

tárogató. It is a plaintive, haunting solo work employing a modal scale that brings out the "rich dark tones and piquant bright timbres of the instrument's unique non-tempered tuning." Lithe ornamentation and raspy repeated pitches permeate the graceful arch of the work's design. Robert Rowe provides a fitting continuation of this reflective quality apparently so characteristic of the instrument in his work *Shells* (1992). Here the tárogató is paired with a computer running the composer's interactive environment, Cypher. The tárogató's leaps, slides, and rapid gesticulations are paired with ostinato reactions and accompanying drones and counterpoint as Cypher listens to the instrument's performance and joins in with a variety of textural and timbral contributions. There are several very successful passages in the work where a balance is reached between the respective contributions of the tárogató and Cypher, and the final moments of the work find Cypher effectively shadowing the restrained, descending melodic lines of the wind instrument.

The short work *Ah Kishinev Subotica* (1993) by Robert Cogan marries the tárogató's distinct timbre with more recently developed contemporary wind techniques including multiphonics, multiple trills, use of the instrument's extreme registers, and simultaneous singing by the performer. This little gem summons up a sense of organic sound-making via the marriage of breath and this instrument. Alfonso Belfiore's *Tra le Cose Tenute* [Among the Things Remembered] from 1995 combines pre-recorded electroacoustic materials with an open form score for the tárogató player. The performer selects at random various notated materials for performance and subsequently triggers changes to the dynamic and

registral character of the pre-recorded audio materials through an interactive computer system. The tárogató, suspended atop undulating bells, punctuating cymbals, and rumbling drones, is at times lyrical and sustained, at other times playful and fiercely focused in its melodic gyrations. In choosing to keep the electroacoustic materials subdued beneath the tárogató's vibrant sound throughout the entire work, the composer unnecessarily limits a potentially rich dialogue between the two media.

Larry Austin's eponymously titled *Tárogató* (1997–98) is the lengthiest work on the disc and combines the solo tárogató with dancers and an octophonic computer part in performance. The materials for the work arise once again from the improvisational traditions of the instrument and its unique timbral and tuning characteristics. The computer materials often function as a tárogató choir, wreathing the live player with a diverse and ever-changing contrapuntal fabric. It acts as both a reflection of the live player and as an instigator of rhythmic and melodic ideas subsequently taken up by the performer. The texture is rich and full of wildly romping figures and exchanges throughout, almost as if the tárogató is traveling through its own sonic history.

*Shadows* (1998) by Ron Mazurek consists of a short series of exchanges between the tárogató and an electroacoustic part constructed from modified samples of the instrument. Drawn from a larger work, *Shadows* is singular in character, intense in its angular yet cohesive combination of the instrument and the modified sounds drawn from it. The final work on the disc is by the featured performer, Esther Lamneck. The three movement *Settings* (1999) draws upon fragments of folk material to provide a founda-

tion and point of reference for the most extensive and adventuresome playing that Ms. Lamneck demonstrates on this disc. A halo of delay and reverb surrounds and girds the tárogató's rapidly repeated figures in all three movements. Use of fast iterations, leaps, and turns in the extreme high register in the second movement are very effective as are the arpeggios spanning wide registers and played at breathtaking speed throughout the piece.

Writing for a unique instrument and a virtuoso player offers both possibilities and limitations, especially when a heavy dose of improvisation is involved. Nonetheless, the meeting between an ancient tradition and the contemporary bent of exploration and sonic extension is a fruitful beginning to the rediscovery of this intriguing instrument.

### **Mario Verandi: orillas distantes / distant shores**

Compact disc, EMF CD 035, 2001; available from CDeMUSIC/Electronic Music Foundation, 116 North Lake Avenue, Albany, New York 12206, USA; telephone (+1) 888-749-9998 or (+1) 518-434-4110; fax (+1) 518-434-0308; electronic mail [cde@emf.org](mailto:cde@emf.org); Web [www.cdemusic.org/](http://www.cdemusic.org/).

*Reviewed by Laurie Radford  
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*orillas distantes / distant shores* is a compilation of six electroacoustic works by Argentinean-born composer Mario Verandi. His studies in Barcelona and his activities as a member of BEAST (Birmingham Electro-Acoustic Sound Theater) at the University of Birmingham are evident in the finely sculpted sound practice throughout these works. The



pieces presented on *orillas distantes / distant shores* adhere to two distinct categories in Mr. Verandi's work: the use of recognizable sound sources and soundscapes in combination with transformations and extensions of these same materials, and a more extensive, abstract style of composition that distances the sound sources from their associative origins.

