

performed at the University of Connecticut-Storrs in early 2011.

Three other Massey compositions are featured herein. *Quiet Dawn* was composed by Massey for the Duke Ellington Orchestra. *Goodbye Sweet Pops* is an homage to Louis Armstrong, evincing tribute to musical forerunners while not being atavistic. Finally, *The Cry of My People* (previous versions of this song were recorded by Lee Morgan and Archie Shepp) epitomizes Cal's compositional energy for combining the soulfulness of Spiritual-like melody with bold and complex harmonic structures.

Long Live the Revolutionary Music and Political Energy of Cal Massey!

Fred Ho
May, 2011



THE MUSIC OF CAL MASSEY: A TRIBUTE THE BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT SUITE

Composed 1970. Arrangement updated by Romulus Franceschini in 1986.

1. Prayer (4:01).
2. (Hey God-damn-it) Things Have Got to Change (7:10).
Soloists: Bobby Zankel and Melanie Dyer.
3. Man at Peace in Algiers (for Eldridge Cleaver) (5:12).
Soloists: Bhinda Keidel, Aaron Johnson and Art Hirahara.
4. The Black Saint (for Malcolm X) (3:56).
Soloist: Frank Kuumba Lacy.
5. The Peaceful Warrior (for Martin Luther King, Jr.) (5:31).
Soloists: Art Hirahara and Bhinda Keidel.
6. The Damned Don't Cry (for Huey P. Newton) (4:50). Soloist: Jackie Coleman.
7. Reminiscing About Dear John (for John Coltrane) (2:14). Soloist: Bhinda Keidel.
8. Babylon (2:00). Soloists: Ben Barson, Frank Kuumba Lacy and Melanie Dyer.
9. Back to Africa (for Marcus Garvey) (6:21).
Soloists: Ben Barson, Jackie Coleman, Art Hirahara and Frank Kuumba Lacy.

The following tracks were arranged by Fred Ho (formerly Houn) in 1985:

10. Quiet Dawn (5:32). Soloist: Salim Washington.
11. Goodbye Sweet Pops (for Louis Armstrong) (5:39). Soloist: Nabate Isles.
12. The Cry of My People (10:27). Soloists: Nabate Isles, Frank Kuumba Lacy, Bobby Zankel, Aaron Johnson, Ben Barson, Salim Washington.

CONDUCTED by Whitney George. **PERSONNEL:** Bobby Zankel, alto sax; Bhinda Keidel and Salim Washington, tenor saxes and other woodwinds; Ben Barson, baritone sax; Jackie Coleman, Nabate Isles, Jameson Chandler (trumpets); Frank Kuumba Lacy, Aaron Johnson (trombones); Art Hirahara, piano; Wes Brown, bass; Royal Hartigan (drums and African percussion); Melanie Dyer, viola; Dorothy Lawson, cello. **ENGINEER:** Jon Rosenberg, recorded April 25, 2011 at Systems Two, Brooklyn, NY. Mixed, edited and mastered by Jon Rosenberg.

Special Thanks: the Massey Family (Taru, Zane, India, Waheeda and Singh), Sarah Saul, Whitney George, Kazembe Balagoon and the Brecht Forum, and Arabelle Clitandre.

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Fred Ho & Quincy Saul
Present THE MUSIC OF
CAL MASSEY
A TRIBUTE Conducted by
Whitney George

THE MUSIC OF CAL MASSEY

BY FRED HO

Calvin Massey (b. January 11, 1928) passed away October 25, 1972 at the age of 44, on the day of the premiere of the black revolutionary opera, *Lady Day*, for which he was one of the musical collaborators, with a book written by Aishah Rahman, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The most detailed biography of Mr.

Massey appears in my book, *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader* (The University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

Today Cal Massey is virtually unknown with the exception of both highly knowledgeable "jazz" scholars and a small coterie of illustrious musicians who remain alive and were immensely indebted to Massey's musical influence and mentorship (eg., the great pianist McCoy Tyner and tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp, while other great "jazz" names have passed who were very close to Cal Massey and who had immense respect for him, such as John Coltrane, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Charlie Parker...). Massey was a father figure and close friend to many of the greatest "jazz" musicians of the post-World War era until his early death in 1972.

