TO KILL A SUNRISE
a "requiem for those shot in the back"

LA RUCHE
İlhan Mimaroglu
TWO COMPOSITIONS
FOR ELECTROMAGNETIC TAPE
TO KILL A SUNRISE
A "REQUIEM FOR THOSE SHOT IN THE BACK"

Solo speakers
CHRIS WASHINGTON
Text by Marco Antonio Flores
GEOFFREY GÜRŞOY
Che Guevara's autopsy report

Singer
MARY ANN HOXNORTH
Text by Che Guevara

Ensemble speakers
CHRIS WASHINGTON, CLARENCE BULLARD,
MANFRED BORMANN, ANN MC MILLAN,
BASIL PAO, GÜNGÜR BOZKURT,
KEN ANDERSON, LAURA FRANCO
Text by İlhan Mimaroglu

Composed in the studios of the
Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music

LA RUCHE

JACQUES WIEDERKEHR, violoncello
MICHEL MERLET, harpsichord
MARTINE JOSTE, piano

Composed in the studios of the
Groupe de Recherches Musicales, ORTF,
Paris, France (1968)

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TO KILL A SUNRISE

The subtitle, a "requiem for those shot in the back," is taken from a poem by Marco Antonio Flores, the Guatemalan guerilla poet. Fragments of his poem also provide the words for the first section of the piece.

The title? While I was working on the piece, and it had no title at the time, someone at a party said something that I heard as, "Would you like to have some to kill a sunrise?" Without even thinking what was meant by that, I said to myself, "That's it, that's the title!" What I was offered was, of course, tequila sunrise, tequila with orange juice, which I somehow had never heard of before. The sarcasm in the association was unintended at first. It came to me as an afterthought, aimed at those who view the crimes of the ruling order with indifference.

Although this is a piece of program music, the listener needs no program text as what is meant to be said is said in plain words which are part of the music. (For a discussion of the function of words in music and the associated subjects, the reader is referred to the notes of my compositions, Tract, recorded on Folkways FTS 33441.) I wish to avoid, however, one possible misinterpretation. The piece is a dirge, a "song of mourning," for those who
are murdered by the lackeys of the ruling class. It is not a criticism of the killers. I am not saying to them, "You shouldn't have done what you've done to all these people who wanted to change the world and overthrow what you represent," or it would have been like saying to the enemy general, "You shouldn't have killed our soldiers." Such a criticism would amount at changing sides and trying to come to terms with those who are fought against.

The piece was composed in September through December, 1974, and first heard publicly in one of the evenings of electronic music given by the Ripert Centre at the Kitchen, New York City, January 29, 1975. A few hours before the concert came the news of Weather Underground's bombings. Before the playing of the piece I wanted to make a brief speech to the audience and refer to the news as an occasion that might add a touch of vengeful solace to the wrath and sorrow of the music. I was not permitted.

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The piece is titled after a famous Paris building where such painters and writers as Picasso, Modigliani, Mac Orlan and Apollinaire had lived and worked.


At the time I was proceeding with the first experiments on a new piece commissioned by the GRM, I learned that this historic building, still used as living and working quarters by many artists, was facing demolition, to be replaced by a high-rise. My nocturnal visits to the environs soon turned into near-pilgrimages and the music I was composing developed under the influence of that place described as "unwanted, mysterious, phantom, a castle of mists ..."

The title therefore reflects those vivid impressions and also represents a dedication to those who were engaged in an effort (now successful) to save the building. That the piece is described as an elegy is an expression of La Ruche's then imminent doom, and it is only coincidental that it is a twelve-cornered building and the piece consists of twelve sections uninterrupted by pauses.

The title is about the existence of the piece only four years later. Fuses blow. The four-channel machine quits. Bayle, Satie, and a pot of rabbit stew. Telephone number for the reverberation chamber is 2850. Druckman thinks it's too romantic. Bureaucracy delays payments and I borrow money from Guy Reibel. One 'cello note looped and transposed on the phonogène 21 times, to Savouret's dismay. If I visit Montmartre one last time, in the early morning, wearing a red sweater, I know I will return to Paris.