

The years between 1968 and 1995 (hebephrenic at the core and sometimes doubly painful, like Midwestern eggs hard-boiled too soon) were new and enchanting, but tough as hell itself while passing through them, (a neat 'n' nasty sparkling spume that plays upon ghostly orderings of things programmed to come alive before they happen). These years have, inevitably, as all the human endeavor contained within their brackets must, become more than just plain history. There are now, on the periphery, newly developed critical attention spans, looking to place into the "inside" a considerable stash of transcendental music composed in those years. This trove of tonal treasure is being heard almost as if it were the first occasion in up-to-date real time to do so. All that was needed, as it turns out, was an intrepid band of retro-prospectors digging among the shards for classical gold. The convolutions of the age--revolution of interior sensibility rubbing and rasping against inner conviction, convulsions regularly vibrating against an external rock-and-roll insurrection better left misunderstood, had affected the artists of those days with a large series of options, wildly variational (too many craz-ee permutations), devoted to a search for proto-meaning clothed in dark meandering (a mandarin ring said no to, not noh, too but, oh, in the slow Confucian/confusion least of the sun, worst of the Mood, surrogates already defanged by the earlier mix, wax, shocks, hacks, sox Max, sex, fax, hicks, hex, flakes, coaxed out of time out of tune, a new world apparently in flames, but whose?) and more than simply parenthetical. Questions have been asked--answers are being tendered.

How does one reconstruct, sufficient to explain? The times were out of whack (Cold War, liberation scenarios, A-bombs, and exes from Rantoul to Texas still massing at the borders of affectivity). "A lot of laughter pervaded the assemblage," much of it induced through the greening of US in P(r)O(s)E made deep (but not profound) purple. One felt more than a tithe of sadness (goodbye Christopher J. C. Columtranebus--other Levite saints, Mingus and Monk, prior explorers, wrench free later). Now that was a time when the formal retrograde indicates a megrim more melancholy: a Redd White that blew black--a progression tempered by placeboical small drops of "found joy" (Lorain's not the sweetest of the Twain, because Cleveland is better marked than Wagner sounds, while the grief for the departed giants multiplies) that was trailed by a veritable Niobeville of despair (napalm, Bhopal, my buddy--with friends like whom, boo, who needs enemas--it turned people, the green swirl flushed to madly rushing brown, thus changing them into dewpointed chemically treated fresh minted shit). Post-technology presents the specter of better things as though it were Slim's chemissereeny (with avocado pit nailed to roof). Is that why we create? Quick, let's run from the numbing business of this saturnine schlock attack to find a better-centered commingling of spiritual bounty.

Morgan Powell (not the dentist) (not the doctor) (not the humidior within which his cigars are kept fresh), the composer-trombonist, the combonist-tromposer, Texan, checks in flexin' in search of whoopee to be makin' (One remembers, in Macon, the bacon neither forsaken nor eaten--Tallahassee impending, the subway there is cash-register rung--later the music: a new song, the triste before the tryst doth tryest the dryest, my God, where is all this going?). Morgan Powell, compadre transposer, jazz katzenjammer living the years mentioned above--concerned with the quality of *all* life and relationships, his compositional process (combinational prolepsis) integrating those notes (not neumes) kept in the memory by awareness of the "inside" of things at the moment that the

outside (dreamt from LBJ's intestines into ReMaIn's of America's bowels), the non-reet Viet fleet not Zoot (nor the other brothers), but rather mayhem, (God forgive them), mayhem, mayhem scores its body-count cylindroid victories!!!! His scores (Morgan's, i.e.) to settle are graphic, emphasis on improviso-air flow, jazz again, moving toward a better world, sweet, soft, easy, sometimes the big structure and the big statement. But all that Darkness to penetrate first. Later yes yes yes quiet quieter quite quietist--release. 1968, Sun of the Soil looking to the horizon and beyond, seethes. See sea estuary Yeast of the son, wealth of the Moon, i.e., Yeats while stoned, why argue the rest? No key, but a modality that is ineluctable. Engaged we trust: The past instructs. This is 1995 and still going.

