

SMOKE & MIRRORS



VANISH

Avner Dorman Diego Schissi Ernst Toch Derek Tywoniuk Alejandro Viñao

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- | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|------|
| 1 | <i>Udacrep Akubrad</i>
DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN | Avner Dorman | 8:41 |
| 2 | <i>Juego de Relojes (Game of Clocks)</i>
JOE BERIBAK, EDWARD HONG, KEVIN SCHLOSSMAN (VIBRAPHONE SOLO), DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN | Diego Schissi | 7:01 |
| 3 | <i>Geographical Fugue</i>
JOE BERIBAK, EDWARD HONG, KEVIN SCHLOSSMAN, DEREK TYWONIUK | Ernst Toch | 2:31 |
| 4 | <i>watch me vanish, watch me?</i>
DEREK TYWONIUK, WAI WAH WAN | Derek Tywoniuk | 7:13 |
| 5 | <i>Book of Grooves IV, Dance Groove Drifting</i>
EDWARD HONG, DEREK TYWONIUK | Alejandro Viñao | 5:59 |



The Collaboration

It was our friend the music critic David W. Robinson who twisted my arm into the DSD realm. Our success with Yarlung's Single, Double and Quad DSD releases is "all his fault." For which we are grateful. David loaned me his Hapi and Pyramix software from Merging Technologies in Switzerland to make these transfers from analog tape. Thank you David. Recording legend Tom Caulfield helped me set up the Pyramix system and then cut our recordings into tracks and added the metadata for our releases on NativeDSD.com. Working with Tom, and his cohorts Jared and Jonas Sacks at NativeDSD has been a pleasure, and the Merging Technologies system worked flawlessly without ever once requiring a reboot during our weeks of transfers. All three of them, Tom, Jared and Jonas, were tirelessly patient with this old-fashioned vacuum tube and analog tape guy (me) as we transferred the SonoruS Series of analog tapes to Quad DSD for these releases.

Many audiophiles believe that Quad DSD is the finest medium to deliver great music on the planet. Given what we have heard it is hard to argue with them. Recording music to Quad DSD is one thing, but playing it back is another much more difficult process. The circuitry and design aesthetic required to take the super high resolution DSD files and deliver them as living and breathing music takes enormous skill and care. For this most important and delicate step we are especially grateful to George Klissarov. It is his musical aesthetic and from-the-ground-up engineering that enabled him to create the exaSound e22, which must be one of the finest Quad DSD and high resolution PCM digital to analog converters on the planet. exaSound also makes the e28 multichannel DAC for surround sound but Yarlung remains a "purist stereo household" and it is the e22 we know and love. Not only is it small and easy to use, but it is intensely musical, such that one marvels at the quality of the music performance and has the luxury of forgetting that one is listening to a digital stream rather than living and breathing musicians performing for you in your listening room. This is magic, but the magic comes not from tricks but from superb engineering. We are honored to collaborate with George and exaSound to bring you this first Yarlung quartet of DSD releases. Learn more about exaSound at exasound.com

Famed audiophile critic Brian Moura, who first introduced us to George at exaSound, wrote this to me:

exaSound has been an early leader in providing Direct Stream Digital (DSD) playback in their DACs. This includes the first DAC for the consumer market that provided both Stereo and Multichannel playback at resolutions up to Quad DSD (11.2 MHz) – 4 times the resolution level offered by the Super Audio CD (SACD). exaSound is also noted for their responsive customer service and custom software drivers that support Windows, Mac and soon Windows Server and Linux. It's no surprise that they continue to win new customers with their products.

