

CHARLES AMIRKHANIAN

CR
SD 523

MENTAL RADIO

NINE TEXT-SOUND COMPOSITIONS

CRI SD 523
Charles Amirkhanian
Mental Radio

Church Car, Version 2(1980-81) (2:55)
Voices: Charles Amirkhanian, Anthony J. Gnazzo
Recorded by Anthony J. Gnazzo at California State University, Hayward, 1980
Mixed by Bob Bielecki at ZBS Media, Fort Edward, New York, April 1981

Dot Bunch (1981) (5:35)
Voice, Drum synthesizer: Charles Amirkhanian
Engineer: Ed Herrmann, assisted by Christopher Merrick
Recorded at KOPN-FM, Columbia, Missouri, September 1981

Dog of Stravinsky (1982) (3:21)
Dedicated to Richard Pontziou, Allan Ulrich,
Robert Commanday, Heuwell Tircuit
Voice: "Dashiell Hammett," Belgian sheep hound, courtesy Reynaldo and Jody Terrazas
Location recording by Charles Amirkhanian, Oakland, California, October 7, 1979
Engineer: Anders Lundqvist
Mixed at EMS, Stockholm, Sweden, October 1982

Hypothetical Moments (1981) (5:31)
Dedicated to Betty Freeman
Voice, ocarina, bells: Charles Amirkhanian; Harpsichord (courtesy of Dennis Russell
Davies): Charles Amirkhanian; Recorded in St. Paul, Minnesota, March 1980
Engineer: John Guth
Recorded at New Wilderness Foundation, New York, NY, October 1981

Maroa (1981) (5:10)
Voice and Drum synthesizer: Charles Amirkhanian
Engineer: Andrew Hindes
Recorded at New Wilderness Foundation, New York, NY, October 1981

The Putts (1981) (5:18)
Voice, Percussion, Drum synthesizer: Charles Amirkhanian
Whisper chorus: Charles Amirkhanian,
Greg Shifrin, Patty Anderson, Tom
Lopez, Gary Gallucci
Sound effects: Bob Bielecki, Tom Lopez
Engineer: Bob Bielecki, assisted by Gail Turner

Dreams Freud Dreamed (1979) (5:10)
Voice: Charles Amirkhanian
Voice, Bells: Charlie Morrow
Engineer: Charlie Morrow, assisted by
Vivien LaMothe and Barbara Benedict
Recorded at New Wilderness Foundation,
New York, NY, March 1979

Andas (1982) (6:45)
Voice: Charles Amirkhanian
Engineer: Anders Lundqvist
Recorded at EMS, Stockholm, Sweden,
October 1982

History of Collage (1981) (4:48)

Dedicated to Carol Law

Voice, Drum synthesizer: Charles Amirkhanian

Engineers: Ed Herrmann, Charles Amirkhanian

Recorded at KOPN-FM, Columbia,

Missouri, September 1981

Incorporating sounds recorded by Bob Bielecki and Tom Lopez, mixed April 1981 at ZBS Media, and by Charles Amirkhanian (cricket at Tassajara, California, June 1981)

Composer, poet, and percussionist **Charles Amirkhanian** is one of the leading United States exponents of text-sound composition, the intermedium between music and literature. Born January 19, 1945 in Fresno, California, Amirkhanian is largely self-taught as a composer.

He holds a B.A. in English Literature from California State University, Fresno (1967), an M.A. in Interdisciplinary Creative Arts from San Francisco State University (1969), and an M.F.A. in Electronic Music and Recording Media from Mills College (1980). Since 1969 he has been music director of Pacifica listener-sponsored Radio Station KPFA-FM in Berkeley, California, where he has become internationally known for his comprehensive programs on avant-garde music, poetry, and art.

Since 1965 he has used speech as the primary element in his music. His quixotic and often non-syntactical use of American English treats words as percussion objects, revealing in its intense rhythms the composer's background as a drummer. Humor and irony abound as well, and in performance Amirkhanian uses his tapes as accompaniment for added live vocal lines while enveloped by the moving image projections (films and slides) of the visual artist Carol Law.

Using the recording studio as his composing desk, Amirkhanian incorporates acoustic percussion tracks in combination with ambient sound recordings to produce enigmatic wordscapes characterized by intense rhythmic activity and abstract objectification of words into sound.

Since 1969, Amirkhanian has developed his current style of restless minimalism in which repeated figures are sustained for short periods of time before giving way to other variations on similar themes. This is pursued in several voices polyphonically, creating kaleidoscopic effects within his typically Webernesque time frames.

From the literary viewpoint, Amirkhanian has been influenced by the prose and poetry of Gertrude Stein and its non-syntactical extensions in the work of Clark Coolidge; also by the cut-up methods of Brion Gysin and William Burroughs.

Amirkhanian's work, nearly entirely based on his own texts, has been performed widely throughout North America, Europe, and the Pacific Basin. He has been commissioned by the Fylkingen Society in Sweden, the Arch Ensemble of Berkeley, Radio VPRO in Holland, the Independent Composers Association of Los Angeles (for the 1984 Summer Olympics), WDR (the West German Radio, Cologne), and the Newport Harbor Art Museum, among others. His work is recorded commercially in the United States, West Germany, Italy, Holland, England, and Sweden, and was the subject of a film documentary made for Dutch television (NOS) by Mike Chanowski (MMC Films).

Recent appearances of Carol Law and Charles Amirkhanian include the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), the Center for Music Experiment (UCSD), Roulette (NYC), the Chicago Art Institute, the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), the Santa Fe Museum of Fine Arts, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Other works by Amirkhanian are available on *Lexical Music* and *10 + 2 = 12 American Text-Sound Pieces*, released originally on 1750 Arch Records and available through CRI.

The title of this album is borrowed from a book by Upton Sinclair, the socialist writer and novelist whose nearly-successful candidacy for governor of the state of California in 1934 took the West Coast establishment by surprise.

Sinclair's *Mental Radio* is a volume of non-fiction on the subject of mental telepathy. The writer had always been fascinated with books on subjects in the realm we now term "parapsychology." He then married a woman who had exhibited what he assured his readers was an indisputable ability to perform telepathic information retrieval. This the book documents in some 239 pages, published by Albert and Charles Boni (New York, 1930).

Mental Radio remains one of Sinclair's forgotten volumes, and when I recently encountered it by surprise in a collector's bookshop I realized that the title, in reference to my forthcoming LP, struck a particular resonance because of my long service in the field of radio broadcasting and because of the interior, close-up qualities of word and voice which make these works particularly suited for radio presentation.

In concert, the pieces are performed live by me with tape accompaniment, and often with slide projections by the visual artist Carol Law. The result is a theatrical environment such as the one seen on the front cover of this album - a performance photograph of *Maroa*.

—Charles Amirghanian

Final master tapes for this album were produced by Robert Shumaker at 1750 Arch Studios in Berkeley, California

This recording was made possible by the generosity of Betty Freeman.

Special thanks to Mostly Modem (San Francisco), Hollis Headrick, KOPN-FM (Columbia Missouri), ZBS Media (Fort Edward, New York), New Wilderness Foundation (New York, New York), The Institute for Electro-Acoustic Music (EMS) in Stockholm, Sweden, Robert Shumaker Recording Services (Berkeley, California), Tom Buckner, Phil Sawyer, Suzanne Ciani, Richard Factor, Charlie Morrow, Prescott Stone, Michael Lazarus, and Tom Silk.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)

Side A (22'55")

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Voice: "Dashiell Hammett," Belgian sheep hound, courtesy Reynaldo and Jody Terrazas

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Dedicated to Betty Freeman
Voice, ocarina, bells: Charles Amirkhonian
Harpichord (courtesy of Dennis Russell Davies): Charles Amirkhonian, recorded in St. Paul, Minnesota, March 1980

Engineer: John Guth
Recorded at New Wilderness Foundation, New York, NY, October 1981

Marzo (1981) (5'10")

Voice and Drum synthesizer: Charles Amirkhonian

Engineer: Andrew Hinds
Recorded at New Wilderness Foundation, New York, NY, October 1981

Side B (22'50")

The Putts (1981) (5'18")

Voice; Percussion; Drum synthesizer: Charles Amirkhonian

Whisper chorus: Charles Amirkhonian, Greg Shirin, Patty Anderson, Tom Lopez, Gary Gallucci

Sound effects: Bob Bielecki, Tom Lopez
Engineer: Bob Bielecki, assisted by Gail Turner
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Using the recording studio as his composing desk, Amirkhonian incorporates tape loops, tape delay, multi-track layering, digital modulation, and synthetic and

acoustic percussion tracks in combination with ambient sound recordings to produce enigmatic wordscapes characterized by intense rhythmic activity and abstract objectification of words into sound.

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—Charles Amirkhonian

Complete notes on each piece enclosed

Final master tapes for this album were produced by Robert Shumaker at 1750 Arch Studios in Berkeley, California

All selections are published by Ars Plural Publishing (BME).

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Director of Production: Rachel Siegel

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