An astonishing analog cassette of the painstakingly ultra surreal is created and survives. It is as though a plow breaks through the plain and fancy (words worth more phantasmagorical out sight) in there and ensures the future: hear here and wow: Morgan Powell (can the tempo be that fast?) is already Music Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois. Time wastes for no one in particular as it heaps awareness onto the decaying centurions of a dauntless enlightenment. But what a difference A(nita O')Day made. In front of our ears, lobes at the ready, is a propitious sampler from the Enabled M. Powell:

*Red White and Black Blues* (1992) for chamber orchestra, was commissioned and premiered by the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Edwin London conducting.

*Red White and Black Blues* is not a blues in the traditional sense but is inspired by the "man furthest down."

The composer suggests:

Red = intensity

White = engagement

Black = humanity

This is explicated by this quote (Hear ya Talkin') from W. C. Handy:

"The blues came from the man furthest down. The blues came from nothingness, from want, from desire. And when a man sang or played the blues, a small part of the want was satisfied from the music. Like I said, we look for truth in music as in everything else. It won't always take the shape as we think it will. There will always be some surprises. But as long as it's good, it doesn't matter whether its Negro or white. What we want in music is something to build on."

If there is a concrete agreement based on Handy's statement on "truth in music" drawn up to validate delineations of the "good" essences, which heal the ills of racist society, there is a mysterious gesture at the very end where we hear the enigmatic tearing of paper leaving us to wonder if the contract is being abrogated; or can it rather mean that explicit legislation is not needed where musicians get together?

*Old Man* (1967) for mixed choir, brass, percussion, and cello is based on a poem by Paul Zelanski.

An old man looking to the west  
Sees death beckoning to him.  
Looks to the east and sees shallow dreams.  
Walks west.

The world of illusion gives way here to a special quality of vision that enables one to see through Saran-wrapped surfaces of superficiality. Though conventional optimism would suggest that the trivial cannot survive in the wizened state of grace achieved by the protagonist, the Old Man knows better. With gentle nuance, the essential metaphor of the poem is rendered in a minimum of notes: a tone poem of exquisite terseness and stoic melancholy.

*Orphans* (1995)

Written for John Fonville (microtonal flutes) and Steve Butters (microtonal metals), *Orphans* presents a graphic score to be realized by close alignment of densities and texture derived from a developing eye/ear scan process. The performers must see, hear, and maintain an informed awareness of where the offered materials suggest, but do not stipulate, the languid moments of melting or the stasis associated with deep freeze. One hesitates to call it pure improvisation, though it certainly relies on impromptu choices made by highly experienced players. There are many perplexing questions to be asked about the methodology invoked, but the evocative power of the experience frees us, at least temporarily, from asking them.

"As a jazz player, microtonal inflections are well known to me, but I have no systemized sense of cents. Fonville, a designer of microtonal systems, has an exquisite cents sense. In *Orphans* I relied on this ability and his composite sound world to create a sound for this piece which was unique. He and Steve Butters did it."

*Suite Changes* (1985) was commissioned by the Concert Artist Guild of New York City, for David Bilger. It was premiered by Bilger and Jim Winn at Carnegie Recital Hall, February 4, 1986. The composer writes,

"Things unknown . . . dreams in a non-serial combination of characters and actions not previously conceived in waking consciousness . . . the sweetness of dreams, the sweetness of what is implied--restlessly remembered . . . it began as a suite and then I cut it up thus changing the suite 'form'. . . for legit trumpet player with piano--not my cup of tea--so I created a piece (which probably wasn't his cup of tea either) from various types of leaves, brewed them, poured them into many distinct cups with as many different combinations of honey, heavy cream, lime, sugar, and whisky for each Sweet Dream. The pitch materials were borrowed from an elegant all-combinatorial matrix developed by long-time friend Sal Martirano. Then with sweet fondness and respect, I changed the material to suit the suite."

