



**Charlie Morrow**

**Vocal and Choral Ensemble**



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*Photo © LISA KAHANE, NYC*

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com·pose – put together

re·com·pose (rĕˈkəm-pōz')

*tr.v.* re·com·posed, re·com·pos·ing, re·com·pos·es

1. To compose again; reorganize or rearrange.
2. To restore to composure; calm.

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reˈcom·po·siˈtion (rĕˈkŏm-pŏ-zĭsh'ən) *n.*

*The FreeDictionary by Farlex*

Charlie Morrow (born Charles Morrow, February 9, 1942) is an American sound artist, composer, conceptualist and performer whose work connects leading edge ideas and technologies with archaic and shamanistic practices. His numerous and diverse creative projects have included chanting and healing works, museum and gallery installations, large-scale festival events,

Negotiation with the musical past was an element in Morrow's compositional thinking, along with a taste for musical pranks. His "Very Slow Gabrieli" (1957) is a dramatically slowed down realization of Giovanni Gabrieli's "Sonata Pian' e Forte" for double brass ensemble. A later collage work, "Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves" (1992), shows a mature late twentieth-century imagination engaging in unexpected ways with late medieval style.

The Little Charlie Festival, a five-day celebration of Morrow's life and work held in New York City during Fall 2010, gave some indication of the category-defying scope of his creative activity.

*Julian Cowley*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie\\_Morrow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Morrow)

**Catalog**

Slow Gabrieli - Sonata Pian' e Forte	12 part brass or choir	1957
Psychic Music	any source any	1957
Air Music	any source any	1957
The Birth of the War God	Western Wind Vocal Ensemble USA	1972
Hymn Transformations O Come Now My Soul (Sacred Harp)	University of Vermont Choir USA	1975
Canticle for Brother Sun	Western Wind Vocal Ensemble USA	1976
Star Bangled Banner, Moving My Vowels	voice(s)	1990
The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves	Camerata Trajectina NL	1992
Enough is Enough	Recomposition of J S Bach ES IST GENUG	2013
For the Magna Carta	Veni Sanctus Spiritus - mensural layers a tempo, 2x, 5x and 10x stretches 4 unison choirs UK	2013

**SLOW GABRIELI - Sonata Pian e Forte 12 part brass  
for double brass ensemble and ghosts**

**Vocal and Choral versions - singers perform the brass parts  
in vocalize, solo or multiple voices on each part.**

A slow motion performance of the 1597 Gabrieli composition “Sonata Pian e Forte” Sacrae Symphoniae #1, stretching it to many more times its normal length.

Performers’ physical gestures are slowed as well. My 1957 composition is the slow performance, as slow as possible.

This slow performance was later expanded by the addition of a Ghost (pulsed drone) Ensemble, and by abrupt pauses in the music to allow the Ghost Ensemble to be heard by the audience and performers in the performance space. The ghosts are a processional brass ensemble in four voices which slowly processes around the outside of the performance space in hallways, stairwells and even out of doors.

The doors, and if effective the windows, of the performance space are opened for this performance and not before so as to preserve the surprise acoustic effect.

The pulsed drone is performed by the processional Ghost brass as long tone envelopes pulsed by breath accents in a steady beat.

In the vocalize versions, the performers agree on vocables suitable for the acoustics of the performance space.

**PSYCHIC MUSIC - any source any 1957**

The vocal or choral ensemble performs any work of music without making a sound, miming the performance. They create the music internally—mentally, emotionally—and psychically project it.

A large conducted ensemble can soundlessly pretend to play musical instruments, or alternatively, perform without any physical movement at all.

While Psychic Music was devised for concert band, it applies to any performance: vocal, choral, orchestra, opera, theatrical plays, TV news reporters, etc.

**AIR MUSIC - any source any 1957**

Through-composed work with colors and rhythms of air blown through whatever musical instrument including cupped hands is specified. A vocal or choral group of any size is appropriate.

This can be an improvised or a carefully planned presentation of a composed work.

**THE BIRTH OF THE WARGOD 1972**  
**Western Wind Vocal Ensemble**  
**USA SSACtTB**

Poet Jerome Rothenberg translated this epic poem from the Aztec to English. Morrow set it for Western Wind Vocal Ensemble - two sopranos, alto, countertenor, tenor and bass baritone.

Morrow composed Wargod with his voice in his sound studio. He chanted the text setting, one voice at a time, into a multitrack sound recorder. He then transcribed the performance to musical notation. The vocal settings are filled with mouth music and word painting. The style is a mix of chanting, hymn making and rhythms.

