



Bio information: **ROB MAZUREK AND BLACK CUBE SP**

Title: **RETURN THE TIDES: ASCENSION SUITE AND HOLY GHOST** (Cuneiform Rune 399) Format: CD / 2xLP / DIGITAL

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FILE UNDER: JAZZ / AVANT-JAZZ

In the Wake of an Epic Loss,
A Tidal Wave of Extraordinary Music is Unleashed and Recorded in Sao Paulo, Brazil
by
Rob Mazurek and Black Cube SP
Creating
– *Return the Tides: Ascension Suite and Holy Ghost* –
a Transcendent Psychedelic Spiritual Music for Modern Times

Sometimes there are no words. But music can speak volumes when life requires a response to the most profound and wrenching of losses, channeling the deepest feelings, expressing the ineffable and providing emotional and spiritual succor. For **Rob Mazurek**, the brilliant Chicago cornetist, composer and conceptualist improviser who has honed an international coterie of collaborators, the sudden and unexpected passing of his mother **Kathleen Mazurek** in May of 2013 set him on a quest to honor her bountiful spirit and acknowledge her transition to another realm. Not surprisingly, he found exactly what he needed in São Paulo, Brazil. Working with five sonic explorers in **Black Cube SP**, a sextet that builds on the celebrated **São Paulo Underground** collective trio with drummer **Mauricio Takara** and keyboardist **Guilherme Granado**, he created *Return the Tides: Ascension Suite and Holy Ghost*, a startlingly cathartic and magisterial modern psychedelic spiritual that's as riveting as it is ravishing. The album is Mazurek's latest breathtaking project on **Cuneiform**.

Compelled to compose in the days and weeks following his mother's death, Mazurek brought the music to Brazil where he gathered with his long-time comrades for "a shamanistic journey where we sonically clear a path for my mother into the unknown to ensure her safe journey to the next," he says. A series of communal rituals and transitional suites, recorded in one complete unedited session, the album unfolds with four lavishly textured pieces all running more than 16 minutes. Starting with "**Oh Mother (Angel's Wings)**," a beatific gathering of spirits, each piece summons an entire self-contained cosmos, tracing the upward trajectory of body-into-spirit. Whether fierce or pacific, transparent or opaque, the music is enveloping and full of astonishing details that carry the listener in a lapidary tide. "The raw energy of the sound vibrations simultaneously act as a clarifying, healing source that allowed me and the other musicians to enter into the sorrow and devastation," Mazurek says, "and come through to the eye of the storm, viewing the transition from living to dying and experiencing a new intense and mystic space." Language too served its purpose, as his poem written in the aftermath of his mother's loss gave the album its title.

Featuring **Mauricio Takara** on drums, cavaquinho and vocals, **Guilherme Granado** on keyboards, synths, sampler and vocals, **Thomas Rohrer** on rabeca, electronics, soprano sax and vocals, **Rogério Martins** on percussion and vocals, and **MC Rodrigo Brandão** on vocals, **Black Cube SP** brings together some of the most creative and resourceful musicians on São Paulo's roiling music scene. Forged during his eight-year sojourn in Brazil, Mazurek's close ties with the players, who all work together in various overlapping bands and projects, meant that he could depend on them to help "process the loss in a ritualistic, cathartic way, through sound," he says, noting that the music was all recorded at a studio owned by Takara's family. "During these few days, we were all surrounded by the gravity of what had just happened, but were truly compelled to create an unearthly beauty together. This is a modern spiritual with all the beauty and sadness of life being pulled out of us beyond even our own known capabilities."

Bidding farewell to a parent is never easy. For Mazurek the loss of his mother, who's portrayed on the album's evocative cover art, was sudden and wrenching. Only 11 days after being diagnosed with cancer, she was gone.

Black Cube SP's music doesn't mark a sudden break with his previous work. His blue-flame cornet is as intensely lyrical and his lines as incisive as ever, but *Return the Tides* finds him in new emotional territory. Sounding unbridled and unburdened, he is playing beyond himself, buoyed by his equally fearless cast of collaborators, creating layers upon layers of energy and timeless transitions.

