



Reidemeister Move

Plays

ARCANUM 17



Reidemeister Move



plays



ARCANUM 17

The supple wings



A vibrant connection

Credits & Production:

Arcanum 17

Composed by Christopher Williams and Charlie Morrow
after texts by André Breton

Performers

Reidemeister Move
Robin Hayward – microtonal tuba
Christopher Williams – contrabass

Charlie Morrow – voice (English) and conch shells
Maija-Leena Remes – voice (French) and French-English translations

Technicians

Bernd Friebe – recording engineer for Deutschlandfunk Kultur
Tyler Clausen – sound engineer for CMP, field recordings, 3D sound designer
Mike Harrison – assistant sound engineer for CMP, field recordings, videographer
Jeff Aaron Bryant – software programmer

Production and Publishing

Produced by Charles Morrow Productions LLC and Deutschlandfunk Kultur
Published and co-produced by Other Media (c)(p) Other Media (ASCAP)
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CD Edition

Produced and mastered by Sean McCann
R.M. photograph Copyright Holly M. Gilbert (2016)
Photography by Mike Harrison
Recital, Los Angeles, California
Recital Fifty Two (*R.52*)
First edition of 200pc

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André Breton
photograph by Man Ray (1930)



All opaque



The curtain rises

2009: Jeff Perkins – documentary filmmaker, director of *George*, Fluxist, collector/author of the Taxi Tapes – is fleeing his apartment on Fulton Street, New York City. The purge is in full swing: books, records, furniture, et al have to go. What luck! Into my hands arrives a little book, *Arcanum 17*, with a little bookmark, to be discovered some years later:

yes
to smile
and
to fly
with friends
in
Best Wishes
yours
truly
Jeff

1944: André Breton – poet, principal founder and theorist of international Surrealism – has fled German-occupied Paris. He has left behind wife, daughter, and faith in the old order. In New York, he meets Chilean muse Elisa, with whom he escapes to the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec, south of the gaping mouth of the St. Lawrence River. They summer in the village of Percé, in a cottage facing the sea. The massive natural monument of Percé Rock protrudes up through bay before them. He writes a little book about it, *Arcanum 17*.

A thick, existential little book, a reckoning of and with everything that brings him here: Canadian wildlife, the morning star, the myth of Melusina, feminism, the French education system, the ecstasy of newfound love. His alchemical blurring of prose and poetry, dream- and waking states, natural and psychological landscapes, and past, present and future, brings these topics inimitably together. Always on the cusp of development but never quite.

Engaging and transforming, Breton's writing here absorbs and expands the 'pure psychic automatism' of his earlier Surrealist writings. Sonic and musical images saturate the work, from verbal field recordings of the sea and colonies of gannets on nearby Bonaventure Island, to musical metaphors and a profoundly rhythmic portrayal of humanity's perpetual transformation.

The word symphony has been used with the rocky ensemble that dominates Percé, but here was an image which only became powerful from the moment one discovered that the repose of the birds was a perfect match for the craggy shapes of those sheer battlements, so that the organic rhythm was perfectly superimposed on the inorganic rhythm, as if it needed to fuse with it in order to hold itself together: Who could have thought of lending the elasticity of wings to an avalanche? (Translation by Zach Rogow, Green Integer, 2004, p. 32)

Pipe organs of human love; by the sea, with its completely abstract motion engulfed by the city; opening under the midnight sun, even in a hovel, the sinuous windows of ice castles; in dizzy spells that smooth their wings preparing to sideswipe, now the whole sweep of a spring evening, now the echo endlessly ambushed in a verse or in some phrase in a book, now the moaning of that copper star weighing several tons, which a vow of a particular nature has suspended from a chain uniting two peaks hundreds of yards above a village of the Lower-Alps: Moustiers-Sainte-Marie. (pp. 49-50)

2011: While summering in rolling Styrian hills on the other side of the Alps, I finally open the little Breton book. After a spell of soft confusion, I am totally engrossed – was this not written to be heard? There must be low instruments, deep corporeal vibrations for the Rock. These birds, the chattering tourists, the smacking of the flags – what do they sound like today? One would need to embed the listener in these spaces, not merely collect and play back the sounds. Instruments and field recordings dancing frictionously – now within one another, now in counterpoint, now refiguring each other extemporaneously.

