Reviews

[Editor's note: Selected reviews are posted on the Web at http://www .computermusicjournal.org (click on the Reviews tab). In some cases, they are either unpublished in the *Journal* itself or published in an abbreviated form in the *Journal*.]

Events

The Third Annual Cube Fest

The third annual Cube Fest, 9–12 August 2018, Moss Arts Center and the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology at Virginia Tech. Information about the conference is available at http://icat.vt.edu/event/cube-fest/.

Reviewed by D. J. Malinowski
Ōta, Gunma Prefecture, Japan

The third annual Cube Fest took place in Blacksburg, Virginia, in August 2018. It was jointly presented by the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology and the Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech, and organized by artistic director Eric Lyon, technical director Tanner Upthegrove, project manager Donnie Bales, and Ruth Waalkes, executive director of the Moss Arts Center. The festival consisted of twelve concerts (four that repeated) and two presentations, all of which were easily attended thanks to the modular schedule. It brought in composers, performers, engineers, theater artists, and video game designers from all over the world, including Israel, England, China, Iran, Russia, Canada, Argentina, and the United States (which was represented with attendees from ten states). Cube Fest has three stated goals: (1) furthering and sharing spatial audio research in

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the Cube, (2) sharing innovative music experiences with the public, and (3) fostering an international community centered around 21st-century spatial music and new performance practices. Additionally, in celebration of Ableton Live's upgrade from stereo output to 64-channel output, a theme of this year's Cube Fest was beat-oriented music, though many other approaches were also present at the festival.

The first concert, Research Re-Sounds, offered a diverse palette of styles, meeting the goals of the festival. It took place in the Cube, a four-story black-box theater with a 149.6 speaker system, a motion capture system, a 360-degree cyclorama, and the ability to support up to four interacting virtual reality headsets. This concert displayed works created by participants of the Spatial Music Workshop, which took place over a five-day residency exploring massively multichannel compositional practices at the Cube, the Perform Studio (with a 24.4 speaker system), and the Digital Interactive Sound and Intermedia Studio (DISIS) Lab (equipped with a 16.2 speaker system).

Although each piece was spatially innovative and intellectually stimulating, I will focus on two provocative works. Yvette Janine Jackson's *Destination Freedom* is an intense sound opera that immerses the listener in the slaves' journey from Africa to America. One of the innovative spatialization techniques she utilized involved negative sonic space. Sounds of air were projected from individual speakers, dispersed over the high-density loudspeaker array so that it sounded like there was a physical wall with small windows, spread out, through which the air sounds flowed. Jackson also effectively utilized the high-ceiling speakers of the Cube by running water sounds from those speakers, which made it seem like the listener was deep in the belly of a ship, under the surface level of the sea. The audience seemed to be deeply impacted by this sonic realism.

Lee Gilboa's *In(n/H)er Head* uses Head-Related Transfer Functions (HRTF) to transform the Cube into a human head, complete with outer and inner voices. The outer voices represented societal pressure, and the inner voices represented a person's thoughts. This sonically constructed head had different orientations throughout the piece. The subtle spatial spilling and noticeable filtering (produced artificially in the digital domain and then accentuated in various ways by the audience's natural HRTF) reflected this attribute. Also, the composer's body language and thoughtful improvisation made it clear that she was using the 40′ × 40′ hemisphere of speakers as her primary means of expression. This piece used the HRTF in order to contrast the warped sound representing the meaning of society's truths for the individual, with the unfazed sound representing the meaning of the individual's truths.

On the second day, Paul Koonce used his specialized 24-speaker setup

to give a performance-lecture on wave field synthesis in the Perform Studio. He described the benefits of wave field synthesis as compared to those of the traditional multichannel paradigm, how to produce and play back sound for wave field synthesis, and explained various expressive parameters, including localization, orientation of directional sound, and characteristics of reverb such as multichannel impulse response, the wet to dry mix, decay rate, and the shape of the room. He also discussed several unnatural but salient characteristics of reverb, such as walls with different impulse responses, sequence of wall reflections, and the rotation of the room itself. Resourcefully, most of this presentation was given by a video with audio played back through the wave field synthesis system. As one might expect, some of the audience members fully understood the material whereas others seemed to be thrown off by the complex concepts. In order to further demonstrate the capabilities of his spatialization paradigm, Koonce played his pieces *Rotorelief* and *Sisyphus in Situ*.

