

# SMOKE & MIRRORS



# VANISH

Avner Dorman

Ernst Toch

Sergei Rachmaninov

Alejandro Viñao

Diego Schissi

Derek Tywoniuk

Mark Applebaum

Tōru Takemitsu

# SMOKE & MIRRORS VANISH

- |   |  |                    |       |
|---|--|--------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>Udacrep Akubrad</i><br>DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN  | Avner Dorman       | 8:41  |
| 2 | <i>Juego de Relojes (Game of Clocks)</i><br>JOE BERIBAK, EDWARD HONG, KEVIN SCHLOSSMAN (VIBRAPHONE SOLO), DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN                                  | Diego Schissi      | 7:02  |
| 3 | <i>Geographical Fugue</i><br>JOE BERIBAK, EDWARD HONG, KEVIN SCHLOSSMAN, DEREK TYWONIUK  | Ernst Toch         | 2:31  |
| 4 | <i>watch me vanish, watch me?</i><br>DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN   | Derek Tywoniuk     | 7:13  |
| 5 | <i>Vespers I, Call to Worship</i><br>JOE BERIBAK, EDWARD HONG, KEVIN SCHLOSSMAN, DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN   | Sergei Rachmaninov | 3:06  |
| 6 | <i>Catfish</i><br>JOE BERIBAK, KEVIN SCHLOSSMAN, DEREK TYWONIUK  | Mark Applebaum     | 4:57  |
| 7 | <i>Book of Grooves IV, Dance Groove Drifting</i><br>EDWARD HONG, DEREK TYWONIUK  | Alejandro Viñao    | 5:59  |
| 8 | <i>From Me Flows What You Call Time</i><br>JOE BERIBAK, EDWARD HONG, KATALIN LA FAVRE, DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN<br>THE COLBURN ORCHESTRA, GERARD SCHWARZ CONDUCTING | Tōru Takemitsu     | 25:56 |
| 9 | <i>Vespers VI, Ave Maria</i><br>JOE BERIBAK, EDWARD HONG, KEVIN SCHLOSSMAN, DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN  | Sergei Rachmaninov | 2:35  |



Derek Tywoniuk (left) and Wai Wah Wan (right) rehearse Avner Dorman's *Udacrep Akubrad*

**The Absolute Sound's** Top Hidden Treasures:

### **Smoke & Mirrors: Vanish**

Here's a relatively new label dedicated to recording young and established concert artists with minimalist recording techniques using vacuum tube microphones recorded directly to two tracks. Produced by Bob Attiyeh collaborating with Steve Hoffman on the master, *Vanish* is the engaging and highly innovative follow-up to Yarlung's original and equally compelling *Smoke & Mirrors* release, presenting a wide tapestry of rhythms and harmonics skillfully arrayed across a broad and deep soundstage. There's an immediacy, clarity, and transparency to this modern classical percussion recording that seemingly brings the performers to your living room.<sup>1</sup>

By "relatively new label," I mean that Yarlung Records has survived the most challenging period in the history of recording and recently celebrated its seventh anniversary with a remarkable album **Yarlung Records: The First Seven Years** ([www.yarlungrecords.com](http://www.yarlungrecords.com)). What a sonic treat! The quality of the recordings as well as the performances are first-rate, and this CD has become one of my reference recordings. The playing by Orion Weiss on the Bach selections is perhaps the most exciting performance I've heard of the French Overture. The Ravel performance by the Smoke & Mirrors percussion ensemble was an absolute delight! I could keep going on and on about each of the selections. Keep up the terrific work! Thank you!

--Jim Hannon, Publisher & Senior Writer

**The Absolute Sound**, November 2013<sup>1</sup>

### **Producer's Notes:**

Once people have a chance to hear *Smoke & Mirrors: Vanish* and after they read Jim's review in *The Absolute Sound*, this recording won't be hidden for long! Creating this second album with Smoke & Mirrors percussion ensemble proved a great musical experience and deepened our friendship with these remarkable musicians. Special thanks to Sel Kardan and Richard Beene of The Colburn School and to Maestro Gerard Schwarz for their support and enthusiasm for Smoke & Mirrors. We recorded this album in two concert halls. The live orchestra concert of Takemitsu's ethereal and engaging *From Me Flows What You Call Time* came first in Ambassador Hall on February 4th, 2012, with Gerard Schwarz conducting. The world premiere recordings of Diego Schissi's *Juego de Relojes*, the repertoire from Alejandro Viñao's *Book of Grooves* and Derek Tywoniuk's *watch me vanish, watch me* followed in Zipper Hall at The Colburn School on June 3-5, 2013.