2012: Charlie Morrow – composer of music for fish and cities, maker of place through 3D sound, spiritual cousin of Dada, shamans, and Fluxus – embarks with me on an adventure to bring Breton’s book to sounding life. Maija-Leena Remes – literary translator, voice-actor, dramaturge, Morrow’s muse, and coproducer joins our band of magicians. Robin Hayward – inventor of the microtonal tuba, composer of alchemical tendencies, half of the newly formed duo Reidemeister Move – is our companion in arms.

Technicians Tyler Clausen, Mike Harrison, and I drive for two days to reach Percé, starting in Sherbrooke, just north of the Canadian border near our base at Charlie’s HQ in Barton, Vermont, formerly home of Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Something Else Press. George Hargrave of Montreal’s Nutaq Media, an expert in recording in windy locations, provides an anthropomorphic wind shield. We overnight in Rimouski, the northernmost town on the south bank of the St. Lawrence from which you can still see the north bank. The long-awaited village of Percé is drowning in summer tourism – could André Breton have imagined this?

We record his sounds: flags in the harbor, the sea in its many guises, the face of the magnificent Rock, its shale crumbling underfoot. The Québécois twang of boat guides en route to Bonaventure Island, the Île’s moist forests and sweet brooks. And of course the local feathered maniacs, the gannets. What sadists! Who could believe the racket, the stench, the frequency of crash landings on such a small piece of real estate?

We record our sounds: conversations among family members who wade out to the Rock at low tide, the murmur of night. A twist of fate diverts us from flag hunting to a quarry outside Percé. Is this a metamorphosis of Breton’s “old pond”? We hear avalanches from overhead, ripples at the foot, passing motorcycles from within forsaken tractor tires. Breton’s soundscapes are everywhere to be heard, in both old and new constellations.

Back in Barton, among maple trees and wild turkeys once familiar to poet Dick Higgins and artist Alison Knowles, we assemble the montage with Charlie and Maija-Leena. The conch is born as the Star in spatial motion. Maija-Leena’s voice is launched into random orbit. Composing, mixing, recording voices and conch shells, rehearsing with Robin, and rethinking things as we go along as filmmakers might, the immersive sound piece comes into focus after a week. The vibe is high, fueled by pizza and beer from the local Parker Pie Company.

Reidemeister Move premieres *Arcanum 17* at the Western Front in Vancouver in September, taking it eastward for a few reprises on our Canadian tour.

2013: Marcus Gammel – producer of all things fine at Deutschlandfunk’s *Klangkunst* broadcast – invites us to record the piece for his show. It is not obvious how to record this for radio, as soundscapes mixed for an 8.1 cube-like speaker array do not translate transparently to two channels. We plan and experiment with Marcus and Tonmeister Bernd Friebel, ultimately deciding to bring our portable 8.1 system into the studio and record with their Kunstkopf, a kind of mannequin head with microphones in its ears. The production is mixed for binaural playback. Grab your headphones, meine Damen und Herren!

2018 (or 1918?): Sean McCann – fellow Southern Californian, 1-man show at Recital records, idealist – remasters the Deutschlandfunk recording for stereo playback on speakers and publishes the CD & related accoutrements now in your possession. I find myself wondering about 2044, how the eerie resonance of the early 20th and 21st centuries will play out. Fascism, feminism, displacement... ring any bells, dear reader?

Consider the name of the little book: *Arcanum 17*, the 17th Tarot card in the Major Arcana, AKA “The Star”. Historical Tarot master Arthur Edward Waite describes it thus:

A great, radiant star of eight rays, surrounded by seven lesser stars – also of eight rays. The female figure in the foreground is entirely naked. Her left knee is on the land and her right foot upon the water. She pours

The bindweed of light

Water of Life from two great ewers, irrigating sea and land. Behind her is rising ground and on the right a shrub or tree, whereon a bird alights. The figure expresses eternal youth and beauty. The star is l'étoile flamboyante, which appears in Masonic symbolism, but has been confused therein. That which the figure communicates to the living scene is the substance of the heavens and the elements. It has been said truly that the mottoes of this card are "Waters of Life freely" and "Gifts of the Spirit." The summary of several tawdry explanations says that it is a card of hope. (From The Pictorial Key to the Tarot, 1911)

