

Works by T. J. Anderson, David Baker, Donal Fox, Olly Wilson
New World 80423-2

The spontaneous exploration of musical ideas can be exciting, rewarding, and challenging for both the performer and the audience; jazz musicians demonstrate this constantly. Most of the participants in this recording project have had extensive experience in jazz. In their work here, they are exploring the conceptual similarities and connections between improvised music and concert music, an extension and development of both European and American traditions. Each of the written compositions (*Sometimes*, *Dialectics for Two Grand Pianos*, *Intermezzi*, and *Through This Vale of Tears*) comes from an improvisatory stimulus. Of the improvised pieces, *Four Chords From T. J.'s Intermezzi* and *Duetto for Clarinet and Piano* are rooted in notated concert music (T. J. Anderson's *Intermezzi*), while the atmospheric ambience of *Jazz Sets and Tone Rows* was generated by Olly Wilson's *Sometimes*. There is a conscious attempt on this recording to relate the pieces to one another in a musical, conceptual, philosophical, and atmospheric way. This effort was made easier by the fact that three of the four written compositions were commissioned by or written for the performers.

Olly Wilson writes about *Sometimes*: “[This piece] was composed especially for William Brown, and is based on a contemporary interpretation of the Black spiritual ‘Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.’ I attempted to recreate within my own musical language not only the profound expression of human hopelessness and desolation that characterizes the traditional spiritual, but also simultaneously on another level, a reaction to that desolation that transcends hopelessness. It is for this reason that musical events associated with the original spiritual appear in a number of different ways—sometimes straightforwardly, sometimes fragmentized or extended, and sometimes in completely new relationships with one another, both on the immediate as well as the large-scale, formal, level. The relationship between the tenor soloist and the electronic tape also reflects a multitude of shifting roles. They frequently exchange solo and complementary functions in varying degrees at different times in the course of the piece. *Sometimes* is dedicated to my parents who, through love and patience, taught me how to sing.”

With *Dialectics for Two Grand Pianos*, Donal Fox, an innovative composer and virtuoso pianist, has abandoned traditional academic procedures and post-Romantic composing techniques in favor of an organization of sound based on the interaction of instrumental media and their performing environments. His concern with a language of sound independent from traditional tones and definite pitch has caused him to develop new instrumental techniques and to involve the performer in many radical means of expression. Fox has said: “Improvisation is a natural part of the compositional process. A number of ideas that I eventually notate come through creative experimentation and improvisation. This was also true for many of the great European composers of the past—Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, and Liszt, for example, were all excellent improvisers of their day. Their improvisational skills clearly affected their compositional thoughts and procedures.”

In this fully-scored composition the performers are required to execute extraordinary effects: guttural sounds, shouts, laughter, “booming” with fists, foot stomping, tapping, and plucking. Fox's music projects a tremendous energy that is

vibrant, captivating and good-humored. The piece was commissioned in 1986 by Vivian Taylor with a grant from the Heritage Program of the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

T. J. Anderson's *Intermezzi* for clarinet, saxophone, and piano is made up of six sections, each about a minute in duration. The sections have different tempo indications, time signatures, and dynamics for each of the three instruments. No score exists, so each performance yields a different conjunction of musical events. The three instrumental parts are played independently with no adherence to an overall concept of ensemble. Anderson likens it to an observer walking through a crowded room that is resonating with independent conversations; the listener focuses on each conversation separately, but can also recognize a harmony resulting from the interplay of the individual parts (conversations).

Four Chords From T. J.'s Intermezzi and *Duetto For Clarinet and Piano* are based on motives and chord progressions from Anderson's *Intermezzi*. Both pieces are excellent examples of the manner in which spontaneous composition (improvisation) can be structured without using conventional formulas. In *Four Chords*, Donal Fox based his exploration on the first four harmonies of the Anderson piece. The *Duetto* was completely spontaneous: At the end of one of the recording sessions Fox suggested that he and Eric Thomas "jam" for a while. Since each had a copy of *Intermezzi* in front of him, they used it as a basis for their improvisation. Freedom in free-form playing does not necessarily mean chaos—to make music each player must listen carefully to the other in order to make the collaboration work. In a performance such as this one the players push one another to higher levels of self-expression.

Through This Vale of Tears, David Baker's song cycle for tenor, string quartet, and piano, is a tribute to, and commentary on, the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The work was composed for and dedicated to tenor William Brown. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. has written of the piece:

I. "Thou Dost Lay Me in the Dust of Death": This movement is a recasting of the chorale from the composer's *Black America: To the Memory of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, a cantata for jazz ensemble, narrators, soloists, and string orchestra written in 1968. It begins with a sound reminiscent of the voice-and-continuo treatment of the Baroque, but quickly makes use of later stylistic, harmonic, and melodic procedures.