Later during the second day of the festival, the Sounds in Focus concert took place in the Perform Studio. This program of fixed-media work made use of the intimate, dry space. I will discuss a few notable works from this program. Pinda Ho's *To Seek in Circularity* is a very quiet and intricate collage of textural personalities. The sense of quietness was further enhanced by the sound absorption of the Perform Studio, leaving audible the audience's incidental sounds, which became part of the piece. In addition to this, Ho also uses negative sonic space. For example, towards the end of the piece, an insect is heard scampering along the perimeter of the room, which causes the audience to perceive a persisting wall wherever the bug has crawled.

The last piece on the program, Robert McClure's *in excess*, was very successful in representing its stance against excessive plastic waste. McClure fully controlled his sound material, which was of high quality and communicative of the piece's message. The excess of plastic was emphasized through the propagation of sounds of plastic packaging, and the panning of multiple plastic packaging sounds in a manner similar to image widening. Later, the sounds of plastic panned around the room, rhythmically looping to sound like various sea creatures that are devastated by ocean pollution. Toward the end of the piece, sounds became increasingly distorted and transient-like through strategic looping, until they suddenly vanished as the piece ended, symbolizing the silencing of humanity brought about by the pollution it created.

Later that evening, Anne & Elizabeth with Irish electroacoustic composer Linda Buckley presented *The Moon in Her Fan: Imagining Texas Gladden*, a concert of electrified Appalachian music, poetry, and storytelling to celebrate the life of legendary folksinger Texas Gladden. Featured in the concert was Texas Gladden's granddaughter, Vicki Miller. This emotionally powerful experience used spatialization to facilitate a reflection of Appalachia, and included minimalist video, ambient audio, ritualistic theater, intricate fiddle playing, a few traditional folk songs, poetry with stutter delay, and painting. This certainly met Cube Fest's goal of fostering a sense of local community, and did so in a forthright, respectful way.

On the morning of the third day of Cube Fest, Ben Casey and Christopher Willits gave a workshop on Ableton Live's new multichannel features, specifically the Envelop Spatial Tools. These tools allow one to spatialize sound using, according to Willits, "improper Ambisonics," pertinent to electronic music, which usually includes unrealistic sounds. The tools discussed included the E4L Source Panner, E4L B-Format Convolution Reverb, E4L Multi-Delay, E4L Spinner, E4L Deconvolver, and more. Willits also gave a brief history of Max and Ableton, as well as the benefits of each program and how Max for Live incorporates the best of both. Additionally, Willits described his personal spatialization techniques, which include a mixture of photographic space and energy fields. By way of illustration he played his piece *Comet*.

That evening, Willits gave an immersive performance of his works in the Cube. He intuitively and meditatively spatialized major and minor ninth chords, as well as sounds from nature (rain, water splashing, fire, birds), so that they were perceived as moving throughout the space inside the Cube. During the latter part of the concert, he began to position sounds statically in a few particular places, which made me perceive my location and orientation in relation to those fixed positions, as if they were landmarks on a map that I was reading. Several audience members left during this concert, and a child cried (the low frequencies may have been too loud) but many others in the audience enjoyed this deep listening experience.

The Sounds in Space concert took place in the Cube later that night. All fixed media works, it included sounds of pounding heartbeats with turbulently panned sounds in *Berloga* by Dmitri Mazurov; spatialized and delayed harp plucking in . . . *the liquid mountains in the sky* . . . by Christopher Coleman; spatial and sonic palindromes of melodies in unconventional harmonic contexts in *Seven* by Niloufar Iravani; a sonically

realized, busy traffic intersection in *City of a Hundred Bell Towers/Ville Aux Cent Clochers* by David Ledoux; intricate sonification of building usage in *Ritual* by Elizabeth Hoffman; and the muddled aftermath of an abusive voicemail in *Unrequited* by Jacob Elkin.