Derek Tywoniuk writes that **Avner Dorman's *Udacrep Akubrad*** is a piece "unlike any other in the percussion repertoire, and it's as fun to play as it is challenging. Upon first glance at the music, the pitches and rhythms are simple, yet Dorman melds that simplicity with a technical virtuosity that transforms it into a brilliant showpiece for marimba duo.





"The title, which sounds exotic, as do the fervent scales and rhythms Dorman asks us to play, comes from the words "Percadu Darbuka" in reverse. Percadu is the name for the machismo Israeli percussion duo for which the piece was composed in 2001, and a darbuka is the Arabic drum that each player utilizes simultaneously with the marimba (two darbukas and a low tom-tom each). This unusual combination of instruments inspires the musicians to bring a charismatic joy to the performance on par with the liveliness of the cultures from which they originate. Ivan and I had a lot of fun preparing for this live concert recording session on June 4<sup>th</sup>."

--Derek

On the exoticism of this piece, Dorman writes "This piece draws its inspiration from the music of our region, extending the 'Eastern' boundaries as far as the Indian sub-continent. The main source materials in this piece are scales and the rhythms emanating from the traditional classical music of the peoples of the Mediterranean on the one hand, and on the other: a repetitive minimalism, prevailing also in the music tradition of the Middle East, but in this piece depending on a technique that has been developed during the last thirty years."

--Avner Dorman

Diego Schissi wrote *Juego de Relojes (Game of Clocks)* as a commission from Yarlung Artists, generously underwritten by longtime supporters Carlos and Haydee Mollura. We met Diego after *Antonio Lysy at The Broad: Music from Argentina* won a GRAMMY® Award in 2010. In response, Yarlung Records was invited as foreign guests by the Argentine Ministry of Culture to the first MICA conference in Buenos Aires. We saw Pablo Motta, our Argentine friend and bass player, on our first night in South America.<sup>1</sup> He said "I have a friend you need to hear, Bob, and his name is Diego Schissi. He and Diego Schissi Quinteto are playing at Café Vinilo<sup>2</sup> tomorrow and I will call to make sure you get a table." We went, of course, and subsequently heard two more of Diego's concerts that following week. Diego is a serious new music composer, pianist, contemporary jazz musician and creator of a new fusion of all of the above with Argentine tango. In many ways, Diego inherited the mantle of Astor Piazzolla; he breathes new life into the now traditional and iconic Argentine musical medium. Many of Diego's compositions pay homage to or make fun of the great Piazzolla and take this fabulous archetypical South American music into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Yarlung looks forward to making a recording with Diego and his wonderful quintet in the future. But in the meantime, he kindly accepted our commission for Smoke & Mirrors percussion ensemble.

<sup>1</sup> We attended an orchestra rehearsal at Teatro Colon and then joined Pablo at a session for his new CD in the famous Ion Studio nearby. Astor Piazzolla, Lalo Schifrin and many Argentine legends made Ion their home in its glory days as the EMI studio in Argentina. Ion's success continues today thanks to its astute leadership and extraordinary collection of Neumann tube microphones.

<sup>2</sup> Café Vinilo (or Vinyl Café) does indeed celebrate vinyl records. It is a successful music store, restaurant and night club in a swanky section of Buenos Aires.

Diego told me "It was a great joy to write for such a terrific ensemble, although I wish I did not live so many thousands of miles away. Buenos Aires and Los Angeles may be close musical sisters but they are geographically so distant! We compensated with many phone calls, emails and videos back and forth.

"*Juego de Relojes* is simple in structure. It features solo vibraphone and percussion ensemble displaying an uneven palindromic form (non-metals/ metals/ non-metals) that would continue in a perpetual loop if you tied the ending and the beginning together. The soloist dominates throughout the piece while the other instruments either amplify the vibraphone's resonances or complement the sound with frequencies that the vibraphone cannot provide.

