwalder (trumpet)
Christoph Walder (French horn)
Hans Peter Manser (French horn)
Peter Nickel (trombone)
Florian Heigl (bass trombone)
Alexander Rindberger (tuba)
David Helbock (piano)
Bjarne Roupé (guitar)
Peter Herbert, Tibor Kövesdi, Manuel Mayr (basses)
Lukas Knöfler (drums)



Photo: Rainer Rygalek

BACKGROUND

An interview with Michael Mantler

What was the Jazz Composer's Orchestra?

In 1964 Carla Bley and I had formed a large orchestra as part of being involved with the Jazz Composer's Guild, a collective of musicians and composers in the field of new jazz that was created to hopefully enable them to work unencumbered of commercial constraints. The original musical premise was to create an orchestra that would present free jazz within a larger, more controlled orchestral environment. A recording of some of the orchestra's early live performances from 1965 (*Communication*) was released, and to continue from there we eventually established the Jazz Composer's Orchestra Association, a non-profit organization to commission, perform, and record new compositions. During 1968, as its initial project, a double album of my music was recorded, entitled *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra*, with soloists Cecil Taylor, Don Cherry, Roswell Rudd, Pharoah Sanders, Larry Coryell, and Gato Barbieri. Some of this music was also performed live at New York's Electric Circus in 1969.

You wrote much of this music while still in your early 20s. The fact that you could arrive in New York, as a young European from Vienna, and gain the trust of some of the heaviest soloists of the free jazz movement - players such as Cecil Taylor or Pharoah Sanders - seems to speak of enormous self-assurance. Is that the way it was?

I never really thought about it much at the time, but, in retrospect, it was probably quite audacious, perhaps even presumptuous, to involve musicians of that stature in my music. They were, after all, the real giants and innovators of a radically new music. But it was a rather small scene and most everybody knew and worked with each other, having formed a kind of bond through necessity, since we were involved in a music that was commercially totally unviable and often even quite disliked by the mainstream audience and critics alike.

How did this present album come into being?

In the process of digitizing various old scores during 2012, I had re-acquainted myself with these compositions as well as earlier ones, going back as far as the very first (and unrecorded) one in the series. After not having listened to this music for a long time, I was impressed by how fresh and exciting it still sounded, even after all these years. It seemed that the music should perhaps be allowed to have another life, reaching a new audience that would probably never have known it. I began discussing the idea with Christoph Huber of *Porgy & Bess* in Vienna, who had been a faithful supporter of several of my projects in the past, and he immediately agreed to produce the event at his venue, providing the necessary financial and technical support to rehearse, perform and record this music.

What exactly were you "updating" and why? How did you decide which pieces to select? What were your musical and sonic criteria?

Regarding the idea of an "update," for me that implied an adding to and an improving of the original material. As a given historical element I wanted to retain the same instrumentation. Musically, I strove to keep as much as possible of what still sounded right to me of the notated segments of the scores, but in the end without any restriction imposed on myself as to changes that I might now feel necessary to make. Certain of the compositions remained almost unchanged, while some were so extensively revised that one could consider them almost as new compositions that nevertheless grew from the original materials.

Sonically, what has of course changed drastically is the sound. The new recording is vastly superior technically to the original, which was - although recorded at RCA Studios, one of the most advanced studios at the time - done on just eight tracks by engineers who had never heard anything like this music before. Today's incredibly advanced recording and editing techniques enabled me to achieve an entirely different musical clarity that was obviously not possible during the original recordings.

Is there anything in particular that has changed about large-ensemble jazz (and free improvisation) today that necessitated this album sounding different than the original? Or is it just a question of the times and the musical personalities?

I don't think today's large-ensemble jazz, or free improvisation, has much to do with it - but I'm not all that familiar with the current scene. I will say that on this *Update* album the performances by the musicians in the orchestra are of a much higher technical and interpretative level, with much more exact playing of the parts than in the original versions. As for the soloists, I deliberately chose mostly other solo instruments and personalities, in order to avoid a "re-do" and to achieve a true "update" instead.

*Is it fair or appropriate to compare the soloists of then and now? With *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra* you featured Pharoah Sanders and Cecil Taylor playing at a level of intensity that could hardly be topped by anybody today ...*

It's not really appropriate because the premise is a different one. The soloists I invited at the time were truly original and unselfconsciously so, almost like "forces of nature." I knew their playing and their capabilities extremely well and the original compositions were specifically tailored to these particular individuals.

On the other hand, nowadays jazz musicians are so well-educated that they can play anything, not only in terms of technique but also style. There are players now who can perfectly imitate Cecil Taylor or anyone else they choose. I am not interested in that. Yet, there are nevertheless the relatively rare exceptions who are able to transcend their technical brilliance and who remain distinctly original in interpreting a piece of music creatively.

*Did anything specific spur the prominent use of electric guitar and amplified string quartet on *Update*? And how did you choose the other soloists? Had you worked with any of them before?*

I used the electric guitar as early as on the original *Jazz Composer's Orchestra* album with Larry Coryell and then ever since - for its power, its variety of sonic possibilities and its ability to "sing," even though being an electronic instrument. As for its use in the context of this new album, only the force of an electric guitar could match the ferocity of Cecil Taylor's playing. It seemed a logical choice, and so was Bjarne Roupé, an exceptional guitarist, who has been playing my music for two decades.

Having also already worked with the radio.string.quartet. vienna in the past, I particularly appreciated its versatility and musicality. Being capable of playing notated music perfectly, as well as improvising freely and creatively, and being an "amplified" string quartet, with a strong, intentionally electronic element as part of their sound, it could oppose a full orchestra. The whole quartet as "soloist" was a logical choice then to interpret the piece originally written for Larry Coryell's guitar as well as even being capable of adding a new dimension to the "updated" *Preview*, probably the most powerful piece with Pharoah Sanders on the original album.

