Reviews

Publications

Eleanor Stubley, Editor: Compositional Crossroads: Music, McGill, Montreal

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Reviewed by Osvaldo Budón
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Compositional Crossroads is a collection of articles written by composers, musicologists, and students who have been associated with the Faculty of Music, McGill University, between 1970 and 2004. The book takes as its object the emergence of McGill as a center of new music in Canada, and focuses mainly on the explosion of new music activity that took place at the Faculty during the second half of the 20th century.

The study is articulated in two parts. In *Part One: Mapping the Infrastructures of the Faculty of Music, McGill University, as a Center for New Music*, Robin Elliott offers insight into the pioneering contribution of István Anhalt to the development

of the composition program; alcides lanza, interviewed by Meg Sheppard, speaks about the birth and development of the Electronic Music Studio; and Paul Pedersen writes about the history of McGill Records. John Rea remembers the impact of the visit of foreign composers to the Faculty of Music; James Harley reflects upon how composer–performer collaborations influenced his compositional approach; and Laurie Radford evaluates some current directions in technological and artistic development.

Part Two: Composer–Work Studies consists of a number of essays where selected works by important composers who teach or have taught at the Faculty of Music are approached analytically. Bruce Mather contributes "The Lost Recital: An Analysis of Bengt Hambraeus's *Carrillon* for Two Pianos," Pamela Jones "The Soles of the Feet: alcides lanza Reconnects with his Roots," and Neil Middleton "Hidden Meaning in Brian Cherney's *Die klingende Zeit*." Steven Huebner authors "Bruce Mather's *Théâtre de l'âme*," Jérôme Blais "'Music under the Influence': on *la nécessité extérieure* in the Music of John Rea," and Patrick Levesque "Illusions, Collapsing Worlds, and Magic Realism: The Music of Denys Bouliane."

Eleanor V. Stubley, Director of Graduate Studies of the Schulich School of Music, McGill University, serves as editor of *Compositional Crossroads*. Her "Introduction: Crossroads" offers valuable historical background that prepares the reader to fully comprehend the significance of the articles that follow. Drawing upon a wealth of sources, she is able to present a thorough yet compact account of the evolution of Music at McGill University, which she casts against the background of important social and political events.

She further provides an introduction to both parts of the book,
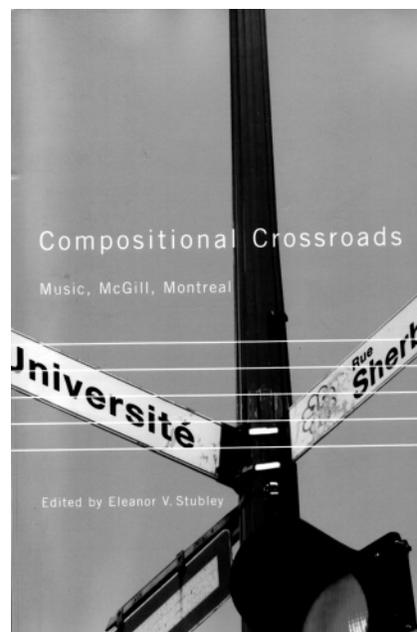
and contextualizes authors and their methodological approaches by means of brief biographical sketches placed at the beginning of each chapter. Ms. Stubley also contributes the closing epilogue: "The Schulich School of Music: Hearing the Future."

The book includes a chronology and two appendices. Commercial recordings of the works cited in the body of the study are listed in Appendix 1, and the document "The Aims and Philosophy of McGill University Records (1988)" is included as Appendix 2.

This review will consider in some detail only the articles included in Part One.

In "István Anhalt and New Music at McGill," musicologist Robin Elliott examines the career of Mr. Anhalt as a composer, teacher, theorist, and administrator between his arrival at McGill from Europe in 1949 (aged 29) and his departure to Queen's University in 1971. Throughout the article, the author—who is Director of the Institute for Canadian Music at the University of Toronto—expounds

on the significance of his career in the context of the development of McGill's Faculty of Music.

Budapest-born Anhalt had studied under Zoltan Kodály in Hungary and Nadia Boulanger in France. In the words of his former student, William Benjamin, he was "more the exception than the rule among émigré intellectuals in being willing to take a serious, non-condescending look at his new surroundings" (p. 36). For Mr. Anhalt, the lack of a new music scene in his new country was "a good situation in which to get work done," (p. 35) and hence he made it his mission to introduce new music to Montreal.

Often bringing in the voices of some of Mr. Anhalt's colleagues, former composition students, and that of the composer himself, Mr. Elliott narrates István Anhalt's adaptation to the new surroundings, his teaching style, the growth of his reputation as a composer, his intense engagement with electronic music from the late 1950s (noting that his first contact with this music was through a CBC broadcast of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge*), and his interest in the creative exploration of the human voice he developed in the 1960s.

István Anhalt, who according to Mr. Benjamin, was "committed to the notion that music was . . . an ever expanding domain of knowledge and possibility, rather like science" (p. 34), is remembered as an inspired pedagogue and a key figure in the establishment of the Electronic Music Studio (EMS) and the introduction of the graduate program in composition in 1968.

At the end of his article, Mr. Elliott states: "Anhalt institutionalized and validated the links between music and scientific inquiry at McGill, and thus in a sense laid the groundwork for further developments in that field, up to and including the creation in 2001 of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Music, Media and Technology" (p. 48).

In the following chapter, "A Brief History of McGill University's Electronic Music Studio," alcides lanza—director of the EMS from 1974 to 2004 and Director Emeritus since then—is interviewed by Meg Sheppard.

Mr. lanza considers that McGill's Electronic Music Studio was born on 16 June 1964, when an oscillator bank and a spectrogram (both instruments built by inventor Hugh Le Caine) were delivered to the Faculty of Music. Mr. Anhalt, who had been collaborating with Le Caine for several years, became the first EMS director. Subsequent directors of the first electronic studio to be established in the province of Quebec were Paul Pedersen (1971–1973), Mr. lanza and Bengt Hambraeus (1973–1974), and then Mr. lanza (1974–2004). In 2004 the Electronic Music Studio was renamed Digital Composition Studio and Sean Ferguson was appointed its director.

Teaching activities at the EMS, Professor lanza recalls, started in 1968 in connection with the launching of graduate programs in composition and musicology (previously, the facilities were dedicated exclusively to the creation of new works by composers on the staff and invited composers). Until the early 1980s, when a Synclavier II was purchased and the McGill EMS became the first digital studio in Canada, the equipment consisted mainly of Le Caine and Moog instruments. Another important articulation in the EMS history took place in 1987, when Bruce Pennycook was hired to develop a music technology area at McGill. This new area was to share some facilities and have overlapping areas of interest with the EMS.