"There's a play-like character to this piece. It does not take itself seriously and I found myself laughing a lot when I wrote it for Smoke & Mirrors. Joe Beribak quickly picked up on the work's sense of humor; it is indeed a *juego*, a rhythmic and timbral game. Smoke & Mirrors makes this apparent at every moment. I meant this as a fun piece to play and one can hear the joy in this masterful performance."

--Diego

Joe Beribak writes of this experience: "Diego was a pleasure to work with from the start of this project to the end. This was the first time Smoke & Mirrors was able to work so collaboratively with a composer. We received the first sketch in March. After our initial reading, Diego asked for feedback about notation and timbre. Even the title was a collaborative effort, as Diego wanted to consider our impression of the piece before naming it. *Juego de Relojes*, which translates as *Game of Clocks*, garners its name from the playful childlike nature of the music and the way all the parts fit together, working like gears in a clock to create a coherent sense of time. Toward the middle of the piece, when it seems that the relentless driving rhythm has reached its boiling point, the music melts into a floating dreamworld of suspended time.

"*Juego de Relojes* is Diego's first composition for percussion ensemble; but, given his prowess as a composer, it is no surprise that he hit a home run. The piece is for solo vibraphone with colorful accompaniment featuring a wide array of percussion instruments. Kevin Schlossman tackled the vibraphone, and this piece showcases his virtuosic fluency as a mallet player. The syncopations of the swift opening and closing sections required that we unify our internal pulse to ensure that, like a great Latin rhythm section, our parts weaved together into a vibrant underlying groove.

"We particularly loved exploring the timbral possibilities of the magical middle section. By matching the sounds of our mallets, the music comes alive as the glockenspiel and crotales extend the range of the vibraphone to new heights. We are grateful to Bob for connecting Smoke & Mirrors Ensemble with Diego and pushing us to stretch our talents."

--Joe

Despite its fame, I first heard **Ernst Toch's *Geographical Fugue*** during one of our early rehearsals for this recording. We spent an afternoon in Colburn School's percussion studio making choices about which pieces to include on this album. When we were done, Derek and Eddie said "Bob, we have something fun for you." They performed *Geographical Fugue*. I suggested we include it in our recording.

Joe writes "We've had a lot of fun doing pieces for speaking chorus in the past. After all, people can't be serious all the time, and there is something that tickles the funny bone when speaking the names of geographical locations repeatedly to form a musical composition. I have fond memories performing *Geographical Fugue* during our residency in Bellingham, in Washington State this past February. We played 19 outreach concerts for Junior High and High School students in addition to two full-length evening concerts. We had only programmed *Geographical Fugue* for the outreach concerts, but it was so well received that we decided to offer it during our evening concerts as an encore. My voice was hoarse by the end of the week.

"All live performance has elements of spontaneity. But this piece in particular encourages the musicians to make each performance unique. It's amazing how many ways there are to say 'Trinidad!'"

--Joe



Kevin Schlossman, Edward Hong, Joe Beribak and Derek Tywoniuk after a take of *Geographical Fugue*

Derek writes "I dedicated *watch me vanish, watch me?* to Wai Wah Wan, my friend whom we call Ivan. We performed it for the first time in the spring of 2013. *watch me vanish, watch me?* is the penultimate movement of a concert-length work I composed titled *After Psychosis*, based upon the writings of Sarah Kane (*4.48 Psychosis*) and Allen Ginsberg (*Sunflower Sutra*). These two texts represent opposite polarities in the human experience. Ginsberg's poem affirms humanity's greatest qualities and celebrates life, whereas Kane's play is the absolute antithesis. By pairing these, I wanted to highlight the wide disparity that occurs in human perception while experiencing the same world.

"I scored *watch me vanish, watch me?* for two performers. Ivan plays glockenspiel, tin cans, toms, and kick drum, and I play the piano. The movement contains three basic sections, each of which plays with meter. At the outset, Ivan plays an irregular percussion rhythm that gradually elaborates into the real pulse, leading to the first climax during which the piano enters and the groove stabilizes. The mood then fades into a somber middle portion utilizing jazz harmonies and layering of staggered echoes between the two players. In the final faster section, I played with rhythmic ambiguity wherein the musicians can feel the music in three or four pulses (or later, in six or eight). This metric tension is something that gives the section an unsettling power for me. The glockenspiel ostinato over rising chord clusters in the piano fades away until the glockenspiel delivers its final note, two pitches a ninth apart. There's an impermanence about the act of vanishing that reflects a feeling of disbelief and denial that it ever happened. Finishing with this uncertain interval felt like the right thing to do, so I left the conclusion open-ended and ambiguous.