Besides Percé Rock, the Star is the most frequent "character" in Breton's book. It appears now and then at the beginning, accruing power and ascending as the reader proceeds. The Star is a chameleon, changing from the copper star to the North Star to Lucifer Light bearer or the morning star. But it always emits an aura of freedom and redemption, particularly in its last appearance:

The star found here again is the early morning star; which tended to eclipse the other heavenly bodies in the window. It surrenders to me the secret of its structure, explains to me why it numbers twice as many points as they, why its points are fiery red and yellow, as if the two were overlapping stars with alternating rays. It is the product of the actual unity of these two mysteries: love summoned to rebirth from the loss of the love object and only then rising to its full consciousness, to its complete dignity; liberty vowing to really know itself well and to become dynamic since its own loss is at stake. In the nocturnal image that was my guide, the resolution of this double contradiction takes place under the protection of the tree that encloses the remnants of dead wisdom, through the exchanges between the butterfly and the flower and by virtue of the principle of the uninterrupted expansion of fluids, connected to the certainty of eternal renewal. (pp. 129-130)

In our piece, the star is Charlie's conch – the mouthpiece a perfect star and perfect path for the breath, the wind. It floats independently over the scenery in different virtual spaces: now a whinny, now amplifying and filtering Charlie's whiskers microscopically, now bursting from a distant meadow with crickets. Our star does allegorize hope, but not as

a brand, an end in itself (think of Shepard Fairey's campaign posters for Barack Obama). Rather, in sympathy with Breton 74 years later, hope here connotes a daily processing of contradiction, a deeper exchange with one's environment(s), a faith in eternal renewal over dogma.



She brandishes a sistrum

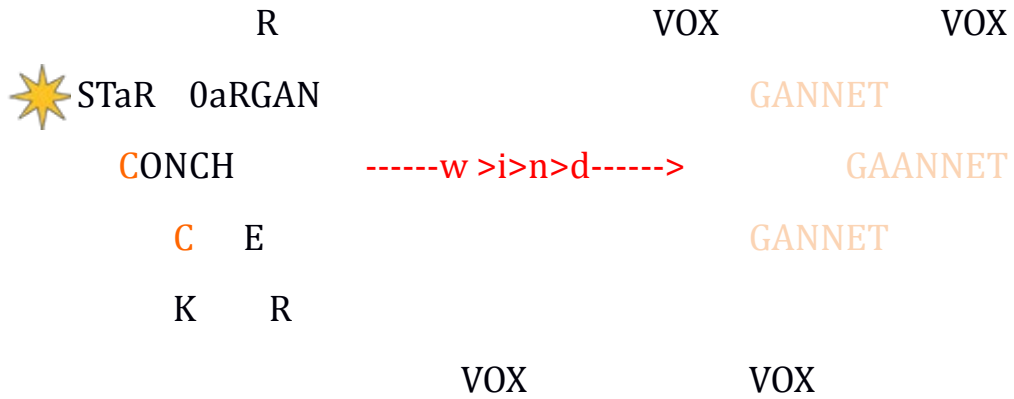


1944

Coordinates: 48°32'N 64°13'W

17

To be reborn continuously



Biographies

Christopher Williams (1981, San Diego, CA) is a wayfarer on the body-mind continuum. His medium is music. He holds a B.A. from the University of California, San Diego, where he studied under Charles Curtis, Chaya Czernowin, and Bertram Turetzky; and a Ph.D. from the University of Leiden (NL), where his advisors were Marcel Cobussen and Richard Barrett.

