

MICHAEL MANTLER SONGS

THE NEW SONGS ENSEMBLE

ANNIE BARBAZZA, JOHN GREAVES *VOICES*

MICHAEL MANTLER *TRUMPET*
GARETH DAVIS *BASS CLARINET*
BJARNE ROUPÉ *GUITAR*
DAVD HELBOCK *PIANO*

radio.string.quartet
BERNIE MALLINGER *VIOLIN*
IGMAR JENNER *VIOLIN*
CYNTHIA LIAO *VIOLA*
SOPHIE ABRAHAM *CELLO*

WORDS BY

SAMUEL BECKETT
ERNST MEISTER
GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI
HAROLD PINTER
MICHAEL MANTLER

[1] TODAY (Mantler)

today
like everyday
facing the news

ignorance, intolerance, chauvinism, bigotry,
nationalism, dictatorships, hostilities,
assaults, invasions, wars, methodical
violence, ethnic cleansing, genocide,
hatred, the horror

and again, and again, and again, again

terror, perverse religions, jihad, murderous fanaticism,
explosive belts, carnage, hostage taking, tortures,
executions, inhumanity, rage, the horror

and again, and again, and again, again

chemical, biological, radiological
weapons, of mass destruction,
nuclear warheads, fragmentation bombs,
combat drones, targeted strikes,
collateral damage

the horror, the horror
always wars, more wars,
always wars, more wars

and then, once more, it all starts again,
continuously

continuously, forever, constantly, without stopping,
endless, forever, always

[2] INTOLERANCE (Mantler)

power
a source of conflict and of war
of persecution and subjugation
of anguish and oppression
pain and suffering
and of hatred
for those we're not

the others
they're different
and therefore bad and dangerous
and we feel threatened
we need to win
subdue and torture
and even kill

not much
if anything
not much at all
we've learned from history

[3] WAR (Mantler)

how is it possible ?
we are used to war
we read about it
we see it on TV
but usually
it's not so close
but far away
so we don't care

but this, now
it's happening right here
and doesn't stop
it's close, so close
how can it be ?

that neighbors and friends
will fight and rape
torture, persecute and wound
torment and victimize
betray, forsake each other
how is it possible ?

[4] BUSINESS (Mantler)

weapons, they come from everywhere
they come from the West
they come from the East

it really is no problem
there is no shortage
it's good for business

everything's for sale,
you want to buy a jet ?
it can be done
your choice of features
just bring the cash
and we deliver

some nice explosives maybe ?
no color, no smell
undetected, exportable,
a terrorist's delight

how about
some scrap uranium ?
that's easy too
we have it all
just ask and pay
and fight your war

and we supply
the means of death

[5] WHAT ELSE TO SAY (Mantler)

this is inhuman
dreadful
horrifying
hellish
disgusting
disgraceful
shocking
shameful
revolting
heinous
nauseating
barbaric
depressing
awful
heartbreaking
tragic

what else to say
what to say
what to say
what to say
what else to say
what to say

[6] PSS (Beckett)

there
the life late led
down there
all done unsaid

again gone
with what to tell
on again
retell

head oh hands
hold me
unclasp
hold me

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[7] DARKER THAN THE LIGHT (Meister)

In the end
one of the two
says:
I've gotten you
used to
loneliness.
In the end
the other
of the two says:
Look, all that's close
is so far
so far.

Life connects
only to life
to nothing
else. The
other
is "there where
one thinks
nothing
nothing
nothing",
for ever.

Just as someone
had thought,
to die:
To turn
from one side of
experience to
one of emptiness,
un-afraid,
a change of cheeks,
nothing more.

And what
does this sun
do to us
what jumps
out of the narrow gate
of those great embers?
I don't know
anything darker
than the light.

[8] SPEECHLESS (Meister)

Mark, nothing
appears
now, yet
your hands
are not estranged
from each other,
they themselves
know nothing
of grasping

(the one
who is dead
had wondered about that).
But what is this
beyond
sleep?
Reason
strolls
through hot grasses,
god-less.

Everything seems edge
despite ("infinite")
depth,
decay clings to it
like mould.
I shudder.
In the mind
the eyelashes
appearing all white,
before the eyes
unregal purple.
In the region
one hears
a song without sound.