"The title *watch me vanish, watch me?* comes directly from two lines of Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*. In that context, the words have a sinister nature, but I realized that the words related to my friend Ivan in an entirely different way. Ivan is a tremendously popular person and a globetrotter. While an amazing friend and colleague, there's an inevitable aspect of him that is always on-the-go, as if to say 'watch me vanish, watch me!'"

--Derek



Derek Tywoniuk and Wai Wah Wan perform *watch me vanish, watch me?*



“Smoke & Mirrors first performed these movements from **Rachmaninov’s *Vespers***, or the ***All-Night Vigil*** during the summer of 2012 for a concert in the charming loggia at Huntington Gardens in San Marino, California. We fell in love with the work from our first rehearsals, and we’ve performed it at every opportunity since. Edward Hong, who in addition to being a founding member of Smoke & Mirrors ensemble is also an orchestra and choral conductor and arranger, adapted these movements for five players on two marimbas and vibraphone solo. From our first rehearsal in 2012 to the week before the recording, we worked hard to make these instruments sing. This is quintessential Smoke & Mirrors, as we transform many individual mallet attacks into one unified sonority. To set an intimate mood at the recording we turned off the overhead lights in Zipper Hall and performed only with lumination from our music stands. This forced us to rely on our magical connection as players more than on a visual connection from watching our sticks. We adjusted our microphone to give the feeling of being in a cathedral. We’d like to extend our gratitude for the blessings of Kevin’s and Edward’s beautiful marimbas built by Marimba One and the incredible resonating chamber that is Zipper Hall.”

--Joe



“**Mark Applebaum** composed ***Catfish*** as an overture to a white trash opera set in rural Biloxi, Mississippi. As fate would have it, the overture is all that he ever completed from the opera. Applebaum calls for each of three players to choose his or her own instruments from among three materials: metal, wood and skin. He wants the listener to imagine that he or she is exploring a junk yard. Derek chose metal plates for their junky quality. Kevin chose wooden planks (the lowest pitch was actually a cutting board). I (Joe) chose congas, which are made from a cow’s skin stretched across a wooden tube.



"*Catfish* celebrates rhythmical deception, both for the players and the listeners. Applebaum writes rhythms whose natural agogic accent pattern is disrupted by the groupings of notes. For example, the piece starts with Derek playing what sounds like 4 groups of 5 beats; but Applebaum writes it as 5 groups of 4 beats. As the composer adds layers, the resulting patterns create lively grooves. Applebaum shifts tempo from groove to groove in a similar fashion. For example, he'll start with 3 notes per beat in one groove and then group them into 2 notes per beat while maintaining the same speed for each of the notes. The resulting beat is quicker, despite the space between each note remaining the same. He does this throughout the piece. Sometimes a groove takes up only one bar. You can imagine the fun involved in trying to realize a new tempo for each bar. There are also moments when Applebaum writes only grace notes without beats. In these moments, cacophony results while we, the performers, keep the pulse internally and come out on the other side together. Buckle your seat belts, and hang on for dear life!"

--Joe

Eddie Hong writes about *Book of Grooves*, a commission from Argentine composer **Alejandro Viñao**. This is the world premiere recording of these movements. "When given the opportunity to be part of a consortium for a new marimba duet by Alejandro Viñao, Derek and I were ecstatic. This commissioning consortium was led by Pedro Carneiro and Kunihiko Komori. Arguably one of the most important composers contributing to the percussion literature today, Viñao already had a rich history with Smoke & Mirrors Ensemble. Our teacher, Jack Van Geem, gave the premiere performance of Viñao's *Khan Variations*, as well as performing his *Arabesco Infinito* and *Tumblers*. Our own first experience performing Viñao's music was with his *Arabesco Infinito* for vibraphone and marimba in 2010.

"*Book of Grooves* challenged us in a similar way as *Arabesco Infinito* did. In this piece, Viñao writes, 'The "groove" or "feel" of a piece is a pattern or sequence that repeats periodically in such a way as to create the desire to move, or dance, or to foot-tap in time with the rhythm.'