The fourth day of the festival featured the Sounds in Motion concert in the Cube. The majority of works from this concert involved performers who determined the spatialization live. I will discuss two pieces of note. Eric Lyon's *Curtains* "space-strates" (a variation of "orchestrates," coined by Margaret Schedel) projected harmonies across the loudspeaker array, constantly morphing them to new space-strations, which produced a strange, poignant psychoacoustic quality. Lyon also used changes in space to accentuate rhythms, and vertically split the sound to introduce a spatially invigorated jungle beat. Federico Camara Halac's *Untitled* was captivating in its raw approach to spatial music. Dry, glitchy sounds, including clicks, were pointillistically placed in time and space, sometimes darting across the speaker array, while the visuals showed words appearing and collapsing. Unfortunately, the piece ended prematurely when the composer's Pure Data patch crashed. Upon reflection, however, this was a refreshingly different way to end a concert, and suited the glitch aesthetic of the piece, albeit accidentally so.

Dustin Wong and Takako Minekawa performed a concert of beat-oriented music with psychedelic visuals later that evening. They used voice, guitar, and keyboards, as well as a large collection of pedals to process and loop the sounds into psychedelic, stratified textures. Most of the spatialization involved panning or projections from different speakers for each note. An interesting psycho-

logical, spatial phenomenon occurred during the middle of the set, when high-frequency singing was placed spatially high while the drums and guitar were placed spatially low. The singing seemed to me like the fresh air that one senses while inside a hole. The performers, it is worth noting, had great control over the rhythms and timbres.

The last concert of Cube Fest was a spatial diffusion of the 5.1 mix of David Bowie's well-known album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*. Spatialization was used to accentuate rhythms (e.g., the rimshot on beat 2 in *Five Years* is spatially distant from the rest of the drum set, as an expressive parameter of the instruments (e.g., the saxophone solo is expressively panned in *Five Years*), to emphasize spatial characteristics of the original 5.1 mix (the reverberant arena rock of *Starman*), and to add additional dimensions to the music. This spatialization of a classic rock album is a Cube Fest tradition, a feel-good festival ending not unlike Joseph Haydn's feel-good coat-and-hat finales. Audience members were moving their heads to the music, and a few were even dancing. Cube Fest 2018 met all of its goals and was an enlightening and inspiring experience. I look forward to the next one.

Gaudeamus Muziekweek

Gaudeamus Muziekweek 2018 took place 5–9 September 2018 in Utrecht, The Netherlands. Information about this festival is available at: https://gaudeamus.nl/en/terugblik /gaudeamus-muziekweek-2018/.

Reviewed by Seth Rozanoff
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The Gaudeamus Foundation has long promoted contemporary music in The Netherlands and internationally. Each year the organization's most ambitious project occurs during the fall, in the form of the Gaudeamus Muziekweek, a festival and competition wrapped into one week-long series of events. The 2018 festival took place in Utrecht between 5 September and 9 September, with concerts and events throughout the city's cultural locations. The TivoliVredenburg venue, housed in a building specifically designed to present contemporary music (boasting five concert halls), was a primary site of the festival.

An iconic element of the Muziekweek is the Gaudeamus Composition Prize. With the competition jury present throughout the festival, the finalists for the prize contribute works from which the winning pieces are selected. Composers of any nationality, younger than 30 years of age, are encouraged to submit their compositions, typically small or large instrumental pieces, to be considered

for the prize. Lately, the competition seeks to attract work that utilizes live electronics or video. As such, the programming for many of the concerts reflected a range of media.

Works selected to compete for this year's prize were performed by groups and individuals including Slagwerk Den Haag, Nikel Ensemble, Tomoko Mukaiyama, and Asko | Schönberg. Other notable groups performing at the 2018 Muziekweek included the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Bozzini Quartet, Ensemble Klang, and the Rosa Ensemble. These esteemed musicians, over the five-day event, support the work of the six competition finalists. Additionally, the Gaudeamus Foundation includes a few artists-in-residence, along with works from the winners or finalists from previous competitions as well.

The Gaudeamus Foundation also provided some educational programming, offering workshops led by various composers and teachers. For example, the Trash Panda Collective organized a score reading session. During this event, compositional outlines submitted by composers beforehand were explored for potential improvisation. Other examples included lectures and discussions by Nicole Lizée and Richard Ayres (competition jury members), Moritz Eggert, Thea Derks, and an IRCAM spatialization workshop. This eclectic programming attempts to provide participants and viewers entryways into contemporary musical practice.