From 2000-2008, Mazurek lived in Brazil among the dense Amazon jungle of **Manaus**, the **Oscar Niemeyer** architectural wonderland in the capital **Brasilia** and the megalopolis **São Paulo**. This brought him recognition throughout Brazil and allowed him to make lasting ties with leading artists and musicians that he continues to collaborate with today. Simultaneously, Mazurek continued his ascent stateside, in Europe and in Asia, which never waned due to his intense touring schedule and constant flow of critically acclaimed, genre-defying recordings.

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A polymorphously creative bandleader, he directs, composes and performs in a wide array of ensembles, from his highly interactive **Chicago Underground Duo** with drummer **Chad Taylor**, which released *Locus (Northern Spy)* in March 2014, to his talent-laden **Octet**, which was captured on 2013's *Skull Sessions (Cuneiform)*, and of course São Paulo Underground, which also released *Beija Flors Velho E Sujo* (Cuneiform) in 2013. His most recent project pulls together his two underground vital life sources, **Chicago Underground** and São Paulo Underground, and pairs them with tenor saxophone legend **Pharoah Sanders** in **Pharoah and the Underground**, which released the CD *Spiral Mercury* and the LP *Primitive Jupiter (Clean Feed)* in August 2014.

One of his most important vehicles has been his constantly shifting **Exploding Star Orchestra**, a capaciously inventive large ensemble, which has featured the likes of **Roscoe Mitchell**, as well as the late **Bill Dixon** and **Fred Anderson**, with **Nicole Mitchell**, **Angelica Sanchez**, **Matana Roberts**, **Jeff Parker**, **John Herndon**, **Chad Taylor**, **Matt Bauder**, **Damon Locks**, **Mauricio Takara** and **Guilherme Granado**, among others. The variable and volatile Exploding Star Orchestra released *Matter Anti-Matter (Rogue Art)* in September 2013. *Galactic Parables Vol. 1*, the most recent of seven Mazurek suites written for Exploding Star Orchestra, is slated for release on Cuneiform in 2015.

Born in **Jersey City, New Jersey**, Mazurek moved to the Chicagoland area as a child. In 1983 wanting to follow the example of his hero **Sun Ra**, Mazurek moved to the city and immediately immersed himself in the eclectic **Chicago Jazz** scene, playing alongside and studying with jazz masters like **Ken Prince**, **Jodie Christian**, **Earma Thompson**, **Billy Brimfield**, **Fred Hopkins** and **Lin Halliday**.

In 1994, he launched the **Chicago Underground** workshop at Chicago's storied jazz club **The Green Mill**. The workshop featured many of the scene's rising stars, including guitarist **Jeff Parker** and drummer **Chad Taylor**. Eventually the workshop gave birth to the **Chicago Underground Collective**, an ensemble that recorded several albums for **Delmark**, **Thrill Jockey** and most recently **Northern Spy**.

Mazurek's collaborations include a wide cross section of leading figures and ensembles in jazz, electronic, rock and improvised music, including the late **Bill Dixon**, **Yusef Lateef** and **Fred Anderson**, **Pharoah Sanders**, **Roscoe Mitchell**, **Naná Vasconcelos**, **Mike Ladd**, **Emmett Kelly**, **Jim O'Rourke**, **Sam Prekop** and **Isotope 217**.

Increasingly recognized as a creative force outside of the United States, Mazurek was awarded France's prestigious artist residency at the **Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud** in 2005, which gave him the opportunity to hone his interest in multi-media works. The following year he debuted **São Paulo Underground**, a powerhouse ensemble that has released four acclaimed albums, two for Cuneiform. More than a prolific composer, he's increasingly combined his sonic experiments with multi-media projects, often with the support of major arts institutions. In 2010, Mazurek received a **Commissioning Music USA** grant from New Music USA for a multi-media work developed in collaboration with video artist and choreographer **Marianne Kim**. In 2013, he also received a **Helen Coburn Meier and Tim Meier Arts Achievement Award** and was given a residency at the famed **URDLA Centre International Estampe & Livre** in Villeurbanne, France where he realized four 3D lithographs to be used as graphic scores for improvisation.