In addition to Massey's tremendous musical leadership – mentoring and collegial – and owing to severe "blacklisting" and exclusion from the "jazz" industry (recording labels, bookings, press), Cal undauntedly became a pioneer in self-producing a series of highly successful concerts, many of which were based directly within the Black community of Brooklyn, in close proximity to where he and his family resided in the Crown Heights neighborhood. Like Sun Ra, Cal Massey exerted the ethos of Black self-determination, rather than as supplicant to and recipient of the dominant and ubiquitous white "jazz" patronage, whether it be financial and/or notoriety.

Cal Massey was a trumpeter, but was most noted as a composer of magisterial works, of which his epic opus was *The Black Liberation Movement Suite* (commissioned in 1969 by Black Panther Party-leader-in-exile Eldridge Cleaver), an extended work of

originally eight movements, later expanded to nine movements. The work had never been recorded in its entirety; only 3 of the 9 movements had ever been recorded, all by Archie Shepp. Cal Massey ranked among the greatest "jazz" composers of the 20th century, included with Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk and Sun Ra.

The Black Liberation Movement Suite is one of the undiscovered gems of epic "jazz" extended work. It perhaps may be regarded through the exposure of this recording as one of the greatest "jazz" suites of the 20th century, joining Mingus' *Epitaph*, *Let My Children Hear Music* and *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady*, the major Ellington suites and extended form works (the Sacred Concerts, *The Liberian Suite*, *The Drum is a Woman*, etc.), Oliver Nelson's *The Afro-American Suite*, and the varying cosmo-dramas of Sun Ra. While of considerable musical and artistic grandeur as these other great extended works, *The BLM Suite* is also a work of considerable socio-political significance, commissioned by the Black Panther Party and musically and ideologically expressing the revolutionary upsurge of the Black Liberation struggle in the U.S. during the late-1960s. Massey's political stance was unparalleled, both then and now, and may remain singular for paying explicit tribute to revolutionary figures such as Huey P. Newton, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey and Eldridge Cleaver (who asked Massey to compose the *Suite* to raise funds for the Black Panther Party's defense fund for political prisoners when they met in Algeria during the Pan-African Arts Festival in 1969).

The *Suite* had few performances while Massey was alive. In one of the last performances before his death, a ninth movement, *Back to Africa* (for Marcus Garvey), was added. In the mid-1980s, I along with Cal's musician son, Zane, organized the first of three tribute concerts to the music of Cal Massey: at the Jazz Center of New York (then-directed by Nobuko "Cobi" Narita). Two subsequent tribute concerts would be featured in Brooklyn's Celebrate Brooklyn summer festival in Prospect Park (organized then by Burrell Hash), and at the Painted Bride Arts Center in Philadelphia during the Mellon Jazz Festival in 1986. For the latter two concerts, Romulus Franceschini, Cal's longtime collaborator and partner in the RoMas Orchestra, and a significant

musical force in his own right across genres, in addition to being a long-time socialist, re-orchestrated the *Suite*.

Romulus Franceschini was more than an arranger. He was a true collaborator in not only the *Suite*, but in many works with Cal Massey, including the historic Africa Brass recordings by John Coltrane, for which the Massey composition, *The Damned Don't Cry* was recorded, but only posthumously released in a Coltrane reissue of these important sessions. They co-led the RoMas Orchestra ("Ro" for Romulus and "Mas" for Massey), a very unique proposition given that the Orchestra was all black, and Romulus Italian-American, and that many of these musicians were zealous black nationalists!

Cal's music has had a recent resurgence, as I facilitated the project being featured at the Central Brooklyn Jazz Festival in 2010 with the Brooklyn College big band under the direction of Dr. Salim Washington. My student, Ben Barson, then finishing his undergraduate stint at Hampshire College, produced a concert featuring the *Suite* in Amherst, Massachusetts. It was also