One of the more distinctive reading sessions, developed and led by Ashley Puente, was titled "From Graphic Score to Modular Patch." This subject has been little studied and is a novel way to produce music. As if to illustrate her points, Puente gave a performance the night before on custom-built modular synthesizers.

Another standout event was "Senses Working Overtime," a Sound Art Expo that took place in Het Huis Utrecht over a two-day period. This show was composed of seven different provocative sound installations. Similar events such as Modulation Meets Gaudeamus, which I will discuss later, were produced in spaces suited for performance or sound art. Overall, there were almost 50 events that took place in Utrecht, including the Gaudeamus Saturday Night, a miniature festival involving 20 concerts and installations throughout the TivoliVredenburg complex.

My discussion of the Gaudeamus Muziekweek stems from my encounter with a selection of concerts, workshops, and composers—a kind of snapshot of practice. It should be noted from the outset that I recognized an open-minded competition jury. The selected works demonstrated highly distinctive or idiosyncratic approaches, and the finalists were matched with performing groups such as Insomnio, New European Ensemble, pianist Saskia Lankhoorn, Slagwerk Den Haag, and the Nikel Ensemble.

The first works I heard in the festival were from three of the finalists at the Rattling Rhythms #1 concert, performed by the percussion quartet Slagwerk Den Haag. This group's collective approach, as it relates to performance in particular, provided an ideal creative environment in which composers could test the limits of their craft. And a core feature of Slagwerk Den Haag is its intention to explore a seemingly infinite range of materials. How would some of the finalists approach managing such a wide range of sonic possibilities, including the use of electronics, in this context? The concert featured works, all world premieres, by Raphael Languillat (born in 1989), Sebastian Hilli (born in 1990), and William Daugherty (born in 1988).

Languillat's *(((LIMBO)))_plexus (part i)* required the performers to manage percussion and electronic sound sources in a manner that produced sparse timbral fragments. They could be heard as material events where the physical aspect of formed sound was largely determined by the use of amplified percussion instruments, pre-recorded sound, light-boxes, and projections. The work also involved an offstage speaker, along with performers in the audience who used walkie-talkies. Another aspect of Languillat's sound work, overall, is the influence of his own work as a photographer. This approach to composition, the willingness to explore shared boundaries with fine art, added a distinctive conceptual layer to his work. It should be noted that some of the images used for his projections were from slide films of x-rayed body parts and MRI scans. The materiality I sensed in Languillat's work stemmed from themes such as World War I trauma, memory, and the notion of the life–death cycle, from which the composer drew in the preparation of his work.

Hilli's *Psycho Wood* focused on performative agency even more so than Languillat's piece. During the pre-concert talk it was suggested that Hilli's work would rely upon genre hybridization as a core feature. Ultimately, Hilli's intention not to reference contemporary classical music aesthetics, and touch on 1960s rock styles of Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles, came through in the work. These conceptual interests stem from Hilli's interest in Timothy Leary's book *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964). The ensemble for this work is required to perform on instruments that Hilli made from the planks, logs, leaves, bark, and branches he had found in Finnish forests and junkyards. These instruments were then organized into a special pitch-based

system. Hilli also added paper sheets and a cajón to the instrumentation. Regarding staging, the performers sat on the ground with their instruments placed in a circle. Hilli's concept resulted in the juxtaposition and complementing of sounds within the wood source material, some of which was processed from environmental recordings and used for playback.

Daugherty's work, *as we come marching, marching,* provided yet another distinctive conceptual approach to the percussion quartet medium. The title of the work is taken from the first line of the American poet James Oppenheim's poem "Bread and Roses" (1911). This work was influenced by a speech upon which the poem was based, given by Rose Schneiderman, a leader of the American Women's Trade Union League. Daugherty's orchestration points toward a sonic materiality that at times pits elastic shapes heard against one another, often extended to overlapping layers. An interesting feature of Daugherty's orchestration was his use of an air raid siren. Like Edgar Varese's siren use in *Ionization*, the timbre was an essential musical ingredient whose role was to expand the sonic palette of the ensemble.

