

Organic Music Societies : :

Don and Moki Cherry

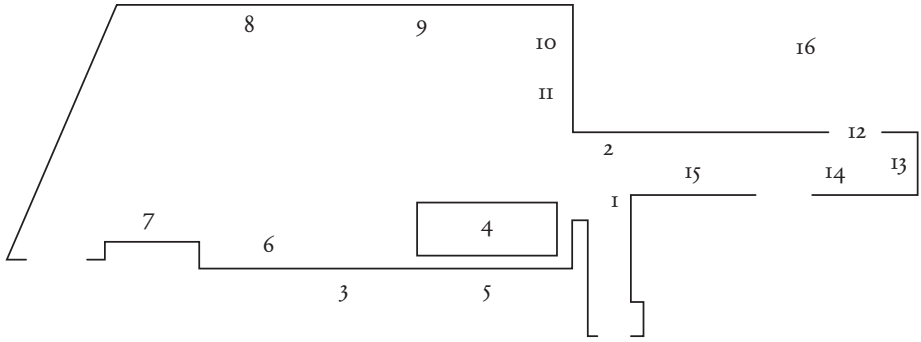
In the late 1960s, the American trumpet player and avant-garde jazz pioneer Don Cherry (1936–1995) and the Swedish visual artist and designer Moki Cherry (1943–2009) began a decade-long collaboration that merged multicultural expressions of art, music, and radical living into a synergetic model for communal creativity. Seeking an alternative to the toxic and taxing elements of the commercial jazz circuit, the couple began organizing expanded, Happening-like concerts in unconventional contexts, coining the terms “Movement Incorporated” and later, “Organic Music” to go beyond orthodox “mixed media” in elaborating their visionary confluence of global folk musics, environmental paintings and tapestries, slide and film projection, and living theater. Inspired by Don’s time as an artist-in-residence at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, in 1970 the Cherrys bought a schoolhouse in Tågarp, Sweden, and put it to use as an intimate, family-oriented site for experimental pedagogy—hosting all-ages workshops on healthy living and sharing their globally-informed approach to making music and art. Domestic work and creative play were seamlessly integrated at the schoolhouse, which Moki vividly decorated with colorful renderings of innocent figures meant to sustain childhood fantasies, while Don assumed the role of benevolent pied piper. Using Tågarp as their mothership, the Cherrys led an otherwise itinerant life, encapsulated in Moki’s motto “the stage is home and home is a stage.” Moki’s vibrant tapestries—a portable solution to life on the road—provided stimulating environments for the imagination as well as practical musical directions, depicting scales, songs, and rhythms for Don and other musicians to draw upon during their traveling workshops and shamanic concerts. The Cherrys developed these projects according to the belief that societal change must start with the self and the home, and the vibrations set into motion by these projects—the holistic amalgamation of visual and sonic materials, the intertwining of private and public spaces, and the anticipation of a then-nascent “world music”—all continue to radiate outwards today.

“Organic Music Societies” is the first retrospective exhibition to examine Don and Moki’s collaborative practice from this fertile period. The exhibition, named after Don’s landmark album *Organic Music Society* (Caprice, 1973), recorded in 1971 and 1972, showcases a variety of works by Moki that exemplify both her ceaseless embellishment of the family’s domestic surroundings and her vital contributions to the settings that served as spiritual dressing for Organic Music Theatre performances. A selection of wall and doorway tapestries that have never been shown in the United States complement her early psychedelic paintings from the late ’60s. A direct glimpse into the Cherrys’ pedagogical initiatives at their idyllic schoolhouse is provided by *Piff, Paff, Puff*, a six-episode children’s music program filmed there for Swedish national television, the entirety of which is on view. Archival materials and ephemera on display include original drawings by both Don and Moki made for use as promotional posters, as well as books and periodicals to which the Cherrys contributed, such as *Huvudbladet* and the catalog for the 1971 Moderna Museet exhibition “Utopias & Visions 1871–1981.”

Organized by Lawrence Kumpf, Artistic Director, and Naima Karlsson with Adrian Rew, Associate Curator.

All works, except for *Piff, Paff, Puff* (1971), come courtesy of the Cherry Archive, the estate of Moki Cherry.

Organic Music Societies is supported by the Nordic Culture Fund, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Additional funding generously provided by Laura Belgray and Steven Eckler and Corbett vs Dempsey.



1 Moki Cherry
Poster for Moki Cherry's first solo exhibition, at Galleri 1, Stockholm (1973)
Print
16 × 11 ½"

2 Moki Cherry
D. C. (1981)
Textile appliqué
33 ½ × 76 ¾"

3 Moki Cherry
Music of Universal Silence (1972)
Textile appliqué
13' 1 ½" × 1' 5 ¾"

This tapestry was hung in various contexts, including the 1972 "Relativity Suite" rehearsals and performance at New York University.

4 Vitrine: see following pages for details.

5 Moki Cherry
Untitled (1968)
Textile appliqué
21 ⅞ × 27 ¾"

Concert poster for an October 1968 performance at the Jazzhus Montmartre in Copenhagen. "Nu" is the Swedish word for "now."