The movements of the Suite are March, Jazz, and Waltz.

*Outlaws* (1995) was commissioned by the Tone Road Ramblers.

"The man for whom law exists--the man of forms, the conservative--is a tame man." --Thoreau

The Tone Road Ramblers is a sort of music barnstorming team outside the organized league. Its members obey the rules of musical propriety as well as any when fulfilling the requirements of their individual "day gigs" but when consummating the periodic obligation of being a Rambler on the road, they mostly rather choose to explore the terrain beyond the limits. The preface to *Outlaws* proclaims

"The score is the law, but leaves the idea with the performer (the law abider and breaker) that the law is to be examined, questioned, tried, and gone beyond (above) and below; the outlaws are both lawful and lawless. They do not have to adhere to the written notes (law abiding); i.e., break the law!

At any time (not otherwise restricted) any player may turn outlaw--and any outlaw at any time may become law abider (the written note) or law enforcer (the cuer)."

The score is filled with suggestions about character formation, alter egos, chord numbers, and chase cues. The group of six dissolves on signal into duos and trios.

"The outlaw uses the law to make new formal interpretations. The outlaw stretches the law to question and possibly confirm or repeal the law. The outlaw breaks the law believing the justness or injustice of it. So in this piece the outlaw sometimes lives by the law; sometimes lives outside the law."

*Loneliness* (1969) is scored for mixed chorus and instrumental quartet (tuba, trombone, harp, and violin.) The text is an exercise in the laconic, a plaintive but economical statement of affairs as seen by a protagonist with an interior view:

A hawk hovers in air.  
Two white gulls float on the stream.  
Soaring with the wind, it is easy  
To drop and seize  
Birds who foolishly drift with the current.  
Where the dew sparkles in the grass,  
The spider's web waits for its prey.  
The processes of nature resemble the business of men.  
I stand alone with ten thousand sorrows.

The translation of the Tu Fu poem is by Kenneth Rexroth.

Kenneth Rexroth: *The Collected Shorter Poems*. Copyright 1956 by Kenneth Rexroth. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

*Transitions* (1975) was commissioned by the University of Illinois Contemporary Chamber Players, Edwin London conductor, Daniel Perantoni, tuba.

The music on this disc leading up to *Transitions* seems to be best described as nocturnal. Dream

states abound and a pervasive aura of darkness prevails. At last, though, there is in *Transitions* a modulated energetic and virtuosic protagonist (again the "day gig"). The dual nature of life as exemplified by the distinction made between night states and daydreams is a commonplace observation; but the ominous quality in this bifurcation leads us from night into an inevitable matinal progression, which itself must ultimately alternate with, and indeed return to, darkness.

—Edwin London

**Morgan Powell** is a composer and trombonist whose works are performed throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan. Powell's primary compositional interests are in the areas of instrumental and vocal music, and explore the rich and complex components of improvisation and the spirit and elements of jazz, together with "New Music" compositional techniques and notation. Powell has received three National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, a Fromm Scholarship, two appointments (1972-73 and 1991-92) as Associate to the Center for Advanced Study, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, an American Music Center Grant, and other awards. His commissions include Spoleto Festival-USA, Festival of Contemporary Arts, Concert Artists Guild, NYC, Baldwin-Wallace Brass Choir, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, and Tone Road Ramblers, among others. Powell's compositions are published by Margun Music Publishing, Media Press, Lingua Press, Smith Publications, Brass Music Limited, Brixton Publications, and T.U.B.A. Manuscript, and are recorded on Crystal Records, University Brass Recording Series, Advance, Century, Opus One, TR2, and Einstein Records.