Mr. lanza also refers to the involvement of the EMS and the Group of the Electronic Music Studio (GEMS)—in partnership with the Composition area—in the organization of the McGill Contemporary Music Festivals from 1982 to 1989. Among other performance milestones, he recalls the festival organized in 1989 to celebrate the studio's 25th anniversary.

Toward the end of the interview, Mr. lanza evaluates the historical significance of the studio in the following terms: "From its modest beginnings in the Redpath coach house, the EMS has played a major role in the development of sound recording, music technology, digital composition, and a myriad of recent interdisciplinary research and initiatives" (p. 70). The legacy of the McGill EMS is seen by its Director Emeritus as "the training of generations of electroacousticians in the production, promotion, and dissemination of electroacoustic music in all its forms" (ibid.).

Composition professor since 1973 and former Dean, John Rea authors the third chapter of the book: "Better than a Thousand Days of Diligent Study is a Day with a Great Teacher: Visiting Foreign Artists Residencies at McGill's Faculty of Music, 1975–1981." Through reference to the circumstances associated with the guest artist residencies of Mario Bertoncini (Italy), Edgar Valcárcel (Peru), Mariano Etkin (Argentina), and Makoto Shinohara (Japan), Mr. Rea is able to recreate the singular atmosphere that existed at the Faculty of Music and in Montreal in the middle to late 1970s: "A social, artistic, and educational environment that seems almost impossible to imagine today" (p. 74). The Faculty of Music had been recently relocated to a new building and several new staff members, coming from around the world, had joined Bruce Mather in the composition area between 1971 and 1973: alcides lanza (Argentina), Brian Cherney (Canada), Bengt Hambraeus (Sweden), Robert

Jones (USA), Peter Paul Koprowski (Poland), and John Rea (Canada).

The Canada Council for the Arts sponsored the visits to McGill of the named composers with funds from the Visiting Foreign Artists Program. During their residencies, the guest artists were to assume teaching responsibilities at the Faculty of Music, and to become actively engaged in concerts and other new music-related activities. For a period lasting approximately one semester, student composers discovered and confronted other poetics through contact with the musical languages that were cultivated by each one of the visitors.

From Mr. Rea's writing the reader gathers that the Faculty in those days resembled something like a unique crossroad where "east met west" and "south met north" for the benefit of everyone, especially the music students. The author draws a human and artistic portrait of each guest composer, providing a thorough biographical background and a description of their main activities while in Montreal. He also offers some insight—remarkable both in depth and style—into selected compositions. Furthermore, he reconstructs in considerable detail several public concerts where the visiting artists participated as composers and/or performers. This allows him to share with the reader his own recollection of how their music was heard at that time.

Mr. Rea's writing remains intense and engaging throughout this lengthy essay. One feels that his reflections on the nature and value of the work of his foreign colleagues are also the background against which he is seeking to understand his own artistic singularity.

Paul Pedersen contributes the article "McGill University Records, 1976–1990: A Brief History." The author's attachment to McGill began

in 1966, initially in connection with the EMS. Mr. Pedersen, who in 1965 completed the first fully computerized composition written in Canada, would stay at McGill until 1990, where he was to be among the founders of McGill Records, and also serve as Dean of the Faculty of Music for a decade (1976–1986).

According to Mr. Pedersen, the story of McGill Records starts in 1974, at the Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw, Poland, when he by chance met Wieslaw Woszczyk—then a sound recording student at that institution—who was to become a key figure in the development of the Sound Recording Program at McGill. McGill Records was formally initiated in 1976, while the Faculty of Music was undergoing a period of significant growth. Mr. Woszczyk was to be the recording engineer, Donald Steven the recording producer, and Mr. Pedersen the executive producer. McGill's own recording studio became operational in 1980. Until then, microphones had to be rented out and tape recorders borrowed from the EMS for recording sessions.

The aim of McGill Records was, in the first place, to promote the Faculty of Music through recordings of faculty performers, including student ensembles, and the music of faculty composers. Featuring other Canadian performers and composers came next in the order of priorities. Recording pieces from the repertoire that were not commercially available was also a guiding criteria for the choice of projects. One of the first releases was *Percussion*, which featured music by Canadian composers performed by students in the McGill Percussion Ensemble directed by Pierre Béluse. This disc won the first prize for the Best Chamber Music Recording in the 1979 Grand Prix du Disque (Canada).

The author offers a very thorough historical account of the development

of McGill Records through its different phases. He provides very precise information and includes several illustrative—and often amusing—anecdotes. Mr. Pedersen's prose, both elegant and direct, contributes to keep the reader focused as he describes in some detail how numerous artistic, financial, legal, and administrative issues were dealt with over the years.

By 1990, when Mr. Pedersen left McGill to become Dean of Music at the University of Toronto, 36 recordings had been issued. Works by McGill composers amounted to 35 percent of the total playing time. The author concludes: "I believe that whatever success McGill Records had during the period from 1976 to 1990 was due in no small part to the fortunate coincidence of the right staff, students, facilities, and opportunity all coming together at a crucial time in the history of the Faculty of Music. Today it is widely perceived that the McGill Faculty of Music has become the pre-eminent Canadian Music School, and McGill Records probably helped to create and solidify that perception" (p. 128).

In "The Making of New Music: Composer as Collaborator," James Harley—currently a professor of Digital Music at the University of Guelph—recalls several of his collaborative experiences with performers, and reflects upon how these collaborations influenced his compositional approach and contributed to give form to his work.

Attending Iannis Xenakis's seminars at Université de Paris and working with the UPIC system at the Centre d'Etudes de Mathématique et Automatique Musicales (CEMAMu), did much to shape Mr. Harley's musical thinking. Having learned mathematics on Xenakis's advice, and while a postgraduate student at the Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw, he read an article by Douglas

Hofstadter on nonlinear functions that exhibited "chaotic" traits. He soon started to work on developing ways to apply nonlinear functions to music composition. The search for computing resources and the opportunity to develop programming skills led Mr. Harley in 1988 to the doctoral program at McGill, where Bruce Pennycook was developing computer music resources.

While a doctoral student, Mr. Harley developed—both within the Faculty of Music and in the larger context of the Montreal new music community—fruitful collaborative relationships with various ensembles, conductors, and individual performers. These experiences, that were to be meaningful in the development of his compositional aesthetic, included collaborations with the McGill Symphony Orchestra and the McGill Percussion Ensemble; conductors Lorraine Vaillancourt and Veronique Lacroix; the ensemble Kappa and its director, Philippe Keyser; percussionist D'Arcy Gray; pianist Marc Couroux; and the duo formed by pianist Brigitte Poulin and violist Laura Wilcox.