The next event I attended was the Modulation meets Gaudeamus concert, for which there was no conventional concert staging. The performers utilized sizeable setups consisting of custom-built or modified analog electronic instruments for each set, which they freely arranged in the space. Listeners could choose to sit relatively close to the performers, or stand if they wished.

This event lasted for over four hours, in which I heard a few primary styles that could be characterized as either drone-ambient or experimental electronica. Others drew from musical and compositional elements found in electronic dance music.

The first work featured the artist Wouter van Veldhoven. The core of his setup included a collection of reel-to-reel tape machines, various tape recorders (some modified), televisions, and Pure Data patches. The machines produced what I would describe as "faulty" sounds such as clicking sounds of the machines in motion. These were then fed back into his system to produce continuous loops.

Next, was the artist known as Zonk't (Laurent Perrier). Perrier develops improvization through the use of a personalized setup comprising analog synthesizer modules and Ableton Live. During his performance, I sensed a musical form emerge from his use of various sequences. At times one could hear a fixed beat pattern serving as the musical foundation for further sonic exploration. Other times, Perrier produced extreme dance music rhythms pitted against grooves in the lower registers.

The final work on this program was by the musician Ashley Puente. She brought a modular synthesizer setup designed by 73–75, which draws from the Serge Modular System designed by Serge Tcherepnin. Puente's musical material was distinctive largely through her tonal approach to forming her materials. She employed traditional musical phrases, while utilizing some of the standard synthesis techniques her setup afforded.

Revisting one of the TivoliVredenburg venues, I attended the Dream Work Ensemble Nikel concert. The program for this concert paired Ensemble Nikel with experimental filmmaker Peter Tscherkassky. Founded in 2006, Ensemble Nikel is a quartet comprising saxophonist Patrick Stadler, electric guitarist Yaron Deutsch, percussionist Brian Archinal, and pianist Antoine François. For this event with Nikel, Tscherkassky provided a trilogy of films: *L'Arrivée*

(1997–1998), *Outer Space* (1999), and *Dream Work* (2001).

A total of eight composers were commissioned to write music for these films. The Utrecht concert featured music for either *Outer Space* or *Dream Work* by composers Simon Løffler, Clara Iannotta, Boris Bezemer, and Mikołaj Laskowski. All the featured composers had works presented at previous Gaudeamus festivals, and Ionnotta had been nominated for the prize in 2013. Tscherkassky describes *Dream Work* as follows: "A woman goes to bed, falls asleep, and begins to dream. This dream takes her to a landscape of light and shadow, evoked in a form only possible through classic cinematography. The formal element binding the trilogy is the specific technique of contact printing, by which found film footage is copied by hand and frame by frame onto unexposed film stock . . . The new interpretation of the text of the original source material takes place through its 'displacement' from its original context and its concurrent 'condensation' by means of multiple exposure" (http://www.tscherkassky .at/content/films/theFilms /DreamWorkEN.html). *Dream Work* was created as a homage to Man Ray and his original production techniques used in 1923.

A focal point in Løffler's composition for *Dream Work* is something he built akin to a spinning machine. Serving as an additional player or musician, it is controlled by the other players who sit on stage without using their instruments. Instead, Løffler requires the Ensemble Nikel players to wear a type of prosthetic in order to extend their hands. The hand actions of characters in the film influenced Løffler. He coordinated these hand movements, along with the machine player's actions, against the film.

Ionnotta's approach aims to create a distinctive audiovisual quality, not

by merely composing a film score, but by capturing the essence of the film's rhythm. For me, Ionnotta's work was musically cohesive, as she mapped her sense of the film's rhythm onto Ensemble Nikel's performance.

Bezemer's work drew from his view of the seemingly contrasting modes of behavior present in *Dream Work*: fluidity and jerkiness. For example, Bezemer scores the percussion in a manner that cuts across the rest of the ensemble's sonic textures. Another example engages a musical scenario wherein the electric guitar's lines are pitted directly against the percussion. Overall, Bezemer demonstrates a wide orchestral range between his instrumental groupings.

