

Eric Chasalow/Over the Edge
New World Records 80440

In art, one and one at times make three. In art for the ear, and particularly with acoustic in combination with electronically-created sounds, the listener tends to hear rather more than a lockstep summation of parts. And it's perhaps this phantom dimension that most intrigues the listener. Again perhaps, as in a difficult love affair, a resonance arises from the antipodal aspects of seeming incompatibility and obviously compelling attraction. One is therefore given to approach music so conceived as forever newly plowed ground.

Odd, then, in terms of expectation, that the first electro-acoustic compositions incorporating magnetic tape appeared (as I write) just over forty years ago: *New Grove* cites Bruno Maderna's aptly titled *Musica su due dimensioni I*, for flute and tape, and Edgard Varese's *Deserts* of 1950-54, for orchestra and tape, as among the earliest examples. Earlier still, in 1939, before the advent of magnetic tape, John Cage composed his *Imaginary Landscape No. 1*, for piano, Chinese cymbal, and two variable-speed turntables. Significant music marks the way as milestones, with regard particularly to this CD. Karlheinz Stockhausen's 1959-60 version of *Kontakte*, for tape, piano, and percussion; Milton Babbitt's 1963-64 *Philomel*, for soprano, recorded soprano, and synthesized tape; Babbitt's 1974 *Reflections*, for piano and synthesized tape; Roger Reynolds's *Transfigured Wind IV* from 1985, for flute, computer, and tape; and Mario Davidovsky's ten *Synchronisms*, for a variety of solo instruments, ensemble combinations, and tape. Eric Chasalow's choice to study with Davidovsky is significant. The American composers Earle Brown, Jacob Druckman, and Ingram Marshall figure in our fractured history, as does James Dashow. In addition there are and were live-electronic organizations: Musica Electronica Viva (Rome), with which Americans Alvin Curran, Frederic Rzewski, and Richard Teitelbaum have been associated; the American ensemble Sonic Arts Union (Robert Ashley, David Behrman, Alvin Lucier, and Gordon Mumma); and of course Pierre Boulez's IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique-Musique, Paris, founded in 1976), with its worldwide influence. Boulez's essay "Technology and the Composer" makes points as relevant now as when the words appeared in 1977 in *Passage du XXe siecle*. He faults a "historicizing culture" and economic imperatives for the developmental stagnation of acoustic musical instruments. On the other hand, computers are so rich in possibilities that, in music, "mental categories have yet to be created," he says, to fully meet their challenge: the phantom dimension in next season's robes; the furrow headed horizonward.

This is the context that frames Eric Chasalow's *The Furies*, *The Fury of Rain Storms*, *Hanging in the Balance*, *Over the Edge* and *Fast Forward*. Chasalow, who was born in 1955 in Newark, N. J., and who grew to aesthetic maturity as Postmodernism was evolving, points (not at all surprisingly) to jazz as part of the family tree. His first investigation into acoustic-electronic combination, a piece for horn, percussion, and tape, dates from 1979. With an National Endowment for the Arts Composer's Fellowship in 1983, Chasalow created a set of three works for soloist and electronic sounds. The composer fashioned each, for cello, for soprano, and for flute, with particular accomplished performers in mind, taking his inspiration, he says, "from their personal styles and energy." The taped parts of *Hanging in the Balance*, *The Furies*, and *Over the*

Edge took shape at the Columbia- Princeton Electronic Music Center (later the Columbia Electronic Music Center).

Chasalow composed *Hanging in the Balance* for the redoubtable cellist Fred Sherry. The phantom dimension fairly saturates this elegant piece. Chasalow envisions the 1983 work as establishing twin 2 relationships between cellist and tape: "At times a dialogue between two distinct parts...at others, a single coherent instrument [formed] by the collision of live with electronic sounds. The effect of the latter relationship is to expand the timbral possibilities of the cello by sculpting complex sonic 'events'..." he says. "This presents the performer with the challenge to match the timbres of the instrument to the tape sounds, which are often not at all cello-like." *Hanging in the Balance* begins, as Chasalow describes it, with a slow, almost fragmentary working of materials, thence to a faster middle section interrupted by relatively static passages, coming finally to climax on a long, sustained sonority set off by declamatory solo gestures, and concluding in a flurry of chords. The third section, returning to the original slower tempo, submerges the soloist within a three-voice electronic chorale. The cello migrates from one voice to the next, adding octave doublings in harmonics. A brief coda returns to what Chasalow refers to as the "almost monophonic" texture of the beginning, along with "a feeling of short, isolated events."