The author opposes the "ivory tower" composer, instead opting for the model of "a composer that collaborates with performers as mutual partners in an evolving process" (pp. 129–130). He explains on a case-by-case basis how specific compositions were conceived and developed in the context of a creative exchange between composer and performer. Score excerpts of the compositions illustrate the discussion. The issue of the levels of technical difficulty that arise from exploring the algorithmic compositional applications of chaos theory comes more than once to the forefront of Mr. Harley's reflections. His concern with the fact that "performers need to be able to find the value and beauty in a composition if

they are to do their part in conveying the music to the listener" (p. 132) resonates throughout the essay.

In "From Mixed Up to Mixin' It Up: Evolving Paradigms in Electronic Music Performance Practice," composer Laurie Radford considers some of the fundamental changes that music-making—largely in relation to technological developments—underwent over the second half of the 20th century, and evaluates current directions in technological and artistic development. "Technologies born of a particular need," says the author, "in turn bring about changes in their maker and their maker's world" (p. 154). By way of a quote from Mike Berk, he brings in a notion that is central to his essay: "it's the electronic music studio—instruments, processing gear, and recording and editing equipment—that inaugurates a new sonic paradigm, confounding our standard definitions of what 'instruments,' 'composition,' and 'recording' are" (quoted on p. 155).

For Mr. Radford—a professor at City University of London at the time of publication—"the evolving technical facilities to access, evaluate, fragment, and reshape sound and image documents in powerful and efficient yet relatively simple ways" (p. 154) lay at the heart of "the growing inclination towards the alchemical mixing of cultural products as artistic material and experience" (pp. 155–156). The author elaborates at length upon the concept of the "mix." He offers several definitions for this term, ordered, one might say, according to a "scale of mixness" covering the ambitus between the simple mixture of acoustic and electroacoustic sound sources and the mix of live performance, pre-programmed response, and cyber-space connectivity. The concept is also evaluated within the framework of the three-fold paradigm of present-day music-

making (oral tradition, written music, and electroacoustic music) proposed by François Delalande. Through reference to the ideas set forth in Jacques Attali's book *Noise*, Mr. Radford proposes a fourth paradigm in which "an emerging cultural imperative to 'mix' and 'remix' the sounds and images of the world erases the historic and aesthetic boundaries distinguishing Delalande's paradigms" (p. 151).

Mr. Radford, who believes that "the 'mixed' work has been the territory of choice for a unique range of expression and material exploration" (p. 156), refers to the activities of the GEMS—founded in 1982 at McGill's Faculty of Music—to provide reference and context for his discussion.

A former GEMS member himself, the author sees the group's work as an example of "the ongoing tendencies [in electronic music performance practice] towards an integration of a broad field of sound sources and instrumental forces" (p. 151).

I trust that anyone interested in gaining a better understanding of the singular nature of Canadian music will enjoy reading *Compositional Crossroads* as much as I did. I found the book to be dense in concepts and information, very well written, and edited most carefully. Although each chapter is, to a large extent, an autonomous text that can be read independently from the others, the whole is clearly more that the sum of its parts. I find particularly accurate the editor's description of the book as "a series of snapshots that, flashed one after the other in quick succession, capture the vibrant life of a prestigious North American music academy at the turn of the twenty-first century standing on the threshold of a new beginning as the McGill University Schulich School of Music" (p. 4).

The fact that the EMS played a central role in the development of the

"new" at McGill is likely to become apparent to the reader from the evidence provided by various chapters in the book. Hence, I believe that any course on the history of electroacoustic music will benefit from including *Compositional Crossroads* in its bibliography.

Recordings

Eric Chasalow: Left to His Own Devices

Compact disc, New World Records 80601-2, 2003; available from New World Records, 75 Broad Street, Suite 2400, New York, New York 10004, USA; telephone (+1) 212-290-1680; fax (+1) 212-290-1685; electronic mail info@newworldrecords.org; Web www.newworldrecords.org.

Reviewed by Laurie Radford
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

As with many composers of the last quarter-century of the 20th century, adeptly availing themselves of a range of performance and technological resources, from standard solo instrument, chamber ensembles, and orchestra, to instrument and electroacoustic pairings and purely electroacoustic essays, Eric Chasalow has portioned out his energies and interests to numerous genres of contemporary concert music projects. This diversity of resources employed is paralleled in the eclectic aesthetic and stylistic language(s) that Mr. Chasalow draws upon and pursues: acerbic instrumental gestures enticingly combined with vital rhythmic and formal clarity; quotation and self-reference; forays into sonic anthropology; reverent gestures towards the instrumental canon; and aggressive forays into the unknowns of electroacoustic con-

struction. This New World Records offering from 2003 offers a generous collection of nine works from his catalogue spanning the years 1994 to 2001 and includes two acoustic chamber music works, four works combining instruments and tape, and three electroacoustic works.

The two purely instrumental works included on the disc are *Yes, I Really Did* (1998) for violin, cello, and piano, and the three-movement *In the Work* (1993–1994) featuring the ensemble Phantom Arts. *Yes, I Really Did* employs the piano trio combination in an expressive and flowing manner with several lyrical interludes momentarily halting the pulse-driven opening thematic material that predominates, until a process of fragmentation brings the work to a wistful conclusion. *In the Work* employs a larger ensemble of six instruments (flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, percussion). The first of the three movements highlights each of the instruments as soloists in turn in an elastic music that wavers between several states, rushing forward, then abruptly halting and lingering, only to veer off in another direction moments later. The second movement is a brief, jazzy episode with snare-cymbal volleys ricocheting off the walking cello under intertwining violin-clarinet-flute lines, and the third movement offers a more expansive and dramatic proposition that doesn't quite provide the "finale" energy and conclusion that one is led to (perhaps conventionally) expect.

Mr. Chasalow is especially renowned for his numerous works for instruments and electroacoustic resources. One of the earliest works on the disc, the toe-tapping *Out of Joint* (1994) for trumpet and tape, tips its hat to the composer's jazz side with spiraling trumpet licks and leaps enwreathed by noodling synth lines and faux trap-set outbursts. The Ital-

ian clarinet virtuoso and champion of new music, Guido Arbonelli, gives a stellar performance of a spritely work, *In a Manner of Speaking* (2000), for bass clarinet and tape. The close timbral and temporal conjunction between clarinet and tape materials, from long undulating sustained notes to rapid stabs and runs, results in a coherent and engaging work that warrants a longer exploration than its less than five minute duration.