In 2011, the **Jazz & Wine Festival** in Cormons, Italy commissioned him to compose *Violent Orchid Suite* and the **Sant'Anna Aressi Jazz Festival** in Sardinia, Italy commissioned *Transgressions Suite*. He topped off a highly productive 2012 by being voted **International Musician of the Year** alongside Wadada Leo Smith by *Musica Jazz*, Italy's top jazz magazine. In 2013, the Sant'Anna Aressi Jazz Festival returned to commission Mazurek for *Galactic Parables*, which was performed live on Italian RAI radio the same month that he was featured on the cover of *Wire Magazine*, which described him as a venerable force in new music.

A master at co-mingling potent personalities, Mazurek convened a particularly deep and interconnected cast of collaborators for *Return the Tides*.

A prodigious percussionist who's also accomplished on the electric cavaquinho, the diminutive four-string instrument that plays a key role in propelling samba, **Mauricio Takara** occupies a central role on São Paulo's teeming creative music scene. In addition to his **M.Takara 3** project, **Hurtmold**, and **São Paulo Underground**, he has contributed profoundly to projects involving **Pharoah Sanders**, **Yusef Lateef**, **Prefuse 73**, **Marcelo Camelo** and **Kassin**.

Also hailing from São Paulo, **Guilherme Granado** is avidly sought after by a disparate array of artists, including **Prefuse 73**, **Naná Vasconcelos**, and the Brazilian superstar **Tulipa**. An integral member of the Brazilian rock group **Hurtmold**, he has released two records under **Bodes and Elefantes**, his solo project. His latest album *Glaciers of Nice Vol. 1* on **Propósito Records** is a glorious electronic-infused spiritual.

Born and raised in Switzerland, **Thomas Rohrer** has lived in Brazil for the past two decades, earning his stripes as a master of the keening rabeca through intense studies with the instrument's leading practitioners in Brazil's northeast. He's a member of **Trio TEC**, the free-improv **Abaetetuba Collective**, a trio with reed expert **Hans Koch** and percussionist **Panda Gianfratti**, and a duo with the singer **Saadet Türköz** from Kazakhstan. He also performs in a long-running duo with **Gianfratti** and has worked extensively with double bass player **Célio Barros** since 1996. A cultural catalyst, he has curated a number of international free improv festivals in Brazil in recent years and was invited by Mazurek to perform with legendary multi-instrumentalist **Yusef Lateef** on a series of performances in Brazil.

Master percussionist **Rogério Martins** is also a member of the band **Hurtmold** and **M. Takara 3** and has recorded with **Marcelo Camelo** and **Chico Rey**. He recently gained notice in the US for his work with singer/songwriter **Mia Doi Todd**. **Rodrigo Brandão** is a seminal figure on Brazil's hip hop and experimental Afro-futurist scene, who has forged a bracing mixture between jazz, hip hop, experimental and Afro-Brazilian chanting. A rapper, music promoter and indispensable producer, he has brought artists like **Gil Scott-Heron**, **Wadada Leo Smith**, **Mulatu Astatke**, **Lee Fields**, **Erykah Badu** and **Tony Allen** to Brazil. As a performer he's made his mark with **Mamelo Sound System**, **Zulumbi**, and **Ekundayo** while collaborating with a multitude of Brazilian musicians from **Naná Vasconcelos** to **Nação Zumbi**.

Each of these musicians brought his love and utter commitment to *Return the Tides*. At the end of the session, there was silence and a profound communion. "We couldn't help the tears from flowing like rivers down the streets of São Paulo into the sea hundreds of miles away," Mazurek says. "As one entity we allowed ourselves to grieve and support each other through sound and the precious act of giving energy and love, expelling it together with the greatest purpose and intention. No one could talk afterward. We silently packed up our things and left feeling very relieved and that we had done all that we could do."

For more information on Rob Mazurek and Black Cube SP:

www.robmazurek.com - www.cuneiformrecords.com

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available for download on the Rob Mazurek artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com



We asked Rob Mazurek to talk about Turn Back the Tides. Here's our discussion from August 2014:

Talk about deciding to do this project with these musicians.