The Furies (1984), a group of four songs for soprano and electronic sounds, takes its texts from among Anne Sexton's fifteen "Fury" poems from *The Death Notebooks* of 1974. (The poet died, a suicide, in that year.) Christine Schadeberg has really made *The Furies* her own, Chasalow says. The composer chose the poetry for its "intensely personal expression and highly charged emotional atmosphere," qualities heightened by the music's taped aspects, which "not only [serve] as accompaniment but actually [meld] with the voice, at times creating a single hybrid instrument." He relieves the weight of the often grim and sardonic lines with touches of lightheartedness, as in "The Fury of Beautiful Bones," where the tape speculates whimsically on the poetry's extravagant imagery. In "The Fury of Guitars and Sopranos," at the point where the poet speaks of the sound of a flute as " ...a God finger over the holes," the tape waxes atypically flutelike, as a rare and amusing change of pace. Soprano and tape alike punctuate the rather more comic aspects of angst in "The Fury of Cooks." In sharp contrast is "The Fury of Hating Eyes," with a now solemn soundscape shading, rather than competing with, lines as startling as "Take the brown eyes of my father,/those gun shots, those mean muds./Bury them." For Chasalow, a work's electronic aspect properly deals in possibilities. He points out that he creates tapes to "blend with the sound of the live instruments and modulate them in surprising ways," aiming as well to create music its performers will find "virtuosic and exciting." As with the other works in this electrified group, *Over the Edge* (1986), achieves this goal and provides moreover, as the title suggests, an a priori state of recklessness for the soloist. Here one experiences the phantom dimension as a playful will-o'-the-wisp in synchrony, so to speak, with the flute's characteristics. The work consists of extremely fast, articulated sections surrounding a slower core. Fast motivic figures build by accretion, starting out in a narrow range and gradually expanding to syncopated angularity. Chasalow identifies *Over the Edge's* provenance as, in part, bebop and bluegrass.

The Fury of Rainstorms (1992), a companion to *The Furies*, differs in that it exists entirely on tape (which Chasalow crafted at BEAMS, the Brandeis Electro-Acoustic

Music Studio). The composer speaks of Sexton's lines in terms of their "compelling musical rhythm. When the opportunity arose to record *The Furies* with soprano Christine Schadeberg... I began to think about a tape piece based on one of the poems I had not originally set," envisioning a work that would manipulate the text rather more extensively. "I liked the idea of using Christine's voice as the source material—a kind of explosion of *The Furies* into another realm." Chasalow describes *The Fury of Rainstorms'* construction in terms of straightforward steps. The work begins as a vocal line with self-accompaniment (a euphemism skirting the need to go into, as examples, three-note chords and monophonic lines 3 ballooned to polyphonic proportions). To this the composer adds sung and spoken ingredients in a variety of inflections that he sculpts into samples that emerge, by way of a hard-disc system, as a twelve-fold laminate of "dynamic, evolving texture" of purely digital parts. The work's mood and brevity bespeak an aphoristic stance all the more emphasized by the vocalist's appearance throughout the soundfield in multifaceted dialogue.

As so often happens in the way music gets made, *Fast Forward* (1988), for percussionists and tape, came about in happy circuitry. In 1987, Erica Duke of the California E.A.R. Unit had been performing *Hanging in the Balance* at various sites. Amy Knoles, one of that ensemble's percussionists, was so taken with the work that she asked Chasalow for another, for percussion and tape. Knoles and E.A.R.'s Arthur Jarvinen perform on marimba, crotales, tom-tom, cymbals, glockenspiel, and wood blocks, Chasalow's having executed *Fast Forward's* tape in his home studio, where he adapted analog techniques to newer MIDI instruments. Among Chasalow's purposes is the desire "to maintain an explosive energy for the main body of the piece with many attack points, registral extremes and syncopated rhythms," he says, along with a flexibility built into an array of beat subdivisions. "More than in any other of my pieces, the instruments and tape blend to create an 'impossible' ensemble." One perceives a totality whose taped parts participate as equals in a legerdemain of jagged, irregular shards of rhythm and sonorities, and at a remove, as it were a Greek-chorus commentary.

