

İLHAN MİMAROĞLU
FACE THE WINDMILLS, TURN LEFT

AGONY · LE TOMBEAU D'EDGAR POE · BOWERY BUM · INTERMEZZO
EIGHT PRELUDES FOR MAGNETIC TAPE



The direction, given in the better-late-than-never date of 1973, could have confused Don Quixote; or, depending on his sense of anachronism, he may have found it perfectly logical.

As to my own sense of anachronism, viewed by some as pertinent to my whole existence (although I would fail to see it that way), it applies only to what is offered here.

The collection covers nearly a decade of my work, a stretch of time in which the windmills were, as always, in full view. There was the matter of taking a direction. The nearest one pointed downward. That's where the safe hiding places are. But the shelter not only proved to be insecure, it was terribly crowded too. And one day, down in the dearth, a down to earth question had to be asked. If it's art for art's sake, then for whose sake is art?

The windmills are still there, but Dulcinea is prettier now.

Except for the last two Preludes, this, then, is a collection of non-political pieces. Not totally perhaps, as *Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe* is clearly an attack on bourgeois mediocrity. It was not for fun and games, but at least out of a quivering consciousness, that I had selected Mallarmé's poem for this precursor of my post-1970 agitprop compositions where the message is entrusted to a more efficient dispatcher than Western Union—music. Even the desolation in Orhan Veli's words (Prelude No. 12) needed a reasoning, which I think I found in the more pointed sorrow of *To Kill A Sunrise* and in the explicative imagery of *Tract and Session*, not to speak of Prelude No. 16 with Nâzım Hikmet's words which are also about those who go, but not back and forth.

By no means do I disown these early pieces. But if I let them reappear it is less because they received a certain amount of attention (much more attention, indeed, than my more recent, more accomplished and more relevant music; but then, that's the way the windmill wrangles) and there were requests for their availability, than because I think that, by virtue of their classification as "avant-garde" or "progressive" or what have you, they can one day fulfill a function on a broader base of socially redemptive musical aesthetics.

AGONY (May 1965). In terms of aural-visual correspondence, if this piece reflects the explosive spontaneity of Gorky's painting, then the tribute (to an artist who was expelled by three academies) would be well served. Purely electronic sounds, although the treatment might call for associations with definite or indefinite concrete material. The extent of transformation the classical studio procedures can bring to whatever is selected as sound source ought to be sufficient to make fanatical adherence to one or the other sound category aesthetically futile. Besides, if *musique* is not *concrète*, does it exist?

LE TOMBEAU D'EDGAR POE (September thru November 1964). The source material consists only of the voice of Erdem Buri—his pre-recorded reading of Mallarmé's poem. *Such as into Himself at last eternity changes him, / The poet arouses with a naked sword / His century appalled not to have known / That death was exultant in this voice so strange! / THEY, with a vile writhe of hydra once hearing the angel / Give a sense more pure to the words of the tribe, / Proclaimed loudly the sortilege drunk / In the honorless flood of some*

dark mixture. / Of the earth and heaven, enemies, alas! / If with it our idea does not carve a bas-relief / With which to adorn the dazzling tomb of Poe, / Calm block fallen down here from an obscure disaster, / Let this granite at least show forever their boundaries / To dark flights of Blasphemy scattered in the future. (Translation mine.)

BOWERY BUM (May 1964) is the piece that occasioned my association with Dubuffet and opened the way to my discovery of his own extraordinary music (of which I eventually made a first commercial edition on Finnadar, SR 9002). The visual impetus of the Dubuffet drawing, one of his Bowery Burns, suggested the form, the content, and even the sound source—the sound of a sole rubber band used as a counterpart to the India ink of the drawing. The outer formal character of the piece corresponds to that of the drawing—a seemingly random maze of lines through which appears a human figure, pathetic and droll.

INTERMEZZO (December 1964) is so named because it was composed as a diversion between two projects that proved (and to some extent were designed) to be technically and procedurally laborious. I realized it with an improvisatory ease that I did not think was possible in the medium of the classical studio, and in the process gained awareness of the inner workings of an experimental style that certainly existed before me, yet seemed to yield its secrets only to me. The experience repeated itself and acquired a greater degree of expansiveness in *Agony* which, along with *Intermezzo*, remains as my favorite among my earlier tape-music pieces.

PRELUDES FOR MAGNETIC TAPE

For the purpose of these pieces, a prelude for magnetic tape is no different from an instrumental prelude, provided the term is understood in its 19th century sense, i.e., a short, independent piece in the style of an improvisation. The first twelve preludes were composed in 1966-67. After a lapse of several years I began making new preludes and so far I reached number sixteen. If I keep on composing more of them, they will all be political pieces as Nos. 14, 15 and 16 are.

In PRELUDE No. 1 the sounds of a piano torn apart for tuning practice are employed. Equal emphasis is placed in both the production and the modification of sounds. The former includes the obtaining of *portamenti* by means of a tuning hammer, and the latter consisting of amplitude and frequency modulations. This Prelude, along with No. 12, was used by the Jose Limon Dance Company for Ruth Currier's "Phantasmagoria 1975".