6 Moki Cherry
Untitled (1967)
Wax crayon on board
40 ⅝ × 28 ¾"

This piece appears as part of the environment for the 1967 Movement Incorporated concert on France Télévisions.

7 Moki Cherry
Om Shanti (1976)
Textile appliqué
23 ⅞ × 47 ¼"

A sanskrit invocation of peace, repeated three times to represent its manifestations in the body, speech, and mind. Don and Moki Cherry studied with Tibetan Lama Kalu Rinpoche between 1972 and 1977.

8 Moki Cherry
Malkauns Raga (1973)
Textile appliqué
74 ½ × 92 ¼"

One of the oldest melodic frameworks for improvisation in Indian classical music, Malkauns is a pentatonic raga played late at night using the notes Sa, Ga, Ma, Da, and Nhi, for a sombre, secret mood. Don Cherry's *Brown Rice* (EMI, 1975) includes a track titled "Malkauns," which features Moki on tanpura. This tapestry was hung in various contexts including children's workshops, Organic Music Theatre

performances circa 1973, and Moki Cherry's exhibition at Galleri 1.

- 9 Moki Cherry
Organic Music (1976)
Textile appliqué
69 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 69 $\frac{3}{8}$ "

The green hands that appear throughout Moki Cherry's oeuvre can also be seen being cut out in one episode of the Cherrys' *Piff, Paff, Puff* television series.

- 10 Moki Cherry
Untitled (c. 1968)
Acrylic on board
20 × 16"
- 11 Moki Cherry
Painting about Life (1968)
Lacquer paint on canvas
30 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 24 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 12 Moki Cherry
Untitled (Frame from *Hear & Now*) (1976)
Textile appliqué
51 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 83 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

The cover to Don Cherry's *Hear & Now* (Atlantic, 1977) features a smiling Don Cherry, seated in the lotus position with pocket trumpet in hand before an ocean landscape populated by seagulls, all framed by this tapestry, which had previously been installed in the Tågarp schoolhouse.

- 13 Björn Lundholm, Don Cherry, and Moki Cherry
Piff, Paff, Puff (1971)
16mm transfer to video
6 episodes, 55:16 total
Courtesy Sveriges Television AB (SVT)

In the fall of 1971, this six-episode children's music program by Don and Moki Cherry was filmed for Swedish national television. Set at Tågarp schoolhouse, the show featured the Cherry family alongside children from a nearby school and aired the following spring in collaboration with the Swedish director Björn Lundholm. The musical

material is by Abdullah Ibrahim and Don Cherry himself.

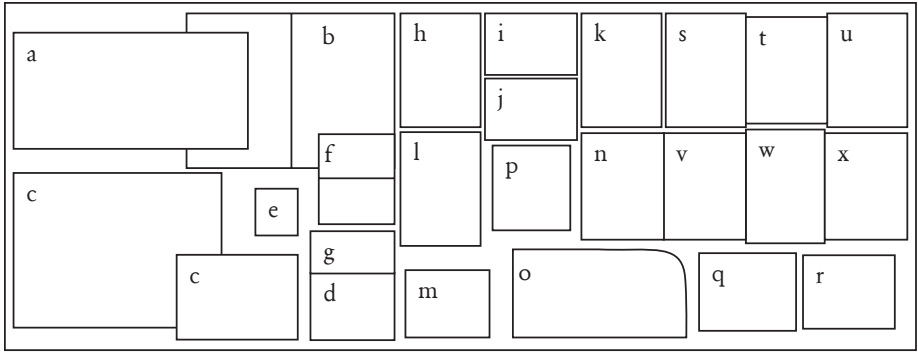
- 14 Moki Cherry
Piff, Paff, Puff storyboard (1971)
Ink on paper
Three 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " sheets

- 15 Don Cherry
Untitled (c. 1972)
Marker on paper
18 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

In 1972, Don Cherry and Abdullah Ibrahim led a group called Universal Silence, which in its various iterations included musicians Johnny Dyani, Carlos Ward, Bobby "Basch" Brooks, Raymond Ayité Adjavon, and Naná Vasconcelos. This poster was most likely made for a concert in June of 1972.

- 16 Moki Cherry
Indian Scale (1972)
Textile appliqué
1' 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ " × 13' 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

This work depicts the seven swaras, or notes of the scale in Indian classical music, a tradition with which Don Cherry was familiar through his studies with North Indian master musicians Ram Narayan and Zia Mohiuddin Dagar. The *Organic Music Society* record closes with a piece titled "Resa," reflecting the solfeggio names for the second and first scale degrees, "re/ri" and "sa," sung alongside other notes on their respective pitches. This tapestry was hung during workshops, rehearsals, and concerts, including the 1972 performance by Don Cherry's New Researches at the Festival de jazz de Chateaufallon—issued as *Organic Music Theatre* (Blank Forms Editions, 2021)—during which "Resa" was also performed.



