

## Mp3 Outspan - Arcana



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Found sounds combined with guitar, bass, didgeridoo, percussion and electronics. 6 MP3 Songs in this album (54:12) ! Related styles: ELECTRONIC: Electronica, AVANT GARDE: Musique Concrète Details: OutSpan Bios: David Brown studied music at the University of Iowa and the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College in Oakland, CA. where he earned his MFA, studying with Anthony Braxton and Kenneth Gaburo. Now living in Providence, Rhode Island, he combines found sounds with acoustic and electronic instruments to create collages of orchestral density. David has created sound design for theater and dance productions and produced several CDs of music including settings of Ovids Metamorphoses and Miltons Paradise Lost read by Chris Turner. Conor Dowling is a bassist, synthesist, composer and performer living and working in The Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. He received his BA in Music from Simons Rock of Bard College (Gt. Barrington, MA) and his MFA in Electronic Music/Composition from Mills College in Oakland, CA, where he studied with Lou Harrison, Kenneth Gaburo and Anthony Braxton. In addition to recording/performing with his Random Access Orchestra, he has played in a variety of original rock bands in the Northampton, MA area, including The Rent Party, Road, Motley Kristofferson and his current cover band Page 6. In addition to working with David Brown in Outspan, he is currently developing material for the 2nd Random Access Orchestra release.

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Arcana Composition Notes

The pieces on this CD represent the evolution of compositional ideas and techniques, which were generated and refined over years of collaboration in our personal studios. Though we share a common musical language from our studies at the Mills College Center for Contemporary Music, our compositional concerns were quite different. The process of working together has brought our musical ideas closer together in many ways, but there remains a healthy creative tension and a bit of technical specialization in

our respective collaborative roles. Five sets of ideas and techniques are common to all of the music on this CD, though used in differing proportions in various pieces. **Musique Concrète:** Environmental sounds play a large role in our music, both in the use of samples in place of instrumental sound sources, but also as architectural elements that determine the shape of large sections of the music. **Generative Grammars:** We have tended to generate most of the sonic material and much of the phrasing and orchestration from a small number of sources, which give the pieces an internal consistency, a larger architectural rightness of proportion and shape. **Harmonic Series and Just Intonation:** We have made extensive use of ratio-metric and harmonic series tunings, which give the tonality a more unique cast as well as making the both consonances and dissonances more powerful. **Long timbral evolutions:** Much of the structure and propulsion of these pieces comes from the evolution of timbre in field recordings and tracks generated from studio feedback networks. **Improvisation:** Although we tend to set up somewhat regimented formal parameters for our pieces, most of our work together leaves a space in the process for improvisation. Sometimes this is heard within the final piece (as in *Lake of Time*), and sometimes its relegated to a more traditional pre-compositional role as a means for generating the melodic and harmonic content of a work (as in section 3 of *The Death of Socrates*). **Piece Descriptions**

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**Dissolution** uses recordings from our individual archives to form structural elements, which were assembled with much attention paid to the interlocking shapes of their individual sources. We then added algorithmic and hand percussion, electric bass and didgeridoo. This was then used as a foundation for improvisation of the organ and electric guitar parts. We would like to thank Wayne Eagles for his outstanding guitar work which helped unify the elements and solidify the trajectory of the piece. **Carnac** uses environmental sounds and field recordings as the foundation, which forms the basic structure of the piece. Much care was devoted to the selection and layout of sample-based drum sounds. These were then used to generate algorithmic drum phrases and gestures, from which the bits which were ultimately used were selected. The drum parts form the temporal structure for the piece in an iteration of Fibonacci ratios that shape the work as a whole. To this rhythmic bed we added just-intoned synthesizer, electric bass and the Slovakian fujara, which is the overtone flute that introduces the piece. The bass plays simple notes derived from the harmonic series and functions, along with the synthesizer, in an architectonic fashion (as does the bass in James Tenney's *Electric Guitar Septet*, a touchstone for *Carnac*). The piece uses Fibonacci series

members 2, 3, 5, and 8 to determine the relative lengths of subsections of the temporal form. Whether one hears these sectional transitions clearly or in a more subconscious way, they seem to impart a rightness to the rhythmic structure.. The Death of Socrates is a composition in three movements: It uses an archaic hexatonic scale attributed to Terpander of Lesbos, circa 700 BCE. The ratios used in this scale are: 11/10, 11/9, 11/8, 11/7, 11/6, 1/1. This scale has a serviceable 5th in the 11/8, but no third, putting it outside the realm of western triadic harmony. The scale is quite singable, however, and generally minor sounding in quality. Through The Veil: The first movement consists of long tones and is an exploration of the tonality. It also uses traffic noise and bird calls to evoke movement from the contemporary urban environment to a rural soundscape of an imagined Classical Greece. Broadband sound sources generally recede over the course of the movement to reveal the tonal elements in greater relief. Crito: This movement uses a reading of Plato's Crito dialog as the structural basis. The vocal processing makes use of pitch-to-MIDI conversion of the spoken voices to generate synthesizer control information. The voices are repeatedly run through digital reverb to obscure the content. This cumulative process maintains the structure and rhythms of the (translated) dialog while smearing the content into a burbling, resonant space, a technique pioneered by Alvin Lucier in I am Sitting in a Room. This movement employs a combination of the hexatonic scale in C with the traditional Greek Mixolydian mode in G, also attributed to Terpander. This combination yields some very tight dissonances, which are used most noticeably at structural cadence points. Funeral Procession: A slow ostinato is established on drums and gongs, modeled on a typical gong cycle from Balinese gamelan. The just-intoned electric piano represents the central melodic part, echoing the spirit of Socrates' stoic acceptance of his fate. The woodwinds and brass weave a tapestry of melodies around this central voice in two separate sub-ensembles. The human voices form a call and response pattern, embodying the expression of the mourners in the imagined procession. Lake of Time uses material generated from self regulating feedback networks, with piano and bass for harmonic and melodic punctuation. Each of the three movements is dominated by one type of sound source; the first by the electric guitar, the second by didgeridoo, and the third by environmental recordings. \_\_\_\_\_ We would like to dedicate this CD to the composer Eric Richards, who has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. - David Brown and Conor Dowling, December 2008

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