Winding Up and the First String Quartet, both composed in 1990, are the program's two acoustic works. Embarrassingly enough, I'd assumed on early hearings that *Winding Up*, for solo horn, employs a taped doppelgänger of the music's soloist and dedicatee, Bruno Schneider—a not unheard-of recording ploy having nothing whatever to do, stylistically or otherwise, with the deftly modeled aspects of Chasalow's live-tape works. The impression, I confess, was quite hard to shake, even after Chasalow assured me that the piece is indeed for unassisted horn. The still (for me) incredible manner in which Schneider leaps from full-bore to pinched sonorities would, I think, confuse all but the most specialized of listeners. Schneider, first horn of L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, is a classical virtuoso. And therein lay a bone of contention. The composer envisioned, for what was originally intended as a encore piece, a hell-bent-for-leather, jazz-like beginning. The soloist insisted on a no less difficult, albeit more polished approach, the merits of which, after heated debate, Chasalow finally recognized. Aired by Swiss radio with Schneider performing as part of a 1991 ISCM concert, *Winding Up* also occupies the Concours International Geneve's horn-competition list.

The First String Quartet returns to larger forms. Within, and inevitably in competition with, the genre's history and daunting repertory, Chasalow engages in expressions of personality and idiom, his goal, as he says, being "to reconcile the

different musics that I love, especially jazz, with Western art-music tradition without self-consciously lifting clichés." At the time of composition, Chasalow had been listening to the World Saxophone Quartet, along with Beethoven's late string quartets. The first theme's arching arpeggiation actually came about as an idea for a saxophone quartet. Chasalow speaks of the dotted rhythms appearing later in the first movement as musings on Beethoven, and of the quartet's four-movement plan as traditional: allegro; slow and lyrical; scherzo (with linking cadenza); fast finale. The spare second movement balances the work's generally energetic demeanor with something extremely simple and harmonically transparent. The scherzo, almost entirely in triple meter, comes up to speed by degree, along with a complexity by way of rhythms that contradict the groups of three: a perpetual motion, confirmed by the climax, itself succumbing to a collision with a rubato cello cadenza which prepares for the big crash on the downbeat of the last movement. The fourth movement is a reworking of elements of the previous three, along with the loud chorale that opens the movement. - *Mike Silverton*

Mike Silverton reviews recordings of contemporary art music for *Fanfare* and has written on the subject for *EAR*, *The Absolute Sound*, and other periodicals. Mr. Silverton's poetry has appeared in literary magazines and anthologies.

Eric Chasalow is Assistant Professor of Composition at Brandeis University and Director of the Brandeis Electro-Acoustic Music Studio (BEAMS). He also served as Executive Director of the Guild of Composers, for which he produced several seasons of concerts in New York City and a nationally distributed radio series, *Composers in Concert*. Chasalow was Executive Director of the Music Alliance, an organization dedicated to improving the climate for art music in America through educational programs.

In 1985, Chasalow received a D.M.A. in composition from Columbia University, where his principal teacher was Mario Davidovsky, and where he studied flute with Harvey Sollberger, having done his undergraduate work at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, and the New England Conservatory. Chasalow has been awarded prizes and fellowships by, among others, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, The American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, The National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York Foundation for the Arts in particular recognition of works that combine live soloists with electronic sounds. He has been commissioned to compose music for Fred Sherry, Amy Knoles, Bruno Schneider, and the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston.

DISCOGRAPHY

This Way Out. International Computer Music Conference CD, 1992.

THE FURY OF RAIN STORMS

The rain drums down like red ants,
each bouncing off my window.
These ants are in great pain
and they cry out as they hit,
as if their little legs were only

stitched on and their heads pasted.
And oh they bring to mind the grave,
so humble, so willing to be beat upon
with its awful lettering and
the body lying underneath without an umbrella.
Depression is boring, I think,
and I would do better to make
some soup and light up the cave.

THE FURIES

The Fury of Beautiful Bones

Sing me a thrush, bone.
Sing me a nest of cup and pestle.
Sing me a sweetbread for an old grandfather.
Sing me a foot and a doorknob, for you are my love.
Oh sing, bone bag man, sing.
Your head is what I remember that August,
you were in love with another woman but
that didn't matter. I was the fury of your
bones, your fingers long and nubby, your
forehead a beacon, bare as marble and I worried
you like an odor because you had not quite forgotten,
bone bag man, garlic in the North End,
the book you dedicated, naked as a fish,
naked as someone drowning into his own mouth.
I wonder, Mr. Bone man, what you're thinking
of your fury now, gone sour as a sinking whale,
crawling up the alphabet on her own bones.
Am I in your ear still singing songs in the rain,
me of the death rattle, me of the magnolias,
me of the sawdust tavern at the city's edge.
Women have lovely bones, arms, neck, thigh
and I admire them also, but your bones
supersede loveliness. They are the tough
ones that get broken and reset. I just can't
answer for you, only for your bones,
round rulers, round nudgers, round poles,
numb nubkins, the sword of sugar.
I feel the skull, Mr. Skeleton, living its
own life in its own skin.