This epic song begins with a fanfare-like prologue. Seven dramatic chapters chronicle the birth of Aztec war god, Huitzilopochtli. From his mother's womb, he heard his four hundred brothers and sisters plotting to kill their mother. He is born fully clad in armor. He systematically plies his rage against the four hundred brothers and sister, as "the marks of what he would become."

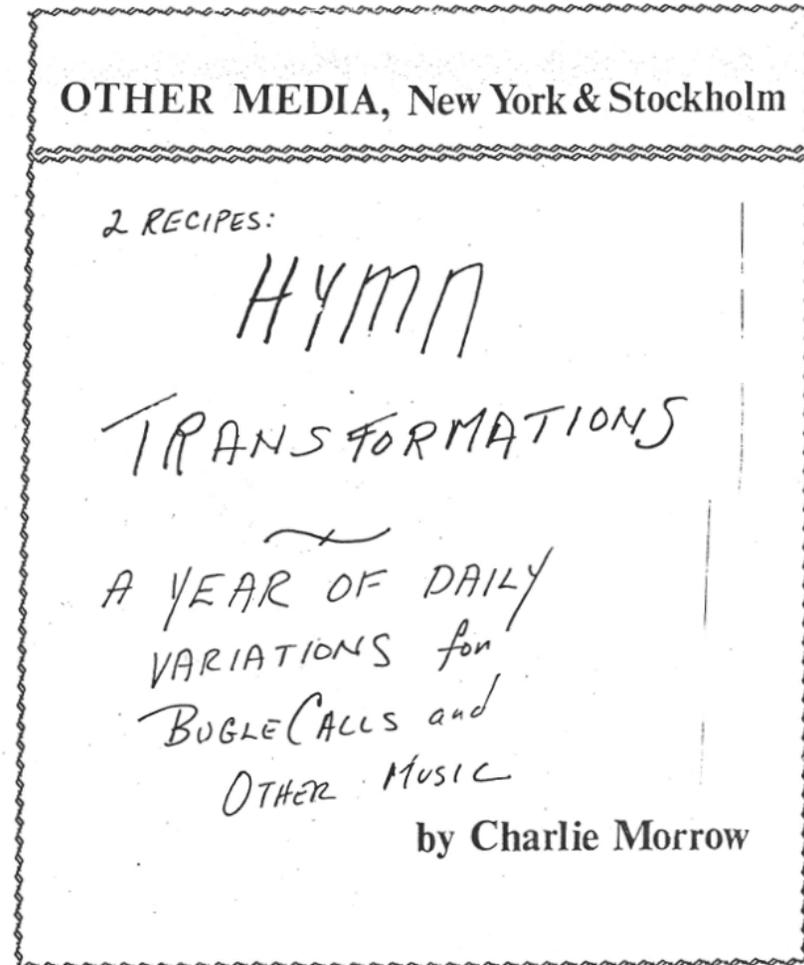
While this work is written for a vocal ensemble, a choral version can join the sections that are not solos.

<p>1. old Coatlicue snake woman 's sweeping up a feather falleth on her more like a ball of feathers 'twas 'twas fluff that moment she did pick it up deposited it betwixt her legs then ended sweeping would want to take it out from legs but nothing's there that instant she's grown pregnant the 400 Brothers saw their mother pregnant a great anger fills them "who hath made thee pregnant "made thee into mother "shame "it lays on us "it shames us (says their sister Coyolxauhqui) "brothers "who has laid it "on us has made "what grows betwixt her legs Old Mother knows it now's so scared a great weight lies on her the child between her legs brings comfort (sez) "I know now what I have to do" Snake Woman hears her boy's word was a great comfort calmed her heart was blowing full of little blisses</p>	<p>THE BIRTH OF THE WAR GOD (aztec) 2. thus joined 400 Brothers would agree in turn those southerners did then determine how they would take their mother's life for shaming them so fierce 400 Brothers were were full of wrath as if their hearts were leaving them for anger sweet sister Coyolxauhqui 's working up &amp; cooling anger of her brothers will go &amp; kill old mother they prepare for war are dressed for it 400 brothers strut like generals spinning &amp; tangling of hair entanglement of headhairs was among them one brother Cuauhtlicac but couldn't keep his word what 400 Brothers said he told to Huitzilopochtli (answers) "careful "little uncle "thou should be always standing guard "I got "some planning of my own</p>	<p>3. so had made up their minds to kill her be finished with old mother had started marching 'twas little sister guided them so fancy so like a bunch of dudes dressed up for war had passed out paper costumes for adornment (sez) "thrust forward "strut in files "be like a perfect squadron "little sister "guide thy way</p>
<p>5. was born that moment Huitzilopochtli lined up his gear his shield of eagle feathers arrowheads blue spearhead ("turquoise- darts" so-called) &amp; paints his face with colors like the "painted child" puts on his head a bonnet of rare feathers fits in earplugs (but also had one skinny foot wore feathered sandle on the left painted his thighs &amp; arms in blue) then one called Tochancalqui set fire to the turquoise spears went to give Huitzilopochtli orders with his dart the newborn wounds their sister Coyolxauhqui cuts her throat the head 's abandoned on Snake Mountain while body goes rolling down the slope smashes to smithereens here &amp; there go hands go feet go torso</p>	<p>6. now was Huitzilopochtli swollen now was going in pursuit of brothers now was stalking them would make them shimmy down would make 400 Southerners climb the summit of Snake Mountain (&amp; when he sees them all before him when he spots them on the slope that instant he pursues them stalks them like rabbits around the mountain four times Huitzilopochtli made them go around it four times pace off the circuit of Snake Mountain would vainly try to freak him with din of timbrels vainly would tumble towards him to sound of bells on ankies &amp; banged their shields) they could make nothing happen nothing worked out now now nothing for defense they had were stalked by Huitzilopochtli drove them off demolished them destroyed them wiped them out did nothing so much as chase them hard did stalk them harder &amp; they would plead with him they'd say "enough's enough "already</p>	<p>7. but Huitzilopochtli couldn't stop with greater fire would burn his anger at them &amp; pursued them only a few escaped his presence squirmed from his hands they headed south (would afterwards be called the Southerners 400 brothers gone that one direction) those who had fled his hand like those he killed on whom he gorged his anger Huitzilopochtli did strip their clothes from decorations weapons he took possession of &amp; joined unto his office made them the marks of what he would become</p> <p>English version by Jerome Rothenberg Copyright 1972 Jerome Rothenberg and Alcheringa</p>

