



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 Hylgaard (voice)

Roger Jannotta (flute, oboe, clarinets)
Michael Mantler (trumpets)
Martin Cholewa (French horn)
Vincent Nilsson (trombones)
Bjarne Roupé (guitars)
Susi Hylgaard (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 his most recent work, *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.

FROM THE TEXTS

What did you say?

*I can't remember.
Maybe I didn't say anything.*

*Suit yourself.
It makes no difference to me.*

Do you think we'll ever find it?

What?

*I said,
"Do you think we'll ever find it?"*

*I heard what you said.
Then I said, "What."*

*Oh.
You mean what.*

Yes, what.

Yes, yes, now I see. What.

Well?

*I can't remember.
Maybe I wasn't asking anything.*

*Suit yourself.
It makes no difference to me.*

Excerpt from "Hide and Seek" by Paul Auster
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THE VOICES



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