A larger ensemble combined with a pre-recorded electroacoustic component, the wittily entitled *Suspicious Motives* (1999), is performed here by the four members of the Auros Group for New Music on flute, clarinet, violin, and violoncello and purportedly incorporates materials from previous works by the composer as well as nods in the direction of Milton Babbitt and others. This is one of the highlights of the disc with lean and carefully balanced use of the ensemble and equally successful combinations of electroacoustic (often transformed vocal) materials that in effect act as a fifth instrument in the seamless integration of the work.

Mr. Chasalow's five *Dream Songs* (2001), on texts by John Berryman, combine a performance by the Boston Modern Orchestra with tape. The tenor voice in these songs is not

presented live but rather by means of the tape along with various transformations of the voice and other colorful interjections that play with the timbral space between the orchestra and the horizons of the electroacoustic medium. There are many evocative and engaging moments in these five short pieces, but the mix of orchestra and tape lacks acoustic integration such that each medium remains in a distinct, separate space in the recording. Although the convincing integration of these forces is admittedly a formidable challenge in live circumstances, the means of unifying disparate sources by spatial design in the studio environment would seem to be presently within grasp.

An early three-minute tape work, *And It Flew Upside Down* (1994) meanders from sustained echoes of instrumental impetus through volleys of gravelly synthesis to broadband iterative complexes, and then . . . it fades away as quickly as it began. The remaining two electroacoustic works are rather more substantial. A notable part of Mr. Chasalow's research in the area of electroacoustic music has produced the *The Video Archive of Electroacoustic Music,* an oral history project "begun in 1996 by the author and sociologist, Barbara Cassidy, which captures a first-person history of many pioneering electroacoustic music composers, scientists, and engineers from 1950 to present" (www.ericchasalow.com/oralhist.html). The two works on the disc that have emerged from this project represent (in the composer's words) a "convergence of collecting and composing." The title track, *Left to His Own Devices* (1996), employs recordings of interviews with Milton Babbitt, and *Crossing Boundaries* (2000) uses the voices of Charles Dodge, John Pierce, Max Matthews, Bill McGinnis, Mel Powell, Ramon Sender, Alice Shields,

Mario Davidovsky, and Milton Babbitt. This genre of work might be heard as verging on documentary in its self-reflection, radiophonic in its negotiation of text, narrative, and transformed sound stage, a genre of electroacoustic music *about* electroacoustic music.

In the first work, the intervening quotes by Mr. Babbitt are accompanied and framed by washes of "computer" music harkening back to the sound complexes created by Mr. Babbitt himself in the 1960s, or speed- and pitch-varied fragments of the elder composer's voice. One suspects that there are meaningful and even humorous in-house references lurking here that are available to those privy to the individual and the circumstances to which they refer. The latter work, *Crossing Boundaries*, partakes of the spirit of a rambling collage employing interview voices as source materials, the voice segments strung together by electroacoustic interludes. A much longer, slowly evolving electroacoustic section moves the opening of the work momentarily onto a different spatial and temporal plane for the middle portion of the work before an abrupt explosion of celebratory textures bring with them renewed energy and the return of a variety of vocal testimonies. Once again, not so much what is said but who is saying it would appear to hold the key to fully appreciating this work.

Although many of the materials employed in the tape and instrument and tape works strike one initially as outdated and spectrally wanting, upon closer inspection many of the sounds are in fact quite interesting unto themselves, invoking a nostalgia for icy, clangorous FM percussive sonorities of the 1980s and even, in several instances, of the distinctive emissions and envelope shapes of the hallowed RCA Mark II Synthesizer

on which Mr. Chasalow cut his teeth under the masters of that behemoth, Mr. Babbitt, Bulent Arel, and Mario Davidovksy.

The CD booklet provides copious information about the composer, the works, and the various performers and ensembles presented. It is interesting to see the word tape used to denote works that very likely had no tape involved in their production, the echoes of a terminological debacle that haunt many composers to the present day whose creative careers have spanned the magnetic tape-to-diskette-to-DAT-to-CD-to-Flash Drive object-hood of their musical output.

Meta Duo: Korea-Sax

Compact disc, KEAMS/Nova Musica, 2004; available from Korea Electro-Acoustic Music Society, Room 329, Korea National University of Arts, 2374 Nambu-sunhwan-no, Seocho-gu, Seoul 137-070, Korea; telephone (+82) 2-746-9228; electronic mail master@keams.org.

Reviewed by Laurie Radford
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Meta Duo is a performance duo combining the virtuoso saxophone talents of French musician Daniel Kientzy and the live electronics and audio mixing skills of Reina Portuondo. Their acclaimed concerts present new, innovative works, many of them commissions specifically written for the duo, that involve one or more of the seven instruments of the saxophone family adeptly played by Mr. Kientzy and either pre-recorded sounds or live electronic processing and generation. Live eight-channel audio diffusion is an integral part of Meta Duo's metier, a meta-chamber music they term "enneaphony." Mr. Kientzy, one of the leading exponents

of innovation in the contemporary saxophone world and developer of many new performance techniques for the instrument, has recorded more than 70 CDs and has commissioned over 300 new works for solo saxophone, saxophone with diverse chamber ensembles, and saxophone in combination with a variety of electronic processing and electroacoustic combinations. For more than a decade, Meta Duo has been performing throughout the world, commissioning new works, and releasing recordings. This 2004 collaboration between Meta Duo's label Nova Musical and KEAMS (Korean Electro-Acoustic Music Society) provides an opportunity to discover six works written for solo saxophone and electronics by a selection of Korean composers.

Issues of sound origin and clarity of methodology are always present with a project that combines the vast palette of sound that an instrumentalist like Mr. Kientzy can produce acoustically and the electronic extensions and transformations applied to that performance. Nonetheless, in the present case, the ambiguity of source does not detract from the strength of most of the works presented on *Korea-Sax*. The opening work on the disc, *Pollywogs* (2002) by Joyous Choi, a French Ministry commission for Meta Duo, has Mr. Kientzy playing both soprano and baritone saxophones in combination with a rich and eclectic array of pre-recorded sound materials and live transformations of the instruments. In the spirit of the title, the piece nervously dances from dense textures and saxophone flurries to rarified, cavernous ambience, and finally to saxophone leaps and arabesques amid liquid reverberation. *Metamorphosis* (2002) by Young-Mee Lymn offers an evocative dialogue in which transformed recordings of saxophone materials

override, cajole, amplify, and counter moody, tentative solo alto saxophone outbursts and trills.

