

BUTCH MORRIS
Dust to Dust

New World Records 80408

"Conduction" (conducted improvisation) is a means by which a conductor may compose, (re) orchestrate, arrange, and sculpt both notated and non-notated music. Using a vocabulary of signs and gestures, many within the general glossary of traditional conducting, the conductor may alter or initiate rhythm, melody, and harmony; develop form and structure; and instantaneously change articulation, phrasing, and meter. For example, indefinite repeats of a phrase or measure may now be at the discretion of the new composer on the podium. In this way conducting becomes more than a method for musical interpretation, but an actual part of the process of composition. Conduction is a viable musical tool for the improvising ensemble.

In the past fifty years, the international community of improvisers has grown at such a rate that it has defined its own future. The free exchange among the world's musics has enriched this community, and hold it steadfast in its mission to be the medium for expressing the moment. It is this collective imagination that is presenting a new challenge to technology and tradition, with the hope of broadening the total language of communication. The compositions on this recording are a product of these ideals. However, they do have pre-described usages, which is to say, there was and is meaning beyond the moment.

The theme for "Othello" was written for the play as presented at Rutgers University in the summer of 1990, then at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C., in November 1990-January 1991, directed by Harold Scott, with Avery Brooks as Othello, Jordan Baker as Desdemona, and Andre Braugher as Iago. It is important to mention who was involved so that you can understand what they contributed, inspired or provoked through their work. The story by Shakespeare certainly speaks to time unbound, but the specifics of the direction by Mr. Scott and the work of the actors allowed me to find a sonic arena so full of cultural and socio-psychological isms that it became possible to make or find many musics. The two versions recorded here represent the humanity of Othello, the devious, calm reserve of Iago, and the innocent beauty of Desdemona.

For the Bartok improvisation, I took the rhythmic figure [-----] and beat it out to the ensemble. J.A. Deane electronically sampled it, and then we began the conduction. The first entry is that of the sample. The harp enters next with [-----] which was trapped by Wayne Horvitz. Drums and piano enter, playing the original figure as directed at varying speeds; the figure is then developed. Next, both samples are introduced and the woodwinds enter, with ensemble conduction throughout.

The theme for "Via Talciona" was composed during my residence at the Festival de Montalcino in Italy (December 1989-Januray 1990) for the play *Il Presidente Schreiber*, written by Javier Barreiro and Alessandro M. Cassin. As I wrote the theme I could hear its improvisational possibilities for other situations; even though I may write a piece for a particular use, the arrangement/orchestration is open-ended so that it may accommodate other needs as the situation arises. The melody, originally "La Legge," (The Law), is the documentation of a soul, lost somewhere in the kingdom of heart and mind. It was written to express the delirium of being in such a place--the alluring beauty of such a kingdom, and the deceptive entanglement of a law that governs. The introduction is eighteen measures long--the first seven played on piano, harp, English horn, and violin, and the remaining eleven played on piano, vibraphone, and bassoon. What is notated in the introduction is played by piano and vibes.

The melodic form then follows, A-A-B-A. The improvisation is conducted, followed by a repetition of A-A-B-A. The piece closes with the ensemble playing with the fermata.

"Long Goodbye" is an excerpt from a suite entitled *Trail of Tears*, originally commissioned by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. It was premiered at Tufts University in April 1988. I wrote at the time: "I wanted to engage certain ideas I have concerning the relationships between digestion of sound, bloodline, and translation, and to capture and incorporate two great nations, Native America and Africa-America."

"Dust to Dust" was originally commissioned by the Brooklyn Philharmonic for the New Music America festival in 1989, and was performed by that orchestra on November 15, 1989. Only the final two sections of the original three are included on this recording.

"Food Chain Dialogue" is a conduction for ensemble that makes use of the technical and recording equipment in the studio, and of the ensemble's ability to use and re-use that equipment.

I would like to thank everyone in the community who has brought the development of improvisation this far, and to say we have a glorious future ahead even though we face the same problems everyone in the world faces--unemployment and ignorance.

—Butch Morris

LAWRENCE D. "BUTCH" MORRIS is the originator of the revolutionary method of conducted improvisation called "conduction." He has appeared as conductor, composer, arranger, and/or cornetist on over forty recordings. Morris has been visiting lecturer and composer in residence at Tufts University and The Royal Conservatory in Liege, Belgium. He has also served as musical director for the ABC television series *A Man Called Hawk*. Morris has received commissions from the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Massachusetts Council On the Arts and Humanities, the National Endowment For the Arts, and the city of Berlin.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Homeing, Sound Aspects CD4015

Current Trends In Racism in Modern America, Sound Aspects CD4010

In Touch...But Out Of Reach, Karma PK9

9 Below (with Wayne Horvitz), Sound Aspects SAS014

Producer: Wayne Horvitz

Executive Producer: Arthur Moorhead

Engineer: James Farber

Assistant Engineer: Pat Dillet

- 1- Othello B (7:58)
- 2- The Bartok Comprovisation (7:05)
- 3- Via Talciona (12:12)
- 4- Long Goodbye (10:32)
- 5- Dust to Dust, second and third parts (7:33)
- 6- Food Chain Dialogue (7:33)
- 7- Othello A (7:08)

Vickey Bodner, English horn
Jean-Paul Bourelly, guitar
Brian Carrott, vibraphone
Andrew Cyrille, drums
J.A. Deane, trombone and electronics
Marty Ehrlich, clarinet
Janice Grice, bassoon
Wayne Horvitz, keyboards and electronics
Jason Hwang, violi
Myra Melford, piano
Zeena Parkins, harp
John Purcell, oboe
Lawrence D. "Butch" Morris, conductor

All compositions written and published by Lawrence D. "Butch" Morris BMI

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