"A groove always attracts percussionists since it can be such an infectious culprit of rhythmic propulsion. Viñao establishes his groove at the outset of each movement, but then deviates from it by writing



odd meters (adding or subtracting parts of beats) and including surprising interplay between the two parts. Viñao writes 'while the music material is permanently transforming into something new, I wanted to make sure that the listener would never cease to "swing with a groove.'"

--Eddie

"The Colburn School has given us great support throughout our time as an ensemble. After we proposed **Tōru Takemitsu's** percussion concerto *From Me Flows What You Call Time* to Yehuda Gilad, music director of The Colburn Orchestra, we were thrilled that he included it on a fabulous orchestra program at Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena. We were even more thrilled when we learned that the esteemed conductor Gerard Schwarz would lead the orchestra. Derek took on the monumental task of locating the exotic instruments. Both Los Angeles Percussion Rentals and California Percussion provided many of the colorful instruments we used in this concert. Katalin La Favre made the long colored ribbons that we pulled from the stage to sound our wind chimes in the rafters. These colors are the same as those on Tibetan prayer flags, which represent the five elements: Earth (yellow), Water (green), Fire (red), Air (white), and Sky (blue). We like to think that an additional element, Time, is provided by the music.

"The greatest challenge in this piece was playing as a unified group while spread across the stage. We needed to hear and feel each other perfectly since we could not always see each other. Derek, Edward and I (Joe) played downstage in front of everyone while Katalin and Ivan were behind the orchestra on the left and right (further from the audience). For the audience to hear us playing at the same time, Katy and Ivan needed to play slightly earlier than the rest of us.



"We gave each other constant feedback in rehearsal. Eddie and I also spent considerable time alone together, improvising freely to get a feel for each other's musical voice in this repertoire. We had to coordinate our improvisation within the framework of the notated music, especially the drum break near the end of the work, to make sure we could leave and return to the music in Takemitsu's score.

"Smoke & Mirrors wants to give special thanks to Mark Fabulich and Victor Pineda for their logistical expertise, and to Greg Forbess who constructed our wind chime hanging rigs."

--Joe

Yarlung Records would also like to thank Mark Fabulich, Colburn Orchestra manager at the time of the Takemitsu concert and recording, not only as a wonderful colleague in the music world but as the person who introduced us to Smoke & Mirrors ensemble before we made their debut recording in 2011. We would also like to thank Victor Pineda and Lisa Palley, who gave so much of their expertise in both Zipper Hall and Ambassador Auditorium, and made the music on this album possible.



Katalin La Favre

### Technical notes:

We used two coincident Neumann U47 microphones for the orchestra with two AKG C12 microphones for a small amount of reinforcement for the winds and rear percussion in the Takemitsu concerto. We chose a single stereo AKG C24 microphone for all the other tracks. Jon Fisher from Gearworks Pro Audio lent us these precious microphones. Elliot Midwood designed our microphone preamplification equipment and we recorded directly to RMGI 468 tape using stranded silver Yarlung interconnects and the Yarlung analog tape recorder circuitry designed for us by Len Horowitz. Mastering by Steve Hoffman. Bernie Grundman cut our lacquers for vinyl release.

--Bob Attiyeh, producer

Executive Producer: Sandy Pressman

Layout: Eron Muckleroy



Joe Beribak



# SMOKE & MIRRORS

## VANISH

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with **The Colburn Orchestra** conducted by **Gerard Schwarz**
- 9 Sergei Rachmaninov *Vespers VI, Ave Maria*



Smoke & Mirrors Percussion Ensemble  
Joseph Beribak & Katalin La Favre, directors

Joseph Beribak     Edward Hong  
Katalin La Favre     Kevin Schlossman  
Derek Tywoniuk     Wai Wah Wan

Yarlung Records  
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Producer and Recording Engineer: Bob Attiyeh  
Assistant Producer and Recording Engineer: Jacob Horowitz  
AKG Tube Microphones: Gearworks Pro Audio  
Microphone amplification: Elliot Midwood  
Executive Producer: Sandy Pressman  
Mastering Engineers: Steve Hoffman and Bob Attiyeh