The Fury of Guitars and Sopranos

This singing
is a kind of dying,
a kind of birth,
a votive candle.

I have a dream-mother
who sings with her guitar,
nursing the bedroom
with moonlight and beautiful olives.
A flute came too,
joining the five strings,
a God finger over the holes.
I knew a beautiful woman once
who sang with her fingertips
and her eyes were brown
like small birds.
At the cup of her breasts
I drew wine.
At the mound of her legs
I drew figs.
She sang for my thirst,
mysterious songs of God
that would have laid an army down.
It was as if a morning-glory
had bloomed in her throat
and all that blue
and small pollen
ate into my heart
violent and religious.

The Fury of Cooks

Herbs, garlic,
cheese, please let me in!
Souffles, salads,
Parker House rolls,
please let me in!
Cook Helen,
why are you so cross,
why is your kitchen verboten?
Couldn't you just teach me
to bake a potato,
that charm,
that young prince?
No! No!
This is my country!
You shout silently.
Couldn't you just show me
the gravy. How you drill it out
of the stomach of that bird?
Helen, Helen,
let me in,

let me feel the flour,
is it blind and frightening,
this stuff that makes cakes?
Helen, Helen,
the kitchen is your dog
and you pat it
and love it
and keep it clean.
But all these things,
all these dishes of things
come through the swinging door
and I don't know from where?
Give me some tomato aspic, Helen!
I don't want to be alone.

The Fury of Hating Eyes

I would like to bury a
ll the hating eyes
under the sand somewhere off
the North Atlantic and suffocate
them with the awful sand
and put all their colors to sleep
in that soft smother.
Take the brown eyes of my father,
those gun shots, those mean muds.
Bury them.
Take the blue eyes of my mother,
naked as the sea,
waiting to pull you down
where there is no air, no God.
Bury them.
Take the black eyes of my lover,
coal eyes like a cruel hog,
wanting to whip you and laugh.
Bury them.
Take the hating eyes of martyrs,
presidents, bus collectors,
bank managers, soldiers.
Bury them.
Take my eyes, half blind
and falling into the air.
Bury them.
Take your eyes.
I come to the center,
where a shark looks up at death
and thinks of my death.

They'd like to take my heart
and squeeze it like a doughnut.
They'd like to take my eyes
and poke a hatpin through
their pupils. Not just to bury
but to stab. As for your eyes,
I fold up in front of them
in a baby ball and you send
them to the State Asylum.
Look! Look! Both those
mice are watching you
from behind the kind bars.

Used by permission of Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.
Copyright c 1974 by Anne Sexton.

Arthur Jarvinen, percussion, is an active composer, multi-instrumentalist, and physical poet. He is a member of the California E. A. R. Unit, has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group and Steve Reich, and has worked on special projects for Frank Zappa.

Amy Knoles, percussion, performs regularly with the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, the Cyber Arts Festival, and the Ojai Festival. She also performs interactive computer music as a soloist and with Morton Subotnick, Tod Machover, Basso Bongo, The Paul Drescher Ensemble, and the California E. A. R. Unit.

Christine Schadeberg, soprano, performs regularly with chamber ensembles and orchestras across the United States and Europe. Her song recitals program works by living composers within the context of twentieth-century and standard vocal repertory. Ms. Schadeberg's stage performances include Meredith Monk's *ATLAS*, Mozart's *Requiem*, and Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*.

Bruno Schneider, horn, has performed with the Zurich Opera Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Bach Collegium, and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. He is currently (1993) principal horn with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. Mr. Schneider has recorded for EMI, Erato, and Claves.

Fred Sherry, cello, a founding member of TASHI, has played with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. He has been performing with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center since the early 1970s and became an Artist of the Society in 1984.

Speculum Musicae has long been dedicated to performing contemporary music. The ensemble's repertory includes the "classics" of the early 1900s to newly commissioned

works. Speculum Musicae are currently (1993) in residence at the School of the Arts at Columbia University. The ensemble has recorded for CRI, Nonesuch, New World, Columbia, and Bridge Records.

Curtis Macomber, violin, has appeared with the Musica Aeterna Orchestra, the Juilliard and Vermont Symphonies, and the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, as soloist. He was top prizewinner in the 1980 Kennedy Center-Rockefeller Foundation Competition.

