

DANA BRAYTON

CHAMBER MUSIC 1992–2006

LUDOVICO ENSEMBLE



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I was just 20 years old when I started the Ludovico Ensemble during my sophomore year at the Boston Conservatory. Dana was a professor of mine at the time and his advice was pivotal to the formation and development of the ensemble. At one point or another, Dana coached the Ludovico Ensemble in all of the pieces featured on this CD. During the countless hours spent on rehearsals leading up to the recording and in the recording sessions themselves, we often found ourselves in want of some sage advice from Dana on how to tackle a certain passage or for permission to deviate slightly from something in one of the scores. Luckily we were able to fondly remember the time Dana spent with us on his music and, we hope, to come to conclusions he would have been happy with.

—Nicholas Tolle

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DANA BRAYTON AND I MET at Pomona College in 1975 where we began a life-long friendship. We started a jazz band, an offshoot of Bobby Bradford's big band, long before Dana became immersed in the world of classical music; we continued making music together in Boston in the early 80's until he gave up performing. He was always a few steps ahead of me; encouraging, seeking wisdom, serious and hilariously cynical at the same time. He wore no blinders — life was work and never mind "pandering to the elitist bastards." Be yourself and never give up! "Purple Haze, Straight No Chaser, Bartok's 4th Quartet, Aretha! It's all one!" That was how it was.

Dana proceeded to get his DMA, and from the mid 80's until his death in 2006 he composed in earnest. His music was wonderfully imaginative, informed, and difficult. He clung to the truth that all that matters is the next challenge, the next possibility.

Dana was sincerely devoted to his wonderful family. Composing, teaching, endless home renovation, and family life left him forever exhausted. He loved outdoor sports and any spare time was given to biking, wind-surfing, or hiking. He managed his life with cool efficiency, often exhibiting a matter of fact maturity that was mystifying to more wayward souls like my own. This level-headedness gave his music sturdy structure and focus, and yet one can clearly and equally

hear in his work the wild man, the passionate, heartfelt outsider that ranged quietly inside him.

Dana found a lot of joy in teaching, and in his years at the Boston Conservatory he touched many students deeply. He was utterly free of pretension, often sarcastically funny, always invigorating his charges with an everyman's zeal. He completely rejected stylistic boundaries and any sort of academic gamesmanship, preferring to encourage students to add jazz, rock, funk, and anything else into their compositions. For quite a few years he and I produced a night of music involving students and professionals called "The Funk Project," when various composers brought in charts that combined western percussion, jazz, classical, world music, and rhythm and blues. It was a blast.

I vividly remember a moment at Dana's memorial concert at Boston Conservatory. As I packed up my gear, awash in sadness, I looked out to see a young student burst into tears and lay his head on the chest of a professor. In that moment it was clear how long and all-encompassing the chain of being is. Who numbers the people we touch? This young man will carry his teacher's wisdom with him and spread it, as will so many others who were touched by Dana's music or his professorial heart. Had he any idea how many people cared for him?

Dana was so lacking in vanity that he never released a CD of his own music. When he died of a sudden heart attack at age 53, I despaired of his music ever having a continued life. When Nick Tolle and group suggested this recording out of admiration for Dana's work, I was immensely pleased. Dana was an amazing composer. Now his work will live on.

—Joel Harrison

AS I AGAIN HEAR THESE WORKS BY DANA, I picture a summer evening spent on his porch in rocking chairs. Over the span of several hours we drank a few beers in a shared, eventful, and almost complete silence, colored by the chirping crickets, and punctuated only by a few words and sentences. Dana had this power, as friend and composer, to unveil a rich world, teeming and growing beneath the apparent silence.

Bloom, **Bell Birds**, and **Rose Marie** lead us gently through what we used to call the "Brayton Nocturnal Magic Landscape." There is a wonderful levitation in the last, a work that seems composed on an asteroid, not on Earth or on Jupiter: an outer space rock with almost no gravity. A kaleidoscope of short motifs dance and sigh in the middle and high register of the quartet, choreographing an ensemble of fairies and elves. **Bell Birds** continues the exploration of this expressive territory. Dana's love for the rainforest and his skill to reveal minute variations and slowly shifting textures glow in the mysterious **Bloom**, a work that at times sounds as if Sun Ra is landing in Bali, with Dana receiving him with his twinkling mischief.

The two duos present other aspects of Dana the composer: in **Odds and Evens** he reveals his dry humor, his capacity to create an exhilarating and unflappably elegant high speed chase between the two vibraphones, and to do so without spilling a drop from his martini glass. **Range of Motion** starts peacefully, an astringent pastoral scene reminiscent of Stravinsky, and then evolves into a delightful, postbop exchange of virtuosic volleys and arrives in the last four minutes to the highest place to which music can aspire: love without sentimentality, reigning forever.

—Osvaldo Golijov

THE LUDOVICO ENSEMBLE was founded in 2002 by Nicholas Tolle and currently serves as Ensemble in Residence at the Boston Conservatory. Its mission is to dually promote rarely heard works of the European and American avant-garde as well as to foster the development of new repertoire for mixed chamber ensemble. Its performances have been enthusiastically received by composers such as Helmut Lachenmann and Jonathan Harvey. The group takes its name from the fictional medical treatment featured in the Anthony Burgess novel and Stanley Kubrick movie "A Clockwork Orange," in which the protagonist is subjected to a classical conditioning regimen that induces nausea at the sight of violent or exploitative acts, but also, inadvertently, to the music of Beethoven.

The Ludovico Ensemble would like to thank the friends and family of Dana Brayton whose contributions made this recording possible, and the Boston Conservatory for providing rehearsal facilities.



Dana Brayton, 1952–2006

Born in Brookline, MA on September 4, 1952, Dana Graham Brayton grew up in Weston, CT. After studying at Lake Forest

College, Pomona College, and the University of Washington, he returned to the Boston area, where he earned a master's degree in composition from the New England Conservatory and a DMA from Boston University. In 1986, he was a composition fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center.

Drafted into the military in 1973 near the end of the Vietnam War, Dana was sent to Berlin, where he served in the Army band. Almost three decades later, Dana paid tribute to those who served in Vietnam with his music theater/dance work "The Things They Carried." He wrote two other progressive theater pieces entitled "Surviving Coyote" and "All Lost to Prayers," as well as pieces for chamber orchestra, string quartet, guitar, jazz big band, and percussion.

Dana taught briefly at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth and the Berklee College of Music before joining the faculty at the Boston Conservatory in 1995. He was a beloved teacher there until his death on July 3, 2006, of a heart attack while on a long-distance bike ride.



LUDOVICO ENSEMBLE EDITION 1

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- 1 BELL BIRDS** (2000) 10:53
Eliza Jacques, cello
Karolina Rojahn, piano
Mike Williams, percussion
- 2 ODDS AND EVENS** (2003) 6:50
Matt Prendergast, vibraphone
Nicholas Tolle, vibraphone
- 3 BLOOM** (2006) 10:11
Matt Prendergast, percussion
Nicholas Tolle, percussion
Mike Williams, percussion
- 4 RANGE OF MOTION** (1992) 9:39
Derek Beckvold, saxophone
Kent O'Doherty, saxophone
- 5 ROSE MARIE** (1999) 17:47
Gabriela Diaz, violin
Shaw Pong Liu, violin
Ashleigh Gordon, viola
Eliza Jacques, cello

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—Osvaldo Golijov

Executive producer: Nicholas Tolle

Recording engineer: John Weston

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www.futuraproductions.com

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