**HYMN TRANSFORMATIONS 1975**  
**O Come Now My Soul (Sacred Harp)**  
**University of Vermont Choir USA**

Morrow wrote this method of tailoring hymns and bugle calls to the calendar date or other numerical information. This recording is based on a hymn from the Sacred Harp, traditional American hymn book. The hymn is sung, then with notes doubled, then tripled, and so forth.

Sacred Harp hymns are varied through numbered transformations, adding repetitions, echoes, etc. The alterations serve as examples of how to transform traditional music using performing strategies that are “easy enough to do by ear.”



**CANTICLE FOR BROTHER SUN 1976**  
**Western Wind USA SSACtTB**

Poet Jerome Rothenberg translated to English this famous historic text by St. Francis D'assisi. It is a series of praises especially for Brother Sun. Morrow set the translation for the six voices of the Western Wind. Morrow uses audible systems of numerical repetitions and echoes to expand each verse. A simple melody is developed numerically and contrpuntally through to the end.

1 Sop TRI YI YI  
 2 UM UM UM

CTR TNR PRANTANTANT

1 Tenor DIANTANTANT  
 2 UM UM UM

BAR TRI YI YI

1 Sop FREELY MOST HI G-H  
 2 MOST HIGH

CTR TNR FREELY MOST HIGH

1 Tenor  
 2

BAR

45

NO. M-1 12 STAVE  
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MADE IN U.S.A.

**MOVING MY VOWELS VOICE(S) 1990**

Systematic shifts in the service of patriotism

Applying transparent rules for substituting vowels for each other, Morrow produces a series of variations on the U.S. National anthem. First page:

MOVING MY VOWELS e becomes o

The Star Banglod Bannor

*O say can you soo, by the dawn's oarly light, what so proudly we hailed at  
the twilight's last gloaming. Whoso broad stripos and bright stars, through the  
porilous fight. O'or the ramparts we watchod wore so galantly stroaming?  
And the rockot's rod glaro, the bombs bursting in air gavo proof through the  
night that our flag was still thoro. O say doos that star banglod bannor yot  
wavo, O'or the land of the froo and the homo of the bravo*

## THE BOOK OF HOURS OF CATHERINE OF CLEVES - Camerata Trajectina 1992 Produced by Han Reiziger. VPRO. The Netherlands

The Book of Hours.

A celebration of miniature images created by the Flemish Master of Cleves, circa 1540. Following the natural illuminations sound design adorns the music, and the celebration begins and ends with church bells. Morrow's music is late 20th century conceptual spin on period's style. Performance commissioned by Dutch radio, VPRO and is performed by the Utrecht early music players "Camerata Trajectina." The one hour event includes carillon bells, procession into a cathedral and recession.

In performance, projections of the pages of the Book of Hours flow through with full page images and explorations of visual details.