Laskowski chose to compose a soundscape for *Outer Space*, where the musicians are required to mimic sounds of a given set of sound samples. Laskowski organized his material so that individual players could demonstrate idiosyncratic performance techniques. For example, the pianist bows the piano strings with a VHS tape, or plays strings manually with a cassette box. The guitarist excites his strings with a screwdriver or pumice stone, etc.

The compositions for Tscherkassky's three films took many artistic risks, resulting, among other things, in the expansion of Ensemble Nikel's sonic range. This could be due to the practical issues that arise when forming compositional strategies with the moving image, or pitting a live ensemble against a pre-produced film.

The last event I attended was called the Gaudeamus Saturday Night, which took place in TivoliVredenberg. It was composed of various concerts and installations, some of which overlapped with one another. Among the 19 Saturday Night sets the collective known as Monoták produced the most distinctive musical contribution. Theirs was a four-hour presentation of works from the collective's five-year history, composed and performed by its members. Monoták consists of artists Anat Spiegel, Bart de Vrees, Dirk Bruinsma, Wilbert Bulsink, Ivo Bol, Paul Glazier, Henry Vega, Florian de Backere, Eric de Clercq, and Thomas Myrmel. Monoták, based in Amsterdam, also organizes events and concerts throughout The Netherlands and Europe.

Stemming from my first encounter with Monoták, this group explores a range of poetics between instrumental, performative, text, and image elements. Their artistic output could also be characterized as exploring the composer-performer and improvisation-score relationships relating to the group's use of technology, overall. At first glance, one sees a seemingly complex setup of various controllers, laptops and tablets, microphones, mixers, and projections, suggesting a multimedia approach to collaboration. Monoták's performances are formed from a socially mediated context, built around members' encounters between one another. This offers audiences a distinctive musical narrative, compared with other concerts of this type, which tend to gravitate toward a rigid historical performance model of contemporary music.

There were other groups and individuals performing during the Saturday Night event that utilized electronics. These groups included Plastiklova, a vibraphone and electronics duo (Laurent Warnier and Yu Oda), I/O (led by Thanasis Deligiannis), Sarah Davachi, Kara-Lis Coverdale, and Coby Sey, among others. Ultimately, the Saturday Night event offered audiences the widest range of artistic expression in the Muziekweek, thanks to much of the work involving electronic media.

After attending the aforementioned Gaudeamus events, two issues remained in my thinking as they relate to what seems to be the Muziekweek's aims at reaching the public: highlighting creative practices that involve the use of electronic technology, and bridging the gap between serious new music composers and sound artists. As such, I wondered if it is necessary to offer such a wide range of new music practice to the public? Or, how might a sense of inclusiveness be encouraged between creative technology (new and old) and contemporary classical music disciplines? Gaudeamus seems successful in their attempts to be inclusive, with marathon-like events focusing on individual or collaborative music-making involving electronics. Here, the audience may better engage with performers, learning about the technology used through this direct physical encounter. Perhaps what is most important is the ability that these events, which can seem obscure compared to the instrumental composition-based concerts, have to encourage practical as well as conceptual creative action.

For example, the open nature of the electroacoustic or audiovisual concerts seems to have the potential to draw in composers and performers who use similar tools, and build further social connections and collaborations. Also, there seems to be an element of openness inherent in technologically based creative practice, which encourages the freedom to experiment. Not only is the Gaudeamus Muziekweek an artistically diverse event overall, it also encourages the formation of new social or musical relationships, and strengthens existing ones as well.

Recordings

Esther Lamneck: Tárogáto Constructions

Compact disc, 2018, Innova #994, available from Innova Recordings, 75 West 5th Street, #522, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102; www.innova.mu/.

Reviewed by Ross Feller
Gambier, Ohio, USA

Esther Lamneck is one of only a handful of performers whose specialty involves performing on the tárogáto, a single-reed woodwind instrument similar to a clarinet, originally used for folk music in Hungary and Romania. In addition to indigenous folk music appropriate to the tárogáto, Lamneck is intimately involved with advanced technologies and multimedia work, involving interactive technology research with the EyesWeb program, which allows for gestural control of live sound and video processing. Over the years she has established close working relationships with a variety of electroacoustic and computer music composers such as Cort Lippe and Mara Helmuth, and is also a longtime collaborator with experimental choreographer Douglas Dunn.