PRELUDE No. 2 is all electronic. It is served by the sounds of a Thomas organ which, as an electrophonic instrument, is far more versatile and interesting than any of the current day synthesizers. The option of modifying the source material is fully utilized.

In PRELUDE No. 6 guitar sounds are exclusively employed. The predominant modification procedure is the application of various attack and decay rates to the sound of the open strings revealed at the end of the piece in its original state.

The clarinet provides the raw material for PRELUDE No. 9 and the material is subjected to frequency modulation mostly by two simultaneous carrier frequencies beating against each other.

The sound source for PRELUDE No. 11 is a rubber band whose rich timbres cannot be fully perceived by the unaided ear but can be captured by sensitive microphones. Throughout this piece the use of modification techniques not directly associated with the tape recorder is kept at a minimum.

PRELUDE No. 12 is the only one in the early group that combines the two "opposing" sound categories, the electronic and the "natural". Both meet on a common ground, the tape-recorder, and exchange characteristics within the climate of a musical vocabulary not normally associated with experimental music. The quaint voice reading Orhan Veli's (1914-1950) Turkish poem belongs to Gungor Bozkurt to whom the Visual Studies carry a dedication by which she was shortchanged (although she does not feel so) for not only sharing some of the toil that went into the making of those pieces, but all of the privations of a composer's life too. I translate the poem as follows: *We have our seas, full of sun; / We have our trees, full of leaves; / Morning till night, we go and go, back and forth / Between our seas and our trees, / Full of nothingness.* This Prelude and No. 2 were the ones Federico Fellini used in his *Satyricon*, in versions I had specially revised for the film.

PRELUDE No. 14 was composed at a time when I was acquiring a better comprehension of the essential (but efficiently covered up) function of music: if music can talk and sing, as it does, then it should do so only about what's going on and what's to be done, about (social, political, economic) realities, truths, and actions. Its traditional privilege to remain mute I still recognize, but only if a message is conveyed by way of titles, program notes, performance instructions, etc. Hence the title of this all electronic, all mute Prelude of 1973—*Face The Windmills, Turn Left.*

PRELUDE No. 16 is set to a poem by Nâzım Hikmet (1902-1963) whom I regard (many do) as the greatest poet of revolutionary struggles. It is titled "On A Painting By Abidin Dino—The Long March". As I was translating it from the Turkish (not for a musical purpose at first) I imagined a melody in the voice of Janis Siegel (of that extraordinary vocal group, The Manhattan Transfer) whom I had not even met at the time. Eventually I contacted her and asked her to sing it for me. Rarely have I been so right in my conceptualizations.



Note: Of the compositions referred to in the above text, *Tract* and *To Kill A Sunrise* are released on Folkways, FTS 33441 and FTQ 33951 respectively. *Session* will be released on a forthcoming Finnadar album.

Also by İlhan Mimaroglu on Finnadar

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Side One

1. AGONY (9:06)
Visual Study No. 4 after Arshile Gorky
2. LE TOMBEAU D'EDGAR POE (7:04)
Poem by Stéphane Mallarmé
Erdem Buri, speaker
3. BOWERY BUM (2:43)
Visual Study No. 3 after Jean Dubuffet
4. INTERMEZZO (3:02)

Side Two

PRELUDES FOR MAGNETIC TAPE

1. PRELUDE No. 1 (2:50)
2. PRELUDE No. 2 (2:24)
3. PRELUDE No. 6 (2:14)
4. PRELUDE No. 9 (2:15)
5. PRELUDE No. 11 (3:03)
6. PRELUDE No. 12 (2:31)
Poem by Orhan Veli
Güngör Bozkurt, speaker
7. PRELUDE No. 14 (3:42)
("Face The Windmills, Turn Left")
8. PRELUDE No. 16 (2:01)
Poem by Nâzım Hikmet
Translation by İlhan Mimaroglu
Janis Siegel, vocalist

All the selections were composed and realized by İlhan Mimaroglu in the studios of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, New York, N.Y., are recorded in revised versions of 1976 specially prepared for this album, and are published by Seesaw Music, ASCAP.

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 SR 9012

Ilhan Mimaroglu

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STEREO

SIDE ONE

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2. LE TOMBEAU D'EDGAR POE (7:04)
Erdem Buri, speaker
3. BOWERY BUM (2:43)
4. INTERMEZZO (3:02)

All selections composed by Ilhan Mimaroglu
(STX 145-SP)
Made in U.S.A.

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Ilhan Mimaroglu

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STEREO

SIDE TWO

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PRELUDES FOR MAGNETIC TAPE

1. PRELUDE No. 1 (2:50); 2. PRELUDE No. 2 (2:24);
3. PRELUDE No. 6 (2:14); 4. PRELUDE No. 9 (2:15);
5. PRELUDE No. 11 (3:03)
6. PRELUDE No. 12 (2:31)
Gungor Bozkurt, speaker
7. PRELUDE No. 14 ("Face The Windmills, Turn Left") (3:42)
8. PRELUDE No. 16 (2:01)
Janis Siegel, vocalist

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