II. "If There Be Sorrow": This setting of the Mari Evans poem is unmistakably modern in treatment, with characteristic leaps, and dissonant melodic and harmonic intervals.

III. "My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?": This is a spiritual-like treatment of the Twenty-second Psalm, with the slurred falling thirds and other elisions characteristic of spirituals.

IV "Parades to Hell": This setting of the Solomon Edwards poem is expressionist-like in character, but it also ironically sets the musical stage and serves as a lead-in to the following, stylistically contrasting, movement.

V. "Deliver My Soul": This is a gospel setting of the Twenty-second Psalm, in which the piano plays a larger role than in the other movements of the piece. It is a kind of gospel waltz with a significant jazz-like scat section. The dissonances heard at phrase endings are compositional.

VI. “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child”: A modern setting of the traditional African- American spiritual of the same name, this is both a brief presentation of and a modern musical commentary on this popular religious folk song.

VII. “Now That He Is Safely Dead”: This setting of the Carl Hines text, another movement recast from the composer's *Black America*, is at once retrospective and predictive, commenting on “a dead man's dream.” It ends with a chorale-like treatment of the text.*

Jazz Sets and Tone Rows is an improvisatory collaboration by Oliver Lake and Donal Fox, who were inspired after hearing several takes of Olly Wilson's *Sometimes* at the recording session. A composer and saxophonist, Lake is a master of free-form improvisation who uses the full range of the jazz vocabulary and tradition to give shape and substance to his spontaneous compositions. Working with Fox allows Lake to improvise over serially derived procedures. At the same time, he leads Fox into abstractions and permutations of bebop and blues-derived motives. Matching each other's moods and intensity allows the two players to create and mold a spontaneous composition while retaining the immediacy of a free exchange of musical ideas. This piece, like *Duetto for Clarinet and Piano*, is a well-paced musical dialogue.

With this recording, Vivian Taylor has brought together a diverse group of world-renowned composers, players, and teachers to clearly demonstrate conceptual similarities and connections between “improvised” and concert music. It is a brilliant extension of a tradition firmly rooted in the past that demonstrates many exciting applications and possibilities for contemporary musicians. —DR. BILLY TAYLOR

*Billy Taylor, Ed.D., is a pianist, composer, teacher, lecturer, television and radio personality, recording artist, and author; *Mr. Floyd's commentary on *Through This Vale of Tears* originally appeared in the program notes for a performance by the Black Music Repertory Ensemble of the Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College, Chicago.*

Sometimes
(Traditional)

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
A long way from home.

Who'll believe me
A long way from home.

Through This Vale of Tears
I. “Thou Dost Lay Me in the Dust of Death”
(Psalm 22)

Thou dost lay me in the dust of death.

Yea, dogs are round about me.
A company of evildoers encircle me.

They have pierced my hands and feet.
I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me.
They divide my garments among them.
For my raiment they cast lots.

Thou dost lay me in the dust of death.

II. "If There Be Sorrow"
(by Mari Evans)

If there be sorrow
let it be
for things undone
undreamed
unrealized
unattained

to these add one
love withheld
restrained

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III. "My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"
(Psalm 22)

My God, why hast thou forsaken me?
My God, why art thou so far from helping me,
From the words of my groaning? Ah,
I cry by day, but thou dost not answer,
And by night and find no rest.

IV "Parades to Hell"
(by Solomon Edwards)

Some recent explorers say God is dead.
Land, sea, air, but nowhere a trace.
"We agree," say the breathing dead,
Who full of things, not God,
Have no room to harangue at him.
These dead need company or proud housekeeping.
Or maybe they're tired.
It's rough all day to roll a stone away,
To let in a stranger who'll run off with your soul.

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V. "Deliver My Soul"
(Based on Psalm 22)

Deliver my soul from the sword,
O Thou my help.
O want'cha please come to my aid?

Deliver my life from the pow'r of the dog,
O Thou my help.
O want'cha please come to my aid?

Lord save-a poor me from the mouth of the Lion,
O Thou my help.
O want'cha please come to my aid?

Deliver my soul from the horns of wild oxen,
O Thou my help.
O want'cha please come to my aid?

VI. "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child"
(Traditional)

Oh, my Brother.
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
A long way from home.

Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone
A long way from home.

VII. "Now That He Is Safely Dead"
(by Carl Hines)

Now that he is safely dead,
Let us Praise him.
Now that he is safely dead,
Let us Praise him.
Build monuments to his glory.
Sing Hosannahs to his name.

