

Leroy Jenkins Violin & Viola Sirone Bass Jerome Cooper Drums & Piano

# invasion

26:16  
(Jerome Cooper)

# hu-man collegno

7:58  
(Sirone)

12:48  
(Leroy Jenkins)

In 1970 the idea of revolution was everywhere – the raging war in VietNam, the desperate antiwar protests that erupted, the ongoing civil rights revolution, and the jazz revolution. In New York City, the center of the jazz world, the free jazz scene – “outside” jazz, underground jazz, the avant garde – was highly active. Inflamed by a decade of innovations by the likes of Coleman, Taylor, Coltrane, Ayler, rugged individualists roamed the lofts and small clubs, seeking catharsis in playing fast, exhaustive energy music. One night at a popular club drummer-bandleader Sunny Murray introduced his versatile bassist, Sirone, to Leroy Jenkins, who was becoming known as a new violinist in town; almost immediately the two discussed playing together. They soon formed a trio with, briefly, drummer Frank Clayton; later in 1970 another newcomer to New York, drummer Jerome Cooper, joined the two string players to complete the Revolutionary Ensemble.

This group introduced New York to decided musical advances, many pioneered by Chicago’s A.A.C.M. musicians. Ex-Chicagoan Jenkins, who played violin, of all unheard-of modern jazz instruments, had formed his concept from classical, swing, blues, and modern elements and had been one of the radicals who discovered new concepts of sound, space, and musical relationships in the late 1960s. Cooper had been a somewhat later Chicago explorer, while Sirone’s freedom of motion had grown out of work with the most visionary New Yorkers. Extensive rehearsal led this cooperative trio to a shared, free sense of dynamics, momentum, and form, and a wholly unique sound: their instrumental recombinations yielded a surprising variety of textures and colors. Most of all, these highly sophisticated personalities played *together* to create an ensemble music even larger than the sum of its parts.

*Continued inside....*

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109 West 27th Street, Seventh floor, New York, NY 10001

Phone 212 627 0990 • Fax 212 627 5504 • Email: info@mutablemusic.com • mutablemusic.com

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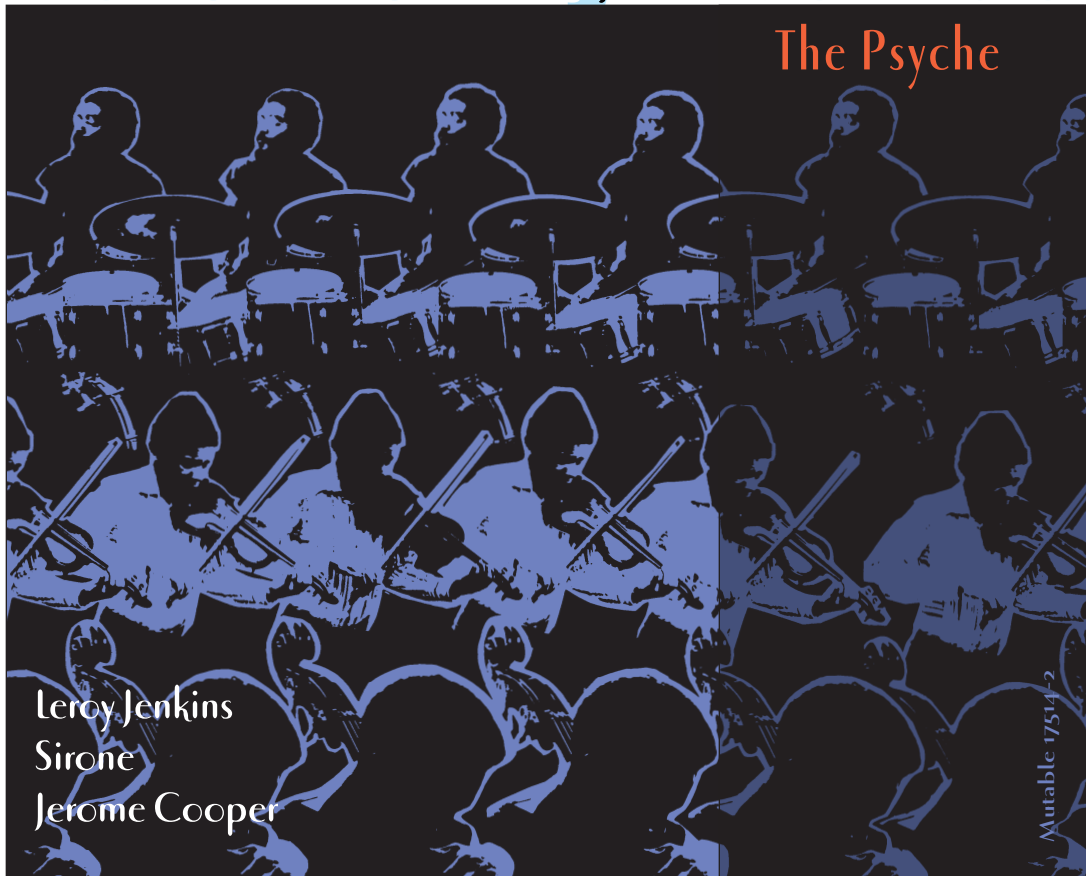
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Revolutionary Ensemble

The Psyche

# Revolutionary Ensemble

## The Psyche



Leroy Jenkins  
Sirone  
Jerome Cooper

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*Continued from back....*

The Revolutionary Ensemble’s seven years together were surely fruitful, with many New York City appearances and European tours, too. Audiences responded warmly, among other gigs, they played the Village Vanguard and several dates at the Tin Palace – once, despite a historic snowstorm, that club was packed to hear the Ensemble. Articles and reviews were mainly encouraging, but recordings were a problem: Few companies documented the new music, and too many LPs were badly recorded or pressed. To assure quality control the Revolutionary Ensemble formed RE Records, in 1975, to produce the third of their six albums, *The Psyche* proved to be the RE label’s only album. It was little heard in America, for it was released just in time for a European tour and the artists took the cartons of LPs with them. They sold out the first pressing to European dealers; somehow, the busy trio never had time to order a second pressing.

If you doubt the expressive capacity of stringed instruments, *The Psyche* should change your mind: Jenkins and Sirone have many ways of bowing and plucking, along with dramatic passages high and low on their instruments. Careful listening and sensitive responses sustain this music; accompaniments to solos grow into intense interplay. The ensemble regularly re-forms into solo, duet, and trio combinations, aided by the players’ doubling instruments. Jenkins’ mastery of thematic improvisation, including motive recall and motivic transposition, provides an especially valuable unifying element. In “Invasion,” hear the opening sustained tones over a rattle (hostly chains?) that are strained into heated tension, erupting into a fast tempo and three long tones that are Jenkins’ solo’s call motive. Another highlight of this disc is the wonderfully conceived, far-ranging violin solo that becomes a colorful violin-bass-drums trio improvisation at the center of “Hu-Man.” And don’t miss “Col Legno,” named for a technique of playing strings with the wood of the bow, which features especially close, intense interplay of violin-bass-piano. There are many other delights in this CD, for these artists are near the peak of their creative powers in *The Psyche*. Their remarkable realization of the ensemble ideal still is revolutionary, nearly three decades later. For us Americans, it’s a joy and a revelation to finally hear this album.

John Litweiler, November 2003