As for the other soloists - I've known and appreciated alto saxophonist Wolfgang Puschnig for many years, although mostly having worked with him in the context of Carla Bley's music. I found tenor saxophonist Harry Sokal and pianist David Helbock specifically for this new project. All of them are wonderfully creative players, who not only immediately understood and interpreted the music without necessarily being influenced by the original versions, but were also able to contribute the rather elusive emotional quality that I feel is indispensable for my music.

*Why did you decide to hand over the conductor's role to Christoph Cech for the new recording?
How did you come into contact with the Nouvelle Cuisine Big Band?*

I am not a conductor, even though I did conduct the orchestra on the original recordings. These scores were unconventionally written, without time signatures or bar lines. The notes were normally notated, but most durations as well as pauses were shown graphically, visually approximately related to time passing. Parts for each musician included a reduction of the whole score as a guide, which enabled them to relate to each other. The conducting was done entirely by giving downbeats for entrances of individual notes or for whole musical phrases or even groups of freely played materials. Dynamic changes were also indicated manually. The orchestra musicians worked out their phrasing during rehearsals, almost like learning the music by rote, with the final performances resulting in a very musical and personal way of rendering the score. I, as the "conductor," was thereby much more "playing" the orchestra as an instrument than just instructing it to follow strictly notated music.

The *Updates*, however, for convenience's sake, were now exactly notated according to established music notation conventions in terms of meters, tempi, note durations and dynamics. Solo lengths were also specifically controlled, which was not necessarily the case during the original recordings. This, then, required a classically trained conductor, which I am not, and I felt neither qualified nor comfortable in attempting to act as one. I therefore wanted to find someone who would already be somewhat familiar with my music, and also be competent to conduct the new scores to get the best readings possible. Since I had worked successfully with Christoph Cech on a couple of occasions before, he was the perfect choice to take on that role. I also wanted him to work with me on assembling the orchestra, and as it so happened, he already had a large working group of his own, consisting of extremely capable and enthusiastic young musicians. After making a few changes to adapt it to my desired instrumentation, his Nouvelle Cuisine Big Band was chosen to be the orchestral body for this project.

It's good to hear your trumpet, right away, on the Update. Your distinctive sound as a player hasn't exactly been over-exposed on recordings in the 21st century so far. And if we go back to the 1960s it wasn't featured on The Jazz Composer's Orchestra, either. What's the current status of your relationship to the instrument?

I don't necessarily need to hear my own trumpet playing in all my music. My function with the Jazz Composer's Orchestra was simply that of the composer, producer and conductor, guiding the performance and recording of the music, which in itself was an all-encompassing activity. It wouldn't even have been possible to play the trumpet at the same time, nor was it necessary (there was Don Cherry, after all ...). During my career after that I've done many projects that didn't involve my trumpet, although, more recently, I do like to include myself more and more. But I'm not someone who plays his instrument every day. Sometimes several years pass without touching it. I think that it retains a certain freshness when I at last do pick it up for a specific musical purpose or project.

The orchestral frames which are containing and channeling the energies of the improvisers don't feel like artificial constructs. This is not the uneasy alliance of idioms that the so-called Third Stream had paraded at the start of the 1960s. You shaped forms that radiated their own elemental power and directly addressed the force-field of the players. Where did your musical language for the structure of The Jazz Composer's Orchestra come from?

I don't really know. I hardly ever analyze my own music after the fact, and I don't encourage listeners to think that way either. I have never used formal composition techniques, so we'll probably have to talk about musical influences. I had, of course, early on listened to all kinds of music, certainly the whole historical range of jazz as well as mostly contemporary classical music. Although I've never seriously analyzed or studied scores, I was always particularly interested in larger structures and ensembles: Ellington, George Russell, Gil Evans, Mingus, Stravinsky, Bartok, Varèse, Messiaen ... but I'd also need to mention Cecil Taylor, whose music I've always considered to be orchestral. So something from all these sources must have been absorbed and somehow surfaced in my music. On a technical, theoretical level I'd start, of course, with some structural and harmonic ideas or constraints, always related somehow to the players. But many, if not most, of these formal, self-imposed restrictions would end up being changed or disregarded in the course of composing, as I followed some thread of an inherent musical logic, which in the end may be quite incomprehensible, even to me, as to how the final result was achieved.

In terms of your own work, how have your feelings about the validity of improvisation changed over the years? If one follows your albums it seems for a long time to be given less room - as if you have lost faith in it. Has the ratio of composition to improvisation changed from the original album to the new one?

Very much so. Even though the original idea was, even then, to control and somewhat limit what were, in my opinion, the "excesses" of free improvisation, both in terms of content as well as extent, I came to find that there was still too much of it. Over the years, I have generally come to favor integrating improvisation ever more with notated compositional elements by providing more specific materials and "surroundings" for the improviser to relate to, in order to create a composition as homogeneous as possible. Never in the form of conventional "chord changes," though, since I find that this most often results in pre-conceived improvisational modules. This, by the way, in contrast to the role of the improvisers on the original recording. They had no specific written materials of any kind, other than a complete reduced score, indicating what the orchestra was playing, and cues as to when they should solo.

What feelings strike you when you listen to the original album now? And what are your impressions when you hear this new group perform your updated scores?

I still love that album for its power and excitement and the absolutely exceptional improvising - to me some of the best playing ever by those soloists. Hearing the new versions I feel that they can hold their own quite well and, in fact, express perfectly how I think this music should sound now.

