

BACK COVER

FRONT COVER



ECOSPHERE
 music for instruments and electronics

Rand Steiger



EMF logo

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Ecosphere, Rand Steiger's latest collection of works for instrumental ensemble and electronics, offers a veiled musical landscape that features two conjoined aspects of the composer's aesthetic. Concrete musical objects, marked by harmonic clarity and rhythmic propulsion, are treated by technology to create inflected musical structures, in which distinctions between live and processed sounds are often ambiguous. Key to this is the ingenuity with which Steiger uses technology. Partnering with some of the world's most important innovators in the field, including Olivier Pasquet and Miller Puckette, he reaches beyond ubiquitous and commonplace techniques of signal processing to embrace technology as a tool for the manipulation of perspective. A typical instance: a recognizable sound appears, perhaps a cello or an oboe. The sound starts to move in space within a multi-channel array; it traverses zones of reverberation, some of them clear and echoing, others viscous and impenetrable; an attack chatters with multiple starts, while another one oozes from the texture with barely an impulse. At all times the identity of the instrument remains clear, but at no time is there such a thing as a simple, flat-footed instrumental "note." The result is a world that is suspended between the familiar and strange, the wakeful and the dreamlike.

Ensemble intercontemporain performers on this recording: Jane Tomson, flute and piccolo; László Hadady, oboe and cor anglais; André Trouette, clarinet and bass clarinet; Alain Billard, bass clarinet and contrabass clarinet; Jens McManama, horn; Jean-Christophe Vervoitte, horn; Jérôme Naulais, trombone; Vincent Bauer, percussion; Daniel Ciampolini, percussion; Dimitri Vassilakis, keyboard; Michael Wendeberg, keyboard; Hae-Sun Kang, violin; Ashot Sarkissjan, violin; Odile Auboin, viola; Eric Couturier, cello; and Pierre Feyler, bass.

Rand Steiger (b. 1957) works for instruments with real-time digital signal processing **1. Dreamscape** (2004) [22:43] Mosaic (E. Aaron, cello; S. Beck, piano; D. Druckman, percussion; Z. Mueller, flute) **2. Traversing** (2005) [12:33] Matthew Barley, solo cello; Southbank Sinfonia; Peter Wiegold, conductor **3. Nested Etudes for Oboe** (2006) [6:57] Karisa Werdon, oboe **4. Ecosphere** (2002) [28:57] Ensemble intercontemporain, Patrick Davin, conductor; Olivier Pasquet, electronics Technique IRCAM **DDD** EMF Media. Total Time: [71:10]

Dreamscape and Ecosphere make extensive use of dynamic audio spatialization and are best heard in the 5.1 channel versions on the included bonus DVD-A, which may be played on any home theater system with a compatible DVD player.

For further information, please see: <http://rand.info>

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Romande), in the Netherlands (Het Orkest van het Oosten, Nieuw Sinfonietta), in Spain (Jonde and Teatro Real), in Austria (Klangforum Wien), in Belgium (Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège, Orchestre National de Belgique, Philharmonie des Flandres, Beethoven Academie) and in Luxembourg (Orchestre Philharmonique). Among the many opera companies he has conducted are the operas of Marseille (France) and Liège (Belgium), where he has served as principal guest conductor.

The **Ensemble intercontemporain** (performers of *Ecosphere*) was founded in 1976 by Pierre Boulez with the support of Michel Guy (who was Minister of Culture at the time) and the collaboration and Nicholas Snowman. The Ensemble's 31 soloists share a passion for contemporary music. They are employed on permanent contract, enabling them to fulfill the major aims of the Ensemble: performance, creation, and education for young musicians and the general public.

Under the artistic direction of Susanna Mälkki, the musicians work in close collaboration with composers, exploring instrumental techniques and developing projects that interweave music, dance, theater, film, video and visual arts. New pieces are commissioned and performed on a regular basis. These works enrich the Ensemble's repertory and add to the corpus of modern masterworks. Based at the Cité de la Musique (Paris) since 1995, the Ensemble performs and records in France and abroad, taking part in major festivals worldwide. The Ensemble is financed by the Ministry of Culture and Communication and receives additional support from the Paris City Council.