Carol Zeavin, violin, is a graduate cum laude from the University of California, Los Angeles, and has been a member of the Amici, Buffalo, and Columbia String Quartets. She performs with, among others, Speculum Musicae, the Group for Contemporary Music, and is principal of the New York Chamber Symphony.

Lois Martin, viola, who studied at Eastman and the Juilliard School, is a member of the Atlantic String Quartet, Fidelio, and the New York Chamber Symphony.

Eric Bartlett, cello, is a member of the Mostly Mozart Orchestra (principal), Orpheus, the New York Chamber Symphony, the American Ballet Theater Orchestra, and the Columbia Quartet.

Patricia Spencer, flute, is a member of the Da Capo Chamber Players, and Artistic Director of the Winnipeg chamber music society, Aurora Musicale. She gave the United States premiere of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Kathinkas Gesang als Luzifers Requiem*, a solo flute scene from his opera *Samstag from Licht*.

Produced by: Jean-Claude Gaberel (*Winding Up*); Eric Chasalow (*Fast Forward, The Fury of Rainstorms*); Eric Chasalow and Tim Martyn (*Over the Edge, Hanging in the Balance, The Furies*); Adam Abeshouse (First Quartet).

Engineered by: Jean-Claude Gaberel (*Winding Up*); Mark Waldrep (*Fast Forward*); Tim Martyn (*Over the Edge*); Adam Abeshouse (First Quartet).

The tape parts for *Over the Edge, Hanging in the Balance*, and *The Furies* were realized at the Columbia- Princeton Electronic Music Center. *The Fury of Rainstorms* was realized at the Brandeis Electro- Acoustic Music Studio (BEAMS). The final mix completed in Stockholm with the aid of William Brunson. First Quartet was recorded May 25, 1993 at SUNY College at Purchase, New York, Music Division Recital Hall. Cover art: James McGarrell. *Roma Tiburtina Track Turning* (1988). Oil/linen, 80" x 62". Cover design: Bob Defrin

This recording made possible with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Alice M. Ditson Fund at Columbia University, and the Mazer Fund at Brandeis University. Thanks to Spectral Synthesis for their support.

© 1993 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. All rights reserved.

1 *Winding Up* for horn (1989) (5:24)
(publ. by Editions Bim)
Bruno Schneider, horn

2 *Fast Forward* for tape and percussion (1988) (5:27)
Amy Knoles and Arthur Jarvinen, percussion

3 *Over the Edge* for tape and flute (1986) (5:55)
(publ. by McGinnis and Marx)
Patricia Spencer, flute

4 *The Fury of Rainstorms* for tape (1992) (1:57)
(Based on the voice of Christine Schadeberg)

5 *Hanging in the Balance* for tape and cello (1983) (6:17)
Fred Sherry, cello

The Furies for tape and soprano (1984)

6 *The Fury of Beautiful Bones* (4:03)

7 *The Fury of Guitars and Sopranos* (3:33)

8 *The Fury of Cooks* (1:29)

9 *The Fury of Hating Eyes* (3:58)

Christine Schadeberg, soprano

First Quartet for string quartet (1990)

10 Movement 1 (6:46)

11 Movement 2 (4:37)

12 Movement 3 (3:48)

13 Movement 4 (5:43)

Speculum Musicae String Quartet: Curtis Macomber, first violin; Carol Zeavin, second violin; Lois Martin, viola; Eric Bartlett, cello.

Made in U.S.A. 1993 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc.

FOR NEW WORLD RECORDS:

Herman E. Krawitz, President; Paul Marotta, Managing Director; Paul M. Tai, Director of Artists and Repertory; Lisa Kahlden, Director of Information Technology; Virginia Hayward, Administrative Associate; Mojisola Oké, Bookkeeper

RECORDED ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN MUSIC, INC., BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Francis Goelet, Chairman; David Hamilton, Treasurer; Milton Babbitt; Emanuel Gerard; Adolph Green; Rita Hauser; Herman E. Krawitz; Arthur Moorhead; Elizabeth Ostrow; Don Roberts; Patrick Smith; Frank Stanton.

**NO PART OF THIS RECORDING MAY BE COPIED OR REPRODUCED
WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION OF R.A.A.M., INC.**

NEW WORLD RECORDS
16 Penn Plaza #835
NEW YORK, NY 10001-1820
TEL 212.290-1680 FAX 212.290-1685
Website: www.newworldrecords.org
email: info@newworldrecords.org

LINER NOTES © Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc.