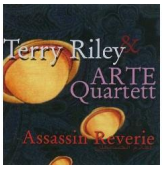
Terry Riley & Arte Quartett – Assassin Reverie (2005)



Uncle Jard (19:38) *1 Part I 5:17 2 Part II 8:36 3 Part III 5:32 4 Assassin Reverie 18:43 5 Tread On The Trail (Version For 12 Saxophones) 9:56* Alto Saxophone – Sascha Armbruster Baritone Saxophone, Edited By – Beat Kappeler Effects, Sound Designer – Beat Kappeler (tracks: 4) Soprano Saxophone – Beat Hofstetter Tenor Saxophone – Andrea Formenti Vocals, Piano, Harpsichord – Terry Riley (tracks: 1 to 3)

American composer Terry Riley turned 70 in June 2005, at which time his presence on the American music scene had been a constant for more than 40 years. He is often categorized as a "minimalist," and many regard his piece In C as the touchstone of musical minimalism itself. Riley refuses to contract himself to either minimalism, or any other designation that his large and categorically bewildering life's work might be held to. New World's Assassin Reverie adds yet another dimension to the multi-sided corpus of Riley, this one done in collaboration with the expert German saxophone ensemble ARTE Quartett. Assassin Reverie contains three works as different from one another as can be imagined, especially considering that they are all scored for saxophone ensemble. If they share some sense of commonality, it is that all three come from the darker side of Riley's musical personality.

Uncle Jard is a multi-movement work that seems to have some difficulty getting off the ground, focusing on drones among the saxophones as Riley sings in a style informed by Indian Classical music. Once in the middle of the piece, we encounter a playful, funky section where Riley sings about "Uncle Jard," an imaginary friend belonging to his grandchildren. The wry wit and humor of this section comes as a completely unexpected diversion and a highly entertaining one. Assassin Reverie is an unusually violent piece based around a tape collage that assembles growingly agitated sounds of war and battle, a provocative work that Riley states is "the result of living in a post-9/11 world."

The pièce de resistance, though, is retained for Assassin Reverie's conclusion; Tread on the Tail, a piece from around the time of In C that has not been heard since it was first rolled out at the San Francisco Tape Center in 1965. Inspired by a Sonny Rollins concert Riley took in at about that time, Tread on the Tail is as dark, foreboding, and compelling as In C is light, sunny, and persuasive. Riley fans who think of him in a new agey vein expecting to find something like A Rainbow in Curved Air here might be disappointed, but enthusiasts of serious contemporary music will be blown away, as Assassin Reverie is the most challenging and rewarding Riley album that had appeared in some time. ---Uncle Dave Lewis, AllMusic Review

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