The opening work on the recording, **Dreamscape** (2005), gives an immediate example of Steiger's ability to mold perception. Here, an ensemble of flute, piano, cello and percussion is in constant motion; lines emerge from the texture, navigating not only a melodic space but moving forward and back through depth, at times hidden and at other times seemingly right in front of our ears. Of course an eighteenth-century composer might have done the same thing by means of sophisticated polyphony, but in *Dreamscape*, the added dimensions of reverberation and movement in space lend plasticity to the listener's perspective. For example, the flute is highly treated: it is harmonized and diffused through space; through varying degrees of reverberation it seems to grow larger and smaller. Sometimes the flute sound is enhanced to the point that it seems we are hearing the piece from the flutist's point of view, as though we had been lifted out of the safe zone of third-person participation and were floating just above the stage. The percussion music, on the other hand, perhaps because these sounds are already charged by noise and the palpability of attack, is less engaged by technology. These sounds remain (more or less) uninflected and thus serve as the touchstone for the real, the waking, world.

Similar themes are taken up by **Traversing** (2006), a tour de force for cello and ensemble commissioned by Brunel University in London for its bicentennial celebration. In *Traversing*, the cello rarely cedes its primacy, yet here again Steiger manipulates fore- and background relationships to great effect. But it is not just sound mass and volume that are at play. As every performer knows, there is a richness of small noises normally denied to the audience on account of distance.

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Steiger finds this noise thanks to a microphone positioned just inches above the strings, allowing us to listen to the solo cello line in *Traversing* from an impossibly close perspective. He is able to create moments of magnification, when the cello seems to loom over the rest of the ensemble like a mega-instrument, a repository of all sounds and possibilities. Later, when the more distant noises of the ensemble musicians enter, we can imagine what we cannot possibly hear, a ten-fold amplification of grinding bows and the tactility of sliding fingers.

It might seem natural to explore fore- and background relationships in works for ensemble. Doing the same thing with a solo instrument, especially a linear one like the oboe, is another matter indeed. In Steiger's concise **Nested Etudes** (2007), heard here in a brilliant performance by Karissa Werdon, the oboe sound is fractured and recombined to provide just the sense of depth often missing in pieces for single-line instruments. Attack and decay, normally the twinned elements of any musical sound, are uncoupled, allowing notes to be sustained in long layered arcs of disembodied polyphony. "Nesting" is usually a term associated with rhythmic material, where one rhythm is imbedded within another contrasting one to create momentary flux in the temporal flow. But here Steiger creates a virtual "nested instrument," in which flux is created within the fabric of a single line.

Ecosphere (2002), the final work on this recording, brings to mind a quotation from Proust: "If a little dreaming is dangerous, the cure for it is not to dream less but to dream more, to dream all the time." *Ecosphere* is the mother lode of dreaming: big, resonant, challenging for the performers, and brimming with ideas. And as the



A featured soloist in the New York City Electronic Music Festival 2009 and a long-time member of the multi-dimensional ensemble TABOR, oboist **Karisa Werdon** is a strong advocate for contemporary music, both as a soloist and as a chamber musician. She has received awards at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the Coleman Chamber Ensemble Competition, Chamber Music Yellow Springs, the Chesapeake National Chamber Music Competition, and the Yale Chamber Music Competition. Karisa received her Doctorate of Musical Arts degree from Stony Brook University in May 2009. In addition to her freelance career in New York City, she teaches and presents masterclasses both in New York City and around the country. Karisa holds a Master of Music degree from Yale University and a Bachelor of Music degree from Grand Valley State University.



Patrick Davin (conductor of *Ecosphere*) has conducted many of the leading orchestras and opera companies of Europe. A former student of Pierre Boulez and Peter Eötvös, he has conducted many premieres by distinguished contemporary composers. He has conducted in Germany (Ensemble Modern, SDR Stuttgart, Mannheim Chamber Orchestra, Ludwigshafen Philharmonic, Dusseldorf Musikfabrik), in France (Ensemble Intercontemporain, Orchestre National de Lille, Orchestre Philharmonique de Nice, Orchestre National d'Ile-de-France, Orchestre Radio-France, Ensemble Itinéraire), in Switzerland (Orchestre de la Suisse

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A significant and distinctive strand of the orchestra's work is the series of free weekly rush-hour concerts at its home, St John's Waterloo. Further performances include festival appearances across Britain and in Italy and Guernsey, an annual gala concert in Cadogan Hall, chamber music at Wigmore Hall and a series of family concerts.

What makes SbS unique is the intensity of the program, combined with the professional training that lies at the heart of every project. Each year, SbS selects 32 players by audition and interview for an eight-month program, which in addition to its busy schedule of performance, includes coaching and workshops with leading UK orchestras; chamber music; projects with schools and the local community; management training; and sessions spanning subjects from improvisation to public speaking. This annual program is carefully designed to equip highly talented young players for success in the rapidly changing classical music profession.

