

MICHAEL MANTLER – BIOGRAPHY

Michael Mantler was born in 1943 in Vienna, Austria, where he studied trumpet and musicology at the Academy of Music and Vienna University. In 1962 he went to the USA to continue his studies at the Berklee School of Music in Boston. He moved to New York two years later, playing trumpet with Cecil Taylor, among others. During that period, as a founding member of the Jazz Composer's Guild, he formed a large jazz orchestra with Carla Bley, resulting in their first recording, *Communication* (1965). After the Guild discontinued its activities, he toured Europe with the Jazz Realities Quintet, featuring Steve Lacy and Carla Bley.

He recorded his *Jazz Composer's Orchestra* album in 1968 and appeared as trumpet player on Carla Bley's *A Genuine Tong Funeral* and *Escalator Over The Hill*, as well as on Charlie Haden's *Liberation Music Orchestra*.

The problems of independently distributing the Jazz Composer's Orchestra's records led him to form the New Music Distribution Service in 1972, an organization that was to serve many independent labels for almost twenty years.

In 1973, he started WATT Works, a record label devoted to his and Carla Bley's music. Rarely appearing live, except with the Carla Bley Band, he recorded a series of albums for the label: *No Answer* (set to the words of Samuel Beckett, sung by Jack Bruce), *13* (for two orchestras and piano), *The Hapless Child* (with words by Edward Gorey, featuring Robert Wyatt), *Silence* (based on the Harold Pinter play, again with Robert Wyatt and also Kevin Coyne), *Movies* (with Larry Coryell and Tony Williams), *More Movies* (with Philippe Catherine), *Something There* (with Mike Stern, Pink Floyd's Nick Mason and the strings of the London Symphony Orchestra), *Alien* (with Don Preston), *Live* (recorded at the International Art-Rock Festival in Frankfurt, with Jack Bruce and Nick Mason), and *Many Have No Speech* (an album of songs in English, German and French based on the poetry of Samuel Beckett, Ernst Meister and Philippe Soupault, featuring Jack Bruce, Marianne Faithfull and Robert Wyatt). During that period he also appeared on most of Carla Bley's recordings, as well as on albums by John Greaves (*Kew Rhone*), Nick Mason (*Fictitious Sports*), and Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra (*Ballad Of The Fallen*).

In 1991 he returned to live in Europe, discontinuing his work with WATT. Recording now for the ECM label from 1993 on, he released *Folly Seeing All This* (featuring the Balanescu String Quartet and including a setting of Samuel Beckett's last poem, sung by Jack Bruce), *Cerco Un Paese Innocente* (with singer Mona Larsen interpreting texts by Giuseppe Ungaretti), *The School of Understanding* (a "sort-of-opera" with Jack Bruce, Robert Wyatt, Mona Larsen, Don Preston, John Greaves, Per Jørgensen, Susi Hyldgaard, and Karen Mantler), the orchestral work *One Symphony* (paired with *Songs*, again featuring Mona Larsen), *Hide and Seek* (an album of songs with words by Paul Auster, for chamber orchestra and the voices of Robert Wyatt and Susi Hyldgaard), the anthology *Review* (Recordings 1968 – 2000), *Concertos* (featuring soloists Bjarne Roupé, Bob Rockwell, Roswell Rudd, Pedro Carneiro, Majella Stockhausen and Nick Mason), *For Two* (duets for guitarist Bjarne Roupé and pianist Per Salo) and, most recently, *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update* (featuring the Nouvelle Cuisine Big Band and soloists Bjarne Roupé, David Helbock, Wolfgang Puschnig, Harry Sokal and the radio.string.quartet.vienna).

In recognition of his life's work he received several awards, including, among others, the Austrian State Prize for Improvised Music and the Music Prize of the City of Vienna.