### THE BOOK OF HOURS OF CATHERINE OF CLEVES - a play of time -

book text & images: attributed to the Master of Cleves(1430)  
music, libretto and sound design: Charlie Morrow(1994)  
world premier, commissioned by VPRO

The illuminated miniature BOOK OF HOURS OF CATHERINE OF CLEVES is an exquisitely beautiful and very Dutch treasure, from the 1430s Renaissance Guilders. Each hand painted page contains a central biblical image surrounded by a border of nature images and human life with nature - bird catching, animal hunting, wood chopping, fishing. I was drawn to these miniature images with such grand vision, complexity and humor. I found personal resonance in to the idea of nature surrounding the theological. I have known an American facsimile edition of the Book since childhood in our family home, and dreamed this project for years.

When the opportunity arose to make the premier in the place of the Book's origin, I created a score and libretto to "perform" the BOOK OF HOURS. It uses early musical instruments and period style voices, illuminated with modern sound design. The form is that of a pageant or play with a short movement for single images or groups of images. So far, I have completed The Hours of The Virgin - presented in this performance - and The Saturday Hours of the Virgin

I composed specifically for the Camerata Trajectina with carillon, vocal soloists, plain-chant choir(recorded), zink and electronic keyboard triggering natural sounds. The performance requires microphones, live electronic processing of the instruments, recorded sounds, and loud speakers in the church.

Natural sound is employed in two ways: First as the sound environment in the performing spaces, surrounding the music and images with an envelope of the natural world. This envelope corresponds to the painted border images in the Book of Hours - second as a vocabulary of symbolic sounds hand played by the keyboardist at appropriate moments: bees for the Virgin, owl and woodchopping for Joseph, chant voices in the Temple, babies sounds and cries for the holy infants.

Of special note is the sound of the bees, which symbolize Mary, because in the past people thought bees reproduced asexually. In any case, I had planned to make the Book of Hours as a collaboration with Juan Downey, the Chilean born New York based painter and video artist. Unfortunately, Juan died in June 1993. I had planned to sing for Juan on the morning of June 7. But when I telephoned, his wife Marylis wept that Juan had just died. As I rushed to their home, passing the corner of West 73rd Street and Broadway, I was momentarily surrounded by bees. After saying goodbye to Juan, I went to my studio, and composed a memorial piece from the sound of bees and my chanting voice. This memorial piece for Juan is embedded into the sound fabric of The Book of Hours. His spirit has kept me company throughout the composing, and I hope to bring his sensibility into the visual exploration of the painted images. I was not surprised when Marylis, said that Juan loved and had kept bees. She and Juan had birds singing in their home, framing their lives such as the sound design of this work is framed by birdsong.

As a conceptualist and maker of ritual, I employ a way of thinking rather than a personal musical style. I prefer an animated approach to sound, where all the components dialogue with each other, each with their own identity - as opposed to texture or melody with accompaniment.

The music style I chose for The Book of Hours is contrapuntal, contemporary and melodic, with formulas reminiscent of both early European music and Arabic music. I employ heterophonic monody in which instruments and voices playing the same music take turns leading and lagging in an improvisational manner. I also use slowed down and sped up versions of the same lines, as well as cadenza like expansions of the musical motives. For example, the carillon prelude contains the seeds of many parts of The Hours of the Virgin, but also unique twists on the musical ideas not heard anywhere else. In this way, I hope to play with the listeners memory, moving forward and backward in the listening time.

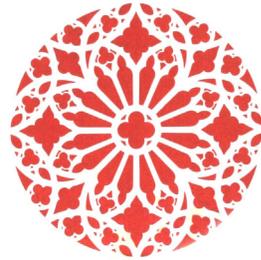
**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH - recomposition of J S Bach ES IST GENUG 2013**

Morrow created this work with digital sound tools. It uses stretched sounds and repetition. It is intended to be performed live, recreating the mannerisms of the digital work.

**FOR THE MAGNA CARTA, LINCOLN UK 2013**

**Veni Sanctus Spiritus - mensural layers  
a tempo 2x, 5x and 10x stretches**

We portray in sound the 15th June day 1215, one day after Pentecost, when the barons forced King John to release some of his royal power. At this time, the English were Catholics. The transformation of this Gregorian chant in the manner of the Notre Dame masters Leonin and Perotin has three mensural time-stretches of Veni Sanctus Spiritus layered against the chant. The spatial implication are best illuminated by spreading the multiple choirs in performance.



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“Charlie Morrow’s works extend well beyond the conventionally defined parameters of a composer or conductor, as this catalog of Recomposition works dramatically illustrates.”

*Charles Bernstein*

“He is, from where I see him, both the leading proponent of an active ethnopoetics in avant-garde musical performance & a master of new technologies as they come into contemporary practice. It’s this dynamic of old & new, approached from so many different directions, that a gathering like this makes plain.”

*Jerome Rothenberg*