The **Cleveland Chamber Symphony**, a professional ensemble-in-residence at Cleveland State University, presents new music, along with neglected works by the musical greats of the past. Under music director Edwin London, the thirteen-year-old orchestra has made a commitment to new music by American composers. To date CCS has presented ninety-one world premieres. Twice each season the orchestra plays special concerts of new music by young and emerging composers, giving these artists the opportunity to collaborate with a professional ensemble and to hear their work presented in a concert environment. The Cleveland Chamber Symphony received the 1992 Laurel Leaf Award from the American Composers Alliance and the 1990 John S. Edwards Award for Creative Orchestral Programming.

The **Tone Road Ramblers** are an ensemble of composer-performers. They specialize in the performance of their own compositions and works written for them. The Tone Road Ramblers is comprised of John Fonville, Eric Mandat, Ray Sasaki, Morgan Powell, Jim Staley, and Steven Butters.

**Edwin London**, composer and conductor, began his career as a French hornist, playing principal horn in the Orquesta Sinfonica de Venezuela and other ensembles, including the Oscar Pettiford Jazz Band. A graduate of Oberlin College, he received his doctorate from the University of Iowa, where he studied with P. C. Clapp and Philip Bezanson. He also studied with Luigi Dallapiccola, Darius Milhaud, and Gunther Schuller. He has taught at Smith College (1960-69) and the University of Illinois (1969-78), and since 1978 has been a professor at Cleveland State University.

**Steven Butters**, percussion, holds degrees from the University of Illinois, where he studied with Thomas Siwe, and the University of Iowa, where he studied with Thomas L. Davis. An active

performer of contemporary music, Mr. Butters has presented numerous solo recitals in the United States and Korea, and has premiered several new works for solo percussion. He performs regularly with Ensemble NoAmnesia, Jack the Dog, the Likes of Us, Signal to Noise Unit, Steel Express, the Tone Road Ramblers, and Walleye. He has recorded for the Drag City, Einstein, and Opus One record labels.

**John Fonville**, flutist/composer, is dedicated to extending the language and technique of the flute. Toward that objective he has mastered all the recent technical developments and their use in various musical contexts: microtonal music, improvisation, and new compositions that push the boundaries. He performs on a complete set of quarter-tone flutes, from bass flute to piccolo. His numerous premieres include works by Ben Johnston, Salvatore Martirano, Joji Yuasa, Roger Reynolds, Hiroyuki Itoh, Paul Koonce, and others. Mr. Fonville is a member of the Tone Road Ramblers, the Eolus Quintet, and SONOR, the resident contemporary music ensemble at the University of California at San Diego, where he is a member of the faculty.

**Eric Mandat**, clarinetist and composer, tours extensively as a soloist, presenting programs and lectures featuring new American clarinet music and extended performance techniques. His compositions for clarinet utilize multiphonics and microtones within a musical framework influenced by jazz and traditional music of non-Western cultures. Mandat has also been active as a performer of the more traditional clarinet repertory. He is professor of clarinet and saxophone at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He studied at the University of North Texas, the Yale School of Music, and the Eastman School of Music. His principal teachers have included Charles Neidich, Stanley Hasty, Keith Wilson, Lee Gibson, and Richard Joiner.

**Daniel Perantoni**, tuba, is a professor of music at Indiana University. He has been a featured artist at the Monterey Jazz Festival, at Spoleto U.S.A., the Adelaide Festival, the Banff Centre for the Arts, the Montreux Brass Congress in Switzerland, and as a soloist throughout Japan. He has also performed with the United States Army Band, the San Antonio Symphony, and the Amsterdam Philharmonic. Mr. Perantoni is a member of the Matteson-Phillips Tubajazz Consort, the St. Louis Brass Quintet, and is a founding member of Summit Brass.

**Jeanne Dayton Sasaki**, piano, resides in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. Ms. Sasaki received her musical training at the University of Illinois, the Eastman School of Music, and the North Carolina School of the Arts. She has studied with John Wustman, Michael Zenge, Robert Spillman, Barry Snyder, and Anne Epperson. She has served as music director of the Four Corners Opera Apprentice Program in Durango, Colorado, and accompanist/coach of the Charlottetowne Players Opera Association in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the Illinois Opera Theater in Champaign-Urbana.