Southbank Sinfonia performers on this recording: Mihkel Kerem, Suzannah Quirke, Gillian Ripley, Alice Rickards, Victoria Barnes, Hannah Smith, Paloma Deike, and Mark Pedus, violin; Linda Kidwell, Wei Wei Tan, Beverley Parry, and Melanie Law, viola; David Lale, Niamh Molloy, and Sam Sherwood, cello; Kate Aldridge and Pamela Scanlan, bass.

first of his recent set of pieces, it also serves as Steiger's "Burgess Shale," to borrow from the composer's title of an earlier work for orchestra. Embedded here in the musical schist are the forbearers of Steiger's recent notions about perspective, proximity, and the shifting relationships within space. *Ecosphere* explores it all, from the movement of sounds around a multi-channel space, to shifting densities of reverberation and the resulting evocation of distance, to the alienation of a sound from its source by means of signal processing. Taken together, these procedures evoke something woolly and organic. There are no quotations of sounds from the natural world—this is not Steiger's version of Messiaen's birdsong. But the correlated technological treatments in combination with extremely virtuosic instrumental parts lend the impression that *Ecosphere* is teeming with life. A moment that sounds like the birds and animals of a rainforest is transposed with something vaguely like a thunderstorm. And throughout there are voices—singing, moaning, chattering—moving together through the sounding space in a weave that is both joyous and plangent.

Ecosphere is a world whose individual components seem familiar, yet the result taken as a whole eludes facile description. Maybe that is the particular quality of dreaming that runs throughout Steiger's music: concrete musical objects—what we might call musical "material" elsewhere—become uncertain and vaporous as we approach. Something held coolly in the hand suddenly springs to life. In another moment, a vital arc of melody dissolves into mists. Everything is enshrouded in a bio-net of reminiscence, in a dream language we seem to know but have not heard.

Steven Schick

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Rand Steiger was born in New York City in 1957. His compositions have been commissioned and performed by many leading ensembles and organizations, including the American Composers Orchestra, IRCAM, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he served as Composer Fellow.

His compositions and performances are recorded on the Centaur, CRI, Crystal, Einstein, Koch, Mode, New Albion, New World, and Nonesuch labels. His compositions explore a hybrid approach to just and equal tempered tuning, with harmonies derived from the overtone series. Throughout his career he has also been deeply engaged with computer music research, and many of his works have combined traditional instruments with real-time digital audio signal processing and spatialization.

Steiger is also active as a conductor of contemporary music. He has conducted the Arditti Quartet, Ensemble Sospeso, Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, Nouvel Ensemble Contemporain (Switzerland), and the California EAR Unit, of which he was the founding artistic director. Among his recordings as conductor are works by Carter, Reynolds, Stockhausen, Subotnick, and Xenakis and operas by Anthony Davis and Hilda Paredes. He has also conducted many U.S. and world premieres, including works of Andriessen, Boulez, Ferneyhough, Newton, Reynolds, Riley, Rzewski, Subotnick, Tavener, and Tuur.



Composer/conductor **Peter Wiegold** (conductor of *Traversing*) has been a regular conductor of the Composers' Ensemble (recent concerts in Dartington, London, Brighton, Bath, Oxford, Darmstadt, Salzburg, Holland, and Macedonia) and has also conducted the Birmingham

Contemporary Music Group (bcmg), the London Sinfonietta, Endymion Ensemble, Northern Sinfonia, Southbank Sinfonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Joensuu Orchestra, Symphony Nova Scotia, and Orchestra Camarata Labacensis, Slovenia. In September 2009 his ensemble notes inégales recorded a portrait CD of his compositions for NMC recordings. Recent works include *Earth and Stars* for ensemble xx.jahrhundert (Vienna), *The Great Wheel* for Sinfonietta and musicians from Uzbekistan, *Brief Encounter* for the National Opera Studio and Southbank Sinfonia London, *Farewells take place in silence* for the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, and the *burden'd air* for cellist Matthew Barley with live electronics. Wiegold is a Professor and Head of Music Research, at Brunel University.

Founded in 2002, **Southbank Sinfonia** (string orchestra on *Traversing*) is an orchestra of young professional players whose work encompasses an unrivalled range of activity and music. Working with leading orchestras—ranging from the Royal Opera House and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields to London Sinfonietta—and artists including Sir Thomas Allen, Edward Gardner and Michael Collins, Sbs performs repertoire from Baroque, contemporary, symphony, chamber orchestra, and light music to opera and ballet.

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century, Mueller has collaborated with director Hans Peter Cloos in the production Cabaret Schoenberg and worked with choreographer Donald Byrd and video artist Vibeke Sorensen. As a performer, she can be heard on recordings on Naxos, Nonesuch, New World, Newport Classic, and other labels. As soloist, she has released a CD for Premiere Records entitled *The American Flute*, and recorded George Crumb's *Idyll for the Misbegotten* and *Vox Balaenae* for New World Records. She currently serves as Director of Composers & Repertoire at Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.