Questions by Steve Lake



COMMENT C'EST

ECM 2537

music and words by Michael Mantler

with Himiko Paganotti (voice)
Michael Mantler (trumpet)

and the Max Brand Ensemble
conducted by Christoph Cech

recorded April - July 2016, Vienna, Austria and Pernes-Les-Fontaines, France

TITLES

Aujourd'hui / Intolérance / Guerre / Commerce / Hiver / Saans Fin / Folie / Pourquoi / Après / Que dire de plus

THE ENSEMBLE

Annegret Bauerle (flute)
Peter Tavernaro (oboe)
Gregor Narnhofer (clarinet)
Eberhard Reiter (bass clarinet)
Balduin Wetter (French horn)
Tobias Ennemoser (tuba)
Joanna Lewis (violin)
Simon Frick (violin)
Simon Schellnegger (viola)
Arne Kircher (cello)
Tibor Kövesdi (bass)
Sun Yi (vibraphone, marimba)

and (guest)
David Helbock (piano)

ABOUT COMMENT C'EST

Comment c'est (How it is) is a song cycle for female voice and chamber orchestra. Wanting to use French, a language that so beautifully lends itself to be sung, I had long been thinking of using a certain type of voice from French popular music in a totally different and serious context. When the project finally came to be realized I luckily found a very interesting French electro-pop/jazz singer, Himiko Paganotti.

She turned out to be the perfect choice, having a tremendous range, both musically and emotionally. Introduced to me by John Greaves, an old cohort of mine, she had worked with him and in many different contexts, including the French cult rock-jazz band *Magma*. Our first occasion to work together was at a concert in Paris during 2014 with the *Chaos Orchestra* of composers Daniel Yvinec and Arnaud Petit. This collaboration resulted in a lengthy work entitled *Oiseaux de Guerre (Birds of War)*, which dealt with atrocities of the Iraq war. Continuing from there, wanting to explore the voice and the general theme further, I worked on creating *Comment c'est*. It was premiered with two concerts at Porgy & Bess in Vienna during September 2016.

I have always kept my musical life as abstract as possible, never directly related to programmatic influences or themes, such as world politics, news items or personal life events. In hindsight, that was only partially successful. After all, I participated in the early *Liberation Music Orchestra* projects with Charlie Haden. For me, however, it was more the musical experience that counted, rather than the expression of political views. Of course, at the time, one marched on Washington, demonstrated against Vietnam and, in general, behaved anti-government, anti-business and anti-establishment.

Certain critical political-sociological world-views eventually began to appear from time to time in my work, such as in *Cerco Un Paese Innocente* (I search for an innocent land - another song cycle, this one in Italian), and especially in the extended sort-of-an-opera *The School of Understanding*, with some of its songs resurfacing, extensively revised, in this current project.

No longer able to ignore outrageous recent world events, it had simply become impossible to continue creating music without reacting to this overwhelming and pervasive environment of hatred, greed and corruption. *Comment c'est* therefore concerns itself quite specifically with a range of serious subjects, such as war, terrorism, hostages, migration, poverty, fear and the generally sorry state of our contemporary world.

I have always wanted to simply create music that is beautiful and that perhaps reveals something that might be deep within us all. Yet, with this music, in particular, I hope not only to touch those elusive feelings but also to more concretely tell *How It Is*.

- Michael Mantler



Photos: Rainer Rygalek



CODA - ORCHESTRA SUITES

ECM 2697

music by Michael Mantler

with

Bjarne Roupé (guitar)

David Helbock (piano)

Michael Mantler (trumpet)

Orchestra

conducted by Christoph Cech

recorded September - October 2019, Vienna, Austria and Pernes-Les-Fontaines, France

TITLES

TwoThirteen Suite / Folly Suite / Alien Suite / Cerco Suite / HideSeek Suite

THE ORCHESTRA

Leo Eibensteiner (flute)

Peter Tavernaro (oboe)

David Lehner (clarinet)

Fabian Rucker (bass clarinet)

Michael Mantler (trumpet)

Christoph Walder (French horn)

Daniel Riegler (trombone)

Simon Teurezbacher (tuba)

Joanna Lewis, Ulrike Greuter, Diane Pascal, Tomas Novak,

Simon Frick, Maximilian Bratt, Magdalena Zenz, Emily Stewart (violins)

Simon Schellnegger, Anna Magdalena Siakala,

Daniel Moser, Tamara Stajner (violas)

Asja Valcic, Arne Kircher (celli)

Tibor Kovessdi, Philipp Kienberger (basses)

Maximilian Kanzler (vibraphone, marimba)

David Helbock (piano)

Bjarne Roupé (guitar)

ABOUT CODA - AN INTERVIEW

What is the concept of Orchestra Suites?

It is somewhat similar to my recent Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update. At that time, I had re-acquainted myself with my music from the early Sixties. I was impressed by how fresh and exciting it still sounded, and it seemed that this music should perhaps be allowed to have a new (and different) life, reaching a new audience that would probably never have known it. During this re-processing it turned out that certain of the compositions remained relatively close to their original versions, albeit with different soloists, while some were so extensively revised that one could consider them almost as new compositions.

With Orchestra Suites, that concept was even more drastically applied, very selectively choosing material for more updates of different musics that were particularly dear to me (so to say "the best of" ...), taking bits and pieces from various other periods in my career, to be shaped into entirely new musical suites

Which older works are your referring to?

After careful consideration, there were quite a few, from various albums, with very diverse instrumentations and concepts, such as Thirteen (a work for two orchestras plus piano soloist, from 1975), Alien (a studio production with only synthesizer tracks and trumpet, 1985), Folly Seeing All This (an album mostly featuring a string quartet, 1992), Cerco un Paese Innocente (a suite of songs with words by Giuseppe Ungaretti, plus big band and string quartet, 1994, but now used instrumentally only), Hide and Seek (a chamber opera with texts by Paul Auster, 2000, now also used without voices), and For Two (a series of duets for piano and guitar, 2010).