Seong-Joon Moon's *Klangschatten IV* (2002) for alto and tenor saxophones and electronics is a striking essay in the exploration of sound materials intrinsic to the visceral language of the saxophone, the rushing pressure of breath pushing through the spaces of the instrument, augmented by electronic processing, leading to an intense focus of internal energy and pulsation. Fragile glimpses of the onset of sound production, the primal beginnings of sonic energy, are countered by harsh extremes of respiratory commitment intensified by dissonant digital harmonization and ambient resonance. *Klangschatten IV*, one in a series of works by Seong-Joon Moon's for acoustic instruments and electronic music, is a vivid, lean, and entirely convincing melding of saxophone and electronics.

A short work entitled *Mu Ryun Zip Gok* (2002) for soprano, alto, and bass saxophones and tape by Doojin Ahn is based upon the traditional call and response of ceremonial Korean march music. The saxophone intones declarative laments against an irregular pulsating backdrop of fragmented and blurred ceremonial bells, drums, and indigenous double-reed incantations. *Strange Dream* (2002) by Donning Lee highlights Mr. Kientzy's soaring, lyrical command of the alto saxophone awash in reverberant reflections and stuttering multi-delays. Midway through this mellifluous building of texture, a rasping punctuation of breath expulsion and fleeting, dissonant multi-doublings of saxophone fragments steer the piece towards a hesitant exploration of disparate materials and gestures, a disintegration of the apparent fluidity and directionality of the opening that terminates in a simple intoning of the instrument's most basic vibration.

The final work on the disc, *Flux I* (2001) by Jingo Yam, employs soprano and tenor saxophones and a pre-recorded electroacoustic component. Angular accents and hovering, sustained textures provide an initial underlying current for an increasingly fervent and agitated saxophone cadenza. This model of supporting electroacoustic material, diverse and ever-changing, upon which the saxophone ruminates, at first hesitant and then tracking a rising trajectory towards an overly predictable climatic point, drives the remainder of the work through several connected sections toward a somewhat unsatisfactory and limpid conclusion.

The instrumental prowess and confidence of a player like Daniel Kientzy is indubitably a profound pleasure to behold. In the genre that combines instrument and its extension by electronics, the phenomenon of the virtuoso instrumentalist in league with the adept practitioner of signal processing and spatial choreography can sway one's attention away from a consideration of the source of the music that is the composer's conception, the sound materials and the processes that are designed and subsequently animated and manifested by the performers. This disc provides a valuable glimpse of the compositional standards and explorations by contemporary Korean composers working at home and abroad.

The quality of Meta Duo's *Korea-Sax* is excellent. A convincing balance is achieved between unprocessed and processed saxophones and diverse and often complex additional sound materials resulting from live signal processing or pre-determined electroacoustic construction. Although the CD booklet provides ample information about both the composers and Meta Duo in both Korean and English, proofreading by an English speaker would have

greatly improved the legibility of the Korean-to-English translation.

Dan Trueman: Machine Language

Compact disc, Bridge Records 9149, 2004; available from Bridge Records, 200 Clinton Avenue, New Rochelle, New York 10801, USA; telephone (+1) 914-654-9270; fax (+1) 914-636-1383; Web www.bridgerecords.com/pages/catalog/9149.htm/.

Reviewed by Matthew McCabe
*Columbus, Georgia, USA*

I had the pleasure of working with Dan Trueman at the 2007 Third Practice Electroacoustic Music Festival at the University of Richmond. As the technical director of the festival, I took a front-row seat in the production of his *Five (and a half) Gardens*, performed by Trollstilt and So Percussion. During the setup and rehearsals, I found Mr. Trueman to be a sensitive, concerned, exacting musician. I was excited to review this compact disc release, M*achine Language*, after working with him, and I found many of those same admirable qualities in the music on the CD.

The opening track shares its title with the disc. Scored for two violins (one electric, played by Mr. Trueman himself), percussion, and cello, *Machine Language* is dreamy and pensive, with hints of Gorecki-like spirituality and clear world-music influences. The composer notes his inspiration for the piece, making mention of the genetic algorithms cultivated by computer scientists in the study of artificial life. If *Machine Language* is, as Mr. Trueman explains, an imagined version of the languages these virtual life forms might speak, clearly the composer has imagined a species with a poetic and whimsical nature. The work evolves patiently, starting with rustic,

folk-like tones, and continuing to a percussive, rhythmic middle, and finally moving to a peaceful close, rich with color. Far from sounding computational, Mr. Trueman's little life forms cavort about, singing in a way that communicates more as a natural language than as a set of algorithms.

The second work, *Traps*, expands the ensemble to string quartet plus electric violin and portable computer. The piece opens with shimmering string textures that move in waves, punctuated by opaque processing from the computer, explained in the liner notes as a sort of pitch retention/transposition machine. Still more patient and meditative than *Machine Language*, *Traps* exceeds in its execution of the underlying programming. The final three minutes twist the pitch language into the realm of tension and dissonance, and finally resolves the clashing with a return to the gentle textures of the opening. *Traps* is beautiful and sublime, and my favorite track on this disc.

Counterfit Curio is an exercise in discovering an antiquity, though not in the typical sense: The music progresses through a myriad of materials, including cinematic-sounding descending melodies, further folk-like string writing, and bubbly hocketed textures, as well as synthesized sounds and many 20th-century "new music" stylistic gestures. These materials increasingly coalesce as the work moves forward, with the exception of a period of exciting musical stops about halfway through, leading to a tuneful, rhythmic section. The final part of the piece, as the composer notes, is a manufactured "old-sounding" recording created from the previously heard musical materials. With this piece, it's almost as if Mr. Trueman is teaching us music history in reverse: a kind of anti-remix that results in an old music of some mysterious culture that
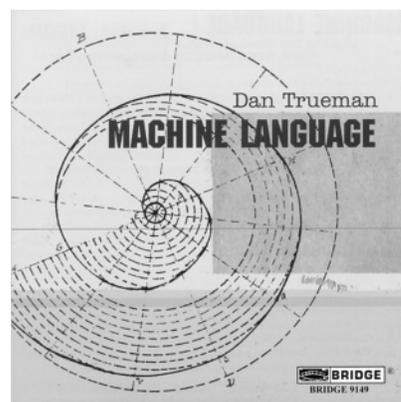
never existed. Pierrot-plus-percussion ensemble Non Sequitur sounds brilliant and rehearsed in the recording.

Following *Counterfit Curio* is the complimentary *Spring Rhythm*. Citing Jackson Pollock and medieval motets as inspiration for the piece, Mr. Trueman creates a work whose expressivity mirrors both sources, and combines the "spatter" technique of Pollock with the refinement of a motet, almost as if the paint spatters (translated here as textures and pitches) contract and expand into the rhythms and rousing syncopations found in the work.