Dead men make such convenient Heroes.
They cannot rise to challenge the images
We would fashion from their Lives.
It is easier to build monuments
Than to make a better world.

So now that he is safely dead,
We, with eased consciences, will
Teach our children that he was a great man,
Knowing that the cause for which he
Lived is still a cause
And the dream for which he died
Is still a dream.

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THOMAS J. ANDERSON, JR., is one of the most respected composers of his generation. Dr. Anderson served for eight years as Chairman of the Department of Music at Tufts University, and was the Austin Fletcher Professor of Music, becoming Emeritus in 1990. Since that date, he has served as Hill Professor at the University of Minnesota, Distinguished Professor at the University of California in Chico, and composer in residence at Northwestern University. He has also premiered *Bahia, Bahia* in Brazil, published *Whatever Happened to the Big Bands?* with Bote & Bock in Berlin, and been commissioned by the Boston Athenaeum to write an opera. Anderson is well known for his diverse compositions, his orchestration of Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha*, which premiered in Atlanta in 1972, and for the recording he conducted for the Smithsonian Institution, *Classic Rags and Ragtime Songs*.

DAVID N. BAKER, JR., is a composer, educator, conductor, cellist, author, and currently Distinguished Professor of Music and chairman of the Jazz Department at the Indiana University School of Music. He has created over five hundred commissioned works for artists and organizations as diverse as the Library of Congress, the New York Philharmonic, Janos Starker, Sonny Rollins, and William Brown. Baker has written numerous books and articles, including a definitive series of books on jazz improvisation, composition, and arranging, and has been an important contributor to more than fifty recordings. He currently serves as president of the National Jazz Service Organization, and is a member of many boards, including the National Council on the Arts.

DONAL FOX, composer, pianist, and improviser, “has concentrated on knocking down and reconfiguring many of the usual divisions between the classical and jazz genres” (*Boston Herald*). He has received numerous awards and commissions, including from the St. Botolph Club Foundation, the Massachusetts Artists Fellowship program, the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard, the Tanglewood Music Center, Project Step, and the Heritage Program. With funding from Meet The Composer, the Saint Louis Symphony has commissioned him to write a piano concerto, and he is composer in residence there for the 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 seasons. He continues his explorations in musical improvisation, working and performing with both orchestral and jazz musicians.

OLLY WILSON'S compositions have been performed by many orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, and the Boston, Cleveland, Saint Louis, Dallas,

Minneapolis, and Atlanta symphony orchestras. He has published articles on African and African-American music, and has conducted numerous concerts of contemporary music, in addition to performing on bass violin with several orchestras, and playing jazz piano. A two-time Guggenheim Fellow (1971 and 1977), Dr. Wilson has won many awards, including the 1968 Dartmouth Arts Council Prize (the first international competition for electronic music composition) for his piece *Cetus*, and an award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters for outstanding achievement in music composition. He is presently Professor of Music at the University of California, Berkeley.

VIDEMUS is a Boston-based chamber organization that was established in 1986 to promote the music of minority and women composers. Since its inception, Videmus has produced several major works, including the 1988 Boston premiere of *Xcerpts* (a concert version of the opera *Malcolm X* by Anthony Davis), and the T. J. Anderson 60th Birthday Celebration Concert at Sanders Theatre. The ensemble's previous recording, *Works by William Grant Still*, is available from New World Records (80399-2).

Featured performers on this recording include Videmus founder and artistic director, pianist **Vivian Taylor**. As a soloist, Taylor has presented premieres in the United States, England, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Tenor **William Brown** has been guest soloist with many orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Boston, Cincinnati, Atlanta, and Detroit symphony orchestras. He is an acclaimed performer of twentieth-century music, and has appeared with contemporary music ensembles in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and New York. Pianist and composer **John McDonald** has performed with the Boston Symphony, the Boston Pops, Musica Viva, Collage, Alea III, and the New World Quartet. **Eric Thomas**, clarinetist, has a burgeoning career in both the jazz and classical fields. In addition to winning classical music competitions in Los Angeles and the Concert Artists Guild competition in New York, Thomas's forays into jazz have been widely acclaimed. Legendary saxophonist and composer **Oliver Lake** has been at the forefront of the progressive jazz movement since the early 1970s. With Julius Hemphill, he cofounded the Black Artists Group (BAG), and the World Saxophone Quartet, of which he is still an active member. Lake has performed with numerous jazz artists, and has been featured on more than fifty recordings.

Put all my food on one plate!
What kinda music U-
play? Good Kind!