Lamneck's work with the tárogáto has been reviewed before in the *Computer Music Journal* (Radford, Vol. 29, No. 4, Winter 2005). Her recently released album on Innova Recordings (#994) entitled *Tárogáto Constructions* includes compositions by six composers. Each composition involves significant, improvisational materials attributed to Lamneck that are chock-full of folk music references, extended techniques, and virtuosic, gestural and textural

materials. As such, Lamneck's role is more of a collaborator than a mere performer. It is not always clear from the liner notes what the exact nature of the collaborations entailed. Lamneck indicates that "all of the tárogáto music has been originally generated by me" and that "each composer has designed a musical world which reacts to what I play by triggering electronic sounds which then influence the direction of my improvisational composition." So, the relationship was apparently a two-way, recursive street between the soloist and each electroacoustic composer.

Because of its key structure, the tárogáto is capable of producing numerous glissandi, as well as high-frequency harmonics. Both can be heard throughout the album. The first track, *Prelude*, by Cort Lippe, sets the tone for the entire project. According to Lippe, "Esther was able to interact with the computer, not simply triggering, but continuously shaping the computer output, while I performed on the computer, musically reacting to Esther's playing and the computer responses to her playing." The sounds come directly from the tárogáto, stored sound material, digital synthesis algorithms, and standard processing techniques such as harmonization, delay, frequency shifting, phasing, and reverberation.

We hear the close miking of the tárogáto offset with spatialized reverb trails that sound as if they are occurring at a distance to the tárogáto. The tárogáto seems to cry out and bicker with itself. About halfway through the track Lamneck plays a series of shrill, high-pitched tones that are paired with computer-generated duplicates, resulting in an intense display of difference tones that pin you to your seat. Overall, the piece is recorded at very hot levels, which underlines the bold and raw senses of the music. Cavernous sounds collide almost out of control. The formal structure includes many fragmented materials that don't develop or progress in traditional ways. Like a verbose friend that takes over a party and never settles down, the piece never settles down or travels anywhere; it explores a kind of anguished, existential present tense. The ending seems to occur without any obvious musical motivation and hence, sounds both premature and surprising.

Lippe's *Duo* takes over where *Prelude* ended. We hear a similar approach to reverb and delay but the pitch materials are seemingly appropriated from the folk world, embellished with extended techniques. We also hear bubbling modulation sounds in the electronic part, emphasizing the liquid fluidity of the tárogáto part. Unlike the first track, this movement comes to a logical close. Overall, this track sounded more enticing than the previous track because of an inventive approach to the concept of the mélange.

Mara Helmuth's piece *Irresistible Flux* was developed with Lamneck over several years and uses granular synthesis software and Max patches with RTcmix scripts to produce a variety of real-time transformations of the sound. Helmuth is perhaps best known for her contributions

to the RTcmix language. *Irresistible Flux* is a hauntingly beautiful sound collage that opens with a sequence of plaintive sounding gestures, matched with minor mode pitch materials. These are processed using very wet trails of reverb with long delay times. At times the reverberant and delayed sounds threaten to supplant the live instrumentalist's part. About a third of the way through the piece we hear a dominant-tonic melodic cadence that serves to complete the first section of the piece. Flanged sounds then occur, imparting an artificial quality to the piece until the live part returns shortly thereafter. We hear a plethora of trills and tremolos, some punctuated with controlled squeals in the highest register of the tárogáto, while others are captured by the computer and amplitude modulated or granulated to produce intriguing fluttering sounds. With the emphasis on unstable elements such as rapidly changing trills and tremolos, I had the sense that it would have been even more powerful if Lamneck had utilized circular breathing to keep the flow and momentum constant. In the final minute, the materials die out as Lamneck plays a slow series of sustained tones that would also have sounded captivating elsewhere in the piece.