Still reflects its title well, with the mixture of strings and electrical humming sounds offering a relatively static sonic landscape that widely stretches out in every direction. This is perhaps the most pensive of the works on the disc, and the composer admirably acknowledges in the booklet how, after completing the work on the morning of 9/11, the piece found itself in a new context. Indeed, after listening and reading the notes, it carries a certain sadness when put into the frame of September 11, particularly the shimmering, granular textures at the close of the piece.

The Tarab Cello Ensemble closes the disc with *A Capella*, a rhythmic and brooding work that exploits minimal materials to the edge of

their possibilities: The eight cello lines weave together, sounding as if the piece was being played on an enormous harp, whose virtuosic player has fingers made of horse hair.

Sonically, each recording is excellent, though disparities in the sense of space are present. As a collection of individual works, each recording communicates well, but listening to the whole involves several invisible teleportations between recording studios and concert halls occurring between tracks. Still, *Machine Language* is a wonderful disc, full of accessible, well-crafted music that ranges from the intellectual to the mysterious. The technological presence in these pieces is always tasteful, non-abrasive, and expressive.

Part of the intrigue of this music is that it could be programmed on a concert of nearly anything; many of the pieces would pair well with both traditional chamber repertoire and experimental electroacoustic music. There is much fresh air to breathe in Dan Trueman's work, and repeated listening brings more nuance to what is already an enjoyable CD.

Electronic Music, Vol. III, Música Viva Competition Prize Winners 2004—2005—2006: Adrian Moore, Joshua Goldman, Panayiotis Kokoras, Pedro Almeida, Santiago Díez Fischer, Ingrid Obled, Manuella Blackburn, Thomas Peter

Compact disc, mcd 016.07, 2007; available from Miso Music Portugal, Rua do Douro 92, Rebelva 2775-318, Parede, Portugal; telephone (+351) 21-457-5068; fax (+351) 21-458-7256; electronic mail misorecords@misomusic.com; Web www.misomusic.com/.

Reviewed by Ian Whalley
Hamilton, New Zealand

This collection, the third in a series from Miso Records in Portugal, collates the prizewinners of the Música Viva Competition from 2004 to 2006. The competition has assumed increasing importance on the international circuit, with 2006 being the seventh year it has been held. Entry to the competition is limited to composers under the age of 35. The last few years has attracted an average of 120 applicants from a range of nationalities.

Jury membership for the competition changes each year. Christian Clozier, Trevor Wishart, and Miguel Azguime adjudicated in 2004. In 2005, Annette Vande Gorne, Marek Choloniewski, and Miguel Azguime covered the duties, and in 2006 judging was undertaken by François Bayle, Morton Subotnick, and Miguel Azguime.

The disc contains eight tracks: two works from 2004, and three from each of 2005 and 2006. Given the jury selection of winning works from a large number of entries each year, the sonic production quality is uniformly high. As a documentary of the competition's outcomes, and a reference point for others who may wish to emulate the standards required, the disc is a worthwhile addition to any library.

The disc also gives a clear sense of the aesthetic that was favored over the period of selection, which is remarkable for its cohesiveness in reflecting predominantly academic Anglo/French and sometimes German electroacoustic music styles. Partly this may be a result of the age limit imposed on composers, with younger composers reflecting the voice of their teachers; but perhaps it also reflects on the orientation and backgrounds of the adjudication panels.

Whatever the reason, given the range of approaches available to electronic music over the last decade, the aesthetic uniformity between many

of the works on the disc, and the lack of stylistic progression over the period, is notable. Accordingly, although there are many works included that are strong within established electronic genres, the few works that are stylistically adventurousness and also engage dramatically clearly stand out.

To aid the listening process, the composers have provided biographical and program notes for the disc. The resulting texts vary considerably in both length and quality, and a tighter writing brief would have added to overall presentation.

The first track from the 2004 competition is by Adrian Moore, titled *Dreaming of the Dawn* (14′04″). Largely drawing on the British electroacoustic music tradition, it is inspired by an Emily Dickinson short poem. Sonically, it uses heavily treated woodwind instrumental samples, which appear in the introduction. The work demonstrates an astute control of timing and timbre, and has a clear sense of development. The approach is delicate and sensitive, with a good range of gestures. Stylistically it is an odd mixture, including a comic moment with a chord often heard in horror films, and nods to popular music synthesis. Although a refreshing approach, the stylistic diversity may disturb some traditionalists.

Mr. Moore's work is followed by *Language* (6′27″) by Joshua Goldman, also from 2004. This is the shortest work on the disc, and the notes provided are scant. The composer indicates that it is a "stereophonic sound structure composed for seven vocalists (none of who are using their vocal cords)" (p. 5), and that the work should be played in complete darkness within the limits of avoiding damaging hearing and equipment. The approach is pointillistic and sparse, and owes much to the vocal works of Trevor Wishart. There is a keen sense of placement, although this is a little static in some sections. The humor is engaging, and in the context of the disc, the work differentiates due to its use of sound sources.

Three works are presented from 2005, and the next two tracks from that year are a highlight of the disc.

The first is *Anechoic Pulse* (9′40″) by Panayiotis Kokoras. Notable here is the delicacy of control, the fine sense of momentum, and the clearly thought-out use of space. The orchestration of the central ideas is subtle, musical, and evocative, and the control of tension and relaxation is finely balanced. The work has clear motives, strong development, and the dramatic structure, although not immediately obvious, is masterful. Better notes of the work would have helped to come to terms with the piece, but the affective language used within an acousmatic style compensates abundantly.

Rota (10:51) by Pedro Almeida follows. A quasi-programmatic approach is taken here, the work making subconscious/experiential reference to seafarers' trips during the Portuguese colonial period, but using abstract sounds rather than direct sonic quotes. Appreciated was the exploration of lower frequencies in this work that seems lacking in earlier tracks on the disc. Apart from the temptation to interpret musical gestures in terms of extra-musical meaning here which can add to but also detract from the sonic experience, striking in the work is the clear musical/dramatic sense articulated though the astute use of timing and space. To the composer's credit, he is able to do this with minimal gestures in many passages, while also allowing the texture to breathe and the listener to dwell on the delicacy of different sonic moments. Structurally, the manipulation of expectation of the climatic points was also appreciated. For sheer dramatic originality, this is the highlight of the disc.