—*Oliver Lake*

Producer: Vivian Taylor
Engineer: Tom Clark, Location Recordings
Production assistant: Mark DeVoto
Recorded at the African Meeting House, Boston, and Tufts University, November 1991
Edited and mastered at Soundmirror, Inc.
Cover art: Richard Hunt. *Untitled* (1984). Oil pastel on paper 29 x 39 1/4 in.

Photograph courtesy Dorsky Gallery.
Cover design: Bob Defrin

This recording was made possible with grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The electronic tape for *Sometimes* was realized at the University of California, Berkeley Electronic Music Studio in 1976. The voice portions of the tape were derived from the singing of William Brown. Most of this recording was made at the African Meeting House on Boston's Smith Court, Beacon Hill. Dedicated in 1806 as a school, church, and community hall, the building stood literally and symbolically at the heart of Boston's African-American community. Currently part of the Museum of Afro-American History, the African Meeting House is the oldest surviving church building of its kind in America. From its earliest days, music was an integral part of the religious and secular life of this structure. *Dialectics for Two Grand Pianos* was recorded at the Alumnae Lounge, Tufts University, on two new Steinway B grand pianos, a recent gift to the University from Howard and Barbara Rich.

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SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

T. J. Anderson

Chamber Symphony. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, James Dixon conducting. CRI SD-258.

Squares; (an essay for orchestra). Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Paul Freeman conducting. Columbia M-33434.

Variations on a Theme by M. R. Tolson. Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano; ensemble, Arthur Weisberg conducting. Nonesuch H-71303.

David N. Baker

Le Chat Qui Pêche. Linda Anderson-Baer, soprano; jazz quartet; Louisville Orchestra, Jorge Mester conducting. First Edition LS-751.

Concerto for flute, string quartet, and jazz band. James Pellerite, flute; ensemble, David Baker conducting.

Concerto for violin and jazz band. James Getzoff, violin; Hollywood All-Star Jazz Band, Carmen Dragon conducting. Laurel 125.

Concerto for 2 pianos, jazz band, strings and percussion. Charles Webb, Wallace Hornibrook, pianos; ensemble, David Baker conducting.

Give and Take. Edith Diggory, soprano; quintet. Laurel 115.

Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams. Janos Starker, cello; George Gaber, percussion.

Sonata. Janos Starker, cello; Alain Planes, piano. Laurel LR-117.

Donal Fox

Boston Duets. Oliver Lake and Donal Fox Duo. Music & Arts, CD 372.

Oily Wilson

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Cetus. Electronic tape. Turnabout TV-343021.

Echoes. Phillip Rehfeldt, clarinet; tape. CRI C-367.

Sinfonia. Boston Symphony Orchestra, Seiji Ozawa conducting. New World 80331-2.

(A full discography of these composers can be found in Derek Bartholomaeus's *Concert Music by Black Composers*, Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College.)

Sometimes published by Gunmar Music, Inc.

Dialectics For Two Grand Pianos published by Margun Music Inc.

Four Chords from T.J.'s Intermezzi, Duetto for Clarinet and Piano, and Jazz Set and Tone Rows published by Leonellis Music.

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Through This Vale of Tears published by MMB Music, Inc.

Olly Wilson

1 *Sometimes* for tenor and tape (1976) (17:20)

William Brown, tenor

Donal Fox
2 *Dialectics for Two Grand Pianos* (1988) (6:36)
Vivian Taylor and John McDonald, pianos

T.J.Anderson
3 *Intermezzi* (1983) (7:53)
Eric Thomas, clarinet; J. Michael Leonard, tenor saxophone; Vivian Taylor, piano

Donal Fox
4 *Four Chords from T.J.'s Intermezzi* (1991) (6:26)
Donal Fox, piano

Donal Fox
5 *Duetto for Clarinet and Piano* (1991) (4:25)
Eric Thomas, clarinet; Donal Fox, piano

David Baker
Through This Vale of Tears (1986)
6 I. "Thou Dost Lay Me in the Dust of Death" (1:40)
7 II. "If There Be Sorrow" (1:14)
8 III. "My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?" (2:48)
9 IV. "Parades to Hell" (1:38)
10 V. "Deliver My Soul" (3:21)
11 VI. "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" (3:51)
12 VII. "Now That He is Safely Dead" (3:46)
William Brown, tenor; Lynn Chang and Marylou Speaker Churchill, violins; Marcus Thompson, viola; Mark Churchill, cello; Vivian Taylor, piano

Donal Fox
13 *Jazz Sets and Tone Rows* (1991) (7:16)
Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; Donal Fox, piano

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