According to the liner notes, *Con forze che si svolgono sferiche* by Paola Lopreiato uses techniques in which "the sounds are processed and altered using unexpected effects, broken, complicated by particular resonance (and) forced breaks." The piece opens with sustained, frequency-modulated tones in the background. Juxtaposed over this Lamneck enters with a slowly moving series of melodies that are periodically destabilized via sample and hold-like processing. The sounds overlap and patiently evolve over the course of the piece. Occasionally they are in-

terrupted by wave-like or rain-like sounds in the electronic part. Delay is used to poignantly create a multilayered texture. Both Lamneck and Lopreiato allow for things to happen at a slower pace than in the previous works. This allows the listener some reflection time, while listening to, and engaging with, the moment-to-moment changes. The sustained texture makes the faster materials sound more significant in relief. Toward the end of the piece we hear percussive snaps, sounding as if the recording equipment had been intentionally tapped. The piece ends with what sounds like a single tap on the inside of a piano with the sustain pedal held down. Interestingly, this seems to present the preceding materials in a way that doesn't necessarily resolve the tension wrought.

For Sergio Kafejian's piece *Construçäo*, the composer built an interactive system that was modeled after Lamneck's performance on the tárogáto. This piece begins with a sparse, fragmented texture utilizing the tárogáto processed with moderate amounts of reverb. The fragments were captured and spatially varied, at times sounding like the Doppler effect, mixed with soft FM synthesis sustains. One can imagine these materials being created with a UPIC (Unité Polyagogique Informatique CEMAMu)-type device in which the composer simply draws lines that are iconically related to the sounds they generate. Lamneck's improvisational playing is distinctly reminiscent of certain horn players from Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. Toward the end of the piece the layers of material continuously build until being abruptly cut off.

Jorge Sosa's *Enchantment* begins in true concerto fashion with the synthetic orchestra setting the stage for

the soloist's entrance. The slow pace and lack of a sense of pulse conjures up a timeless quality. The heavy use of reverb and delay threatens to take over the piece, but is countered by the live part, and recordings of a woman singing passionately. The recorded vocals appear, ghostlike, as an echo of the tárogáto part, matching the tárogáto's speech resemblance characteristics. Toward the middle of the piece the tárogáto part becomes more active, supported in part by fragments of the vocal recordings. Then the texture thickens, which offers a subtle contrast to the opening part. The tárogáto utters a long crying sound, followed by more vocal sustains in its wake. This was a poignant moment in the piece, producing a strong sense of cause and effect that is, more often than not, obfuscated, in the other pieces on this album. Following this we hear an amalgam of soloist versus ensemble materials, signifying the notion of a cadenza. Overall, this track was one of the most convincing, since it allowed for things to happen at a relaxed pace, rather than force the issue with bluster.

The final piece from this collection, Alfonso Belfiore's *Quanti di luce e suono*, offers a focused approach to extended techniques along with the ubiquitous heavy dosage of reverb. At 12 minutes in length it is the longest piece on the album. The electronic part features an effective use of tintinnabulation underneath the live tárogáto part. Periodically the piece sounds like it ends, only to start back up again. This approach plays with the listener's sense of form and expectation. After the second time this happens we hear a long sustained tone played by the tárogáto that intriguingly evolves into an unstable split tone, which is then further embellished with mordant-like materials. The tárogáto part sounds more introspective than in the other

tracks, as if it is having a conversation with itself. The electronic part stays mostly in the background, using bell-like sounds to underscore the tárogáto's resonance. This track, like the penultimate track, was one of the highlights of this album because of how it allowed materials to develop, as Lemneck explored an inward, compact world of sound that was wholly convincing.

All the works on this album use texture as a primary compositional strategy. The large-scale forms are mostly static, filled with materials such as rapidly changing trills and tremolos that refuse to "progress" or develop. Hence, we are in the presence of certain standard-bearers from current free-improvisational and live-interactive practices blended together. The musical gestures heard on this album are clearly derived from the world of free improvisation but composed as such, rather than occurring as some kind of default value. This is perhaps what Lamneck meant when she referred to the notion of "improvisational composition" in the liner notes. Whichever word goes first, improvisation or composition, the works on this album were developed over lengthy periods in which rehearsals and performances took place, allowing for the honing of each piece's basic concept. This begs the question of whether the works can be considered as finished entities, or as works in progress. If you're largely unfamiliar with free-improvisational or live-interactive practices, this album will be revelatory for you.