As a composer and contrabassist, Williams's work runs the gamut from chamber music, improvisation, and radio art to collaborations with dancers, sound artists, and visual artists. Performances and collaborations with Derek Bailey, Jodi Carboni, Compagnie Ouïe/Dire, Charles Curtis, LaMonte Young's Theatre of Eternal Music, Ferran Fages, Barbara Held, Robin Hayward (as Reidemeister Move), Christian Kesten, Hans W. Koch, filmmaker Zachary Kerschberg, Christina Kubisch, Maulwerker, Charlie Morrow, David Moss, Andrea Neumann, Mary Oliver and Rozemarie Heggen, Ben Patterson, Robyn Schulkowsky, Tanja Smit, Martin Sonderkamp, and Vocal Constructivists. In addition to appearing in various North American and European experimental music circuits, this work has been presented by VPRO Radio 6 (Holland), Deutschlandradio Kultur, the Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona, Volksbühne Berlin, and the American Documentary Film Festival.

Williams' artistic research on improvisation, notation, and his body-mind continuum has been presented at major universities and international conferences in North America, Europe, and India, and published in numerous journals and book chapters including *Journal for Artistic Research*, *Journal of Sonic Studies*, *Open Space Magazine*, *Critical Studies in Improvisation*, *TEMPO*, and *Experiencing Liveness in Contemporary Performance* (Routledge). Williams has received scholarships, grants, and prizes from the University of California, the Darmstadt Summer Courses, the Arts Council of Catalunya, Goethe Institut, Hauptstadtkulturfonds Berlin, Festival Acanthes, and the American Documentary Film Festival.

He also co-curates the Berlin concert series KONTRAKLANG, and works with immersive sound experience designer Charles Morrow Productions.

Tuba player and composer **Robin Hayward**, born in Brighton, England in 1969, has been based in Berlin since 1998. He has redefined the tuba's

potential both in the areas of noise and microtonality, and his compositions for other instruments reflect a similar experimental, medium-specific approach. He has toured extensively both solo and in collaboration, and been featured in such festivals as Maerzmusik and Fri Resonans.

Collaborations include such luminaries as Charles Curtis and Roberto Fabbricani along with leading composers such as Christian Wolff and Alvin Lucier. His approach to the tuba has been documented in the solo CDs *Valve Division* and *States of Rushing*, as well as various collaborative releases.

In 2009 Robin Hayward developed the first fully microtonal tuba together with the music instrument manufacturers B&S, and in 2011 published an extensive article on this new tuba in the *Galpin Society Journal*, tracing its history back to the original tuba patent of 1835. He is currently doing a doctorate on the acoustics of the recently developed microtonal tuba at the Technical University in Berlin.

Charlie Morrow (1942 Newark, NJ), is a conceptualist whose music and sound work explores many styles and forms, from events for media and public spaces to commercial soundtracks, new media productions, museum installations and programming for broadcast and festivals.

Throughout his career, Morrow has sought to bring experimental sound and music to a wider audience. His works have ranged from massive free public events, such as "Toot'N Blink" for Chicago's Lake Michigan and "Fanfare in the Air" for New York Harbor to innovative installations for the world's leading institutions, including Kennedy Space Center, and the American Museum of Natural History.

Taking sound to the next level, Morrow most recently created MorrowSound®, a state-of-the-art technology at the forefront of the rapidly-expanding field of 3D sound. It has been showcased at major venues and events, including the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics and the recently opened Magic Forrest and Aviary at Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus OH.

A 3-CD retrospective of Charlie's sound recordings, *Toot!*, was published by XI Records in 2011. And most recently, *Toot! Too*, an LP collecting his event-music from 1970-2014 was published by Recital in 2017.



Ma situation propre

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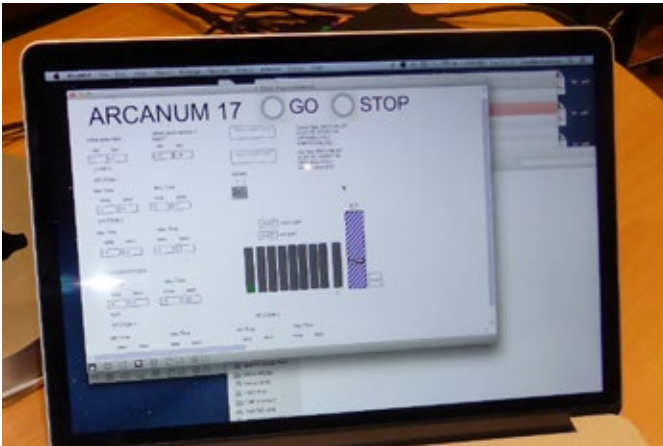
Le rideau se lève