*Evil Fruit* (2000) explores the world of a selection of Brazilian percussion instruments: deep resonant skin and wood timbres tapped out in rapid volleys and rolls; crystalline, metal shards pulsing and bouncing across the stereophonic field. Throughout the piece, the composer pries open the drum's iterative pace and reveals moments of reflective, bell-like resonance. The alternation of abrupt and subtle metallic punctuations ushers forward a series of contrasting iterative textures until a human voice appears to modify and meld with the drum. The evident percussive origins of many materials give way toward the end of the piece to a broader, less distinct sonic image that transports the listener into a distant sonic space. Finally, a climactic increase in spatial proximity and sound-object density returns us to the drum and voice of the work's origins.

*Fréquences de Barcelone* (1997), awarded a prize at the International Radiophonic Competition in France, takes the sounds of Barcelona and thrusts them onto the sound stage amid a variety of other carefully chosen sound materials. The work is both soundscape and fantasy, a recontextualization of daily urban sounds, conversations, street music, rushing waves, and the shrill cries of children at play filtered, stretched, fragmented into a dynamic and fascinating race through the sound world of this vibrant city. Mr. Verandi judiciously juxtaposes moments of traffic chaos with the calm of late-night rain, the din of a midday restaurant with modified bells and the blur of faraway traffic. This piece is a shapely and colorful voyage that hints at an underlying urban narrative of discovery and the magic of a living sound.

Employing spoken texts from *Bodas de Sangre* [Blood Wedding] by Federico García Lorca and samples of Spanish flamenco music, *Figuras Flamencas* (1995) straddles the real and the surreal, from the familiar twang of the flamenco guitar and the earthy tones of flamenco singing, to ghostly textures of ringing, spiraling string sounds punctuated by frenzied vocal incantations. The temporal design of the work is especially effective: dense, exciting moments of movement and rapid change are contrasted with sparse, mesmerizing drones amidst gradually evolving inharmonic spectra, much as the art of flamenco juxtaposes frenzy and repose, passion and calculation. The whispered intonations, disappearing snippets of transformed singing, and raspy textures of strummed guitars bring the work to its conclusion and a final solo recitation that poignantly hearkens back to the strains of flamenco singing at the opening of the work.

Given the opening excursions into

the sounds of Spanish culture, the next work on the disc demonstrates a strikingly different facet of Mr. Verandi's electroacoustic practice. *Heartbreaker* (1996) is based on the activity of breaking objects "and the various forms of energy that are freed by this phenomenon." Meticulous and extensive exploration and transformation of a particular family of sources materials, from the breaking of bricks and glass to the tearing of paper and the crushing of leaves, produces an extremely rich and varied palette of sonic objects that the composer employs with clarity and imagination. Warring pulse-driven ostinati transform into thunderous, swaying waves of low-frequency crunching, then into a tremulous, fragile tinkling that betrays the violent origins of the sounds. The work is a sonorous delight and is formally coherent and shapely. The recognizable hammer-breaking-brick at the conclusion seems rather too literal and banal after the riches offered up during the preceding ten minutes.

*Faces and Intensities* (1996) is another of Verandi's prize-winning works (*Musica Nova* 1996) and another that delves into the abstract exploration of a sound's transformative potential. The guiding model here is that of continuity: slow, methodical transformations, changes of speed, adjustments of spatial movement and focus. The work proceeds in slowly evolving arches of increasing and decreasing energy, never resting long enough to establish a point of reference, always remolding the temporal flow and spatial arrangements of its contributing materials. There is an intensity and complexity to this shifting, kaleidoscopic ambience that holds the listener in a suspended oscillation of expectation.

The final piece on the disc, *Plastic Water*, is one of the most recent offer-

ings, hailing from the year 2000. The work was conceived as an eight-channel work designed for performance on the Sigma 1 diffusion system at TU-Studios Berlin. The stereo version presented on this disc makes one yearn for the opportunity to experience the original multi-channel work. The composer once again brings his considerable technical prowess to bear upon a simple sound source (the crushing and squashing of a plastic bottle) and squeezes out some beautiful timbral objects via his sound transformation practice. The “water” of the title informs the iterative pattering that dominates many of the textures in the piece and an evocative plastic bottle “solo” draws the work to its somewhat premature conclusion.

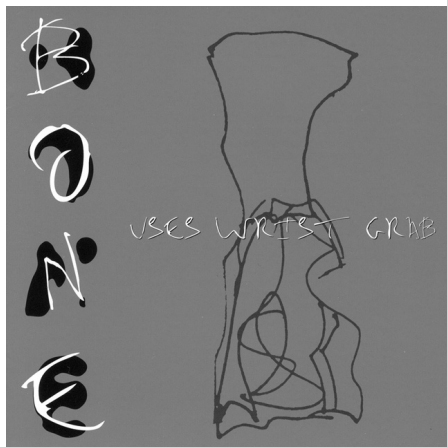
The works on *orillas distantes / distant shores* are now, in some cases, nearly a decade old. These works by Mario Verandi maintain a vivid and visceral quality that encourages repeated audition, and makes one eager to explore the composer’s more recent work.

### **Bone: Uses Wrist Grab**

Compact disc, Rune 176, 2003; available from Cuneiform Records, P.O. Box 8427, Silver Spring, Maryland 20907-8427, USA; electronic mail [cuneiway@aol.com](mailto:cuneiway@aol.com); Web [cuneiformrecords.com/](http://cuneiformrecords.com/).

*Reviewed by Ross Feller Oberlin, Ohio, USA*

Like many of Nick Didkovsky’s recordings, the cover for *Uses Wrist Grab* states: “Listen to this record extremely loud and in one sitting. Open your windows so your neighbors can hear it, too.” This reminds me of Italo Calvino’s parody of the experi-



ence of reading in his novel *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler* except that it would appear that Mr. Didkovsky is dead serious. Unfortunately, while sheer volume might enhance some of the 14 pieces contained in *Uses Wrist Grab*, it merely compounds the problems in others. Regardless, this recording was created from an interesting premise, only possible through the use of current technological tools.

This CD contains seven pieces by Mr. Didkovsky, six by UK rocker Hugh Hopper (Soft Machine, Gong) and one they co-wrote. Each member of Bone (those two plus drummer John Roulat of Forever Einstein) recorded his parts in his own studio. They communicated with each other by email, and sent audio files back and forth for the purposes of rehearsal and tweaking. The final drafts were then mixed and produced by Mr. Didkovsky. As of the release date, Mr. Hopper and Mr. Didkovsky had not yet met in person. The fact that they were able to create this CD from three separate locations presents some intriguing issues. The reliance upon current technological standards for the transfer of audio seems perilous given the inevitable appearances of obsolescence and instability. Yet, they pulled it off. Mr.

Didkovsky writes in the liner notes: “As I was mixing this record, I was struck again and again by how much it all sounds like an organic band that could have rehearsed together.” Indeed, the bass/drums lock-step approach does frequently sound as if the players had been eyeballing each other in order to achieve synchronous precision. But there remains much that is missing from the organic band scenario, and this, I contend, is as it should be. What is perhaps most fascinating about this project is that the musicians did *not* rehearse together as a unit. Unlike much rock-band music, their project required the technological tools they used. A sense of disembodiment occurs as we hear the bass and guitar parts not quite fitting together. This conjures a kind of technological dissonance. One could say that we hear the distance between the musicians’ respective studios.

We also clearly hear differences in aesthetics. Thankfully, it continues to be difficult to categorize Mr. Didkovsky’s music. His employment of asymmetrical meters, gratuitous dissonance, and tonally ambiguous harmonies rubs against the pop sensibility implied by the compositional forms and instrumentations with which he works. As in his other projects, highly idiosyncratic computer-generated melodies and rhythms twist and turn within a torturous random walk. His inventive sonic referential vocabulary includes tokens from the bayou, heavy metal, the Middle East, Led Zeppelin, and Javanese gamelan (thanks to the use of the prepared guitar). One hears a palpable, grating friction between his composed elements.

This friction is much less apparent in Mr. Hopper’s material, which tends toward a lackluster mélange of monotonous repetition and drone-like material. He is a capable per-