



**BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA,  
BRIAN IRVINE ENSEMBLE,  
PAUL DUNMALL:  
MONTANA STRANGE  
(FMRCD315-0911)**

BBC Concert Orchestra,  
Brian Irvine Ensemble  
Paul Dunmall (saxophone)

About 20 or more years ago I went along to a gig that my good friend Brian Carson had organised in Belfast. It was a small attic space in a tiny arts centre called the Old Museum. There was about 30 people there. The band was Paul Rogers (bass), Tony Levin (drums) and Paul Dunmall (saxophone and pipes). The music was incredible. I was completely drawn in to the magic and connection between these three special musicians. Some time later I plucked up the courage to give Paul a call and invite him over to Northern Ireland to play with my own ensemble. Without hesitation he was there and so began some years of a fantastic partnership in which Paul weaved his way freely around my fully written ensemble music. In those early days we used an ingenious light system that Paul's dad made: where a light was attached to a stand which stood beside Paul as he played and was controlled by a foot switch that I operated as I conducted the ensemble: light on - play, light off - stop!. Eventually the light system was no longer required, just a look was enough and eventually: nothing.

At this time I was also involved in creating a lot of orchestral works and we had talked on many occasions about the possibility of combining the extremes of Paul's free improvisation with the detailed rigid compositional world of contemporary orchestral music. The opportunity to came along in the form of the brilliant forward thinking BBC Jazz on 3 and I got to work on what was to be Montana Strange.

When we premiered the piece in Belfast I remember standing on the stage with the entire BBC Concert Orchestra, Robert Zeigler (conductor), my ensemble and Paul and just before it all kicks off Paul leans over to me and says "so where do you want me to play?.." I thought for a moment, before responding: "Anywhere you like big man" .. and then we were off!

As Paul weaved his magic in an around the orchestral landscape I recall one particular moment in the third movement where a period of uninterrupted orchestral sound was severed in half by what could only be described as some sort of sustained guttural, screaming, lustful, wailing from Paul's tenor saxophone: a sound so possessed that the entire horn section of the orchestra immediately turned their heads and looked at Paul in utter disbelief.

Montana Strange for Paul and myself was always about combining two extremes without regard or compromise. Paul's unique musicianship means he has a super natural ability to combine and create a dialogue, an interconnectivity with all sound no matter its origin and in turn create something unique and profoundly beautiful because of that relationship. Its an exciting piece to do, always mutating and surprising and always, always, full to the brim with a deep love and sensation of sound and humanity.

**MONTANA STRANGE: Liner Notes**

Montana Strange was written for and dedicated to my friend and virtuoso improviser Paul Dunmall. It was inspired by the work of iconic filmmaker David Lynch. My intention was to create a giant musical landscape: a dream world filled with notions of loss, belonging, anxiety, a world full of covered up secrets and unsaid feelings, a world of truth and longing. >>>>>>>>

**MONTANA STRANGE (40 mins)**  
For symphony orchestra, ensemble and improvising saxophonist in four movements  
BBC Concert Orchestra, Brian Irvine ensemble and Paul Dunmall (saxophone)

1. Dick Laurent is dead / Candy coloured clown - 15.06
2. A dream of dark and troubled things - 4.39
3. Just cut 'em up like regular chickens - 11.30

Performed by BBC Concert Orchestra, Brian Irvine Ensemble, Paul Dunmall (saxophone), Conducted by Robert Zeigler and Brian Irvine

**DUBLIN PIECE**

4. Drowning in the sea of your dreams - 5.18

Performed by RTE National Symphony Orchestra, Paul Dunmall ( soprano saxophone) Conducted by Colman Pearce



>>>>>>>> The work involves three separate groups of players: a fairly gymnastic symphony orchestra, a somewhat chaotic and disruptive smaller ensemble and the astonishing, virtuosic, free improviser: Paul Dunmall.

There are two conductors, one for the orchestra, the other for the ensemble. Paul is his own boss.

Throughout the orchestra provides a mutating series of backdrops, which are attacked and interrupted by the ensemble. Paul freely navigates and surfs the lot, avoiding, dodging, fighting, riding the waves as they appear. He decides when to play and when not to.

The structure and improvisational nature of the pieces means that it can never be performed the same way twice and will, always, hopefully surprise.

The music exists as two separate scores, which run in tandem and are linked by a series of cue points co-ordinated and executed by the two conductors. Throughout Paul weaves his magical, seductive lines conjured up from some deep, distant human place.

There are four movements. Movements 1 and 2 run together.

#### 1. DICK LAURENT IS DEAD

These opening words of *Lost Highway* act as a catalyst for a menacing, aggravated and mysterious tale. A wild, overwhelming, turbulent landscape is broken momentarily by short moments of static ease. Huge chords and the wafting sound of music from a distant source lead to a softer more sympathetic place full of birds and love. This orchestral paradise in turn gives way to a frenetic, violent excursion for the ensemble.

#### 2. CANDY COLOURED CLOWN

Like several jarring radio stations the orchestra struggles to get its dainty tune heard before eventually erupting into a ridiculously disjointed fairground romp. The ensemble provides a Blue Velvet coda.

#### 3. A DREAM OF DARK AND TROUBLED THINGS

The subtitle to *Eraserhead*, this is a world of isolation, despair and terror where the lone voice of the saxophone cries out, with all its might, against a stronger and imposing orchestra.

#### 4. JUST CUT 'EM UP LIKE REGULAR CHICKENS

Lynch's reoccurring mutant chickens cluck and comically strut about. The orchestra chases as the ensemble swipes at disjointed scurrying birds. A dislocated, chaotic, heroic pantomime that leads to nothing.

Track 1-3 Recorded and broadcast by BBC Radio 3. Commissioned by BBC Radio 3  
For symphony orchestra, ensemble and improvising saxophonist in four movements  
World premiere Ulster Hall Belfast Feb 2004  
Track 4 Recorded at the National Concert Hall, Dublin 16/01/07  
Produced for FMR by Trevor Taylor. Artwork by Ewan Rigg

#### Brian Irvine Ensemble

John Fitzpatrick	Violin
Scott Heron	Cello
Lewis Smith	Saxophones and Clarinets
Richard Mawhinney	Saxophones and Clarinets
Philip Lavery	Saxophones and Clarinets
Alasdair Wallace	Trumpet
Aidan Hughes	Trombone
Michael Keeney	Accordion/Keyboards
Phil Smyth	Electric Bass
Andrew Lavery	Percussion/computer stuff
Bill Campbell	Electric Guitar
Steve Noble	Turntables