A: These musicians are my brothers, they are my family as well. This is why I was able to come to Brazil less than one month after my mother, **Kathleen Mazurek**, passed away suddenly on May 4, 2013, because I knew that they would help me to process the loss in a ritualistic, cathartic way, through sound. This was the intention when I scheduled several days of recording at **El Rocha Studio**, which is owned by Mauricio's family. During these few days, we were all surrounded by the gravity of what had just happened, but were truly compelled to create an unearthly beauty together, one that would herald a new possibility of joy in a world where the most precious being, the mother, has passed into an unknown/known eternity.

What kind of preparation was there composing-wise?

A: In the hours, days and weeks after my mother passed, I felt a torrent of energy compelling me to write. I still feel that energy today. I call it the mother energy. It acts as a vital life-source of inspiration. The compositions that you hear on this recording were composed during that time, immediately after my mother's passing. I brought the composed sketches with me to Brazil, knowing that the process of recording such an emotional work would inevitably change the focus from the compositions to the raw emotionality that was expressed and that you can hear clearly in the recording.

The tunes often feel like they're investigating order & chaos, with a lot of attention paid to the transitions between sections & textures.

A: The work progresses and is meant to be a **shamanistic journey where we sonically clear a path for my mother into the unknown to ensure her safe journey to the next**. The raw energy of the sound vibrations also, simultaneously, acts as a clarifying, healing source that allowed me and the other musicians to enter into the sorrow and devastation, and come through into the joy of transformation from living and from dying.

It feels like certain tunes address or flow from certain emotional states. To simplify, "Oh Mother" feels awestruck, "Return the Tides" feels furious, and "Let the Rain" defiant.

A: **This is a modern spiritual** with all the beauty and sadness of life being pulled out of us beyond even our own known capabilities. The compositions did come in waves during my processing of this incredible event, which completely shocked our family. My mother was diagnosed with cancer and died 11 days later. The powerful sound is meant to clear the air of anything that would keep my mother from passing peacefully into the next and simultaneously to cleanse myself and the musicians.

Talk a little bit about the aftermath of this project...what it felt like when you were done.

A: Complete release and stillness. After the final sound is heard in this recording, we could not help the tears from flowing like rivers down the streets of Sao Paulo, into the sea hundreds of miles away. The feeling of emptiness, not in a negative sense, but in the way of a vessel that can now be used for a different purpose. As one entity we allowed ourselves to grieve and support each other through sound and the precious act of giving energy of love, expelling it together with the greatest purpose and intention. No one could talk afterward. We silently packed up our things and left feeling very relieved and that we had done all that we could do.

Tell us about the album's name: Return the Tides: Ascension Suite and Holy Ghost -

A: The album name is derived from the title of a poem that I wrote for my mother, after she passed. The poem represents to me the moment of ascension and my mother's energy rising to the next. It describes the feeling of ascending into the unknown, both for her, during her passing, and for myself, having survived this devastating loss. The track titles mirror the flashes of movement described in the poem. The complete poem is included in the liner notes.

Tell us more about this album.

A: The music on this is an intense statement of love from the deepest center of my humanity... This is an extremely intimate recording realized during a period of intense grief, but also joy, appreciation and productivity. It explores all of these thoughts and communicates them sonically, but not in an intentional way, only part of us channeling our human experience.

This is a work free of ego. It is strong medicine derived of beauty straight from the core of our beings, which we projected in all directions in multifarious colors to ensure the safe passage of my mother into the next and to heal ourselves, and hopefully others.

Talk about the recording process.

A: The making of this recording was very difficult in the sense that we were all probing the deepest places of our being and were enveloped in a trancelike state using sketches of melodies that I had written shortly after my mother's passing. Cachaca, often used in spiritual ceremony in Candomblé, was used to cleanse our bodies, minds and spirits before the performance. The recording was taken in one unedited take after which none of us could speak.

How is this album different from, or similar to your previous works?

A: Everything in this work feels different to me, as everything in life feels different to me.

How would you classify this music?

A: The music and this band play modern spirituals. We do not ignore developments in sound technology, electronics, but we also reach as far back as the single sound of a human voice. The music is meant to convey the strength and frailty of human expression and existence. In this way, I feel **the music more closely resembles field recordings of spiritual rituals than traditional genres.**