What kind of instrumentation are you using now and why?

I have always considered myself an orchestral composer, even when, mostly economical, circumstances dictated smaller ensembles, at times even down-sized to the absolute minimum, such as the duets of Alien and For Two. This time I did not retain the original instrumentations, but settled on what seems to be my current favorite - a chamber orchestra consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, trumpet, french horn, trombone, tuba, guitar, piano, marimba / vibraphone, plus a string section, normally a string quintet, as used on my previous album Comment C'est, but this time enlarged to 16 players.

Unlike the Big Band used for the Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update, very much a jazz-based ensemble with a more or less traditional rhythm section, the orchestra used for the current suites consists mostly of classical musicians with a smaller number of jazz musicians/soloists included, which still anchors the music in an environment clearly coming from jazz.

Do you actually prefer updating and revising older music instead of writing new music?

Re-using material from my own musical universe is a conscious decision and has, as a matter of fact, been my compositional procedure for a long time. Musicologists could have an interesting time divining what in my music has come from where and how it might have been re-shaped and recycled ... something I myself, however, never consider again and immediately forget. Almost always, when I start a new composition, I begin with materials from the previous work, sometimes perhaps with elements that had been discarded at the time, which I may end up not actually using, but more often than not, that procedure would at least start me off on a new line of musical thought from which to continue.

The role of soloists and/or improvisation?

As always, still some improvisation, incorporated into the continuous flow of a composition, moving, perhaps almost imperceptibly at times, between actual improvisation and loosely interpreted notated sequences. Instrumental soloists have here often replaced, that is, "sung," what were vocal melodies from some of the original versions.

An orchestra and soloists, employing a total of 27 musicians plus a conductor - how does a large production such as this come into being?

As so often, already since as far back as 2006, it has been made possible through the effort and co-operation of Christoph Huber at Porgy & Bess, a supreme concert venue in Vienna, which not only made available the necessary funds, a rehearsal and concert space, but also recording facilities, enabling an eventual album release of this material.

Any plans for further updates?

Absolutely not. I think I have exploited my own universe as much as I feel is desirable or necessary.

New compositions then?

No. I think I've said what I have to say. Which doesn't mean it shouldn't be said more often than in the past. There exists plenty of material that has been presented publicly only once. More performances would certainly be possible and interesting.

Apart from the rare exception, my projects have always been initiated and carried through fruition by myself, and at this time I have neither the need nor the will to do it yet again. Nevertheless, should a serious approach ever be made to create a new work, the mere fact of being asked to do something could possibly, though, generate enough excitement to at least consider it. Who knows ...

- Michael Mantler



Photo: Walter Gonaus



SEMPRE NOTTE - Live Songs

Dark Companion DC 023

music by Michael Mantler

words by Samuel Beckett, Ernst Meister, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Harold Pinter, Michael Mantler

with

Annie Barbazza, John Greaves (voices) and the New Songs Ensemble

recorded live September 26, 2023 at Porgy & Bess, Vienna, Austria

TITLES

Today / Intolerance / War / Business / What Else To Say / PSS / Darker Than The Light /
Speechless / Eterno / Stasera / Girovago / L'Illuminata Rugiada / Vanità / Senza Fiato / Non
Gridate Più / For Instance / When I Run / What's left to say / Understanding

THE NEW SONGS ENSEMBLE

Michael Mantler (trumpet)
Gareth Davis (bass clarinet)
Bjarne Roupé (guitar)
David Helbock (piano)

radio.string.quartet
Bernie Mallinger (violin)
Igmar Jenner (violin)
Cynthia Liao (viola)
Sophie Abraham (cello)

About Live Songs

When asked during an interview if he had any plans for further updates or new compositions, he said, "Absolutely not. I have exploited my own universe as much as I feel is desirable or necessary. I think I've said what I have to say, which doesn't mean it shouldn't be said more often than in the past. There exists plenty of material that has been presented publicly only once. More performances would certainly be possible and interesting. Apart from the rare exception, my projects have always been initiated and carried through fruition by myself, but at this time I have neither the need nor the will to do it yet again."

Therefore, when bass clarinetist Gareth Davis contacted him to ask if he might be interested in writing some music for him, he would only answer, "No, thanks. I'm not sure that I could contribute anything at this point. I don't feel I can write any new music at the moment and I just don't want to keep repeating myself." However, Davis being somewhat insistent and presenting an idea of working again with voices and then developing some concrete and enthusiastic offers to present such a project, he nevertheless began to seriously think about it.

Voices obviously (at least in his thinking) require words. Being overwhelmed by the relentless assault of news of an atrocious war close by, he looked back to relevant texts he had used in the past, choosing appropriate segments -- abstract, in the case of the work of Samuel Beckett and Ernst Meister (previously used in his *Many Have No Speech* album), as well as of Giuseppe Ungaretti (from *Cerco un Paese Innocente*) and Harold Pinter (from *Silence*), and finally (not at all abstract, but very specifically related to the evils of war and the ever so sorry human condition in general), some of his own words from *Comment C'est*. Although not exactly "new" compositions, they certainly ended up being different than their original versions.