The breath exchanged
indeed.
Now, lovely moment,
the air stands still.
Not lonely
and not to miss.
What had been oath,
the stir of solitude.
I've told you
what's dear to me
in vain,
and each
may speak
it's own in vain.

Many
have no speech.
Had I not
my fill of misery, I
would not move my tongue.

[9] (Ungaretti)

ETERNO

ETERNAL

Tra un fiore colto e l'altro donato
l'inesprimibile nulla

Between one flower gathered and the other given
the inexpressible null

STASERA

THIS EVENING

Balaustrata di brezza
per appoggiare stasera
la mia malinconia

Balustrade of breeze
to prop my melancholia
this evening

GIROVAGO

VAGRANT

In nessuna
parte
di terra
mi posso
accasare

In no
place
on earth
can I
settle down

A ogni
nuovo
clima
che incontro
mi trovo
languente
che
una volta
già gli ero stato
assuefatto

Every time
I experience
a new climate
my longing
starts
again
because
I have
already
grown accustomed

E me ne stacco sempre
straniero

And I always leave
as a stranger

Nascendo
tornato da epoche troppo
vissute

Reborn
returning from times
where life was too intense

Godere un solo
minuto di vita
iniziale

To enjoy a single
moment of life
beginning

Cerco un paese
innocente

I search for an innocent
land

[10] (Ungaretti)

SEMPRE NOTTE

EVERLASTING NIGHT

La mia squallida
vita si estende
più spaventata di sé

My squalid life
stretches out
more fearful of itself

In un
infinito
che mi calca e mi
preme col suo
fiavole tatto

In an
infinity
which oppresses me and
weighs heavy upon me through its
light touch

L'ILLUMINATA RUGIADA

La terra tremola
di piacere
sotto un sole
di violenze
gentili

THE SUNSTRUCK DEW

Earth quivers
with pleasure
beneath a sun
whose violence
is gentle

PROVERB! (UNO)

S'incomincia per cantare
E si canta per finire

PROVERBS (ONE)

Beginning has us singing
And we sing to make an ending

[11] (Ungaretti)

VANITÀ

D'improvviso
e alto
su Ile macerie
il limpido
stupore
dell'immensità

VANITY

Suddenly
steep
above the rubble heaps
the limpid
wonder
of immensity

E l'uomo
curvato
sull'acqua
sorpresa
dal sole
si rinviene
un'ombra

And the man
bent
over the water
startled
by the sun
awakes
as shadow

Cullata e
piano
franta

Cradled and
slowly
shattered

[12] (Ungaretti)

È SENZA FIATO

È senza fiato, sera, irrespirabile,
Se voi, miei morti,
e i pochi vivi che amo
Non mi venite in mente
Bene a portarmi quando
Per solitudine, capisco, a sera

MOTIONLESS

It is motionless, the evening, unbreathable,
if you my dead
and the few living beings I love
do not come to mind
and bear me affection when
through solitude, I comprehend, at eventide

[13] (Ungaretti)

NON GRIDATE PIÙ

Cessate d'uccidere i morti,
Non gridate più, non gridate
Se li volete ancora udire,
Se sperate di non perire

OUTCRY NO MORE

Stop killing the dead,
Outcry no more, do not outcry
If you would hear them still,
If you would hope not to die

Hanno l'impercettibile sussurro,
Non fanno più rumore
Del crescere dell'erba,
Lieta dove non passa l'uomo

Their whisper is imperceptible,
They are no louder
Than the growing of the grass,
Happy where man does not pass

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[14] FOR INSTANCE (Pinter)

for instance
those shapes in the trees
you'll find they're just birds resting
after a long journey
I go up with the milk
the sky hits me
I walk in this wind
to collide with them waiting
there are two
they halt to laugh
and bellow in the yard
they dig and punch
and cackle where they stand
they turn to move
look round at me to grin
I turn my eyes from one
and from the other to him
from the young people's room
silence
sleep
tender love
it's of no importance
of no importance

[15] WHEN I RUN (Pinter)

when I run
when I run
when I run
over the grass
she floats
under me floating
under me
I turn
I turn
I wheel
I glide
I wheel
in stunning light
the horizon moves
from the sun
I am crushed by the light

[16] LOVE BEGINS (Mantler)

the news seem always bad
but if you think of it
most other things
on television
in movies and in music
books and poetry
they are about
and filled with love
is that not so

that's true
how wonderful
that's marvelous
most of the time
more often than not
not always though
that's nice
we've got to have it
what would we do
without it
without love
without love

and so we take this occasion
to hear and learn
some useful conversation

this is exciting
well worth the effort
how very useful
just what we need
can we perhaps
find something else
maybe more pertinent
appropriate and apropos

we've searched examined
observed and scrutinized
studied and inquired
probed investigated
explored and analyzed
what have we learned
what do we know now
what do we think
understand and realize
what's going on
what is the point
what have we found
what do we ask
what says it all
what's to conclude
what's left to say
what is the word

[17] WHAT IS THE WORD (Beckett)

folly -
folly for to -
for to -
what is the word -
folly from this -
all this -
folly from all this -
given -
folly given all this -
seeing -
folly seeing all this -
this -
what is the word -
this this -
this this here -
all this this here -
folly given all this -
seeing -
folly seeing all this this here -
for to -
what is the word -
see -
glimpse -
seem to glimpse -
need to seem to glimpse -
folly for to need to seem to glimpse -
what -
what is the word -

and where -
folly for to need to seem to glimpse -
what where -
where -
what is the word -
there -
over there -
away over there -
afar -
afar away over there -
afaint -
afaint afar away over there what -
what -
what is the word -
seeing all this -
all this this -
all this this here -
folly for to see what -
glimpse -
seem to glimpse -
need to seem to glimpse -
afaint afar away over there what -
folly for to need to seem to glimpse -
afaint afar away over there what -
what -
what is the word -
what is the word

[18] UNDERSTANDING (Mantler)

understand understand understanding
what does it mean
many words to choose from
in many languages
but how to use them
[how to make sense]

people talking
from one country
they speak the same
have conversations
they hear the words
but do they really
[understand each other]

people talking
from different places
in many languages
they have studied
intelligence and learning
[is that the answer]

but other people
not knowing
each others' speech
they too communicate
it's really possible
it has been done
[but how]

perhaps they're tolerant
humane, compassionate
unbiased, openminded
they're understanding
they comprehend maybe
and hear each other
[without speaking]

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Irish, went to Paris in the late Twenties, where he began writing both prose and poetry. Until 1945 he wrote in English, but thereafter directly in French, consciously choosing the estrangement of the second, adopted language to "write without style."

His literary output consists of novels, poetry, and plays, including his seminal *Waiting for Godot*, a classic of the contemporary theater. He is considered one of the most important writers of the 20th century, with an influence on contemporary literature as powerful as that of Joyce, Proust, and Kafka. In 1969 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Ernst Meister (1911-1979), German, was recognized as one of Germany's greatest modern poets, in the line of Hölderlin, Trakl, and Celan, the latter of whom he discovered. He was awarded a number of literary awards, including the Petrarca-Preis, the Rilke-Preis, and from the German Academy for Languages and Literature, posthumously, the Büchner-Preis.

Many of his poems, from his earliest publication in 1935 (*Ausstellung*) until his last and perhaps most achieved work (*Wandloser Raum*) in 1979, are meditations on death. He also published numerous other volumes of poetry and several radio plays.

Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888 -1970), the first and one of the most important and influential of modern Italian poets. He was born in Alexandria, Egypt. He studied at the Sorbonne, and while in Paris he became a close friend of Guillaume Apollinaire's. He published his first volume of poetry in 1916, a definitive break with the late 19th-century conventions of Italian poetry. After living in Italy for a number of years, he went to Brazil as a professor of Italian literature at the University of Sao Paulo. On his return he taught at the University of Rome.

His work deals with the large themes of human existence: loneliness, love, loss, nature. But above all, his work is a long record of confrontation with death. T.S.Eliot ranked Ungaretti as "one of the few authentic poets" of the century. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969.

Harold Pinter (1930–2008), was a British playwright, screenwriter, director and actor. A Nobel Prize winner (2005 - "*who in his plays uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed rooms*"), Pinter was one of the most influential modern British dramatists. His best-known plays include *The Birthday Party*, *The Homecoming* and *Betrayal*.