a Don Cherry, *Organic Music Society* 2xLP (Caprice Records, 1973)

Documentary recordings made between 1971 and 1972 and issued only in Sweden. With gatefold album art by Moki Cherry.

b Moki Cherry, contribution to *Huvudbladet Nummergrön* (1971)

Moki Cherry's illustration for the Swedish counterculture newspaper *Huvudbladet*, published between 1971 and 1973 by her friend Kjartan Slettemark, an artist. The periodical included articles on music, communal living, and gardening. The word "Huvudbladet" translates to "the main leaf," with this issue (one of three) being "number green."

c Moki Cherry, *The Life Exploring Force: Musik*, 1971, exhibition catalog for "Utopias and Visions 1871-1981," Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1971)

In 1971, the Moderna Museet's director Pontus Hultén invited the Cherrys to participate in the exhibition "Utopias and Visions 1871-1981." During the show's seventy-two day run the family lived and worked in a geodesic dome installed in the museum's yard. Moki Cherry contributed *The Life Exploring Force: Musik* for the exhibition catalog's centerfold.

d Harriet Szabady, photo of Moki and Don Cherry with Bengt Berger (1971)

A 1971 photo of Don and Moki Cherry with Swedish multi-instrumentalist Bengt Berger performing in the geodesic dome installed at Moderna Museet as part of the exhibition "Utopias and Visions 1871-1981."

e Moki Cherry, decorated reel-to-reel tape case (c. 1971)

This tape, labeled "Guggenheim 1971 Don Cherry," contains a strange bricolage of choral drones, solo trumpet run through abundant tape delay, music for flute and strings, and a tender performance of John Coltrane's "Naima"; percussive ensemble recordings have been sporadically mixed in.

f Moki Cherry, diary entry (October 9, 1969)

The Swedish text reads: "*A blue BUS in Norway in Oslo and around benefit nr.1: it is where we find ourselves the WHOLE TIME!*" In window: *Don Cherry, Moki, Neneh + Lanoo [Eagle-Eye]*

- g Letter from Prudence Ann Woodford-Berger to to Don Cherry in Tågarp, Sweden (December 21, 1976)
- Letter from Prudence Ann Woodford-Berger on behalf of herself and her then husband Bengt Berger, who were living in Ghana, where Bengt was studying the kogyil, a Lo-Birifor funeral xylophone. In anticipation of Don Cherry's arrival, the couple included a map drawn by Bengt and asked Don to bring food and money.
- h Moki Cherry, Movement Incorporated concert flier (1967)
- Flier for the second Movement Incorporated concert in Copenhagen at Kunsthal Charlottenborg on August 23, 1967. The concert was called Welcome Live-in and included Moki Cherry's art as well as a fireworks display and a screening of *Herning* 1965 (1966), an experimental film by Danish Situationist Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- i Photo from Movement Incorporated concert (August 23, 1967)
- Audience members had been invited to bring their own carpets, pillows, and flutes.
- j Photo from Movement Incorporated concert (August 23, 1967)
- From left: Maffy Falay, Kim Menzer, Giorgio Musoni, John Tchicai.
- k Moki Cherry, drawing for 1967 Movement Incorporated concert flier (c. 1967)
- l Moki Cherry, drawing of anthropomorphic creatures (c. 1967)
- m Photo of empty stage with drum kit and Moki Cherry's artwork (c. 1967)
- n Don Cherry, drawing and notes on Ornette Coleman, Africa, Colin Walcott, and Naná Vasconcelos (c. late 1970s)
- o Moki Cherry, drumstick case (c. early 1970s)
- p Moki Cherry, drawing for Organic Music workshop led by Don Cherry (c. 1970s)
- q Photo of Don Cherry leading an outdoors workshop (c. early 1970s)
- r C Van Assche, photo of Don Cherry with children at Centre Pompidou, Paris (1979)
- In 1979, Don and Moki Cherry were invited by Pontus Hultén to lead workshops for children in the Centre Pompidou's Atelier des Enfants.
- s Moki Cherry, *Vishnudbarmollara* (c. late 1960s)
- Intended as the cover for *Tågarp Publication Number One*.
- t Moki Cherry, flier for Mu Part III, a concert by Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell held on December 9, 1977, at Eisner and Lubin Auditorium, Loeb Student Center, New York University
- u Moki Cherry, flier for a July 9, 1978, gathering at Tågarp Schoolhouse
- With a flea market at 1:00 p.m., and a 3:00 p.m. screening of a film by Kjartan Slettemark followed by a concert by Witchdoctor's Son, an African jazz group featuring Johnny Dyani, Dudu Pukwana, and Makaya Ntshoko.
- v Moki Cherry, poster for December 22–23, 1978 Don Cherry concert at Circle in the Square, New York
- w Moki Cherry, flier for October 21–24, 1976, Organic Music concerts with Don Cherry, Ed Blackwell, and Charlie Haden at The Kitchen, New York
- x Flier for November 29–December 17, 1977, Organic Music seminar by Don Cherry at the Samaya Foundation, New York

