

puter and Aly Keita on balafon. The software is written in Max, with the balafon output being fed into a computer that follows the pitches and creates an accompaniment, allowing the player to respond accordingly, while the computer in turn adds new timbres and melodic ideas. The result is a layered melodic and rhythmic approach with a spontaneous and subtle sound.

The associated issue of *LMF* includes the following quote (p. 71): "The North seems to be all form and no content, the South all content and no form." Of course, it is not this simplistic, but the notion does point to occasional differences between intellectual and community approaches to music-making. This CD is a brave attempt to bridge this gap, leaving a sense of wanting to hear more. Most interesting are the works that create new forms and styles combining technology and local acoustic approaches, or that take the source material and develop a new synthesis. Where successful, the results are outstanding.

Electro-acoustic Music From The Netherlands 2000

Compact disc, PEM Productions PEM CD-1, 2000; available from Gaudeamus Foundation, Swammerdamstraat 38, 1091 RV Amsterdam, The Netherlands; telephone (+31) 20-694-7349; fax (+31) 20-694-7258; electronic mail info@gaudeamus.nl; Web www.gaudeamus.nl/.

*Reviewed by Ian Whalley
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The festival Terza Prattica, held in Amsterdam from 30 November to 3 December 2000, was organized by the Gaudeamus Foundation and The

Dutch association Producers Electronic Music (PEM). It included six categories of compositions: works for tape, live-electronics/computer music, installations, film and video music, multimedia, and electronic music theatre. Electronic and electroacoustic music was covered in eight concerts, and included the work of members of the New International Community of Electro-acoustic Music (NICE).

PEM unites some 52 composers and performers active in The Netherlands. Their CD compilation, *Electro-acoustic Music from the Netherlands 2000*, was presented as part of the festival. It includes 28 works each less than two minutes, most realized in 1999.

The aim of the disc is to illustrate the range of electronic and electroacoustic music being produced in the country, and to introduce some of the PEM members' works. Including very short works allows many PEM composers to be represented on the disc, although a good percentage were also left out.

The brief booklet notes are in Dutch, and I thank Anke Spry for her English translation. Perhaps it would be helpful to provide listeners outside The Netherlands with a more uniform and extensive set of biographical details and program notes, preferably in English as well, so that the CD might gain a wider audience outside the country? Further, CD credit notes and production addresses would also be helpful.

Given the number of tracks on the disc, it is not possible in a review of this length to comment on each work, but only to trace general trends and make observations.

Contributions fall into four areas: computer-generated works, with or without spectral shaping; sample-based works that borrow techniques from acousmatic music; live/interac-



tive works; and synthesizer-generated approaches. Most composers include techniques from more than one area.

Many of the contributors come from academic backgrounds or are associated with academic institutions. Notable is the number of composers who have a connection to the Department of Sonology at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague.

Despite the range of techniques used to generate the music, there is a remarkable similarity in sonic outcomes across the disc, leaving one wondering both whether a house style has begun to dominate a national outlook, and what else is happening outside the main academic electroacoustic music centers in The Netherlands.

Given the rapid development in digital tools now at the disposal of most composers in Western European countries, one looks for equivalent advances in artistic statement, human expression, and explorations of emotional range, as well as intellectual and sonic language. What is the outcome beyond the best of analog tape and synthesizer music from the last century, or even the best of 1970s–1980s synthesizer rock bands, for example?

The initial impression, reinforced with many subsequent hearings of these short works, is that electro-

acoustic music in The Netherlands is largely introverted, intellectually focused, at times dated sonically, and exploring a narrow dramatic range. This may be because of the homogeneity of the contributors' cultural base, or a reflection of its current conditions of production.

Not widely represented are the corporal aspects of performance characteristic of acoustic crossover work typical in North America, or the depth of textural control common in the Anglo-French acousmatic school. Many composers from these other backgrounds are comfortable writing in electronic and acoustic idioms, and the cross-fertilization of approaches helps to enrich both practices.

The first eight tracks on the CD largely take similar approaches, many of which focus on using electronically generated sound and spectral shaping. Typical is Richard Barrett's *Involuntary*, the opening track, and Huib Emmer's *Agitato*. There is depth and interesting moments here, but many of the techniques have been absorbed into mainstream international popular electronica, and sound immediately familiar.

Some interesting byways are found in Cor Fuhler's *Hu*, which includes a wider emotional range by using vocoder processing, and Konrad Boehmer's *Reflexe* from the late 1950s and still sounding remarkably fresh in the context of this collection. Arthur Sauer's pop-influenced *Staking* provides light relief in context, but the accompaniments of pop musicians such as Björk have considerably extended the possibilities of this approach.

Tracks 9–15 include a broader variety of styles through greater use of sample manipulation, and they tackle a wider dramatic gambit. Arno Peeters' *Don't breathe a word*,

for example, is notable in context for its use of dialogue and subtle textural manipulations. Wim de Ruiter's *Priet* and Huib Folmer's *De Spiegel Etude* introduce more stylistic variety with their hints at popular music and the use of tonality. Cas de Marez's *Sens*, an extract from 1998, stands out for both its sensitivity and its shaping.

With Tracks 16–19 we see a return to the approach taken in the first eight. Hans J. Kulk's *Corbu* is refreshing here because of his different means of sound generation in context, and René Uijlenhoet's *De telescoop van Galilei* is notable for its programmatic and theatrical approach.

The final ten offerings include a range of technical approaches: soundscape, acousmatic, work with live instruments, sample manipulation, and spectral shaping. For originality of approach, Paul Panhuysen's *The electro-acoustical bowling*, based on an amplified bowling alley is of interest, as is Ronald Philippi's *Elektricitetsveld II*, with its influence from tango culture.

Eric de Clercq's *The present-day environment refuses to be silent* is revitalizing in context due to its soundscape approach, as is Kristoffer L. Zegers' *Klarinet Synthesen* for its use of sampled clarinet sounds that are manipulated. For sheer humor, Armeno Alberts's *Small Monkey Business*, a tape work with the unlikely scenario of monkeys from all over the world meeting each other, is a fitting conclusion.

The final selection is a 12-min 34-sec mosaic of the other tracks by Arno Alberts called *DUTCH PEM JAM*. This gives a good summary of the disc in terms of the general mood and various semiotic approaches taken.

In retrospect, then, one is left with a sense of wanting to hear both less

and more. Perhaps fewer and longer works showing the diversity intended may have been a better approach? It would allow an appreciation of the way the composers handle the extended development of material, dramatic juxtaposition, balance, and resolution. These aspects of composition as reflections of national approaches are of equal interest to composers' sonic fingerprints.

Diane Thome: Bright Air/ Brilliant Fire

Compact disc, CRC2527, 2001; available from Centaur Records, Inc. 8867 Highland Rd., Suite 206, Baton Rouge, LA, USA; telephone (+1) 225-336-4877; fax (+1) 225-336-9678; electronic mail info@centaurrecords.com; Web www.centaurrecords.com.

*Reviewed by Mary Simoni
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The compact disc *Bright Air/Brilliant Fire* is another milestone in the career of Diane Thome, aptly documenting her burgeoning insight into the composition of electroacoustic music. As typical of Ms. Thome's electroacoustic works, her mature aesthetic is never subservient to the technology but instead dominated by a musical sensibility achieved through time-honored practice. The four works on the disc span a period of three years. Three of the works combine electronic sounds with acoustic sources and one is for computer-realized sound alone.

The title track, *Bright Air/Brilliant Fire* (1997), is an 11-min 6-sec dialog between computer-realized sound and flute, expertly performed by Sarah Bassingthwaite. Throughout the composition, the flute asserts