Having done this project first with a large vocal and brass group at a festival in the Czech Republic, he continued to be intrigued with re-working these as well as various other songs from his career. Wanting to reduce the orchestra to something more basic and more manageable, as well as freer in spirit and execution, he once again come back to draw from his "talent pool" of old friends:

Mantler had met **John Greaves** way back in 1976 when he was working with him on recording the iconic *Kew Rhone* album, then met again in 1987 for his *Live* project (with Jack Bruce, Nick Mason, Don Preston, Rick Fenn), and he also participated in his sort-of-an-opera *School of Understanding* in 1996. They had always stayed in touch over the years and Greaves was instrumental in suggesting Himiko Paganotti for his *Comment C'est* album, and now, for this *Songs* project, he brought his musical partner **Annie Barbazza** to this new ensemble, a particularly good choice, since a substantial part of the program consists of songs with texts in Italian by Giuseppe Ungaretti

Bjarne Roupé has been Mantler's choice of guitarist ever since he had returned to Europe in 1991, starting with performances and recording of his *Cerco Un Paese Innocente*, then as a member of his Chamber Music and Songs Ensemble, and then participating on practically all his continuing projects/albums: *School Of Understanding*, *Songs And One Symphony*, *Hide And Seek*, *Concertos*, *For Two*, *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update* and, finally, his last album *Coda*.

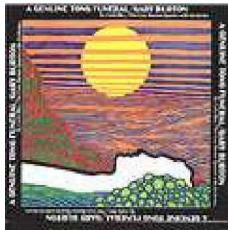
David Helbock, another of his favorite contributors with an exceptional understanding of his music, has been involved in all his projects since *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update*, which also featured the innovative and distinctive **radio.string.quartet**, one of today's outstanding interpreters of contemporary music, who had already participated as well in the past as part of his Chamber Music and Songs ensemble.

And last, but not least, the multi-faceted **Gareth Davis**, who alone was responsible for initiating the original SONGS project, completing the ensemble as bass clarinet soloist.



Photo: Walter Gonaus

DISCOGRAPHY (MICHAEL MANTLER APPEARING WITH OTHER ARTISTS)



A GENUINE TONG FUNERAL (Gary Burton) recorded July 1967
RCA LSP-3988

music by Carla Bley

Gary Burton (vibraphone), Larry Coryell (guitar), Steve Swallow (bass), Bob Moses (drums), Steve Lacy (soprano saxophone), Michael Mantler (trumpet), Gato Barbieri (tenor saxophone), Jimmy Knepper (trombone), Howard Johnson (tuba, baritone saxophone), Carla Bley (piano, organ)



LIBERATION MUSIC ORCHESTRA (Charlie Haden) recorded Spring 1969
Impulse AS 9183

arrangements and including music by Carla Bley

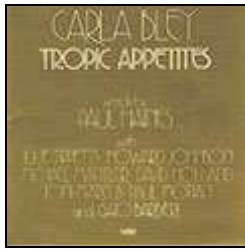
Perry Robinson (clarinet), Gato Barbieri (tenor saxophone, clarinet), Dewey Redman (alto & tenor saxophone), Don Cherry (cornet, flutes), Michael Mantler (trumpet), Roswell Rudd (trombone), Bob Northern (french horn), Howard Johnson (tuba), Sam Brown (guitar), Carla Bley (piano), Charlie Haden (bass), Paul Motian, Andrew Cyrille (drums, percussion)



ESCALATOR OVER THE HILL (Carla Bley) recorded Fall 1968 to Summer 1971
JCOA/EOTH

music by Carla Bley / words by Paul Haines

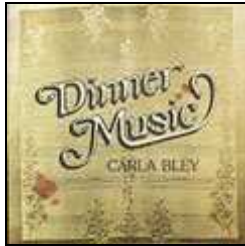
Jack Bruce, Linda Ronstadt, Viva, Jeanne Lee, Paul Jones, Carla Bley, Don Preston, Sheila Jordan, and others (voices), Gato Barbieri (tenor saxophone), John McLaughlin (guitar), Don Cherry (trumpet), Roswell Rudd (trombone), Michael Mantler (trumpet), Charlie Haden (bass), Paul Motian (drums), The Jazz Composer's Orchestra, and many others



TROPIC APPETITES (Carla Bley) recorded Fall 1973
WATT/1

music by Carla Bley / words by Paul Haines

Julie Tippetts (voice), Gato Barbieri (tenor saxophone), Michael Mantler (trumpet, valve trombone), Howard Johnson (voice, clarinets, saxophones, tuba), Toni Marcus (violin, viola), Dave Holland (bass, cello), Carla Bley (piano, organ, voice, recorders, percussion), Paul Motian (drums, percussion), Karen Mantler (voice)



DINNER MUSIC (Carla Bley) recorded Summer 1976
WATT/6

Roswell Rudd (trombone), Carlos Ward (alto & tenor saxophone, flute), Michael Mantler (trumpet), Bob Stewart (tuba), Richard Tee (piano), Eric Gale, Cornell Dupree (guitars), Carla Bley (organ), Gordon Edwards (bass), Steve Gadd (drums)



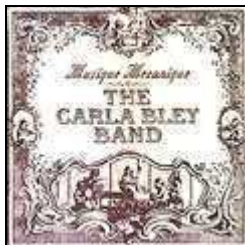
KEW RHONE (John Greaves / Peter Blegvad) recorded October 1976
Voiceprint VP200CD

Lisa Herman (vocals), John Greaves (piano, organ, bass, vocals), Peter Blegvad (vocals, guitars), Mike Mantler (trumpet, valve trombone), Vito Rendace (alto & tenor saxophone, flute), Michael Levine (violin, viola), Carla Bley (vocals, tenor saxophone), Andrew Cyrille (drums), and others



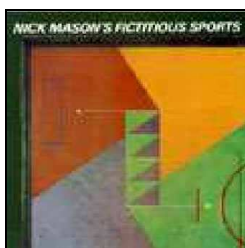
EUROPEAN TOUR 1977 (Carla Bley Band) recorded Fall 1977
WATT/8

Michael Mantler (trumpet), Elton Dean (alto saxophone), Gary Windo (tenor saxophone), John Clark (french horn, guitar), Roswell Rudd (trombone), Bob Stewart (tuba), Terry Adams (piano), Carla Bley (organ, tenor saxophone), Hugh Hopper (bass), Andrew Cyrille (drums)



MUSIQUE MECANIQUE (Carla Bley Band) recorded Fall 1978
WATT/9

Michael Mantler (trumpet), Alan Braufman (alto saxophone, clarinet, flute), Gary Windo (tenor saxophone, bass clarinet), John Clark (french horn), Roswell Rudd (trombone, voice), Bob Stewart (tuba), Terry Adams (piano), Carla Bley (organ, piano), Steve Swallow (bass), D. Sharpe (drums), Charlie Haden (bass), Eugene Chadbourne (guitar), Karen Mantler (glockenspiel)



FICTITIOUS SPORTS (Nick Mason) recorded October 1979
Sony WK 75070

music by Carla Bley

Robert Wyatt, Karen Kraft (vocals), Chris Spedding (guitar), Michael Mantler (trumpet), Gary Windo (tenor saxophone, bassclarinet, flute), Gary Valente (trombone), Howard Johnson (tuba), Carla Bley (organ), Terry Adams (piano, harmonica), Steve Swallow (bass), Nick Mason (drums, percussion)



SOCIAL STUDIES (Carla Bley) recorded Fall 1980
WATT/11

Michael Mantler (trumpet), Carlos Ward (soprano & alto saxophone), Tony Dagradi (tenor saxophone), Gary Valente (trombone), Joe Daley (euphonium), Earl McIntyre (tuba), Carla Bley (organ, piano), Steve Swallow (bass), D. Sharpe (drums)



AMARCORD NI NO ROTA (Carla Bley Band and various artists) recorded 1981
Hannibal HNCD 9301

includes *8 1/2* (Nino Rota) arranged by Carla Bley

Michael Mantler (trumpet), Gary Windo (tenor saxophone), Courtenay Wynter (woodwinds), Gary Valente (trombone), Joe Daley (euphonium), Earl McIntyre (tuba), Carla Bley (organ, glockenspiel), Arturo O'Farrill (piano), Steve Swallow (bass), D. Sharpe (drums)



LIVE! (Carla Bley Band) recorded Summer 1981
WATT/12

Michael Mantler (trumpet), Steve Slagle (alto & soprano saxophone, flute), Tony Dagradi (tenor saxophone), Gary Valente (trombone), Vincent Chancey (french horn), Earl McIntyre (tuba, bass trombone), Carla Bley (organ, glockenspiel, piano), Arturo O'Farrill (piano, organ), Steve Swallow (bass), D. Sharpe (drums)



I HATE TO SING (Carla Bley Band) recorded Summer 1981
WATT/12 1/2

Michael Mantler (trumpet), Steve Slagle (soprano & alto saxophone, clarinet), Tony Dagradi (tenor saxophone), Gary Valente (trombone), Vincent Chancey (french horn), Earl McIntyre (tuba, bass trombone, voice), (or) Bob Stewart (tuba), Carla Bley (piano, organ, glockenspiel, voice), Arturo O'Farrill (piano, voice, organ), Steve Swallow (bass, drums), D. Sharpe (drums)



THE BALLAD OF THE FALLEN (Charlie Haden) recorded November 1982
ECM 1248

arrangements and including music by Carla Bley

Don Cherry (trumpet), Michael Mantler (trumpet), Gary Valente (trombone), Sharon Freeman (french horn), Jack Jeffers (tuba), Steve Slagle (soprano & alto saxophone, carinet, flute), Jim Pepper (soprano & tenor saxophone, flute), Dewey Redman (tenor saxophone), Mick Goodrick (guitar), Charlie Haden (b), Carla Bley (piano, glockenspiel), Paul Motian (drums, percussion)



MORTELLE RANDONNEE (Carla Bley Band / soundtrack Claude Miller film) recorded December 1982
Mercury 812 097

Michael Mantler (trumpet), Steve Slagle (soprano & alto saxophone, clarinet), Tony Dagradi (tenor saxophone), Gary Valente (trombone), Vincent Chancey (french horn), Bob Stewart (tuba), Carla Bley (organ), Arturo O'Farrill (piano), Steve Swallow (bass), D. Sharpe (drums), Karen Mantler (organ), Chris Watrous (guitar)



HEAVY HEART (Carla Bley) recorded Fall 1983
WATT/14

Michael Mantler (trumpet), Gary Valente (trombone), Earl McIntyre (tuba), Steve Slagle (flute, alto & baritone saxophone), Carla Bley (organ, synthesizer), Kenny Kirkland (piano), Hiram Bullock (guitar), Steve Swallow (bass), Victor Lewis (drums), Manolo Badrena (percussion)



THAT'S THE WAY I FEEL NOW (Carla Bley Band and various artists) recorded 1984
A&M CD 6600A

A Tribute to Thelonious Monk
includes *Misterioso* (arranged by Carla Bley)

The Carla Bley Band with Johnny Griffin (tenor saxophone solo) / Michael Mantler (trumpet), Gary Valente (trombone), Vincent Chancey (french horn), Bob Stewart (tuba), Steve Slagle (alto & baritone saxophone), Carla Bley (organ), Kenny Kirkland (piano), Hiram Bullock (guitar), Steve Swallow (bass), Victor Lewis, Willner (voice of death)



THE WATT WORKS FAMILY ALBUM (various artists) released Spring 1990
WATT/22

includes (by Michael Mantler)

