



CODA - ORCHESTRA SUITES

ECM 2697

music by Michael Mantler

with

Bjarne Roupé (guitar)

David Helbock (piano)

Michael Mantler (trumpet)

Orchestra

conducted by Christoph Cech

recorded September - October 2019, Vienna, Austria and Pernes-Les-Fontaines, France

TITLES

TwoThirteen Suite / Folly Suite / Alien Suite / Cerco Suite / HideSeek Suite

THE ORCHESTRA

Leo Eibensteiner (flute)

Peter Tavernaro (oboe)

David Lehner (clarinet)

Fabian Rucker (bass clarinet)

Michael Mantler (trumpet)

Christoph Walder (French horn)

Daniel Riegler (trombone)

Simon Teurezbacher (tuba)

Joanna Lewis, Ulrike Greuter, Diane Pascal, Tomas Novak,

Simon Frick, Maximilian Bratt, Magdalena Zenz, Emily Stewart (violins)

Simon Schellnegger, Anna Magdalena Siakala,

Daniel Moser, Tamara Stajner (violas)

Asja Valcic, Arne Kircher (celli)

Tibor Kovetsdi, Philipp Kienberger (basses)

Maximilian Kanzler (vibraphone, marimba)

David Helbock (piano)

Bjarne Roupé (guitar)

ABOUT CODA - AN INTERVIEW

What is the concept of Orchestra Suites?

It is somewhat similar to my recent Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update. At that time, I had re-acquainted myself with my music from the early Sixties. I was impressed by how fresh and exciting it still sounded, and it seemed that this music should perhaps be allowed to have a new (and different) life, reaching a new audience that would probably never have known it. During this re-processing it turned out that certain of the compositions remained relatively close to their original versions, albeit with different soloists, while some were so extensively revised that one could consider them almost as new compositions.

With Orchestra Suites, that concept was even more drastically applied, very selectively choosing material for more updates of different musics that were particularly dear to me (so to say "the best of" ...), taking bits and pieces from various other periods in my career, to be shaped into entirely new musical suites

Which older works are your referring to?

After careful consideration, there were quite a few, from various albums, with very diverse instrumentations and concepts, such as Thirteen (a work for two orchestras plus piano soloist, from 1975), Alien (a studio production with only synthesizer tracks and trumpet, 1985), Folly Seeing All This (an album mostly featuring a string quartet, 1992), Cerco un Paese Innocente (a suite of songs with words by Giuseppe Ungaretti, plus big band and string quartet, 1994, but now used instrumentally only), Hide and Seek (a chamber opera with texts by Paul Auster, 2000, now also used without voices), and For Two (a series of duets for piano and guitar, 2010).

What kind of instrumentation are you using now and why?

I have always considered myself an orchestral composer, even when, mostly economical, circumstances dictated smaller ensembles, at times even down-sized to the absolute minimum, such as the duets of Alien and For Two. This time I did not retain the original instrumentations, but settled on what seems to be my current favorite - a chamber orchestra consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, trumpet, french horn, trombone, tuba, guitar, piano, marimba / vibraphone, plus a string section, normally a string quintet, as used on my previous album Comment C'est, but this time enlarged to 16 players.

Unlike the Big Band used for the Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update, very much a jazz-based ensemble with a more or less traditional rhythm section, the orchestra used for the current suites consists mostly of classical musicians with a smaller number of jazz musicians/soloists included, which still anchors the music in an environment clearly coming from jazz.

Do you actually prefer updating and revising older music instead of writing new music?

Re-using material from my own musical universe is a conscious decision and has, as a matter of fact, been my compositional procedure for a long time. Musicologists could have an interesting time divining what in my music has come from where and how it might have been re-shaped and recycled ... something I myself, however, never consider again and immediately forget. Almost always, when I start a new composition, I begin with materials from the previous work, sometimes perhaps with elements that had been discarded at the time, which I may end up not actually using, but more often than not, that procedure would at least start me off on a new line of musical thought from which to continue.

The role of soloists and/or improvisation?

As always, still some improvisation, incorporated into the continuous flow of a composition, moving, perhaps almost imperceptibly at times, between actual improvisation and loosely interpreted notated sequences. Instrumental soloists have here often replaced, that is, "sung," what were vocal melodies from some of the original versions.

An orchestra and soloists, employing a total of 27 musicians plus a conductor - how does a large production such as this come into being?

As so often, already since as far back as 2006, it has been made possible through the effort and cooperation of Christoph Huber at Porgy & Bess, a supreme concert venue in Vienna, which not only made available the necessary funds, a rehearsal and concert space, but also recording facilities, enabling an eventual album release of this material.

Any plans for further updates?

Absolutely not. I think I have exploited my own universe as much as I feel is desirable or necessary.

New compositions then?

No. I think I've said what I have to say. Which doesn't mean it shouldn't be said more often than in the past. There exists plenty of material that has been presented publicly only once. More performances would certainly be possible and interesting.

Apart from the rare exception, my projects have always been initiated and carried through fruition by myself, and at this time I have neither the need nor the will to do it yet again. Nevertheless, should a serious approach ever be made to create a new work, the mere fact of being asked to do something could possibly, though, generate enough excitement to at least consider it. Who knows ...

- Michael Mantler



Photo: Walter Gonaus