



## **SEMPRE NOTTE - Live Songs**

Dark Companion DC 023

music by Michael Mantler

words by Samuel Beckett, Ernst Meister, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Harold Pinter, Michael Mantler

with

Annie Barbazza, John Greaves (voices) and the New Songs Ensemble

recorded live September 26, 2023 at Porgy & Bess, Vienna, Austria

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### **TITLES**

Today / Intolerance / War / Business / What Else To Say / PSS / Darker Than The Light /  
Speechless / Eterno / Stasera / Girovago / L'Illuminata Rugiada / Vanità / Senza Fiato / Non  
Gridate Più / For Instance / When I Run / What's left to say / Understanding

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### **THE NEW SONGS ENSEMBLE**

Michael Mantler (trumpet)  
Gareth Davis (bass clarinet)  
Bjarne Roupé (guitar)  
David Helbock (piano)

radio.string.quartet  
Bernie Mallinger (violin)  
Igmar Jenner (violin)  
Cynthia Liao (viola)  
Sophie Abraham (cello)

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### **About Live Songs**

When asked during an interview if he had any plans for further updates or new compositions, he said, "Absolutely not. I have exploited my own universe as much as I feel is desirable or necessary. 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, but at this time I have neither the need nor the will to do it yet again."

Therefore, when bass clarinetist Gareth Davis contacted him to ask if he might be interested in writing some music for him, he would only answer, "No, thanks. I'm not sure that I could contribute anything at this point. I don't feel I can write any new music at the moment and I just don't want to keep repeating myself." However, Davis being somewhat insistent and presenting an idea of working again with voices and then developing some concrete and enthusiastic offers to present such a project, he nevertheless began to seriously think about it.

Voices obviously (at least in his thinking) require words. Being overwhelmed by the relentless assault of news of an atrocious war close by, he looked back to relevant texts he had used in the past, choosing appropriate segments -- abstract, in the case of the work of Samuel Beckett and Ernst Meister (previously used in his *Many Have No Speech* album), as well as of Giuseppe Ungaretti (from *Cerco un Paese Innocente*) and Harold Pinter (from *Silence*), and finally (not at all abstract, but very specifically related to the evils of war and the ever so sorry human condition in general), some of his own words from *Comment C'est*. Although not exactly "new" compositions, they certainly ended up being different than their original versions.

Having done this project first with a large vocal and brass group at a festival in the Czech Republic, he continued to be intrigued with re-working these as well as various other songs from his career. Wanting to reduce the orchestra to something more basic and more manageable, as well as freer in spirit and execution, he once again come back to draw from his "talent pool" of old friends:

Mantler had met **John Greaves** way back in 1976 when he was working with him on recording the iconic *Kew Rhone* album, then met again in 1987 for his *Live* project (with Jack Bruce, Nick Mason, Don Preston, Rick Fenn), and he also participated in his sort-of-an-opera *School of Understanding* in 1996. They had always stayed in touch over the years and Greaves was instrumental in suggesting Himiko Paganotti for his *Comment C'est* album, and now, for this *Songs* project, he brought his musical partner **Annie Barbazza** to this new ensemble, a particularly good choice, since a substantial part of the program consists of songs with texts in Italian by Giuseppe Ungaretti

**Bjarne Roupé** has been Mantler's choice of guitarist ever since he had returned to Europe in 1991, starting with performances and recording of his *Cerco Un Paese Innocente*, then as a member of his Chamber Music and Songs Ensemble, and then participating on practically all his continuing projects/albums: *School Of Understanding*, *Songs And One Symphony*, *Hide And Seek*, *Concertos*, *For Two*, *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update* and, finally, his last album *Coda*.

**David Helbock**, another of his favorite contributors with an exceptional understanding of his music, has been involved in all his projects since *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra Update*, which also featured the innovative and distinctive **radio.string.quartet**, one of today's outstanding interpreters of contemporary music, who had already participated as well in the past as part of his Chamber Music and Songs ensemble.

And last, but not least, the multi-faceted **Gareth Davis**, who alone was responsible for initiating the original SONGS project, completing the ensemble as bass clarinet soloist.



Photo: Walter Gonaus