The final work from 2005 is *Tynajas* (11′33″) by Santiago Díez Fischer. The masterful control of frequency range and timbre is evident from the dramatic outset here. The short program notes provided indicate that the sounds should be viewed as animals or little creatures, an interesting idea that begs more explanation. Still, the idea is a delightful one, and one certainly gets a sense of sonic animism in the work, with moments of delicate impishness and a sense of being drawn in and seduced. Stylistically, and in contrast to the previous piece, this follows a more mainstream acousmatic approach that partly makes it sound somewhat dated on one hand, but is redeemed with touches of harmonic spectral technique. Although a reflection of the intention of the work, gestures are small throughout, and one partly yearns for some longer sounds and a greater frequency range to aid dramatic development.

We arrive at 2006 with the sixth track by Ingrid Obled titled *Si Je Regarde* (7′37″). The program notes here are the briefest in the booklet, which does something of a disservice to the piece, as a clear guide to intention here would help listeners. The work is minimalist, with sparse events and a structure that slowly evolves out of silence after a dramatic beginning. The control of one's expectation is noteworthy, as is the work's cohesiveness. Perhaps greater variety would have helped with the dramatic sense. Still, the brooding nature of the work, and strong concluding section, redeem this.

Causal Impacts (7′00″) by Manuella Blackburn, one of two women whose works are included, is the third outstanding track on the disc. Written in a mainstream academic sonic art genre, the sense of production/sonic clarity is astounding here, finely balanced with an intuitively musical approach. Exceptional is the careful control of short gestural sounds sensitively placed in the frequency and space fields. The control of structure and sense of timing is also remarkable.

The disc concludes with Thomas Peter's work *neugut-rand* (9′13″). The author's short program note provides a reasonable guide to the intention of the work, reflecting the contrast between the artificial and the natural. The aesthetic here is cerebral rather than affective, and while the production is outstanding in using some electronically generated sounds, it seems to beg for some more harmonic spectral glimpses to provide contrast. Notable is the clear shape and playful incidental moments, despite the limited range of gestures used.

Within the dominant aesthetic that the disc represents, there is ample music here to savor and delight in, and it includes a fine collection of young composers who may continue the traditions drawn on. Again, the sense of production is generally high across the works presented, and there are some outstanding examples of compositional craft. Beyond this, a concern is that art, while being about the "divine recapitulation" of

Figure 1. Close-up view of a single AudioCube.

Figure 2. Set of AudioCubes configured to display different colors and intensities.

knowledge, is also about the discovery of new knowledge. In these terms, works that explore new ground while drawing on older traditions are to be admired and encouraged, and it would have been interesting to hear more of the stylistic and affective voices of the younger composers included here.

Products

Percussa AudioCubes Sensors/ Controllers

AudioCube: single, €219.00; two or more, €199.00 each; four or more, €162.00 each; eight or more, €158.00 each (pricing includes UPS shipping); Percussa Bvba, Oudenaardse Steenweg 430, 9420 Mere, Belgium; telephone (+32) 477-931533 or Skype bschiett; electronic mail feedback@percussa.com; Web www.percussa.com/.

Reviewed by Martin Eckart
Guelph, Ontario, Canada

The AudioCubes created by Percussa are sold in varying sets of identical white acrylic cubes measuring 75 mm^3 and weighing approximately 400 g each. Each cube sports infrared sensors on the four horizontal faces, one USB port, and a $\frac{1}{4}$-in. unbalanced mono input/output set (see Figure 1). An on/off switch is provided on the bottom face. The white plastic casing is semi-translucent, and when switched on, the cube produces pastel-colored light of varying intensities over the RGB color spectrum (see Figure 2). The cubes are intended for use with a computer running at least Windows XP or Mac OS X 10.4. Percussa's founder Bert Schiettecatte promises that Linux support is in the works. Computer configuration is recommended at 256 MB of RAM and

a Pentium 3/Macintosh G3 or better. The AudioCubes configuration software is provided on the installation DVD, and includes MIDI Bridge (for live performance), Deckabridge (for DJing), Loopshaper (for sound design), and Plugin Wrapper (for production). Sound packs from Loopmasters are also included. Each cube is powered by a battery that can be charged by means of the USB connection. It is highly recommended to download the latest software, firmware, and manuals from Percussa's support page (www.percussa.com/isupport.php) before beginning installation or using.

The installation, configuration, and basic operation of the AudioCubes are moderately easy to work through. It should take about one hour to install the configuration software, the operations manual, and to work through the Quick Start tutorial showing the MIDI control basics. In order to use the provided configuration and control software (MIDI Bridge), some sort of MIDI loop-back driver is also necessary for MIDI communication between Percussa's MIDI Bridge and sequencing/performance software such as Ableton Live!. The installation DVD provides LoopBe1 for Windows XP. Macintosh computer users do not need to install this additional

software. The documentation included is thorough, and up-to-date reference material can be found on the Percussa Web site (manuals.percussa.com/).

The AudioCubes are a sort of "white box" instrument without a premeditated, highly specialized function. Rather, musicians can use the general properties of the cubes to come up with new methods of performing electronic music and art. The AudioCubes are created for use in four manners: (1) as MIDI controllers, sending Note On/Off messages when the cubes' faces interact with one another; (2) as sensors tracking the distance of objects from each of the four faces of each cube; (3) as MIDI continuous controllers affecting the colored lights within each cube; and (4) as modular audio signal generators.