A L'Abattoir from Many Have No Speech (WATT/19)
When I Run from Live (WATT/18)
Alien (Part 2) from Alien (WATT/15)
Twenty from Something There (WATT/13)
Movie Six from Movies (WATT/7)
The Doubtful Guest from The Hapless Child (WATT/4)



GOING BACK A BIT (A LITTLE HISTORY OF ROBERT WYATT) (various artists) released 1994
VIRGIN CDVDM 9031 (2-CD SET)

includes (by Michael Mantler)

The Doubtful Guest *and* The Object Lesson *from* The Hapless Child (WATT/4)
A L'Abattoir *from* Many Have No Speech (WATT/19)

MICHAEL MANTLER – BIOGRAPHY

Michael Mantler was born in 1943 in Vienna, Austria, where he studied trumpet and musicology at the Academy of Music and Vienna University. In 1962 he went to the USA to continue his studies at the Berklee School of Music in Boston.

He moved to New York in 1964 and started playing trumpet with Cecil Taylor and others. During that period he was also involved in the formation of the Jazz Composer's Guild, a collective of musicians and composers, struggling for better working conditions and opportunities to present their new music without compromise. Together with Carla Bley he formed a large jazz orchestra to perform new compositions, resulting in their first recording *Communication*.

After the Guild discontinued its activities, he toured Europe twice during 1965/66 with the *Jazz Realities* Quintet, featuring Steve Lacy and Carla Bley. He then established the Jazz Composer's Orchestra Association, a non-profit organization to commission, perform, and record new compositions for jazz orchestra.

He recorded a double album of his music during 1968 with the *Jazz Composer's Orchestra* and soloists Cecil Taylor, Don Cherry, Roswell Rudd, Pharoah Sanders, Larry Coryell, and Gato Barbieri. Some of this music was also performed during the "Long Concerts" at the Electric Circus in 1969.

He appeared as trumpet player on Carla Bley's *A Genuine Tong Funeral*, recorded by Gary Burton, and also on Charlie Haden's *Liberation Music Orchestra* album (1969).

He co-ordinated and participated in the Jazz Composer's Orchestra's next recording project, Carla Bley's *Escalator Over The Hill* (1968-71).

The problems of independently distributing the orchestra's record label led him to form the New Music Distribution Service in 1972, an organization which was to serve many independent labels for almost 20 years.

In 1973 he started WATT WORKS, a new record label devoted to the presentation of his and Carla Bley's music exclusively. He recorded *No Answer*, featuring Jack Bruce, for which he wrote music to the words of Samuel Beckett.

The following year he built a recording studio near Woodstock, N.Y. to escape the pressures of commercial recording studios. He received composition grants from the Creative Artists Program Service and the National Endowment for the Arts, and with the aid of a Ford Foundation grant he was able to undertake the recording of his *13* for two orchestras and piano (1975).

He wrote and recorded several more albums for WATT: *The Hapless Child*, with words by Edward Gorey, featuring Robert Wyatt (1976), *Silence*, based on the Harold Pinter play, again with Robert Wyatt (1976), *Movies*, with Larry Coryell and Tony Williams (1977), and *More Movies*, with Philippe Catherine (1980). During that period he also appeared on albums by John Greaves (*Kew Rhone*) and Nick Mason (*Fictitious Sports*), and then toured briefly with his own small group.

In 1982 he recorded *Something There* with Mike Stern, Nick Mason, and the strings of the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Michael Gibbs. Later that year he participated in a European tour and a recording (*Ballad Of The Fallen*) with a new edition of Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra.

Several newly commissioned compositions were performed in Cologne by the Orchestra of the West German Radio (WDR) in 1984, and the following year he composed and recorded *Alien*, featuring Don Preston.

From 1977 until 1985 he was also a member of the Carla Bley Band, touring extensively throughout Europe, the USA, and Japan, as well as appearing on all of the Band's recordings.

His orchestral suite *Slow Orchestra Pieces* was premiered by the Orchestra of the Opera de Lille in France during March 1986, and the Danish Radio Concert Orchestra commissioned a new work from him for a radio production in May 1987 in Copenhagen.

He was asked to participate in the International Art-Rock Festival in Frankfurt during February 1987, for which he formed a group with Nick Mason, Jack Bruce, Rick Fenn, Don Preston, and John Greaves. Material from this concert was later released on his *Live* album. The following summer he briefly toured Europe with a similar band featuring Jack Bruce and Anton Fier.

Most of 1987 was spent working on an album of songs in English, German, and French, based on the poetry of Samuel Beckett, Ernst Meister and Philippe Soupault, with Jack Bruce, Marianne Faithfull, Robert Wyatt, and the Danish Radio Concert Orchestra (*Many Have No Speech*). Music from this album was also performed at a concert produced by the West German Radio in Bielefeld during April 1989.

At the beginning of 1991 he left the United States, discontinuing his work with WATT, and moved back to Europe, where he now lives and works, dividing his time between Denmark and France.

A new orchestral piece was commissioned by the Austrian Donau Festival, and was premiered near Vienna in June 1991 by the Nö.Tonkünstlerorchester, conducted by Michael Gibbs, with Andy Sheppard as soloist. New compositions were also commissioned by the Danish Radio Big Band and the North German Radio Big Band in Hamburg.

His album *Folly Seeing All This* was recorded during June 1992 in London, and released by ECM Records in 1993. It features the Balanescu String Quartet plus other instrumentalists, and it includes new instrumental music and a setting of Samuel Beckett's last poem, written shortly before his death (*What Is The Word*), featuring the voice of Jack Bruce.