Matthew Barley (solo cello on *Traversing*) is known internationally as cellist, improviser, arranger, music amateur and Director of Between the Notes and the Matthew Barley Ensemble. He has performed at some of the world's great concert halls: London's Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Kumho Hall in Korea, Pablo Casals Hall in Tokyo, the Rudolfinum in Prague, and the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. He has also performed at jazz clubs, schools, prisons, and a vegan cafe in Edinburgh. Having worked in over fifty countries, he is as comfortable playing concertos with the BBC Philharmonic or New Zealand Symphony as he is improvising with Amjad Ali Khan, Talvin Singh, or DJ Bee; jamming with teenagers in a school; playing Bach's solo cello suites for BBC Radio 3; or interpreting Shostakovich at the Wigmore Hall. His musical world is about creating cultural and musical connections, ignoring man-made boundaries, and bringing people together.

Steiger was educated at the High School of Music and Art (New York), Manhattan School of Music, and California Institute of the Arts. Important mentors included Justin DiCioccio, Jacob Druckman, Elias Tannenbaum, Morton Subotnick and Stephen Mosko. He was a member of the Faculty of California Institute of the Arts from 1982 through 1987 and has since been a Professor in the Music Department at UC San Diego. He was also recently appointed Composer in Residence of the California Institute of Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2).



Olivier Pasquet (computer music programming) is a producer and electronic music composer who taught himself composition and later computer music while working in various recording studios in France. He then went on to study composition at Cambridge, UK (1996-99). Since 1999, at IRCAM and elsewhere, he has collaborated with leading international composers on research and the realization of their computer music projects. He also composes computer music for concerts, dance, installations, opera, and theater productions, and in the IDM (intelligent dance music) world. Since 2006, he has taught interactive arts and computational design at Ensad, Arts Décoratifs.

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Edward Arron (cello on *Dreamscape*) is rapidly gaining recognition worldwide for his elegant musicianship, impassioned performances, and creative programming. Mr. Arron made his New York recital debut in 2000 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Earlier that year, he performed Vivaldi's *Concerto for Two Cellos* with Yo-Yo Ma and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Since that time, Mr. Arron has appeared internationally in recital, as a soloist with orchestra, and as a chamber musician. The 2009–10 season marked Mr. Arron's seventh season as the artistic coordinator of the Metropolitan Museum Artists in Concert. In the fall of 2009, Mr. Arron succeeded Charles Wadsworth as the artistic director, host, and resident performer of the Musical Masterworks concert series in Old Lyme, Connecticut, as well as concert series in Beaufort and Columbia, South Carolina. He is also the artistic director of the Caramoor Virtuosi and of the Alpenglow Chamber Music Festival in Colorado.

Steven Beck (piano on *Dreamscape*) is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where his teachers were Seymour Lipkin, Peter Serkin, and Bruce Brubaker. Mr. Beck made his debut with the National Symphony Orchestra, and has toured Japan as soloist with the New York Symphonic Ensemble. Other orchestras with which he has appeared include the New Juilliard Ensemble (under David Robertson), Sequitur, the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, and the Virginia Symphony. He is an Artist Presenter and regular performer at Bargemusic (where he recently performed all of the Beethoven piano sonatas), and he has performed on the New York Philharmonic

Ensembles Series and WNYC. He has worked with Elliott Carter, Henri Dutilleux, George Perle, and Charles Wuorinen, and has appeared with many of the leading contemporary music ensembles in New York. His recordings are on the Albany, Bridge, Boston Records, Monument, Mulatta, and Annemarie Classics labels.

Daniel Druckman (percussion on *Dreamscape*) is active as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician, and recording artist, concertizing throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan. He has appeared as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the American Composer's Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic's Horizons concerts, the San Francisco Symphony's New and Unusual Music series. An integral part of New York's new music community, both as soloist and as a member of the New York New Music Ensemble and Speculum Musicae, Mr. Druckman has premiered works by Babbitt, Carter, Druckman, Kernis, Knussen, Ruders, Schwantner, Shapey, and Wuorinen, among many others. Recent solo recordings include Carter's *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* and Jacob Druckman's *Reflections on the Nature of Water*. He has been the Associate Principal Percussionist of the New York Philharmonic since 1991, and is on the faculty of The Juilliard School, where he serves as chairman of the percussion department and director of the percussion ensemble.

Zizi Mueller (flute on *Dreamscape*) was the founder and artistic director of the new music group Mosaic and has commissioned and performed new works by a spectrum of international composers throughout the Americas and Europe. As a producer of multi-disciplinary projects centered on music of the present and last

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