The MIDI Bridge software (running within the included Max/MSP Runtime software environment) provides the basic control interface for the cube functions (see Figure 3). Each cube can be configured to act as a sender, receiver, or sensor by plugging in the USB cable and tweaking the parameters. The cube's color can be set as well as the MIDI in/out ports and the channels for integration with other software. Operation of the cubes with the MIDI Bridge software requires that at least one
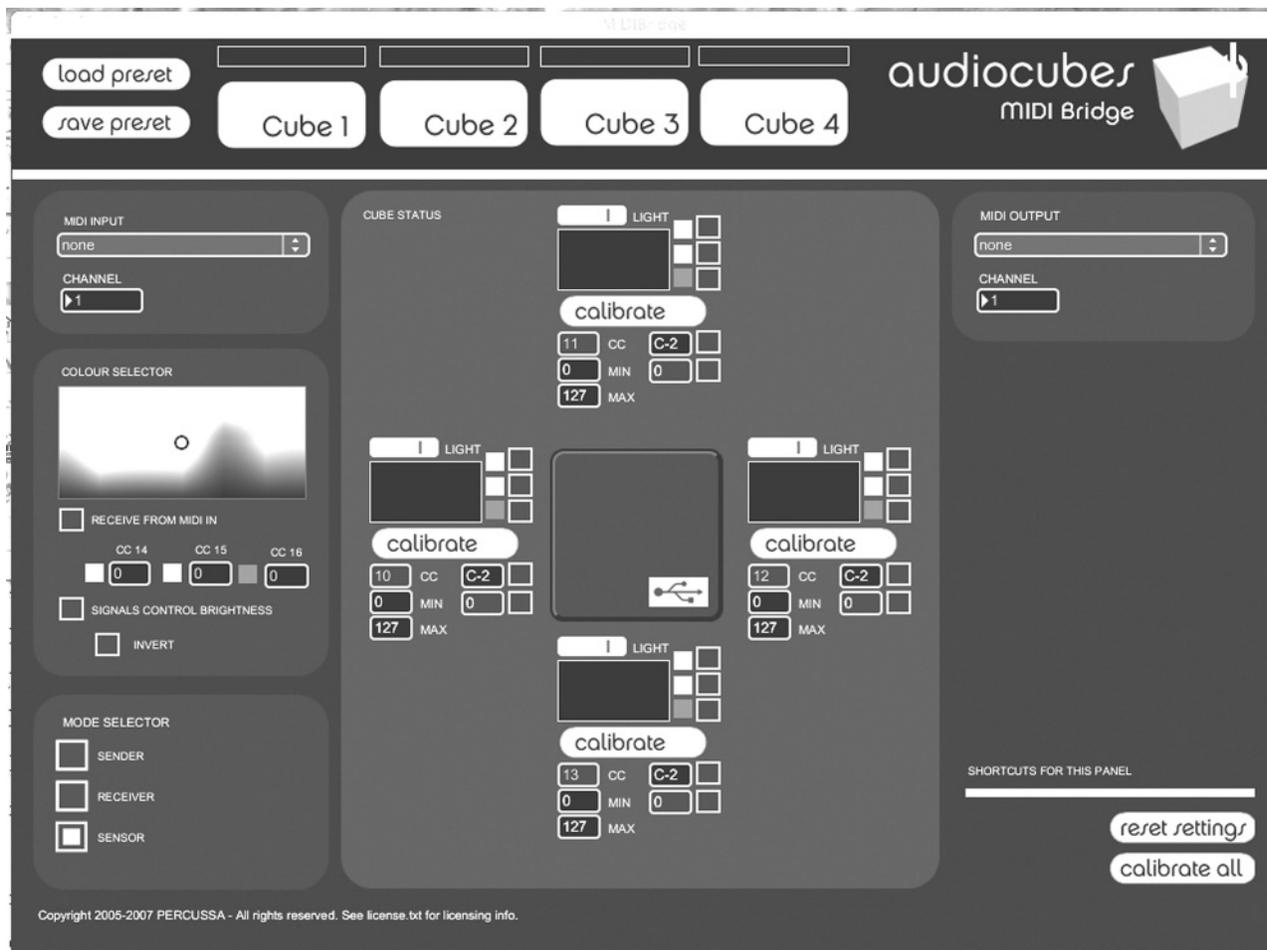
cube is connected to the computer via USB. Designated as a "receiver," this cube will then transmit sensor input from other "sender" cubes as MIDI Note On messages, depending on which face of the sender cube aligns with the receiver's sensor. The basic application of this set-up is to control Live! sets (or something similar using other sequencing/looping environments) by simply rotating a cube 90 degrees and triggering MIDI-mapped clips loaded into the Ableton software. Although this is not the only conceivable purpose of the sender/receiver mode (pattern sequences created in Propellerhead Reason can also be controlled, or effect toggles in other software could be controlled, for instance), it tends to be a more impractical, imprecise, and slow method of performing these simple actions than pressing a button on a more traditional controller. One benefit, however, is that by being a different way to tangibly control music, it inherently looks cool. Also, it may force you to rethink the organization of your sets.

Trumping the tactile and visual aesthetic of simply triggering Ableton Live! clips is the ability to use the infrared sensors on each face of a cube as separate proximity sensors. This is where the possibilities for developing more compelling performances really open up. With four faces of one cube mapped through MIDI Continuous Controller data to separate effects parameters, pitch generators, and oscillators, you can begin controlling your computer instrument by waving your hands or other objects around the faces of the cubes. You can pick up a cube and move its face near the table or set up rows of dominoes to create cascading effects. It is entirely up to your imagination how to use

that particular dimension of the instrument. Additionally, with just one cube you get four proximity sensors to play with, and if spending €648 for a set of four cubes is a bit steep, then you can have plenty of fun with just one cube at €219. These prices include shipping and taxes (shop.percussa.com/audiocubes.html).

Controlling cube color is straightforward using the MIDI Bridge software. Just connect your cube to your computer using the USB cable, select the color you want in the software, and repeat for all your cubes. The more enticing feature, however, is the ability to control cube color in real time using MIDI Continuous Controller messages. This is a simple matter using software like Ableton Live!. You could set up simple clips to simply pulse a color in tandem with the bass drum, or you could build Max/MSP patches to output color based on pitch. Again, the range of creativity here is wide open. The tight integration between sound and color can help bring out the performative aspects of your music.

One disappointing aspect of the AudioCubes is that the color control and proximity sensor modes can be controlled only for cubes plugged in via USB (up to four can be connected at once, it should be noted), thus limiting the wireless movement capabilities of the instrument. However, there is a topology and color control firmware upgrade promised for the immediate futre which will remove this limitation.

For advanced experimentation with the AudioCubes, Percussa provides a Max/MSP Software Development Kit (SDK), consisting of a collection of example patches and an external for Macintosh and Windows platforms. Included in the SDK is the advanced "Cube Bending" feature. Each cube can be used as a lo-fi (32 kHz/9 bit) audio generator and processor. At least one cube needs to be plugged into a sound system using its $\frac{1}{4}$-in. output jack. This cube can be thought of as the endpoint of the process chain. The other cubes can then communicate with one another through the infrared ports on each face. This is a bit confusing to get the hang of, but you can get some interesting (if occasionally strange) results with a little bit of effort. The online man-

ual provides diagrams of each of the generators (sine, saw, fuzz, random, etc.) and processors (delay, distort, granular, etc.), showing which faces of the cube modify which properties of the processor. Although the output is generally noisy, it does contain that nostalgic digital lo-fi sound. It would be hard to create traditional music using this method but it is effective and fun as a tangible noise generator.

The AudioCubes by Percussa are one of the first alternative music interfaces available to the commercial market. The open-ended design of the cubes allows for and requires a reasonable amount of creativity to truly use the cubes effectively in performance. If you're not willing to take the time to figure out how these cubes might enhance your performance then they just might not be the tool for you. On the other hand if you are a tinkerer, willing to explore the dimensions of proximity sensors, lo-fi generators, colored light control, and clip triggering in three dimensions, then the price tag may well pay off in helping you develop a more dynamic, hands-on performance medium.