**Ray Sasaki**, trumpet, is a professor of trumpet at the University of Illinois. He is a member of the St. Louis Brass Quintet, Sinfonia da Camera, and the Tone Road Ramblers. He is an active soloist and has toured throughout the United States and Europe. Mr. Sasaki was a featured concerto soloist for the All-Japan Band Directors Camp. He has commissioned new works for trumpet with the Cleveland Chamber Orchestra, the International Trumpet Guild, and the Jazz Members Orchestra of Chicago.

**Jim Staley**, trombonist and composer attended the University of Illinois, where he received his Bachelor ('76) and Masters ('78) degrees in music, and studied with composers Morgan Powell, Ben Johnston, and Salvatore Martirano. In the early Seventies he served in West Berlin as a member of a U.S. Army Band. While in Berlin he became acquainted with many fine composers and musicians. This was a time of the establishment of Minimalism and the pioneering of "free jazz." Staley moved to New York and has resided in Manhattan since 1978. He has recorded for SST, Dossier, A&M, Nonesuch/Icon, Hat Art, and DIW. Staley also performs and records with the Tone Road Ramblers.

## **SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

*Darkness I.* University of Illinois New Music Ensemble. Opus One CD 164.

*Faces.* Zoe Munn, cello, percussion, voice. Opus One CD 164.

*FFFF.* Einstein Records 007.

Quintet for Brass No. 2. University of Illinois Contemporary Chamber Players. Opus One CD 164.

*THO.* Tone Road Ramblers. Opus One CD 164.

*Windows.* Crystal Recording Co. S215.

Producer: Morgan Powell

Engineers: John Cirillo (*Red White and Black Blues*); Jon Schoenoff (*Orphans, Suite Changes, and Outlaws*); Carl Volkers (*Old Man, Loneliness, and Transitions*)

Editing: Jon Schoenoff (*Orphans, Suite Changes, and Outlaws*)

Mastering: Jon Schoenoff

Digital mastering: George Blood Professional Audio Services, Philadelphia Cover design: Bob Defrin Design, Inc., NYC

All the compositions were recorded in Foellinger Great Hall, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Urbana, Illinois, except for *Red White and Black Blues* and *Transitions*. *Old Man* was recorded live May 9, 1969. *Orphans* and *Outlaws* were recorded October 5, 1995. *Suite Changes* was recorded October 17, 1995. *Loneliness* was recorded live July 8, 1970.

*Red White and Black Blues* was recorded in Waetjen Hall, Cleveland, Ohio, September 24, 1992.

*Transitions* was recorded at Smith Music Hall, the University of Illinois, in 1976.

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**MORGAN POWELL** (b. 1938) 80499-2

- 1 *Red White and Black Blues* (1992) 15:27 (publ. Media Press)  
Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Edwin London, conductor
- 2 *Old Man* (1967) 4:32 (publ. Media Press)  
The Ineluctable Modality, Edwin London, conductor
- 3 *Orphans* (1995) 6:11  
John Fonville, microtonal flutes; Steven Butters, microtonal metals
- 4 *Suite Changes* (1985) 15:11 (publ. Brixton Publications)  
Jean Dayton Sasaki, piano; Ray Sasaki, trumpet
- 5 *Outlaws* (1995) 10:02 (publ. Media Press)  
Tone Road Ramblers: John Fonville, flute; Eric Mandat, clarinet; Ray Sasaki, trumpet;  
Morgan Powell, Jim Staley, trombones; Steven Butters, percussion
- 6 *Loneliness* (1969) 5:19 (publ. Media Press)  
The Ineluctable Modality, Edwin London, conductor
- 7 *Transitions* (1975) 10:37 (publ. T.U.B.A. Manuscript Press)  
The University of Illinois Contemporary Chamber Players, Edwin  
London, conductor; Daniel Perantoni, tuba

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