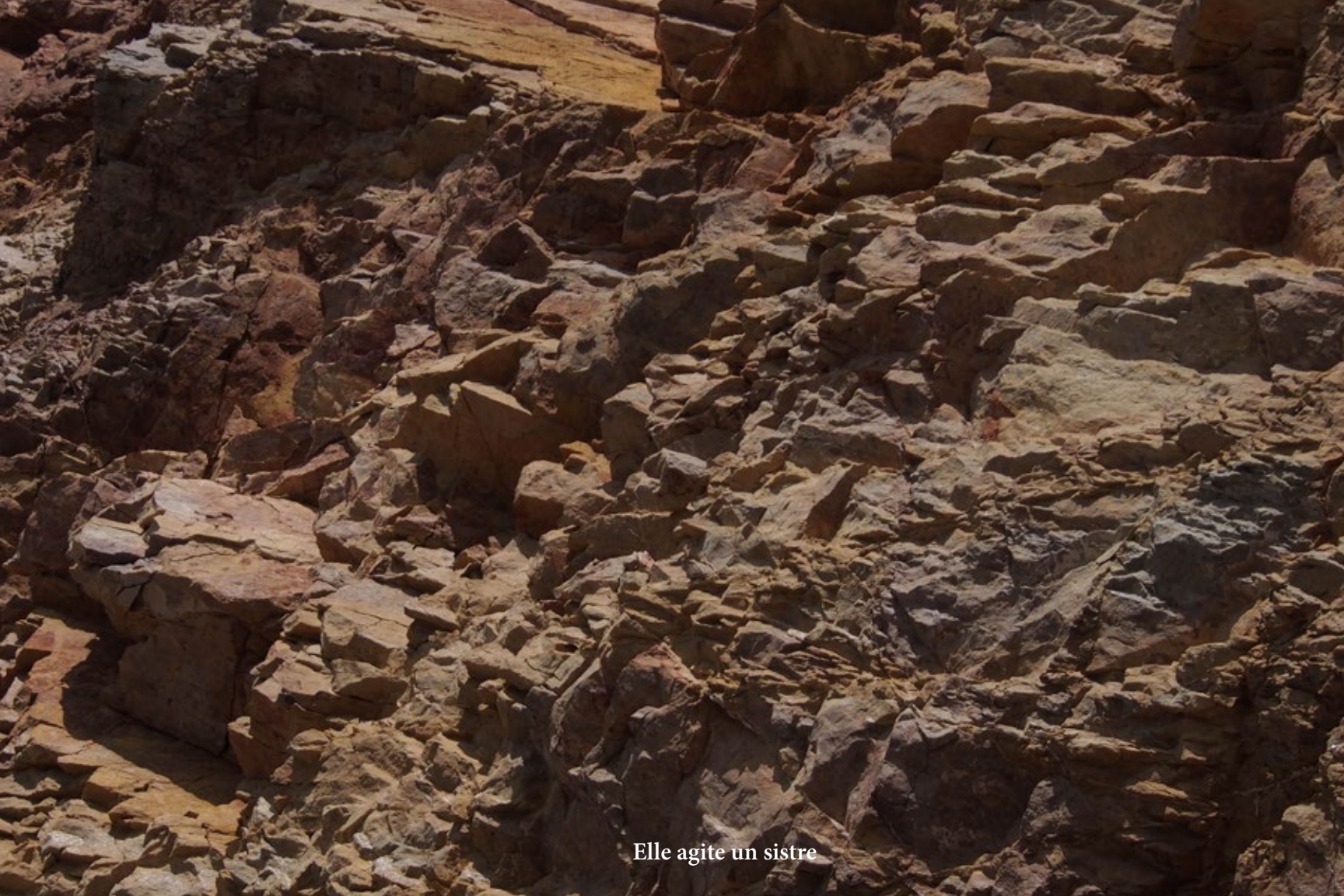
Mélusine à demi reprise



Un liseron de lumière



En se recréer sans cesse



Elle agite un sistre