In 1993 he formed the ensemble "Chamber Music and Songs", featuring his trumpet plus Mona Larsen (voice), Bjarne Roupé (guitar), Kim Kristensen (keyboards), and a string quartet. Its premiere took place at the Copenhagen Jazzhouse in September, followed by a studio production at Danmarks Radio. Some of this material was eventually to appear on the *Songs and One Symphony* album.

His *Cerco Un Paese Innocente*, a Suite of Songs and Interludes for Voice, Untypical Big Band and Chamber Ensemble, with words by the Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti, had its premiere in concert at the Danish Radio January 1994. Featured were the voice of Mona Larsen, Mantler's Ensemble, and the Danish Radio Big Band, conducted by Ole Kock Hansen. The work was subsequently recorded in the studio and released by ECM Records in 1995. Another performance of the work took place in Palermo, Sicily, during April 1996.

His "sort-of-an-opera" *The School of Languages*, had its premiere August 1996 at Arken, the new Museum of Modern Art in Copenhagen. Participants included singers Jack Bruce, Mona Larsen, Susi Hyldgaard, John Greaves, Don Preston, Karen Mantler, Per Jørgensen, and Robert Wyatt. Its recording was released as a double-CD by ECM Records in the Fall of 1997 under its new title *The School of Understanding*. The work was again presented during November 1997 at the Hebbel Theater in Berlin.

A large orchestral piece, *One Symphony*, commissioned by the Hessischer Rundfunk, was premiered November 1998 by the Radio Symphony Orchestra Frankfurt, conducted by Peter Rundel. Its recording was released by ECM in early 2000 together with previously recorded material featuring Mona Larsen and the "Chamber Music and Songs" Ensemble (*Songs and One Symphony*) interpreting songs set to texts by Ernst Meister.

Hide And Seek, an album of songs with words by Paul Auster (from his play by the same name), for chamber orchestra and the voices of Robert Wyatt and Susi Hyldgaard, has been released by ECM Records March 2001. Theatrical productions of the work, in collaboration with Rolf Heim (who has previously worked with Mantler on *The School of Understanding* performances), were created in the Spring of 2002 in Copenhagen and Berlin.

His *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone* (originally commissioned by Portuguese percussionist Pedro Carneiro in 2001), was premiered at the Hessischer Rundfunk in March 2005 with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Frankfurt, conducted by Pascal Rophé.

During September 2006 Porgy & Bess in Vienna presented a series of retrospective portrait concerts with his "Chamber Music and Songs" ensemble

In recognition of his life's work he received several Austrian awards: the State Prize for Improvised Music, the Prandtauer Prize of the City of St.Pölten (where he spent his early youth), and the Music Prize of the City of Vienna.

Released November 2006, the anthology *Review* (recordings 1968 - 2000), traced his unique musical path during more than 30 years of recordings for JCOA, WATT and ECM.

He appeared at the JazzFest Berlin in November 2007 with his *Concertos* project, featuring the Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin under the direction of Roland Kluttig. A studio recording of *Concertos* with soloists Bjarne Roupé (guitar), Bob Rockwell (tenor saxophone), Roswell Rudd (trombone), Pedro Carneiro (marimba and vibraphone), Majella Stockhausen (piano), Nick Mason (percussion), and Mantler on trumpet, was released by ECM during November 2008.

His next CD (*For Two*), a series of duets for guitar (Bjarne Roupé) and piano (Per Salo), was released by ECM during June 2011.

New works were commissioned and performed by the Max Brand Ensemble, conducted by Christoph Cech (*Chamber Music Eight*, Tage der Neuen Musik, Krems, Austria, 2012) and by the Chaos Orchestra, conducted by Arnaud Petit (*Oiseaux de Guerre*, featuring singer Himiko Paganotti, Forum Blanc-Mesnil, France, 2014).

During September 2013 Porgy & Bess in Vienna presented his *Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update* project, featuring the Nouvelle Cuisine Big Band, conducted by Christoph Cech, with soloists Michael Mantler (trumpet), Harry Sokal and Wolfgang Puschnig (saxophones), Bjarne Roupé (guitar), David Helbock (piano) and the radio.string.quartet.vienna. The program included a complete re-working of all the pieces from the original 1968 album, as well as of even older material from as early as 1963, never before performed or recorded. A selection of recordings from these performances was released by ECM Records during November 2014..

The complete *Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update* project was performed live several times during 2015/16: at the Moers Festival and at the North Sea Jazz Festival in Rotterdam (with the Nouvelle Cuisine Big Band) and at the German Jazzfestival Frankfurt (with the hr-Bigband), as well as in Portugal at the Lisbon Jazz em Agosto Festival (with the Orquestra Jazz de Matosinhos).

His latest work, *Comment c'est*, a song cycle for voice and chamber orchestra, featuring the French singer Himiko Paganotti and the Max Brand Ensemble, was premiered in Vienna with two concerts at Porgy & Bess in September 2016. Its studio recording was released by ECM Records during November 2017.

With the subsequent project, the *Orchestra Suites*, he continued working on further orchestral reinterpretations of older works, very selectively choosing material for more "updates" of different musics that were particularly dear to him and that he thought should have a new (and different) life. The result was a series of suites (*HideSeek*, *Alien*, *Cerco*, *Folly*, *TwoThirteen*) for a larger orchestra, conducted by Christoph Cech, presented and recorded at three concerts during September 2019, again at Vienna's Porgy & Bess. The resulting album, *CODA - Orchestra Suites*, as well as a series of print editions (including engraved and facsimile scores of selected recorded work from a 50-year period), were released in July 2021 by ECM Records.

The compositions from his *Concertos* album were performed September 2021 in Vienna with the Janus Ensemble and soloists, conducted by Christoph Cech.