David W. Robinson writes extensively for Postive Feedback Online, for which he is also the publisher and Editor-in-Chief. Like Brian Moura, David is known as "The Mountain" for his knowledge and experience with high resolution playback. David sent me this description of exaSound:

Over the past several years, I have gotten to evaluate a number of DACs with DSD capabilities. Each has its own set of strengths, and a few weaknesses, which is only to be expected. But the exceptional work of George Klissarov and exaSound in their e22 and e28 DSD DACs is truly noteworthy -- in every sense of that word. The combination of ease, naturalness, harmonic balance, detail, and silky elegance of presentation, make it a top-tier product, one of the very best in my experience. This is no surprise to me: George himself has wonderful sensibilities, well attuned to the task of fusing the audio arts and the music they cherish with the technical challenges posed by bringing the best out of the latest DSD advances. The results are splendid: A noble marriage of music with technology. We are all the beneficiaries of George Klissarov's achievements at exaSound!

People have asked me "Why NativeDSD?" Why should Yarlung focus on one distributor for these much-anticipated Yarlung albums? NativeDSD.com results from its founder's love of music more than his love of profit. Jared Sacks is a superb musician and recording engineer living in The Netherlands but working all over the world, with a superb musical sense and extraordinary results with his recordings. Yarlung's recording library includes many albums from Channel Classics, Jared's label, and we were a fans years before we knew who Jared was. He created NativeDSD to serve the DSD listening community exclusively and to support labels that wished to join him in making these recordings widely available. Jared works with labels we respect greatly. Jared has this to say about his mission: "If you are tired of listening to compressed audio and your desire is to instead play uncompressed, original recording quality sound, this is your one stop shop. You will find detail in the music you were never able to hear before.... NativeDSD was founded... to create a central place where music fans could go to find the highest quality music in the world in both Stereo and Multichannel, directly from those labels recording [and releasing] in DSD." How could we resist? Please let us know what you think of the results.

-Bob Attiyeh, producer
www.yarlungrecords.com



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.¹

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). 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 2013¹

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 4th."

--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.¹ 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 Vinilo² 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 21st 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.

¹ 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.

² 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



Kevin Schlossman

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

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



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

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?*



11 Edward Hong warms up



Katalin La Favre

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

Technical notes:

We chose a single stereo AKG C24 microphone, loaned to us by Jon Fisher from Gearworks Pro Audio. 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, Kevin Schlossman, Derek Tywoniuk and executive producer Sandy Pressman

In a surprisingly short period of time, the adventurous GRAMMY® Award winning classical music label Yarlung has produced an eclectic catalog of impeccably recorded performances by a roster of adventurous musicians, including many that are well-known and others soon to be. The varied repertoire, with a refreshingly international flavor, covers everything from modern percussion to solo piano and violin to large scale symphonic works with singers.

The minimally miked “purist” recordings produced and engineered by label founder Bob Attiyeh in some of the world’s great concert spaces, are captured simultaneously on analog tape and high resolution digital and released on vinyl, reel-to-reel tape, CD and as high resolution Studio Master downloads.

Yarlung’s production and sonic model is distilled from the recording industry’s glorious past—one that pessimists were certain could never be successfully resurrected—while its forward-thinking business and distribution model points the way towards a healthy future for a “record business” long given up for dead by trendy “futurists.”

For older lovers of recorded classical repertoire, Yarlung’s catalog represents a return to sonic and musical greatness. For younger ones familiar only with dynamically and spatially compressed low resolution recordings, these from Yarlung are like 3D IMAX but without the glasses.

-Michael Fremer
Editor analogplanet.com
Senior contributing editor, *Stereophile*

Once upon a time there was a land of hi-fi. And it was gone all too soon. But thank Heavens for Yarlung Records. In the age of compressed digital downloads, it is refreshing to hear real sound and real music again, reminiscent of RCA Living Stereo in its golden age, or Mercury Records at its height. Yarlung's sound is liquid and transparent, just as if you were sitting in the concert halls with superb acoustics, where these recordings are made. Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, Ambassador Hall in Pasadena, and Zipper Hall at The Colburn School, to name a few.

What Mercury did for Howard Hanson and the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra in the fifties, Yarlung Records is now doing for The Colburn Orchestra and Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke. You can hear the evidence on the album *If You Love For Beauty*, released in 2012. Who would have thought that a conservatory orchestra (granted the players are young superstars, soloists all), could capture the world's attention like this. I understand that Yarlung does this by using similar techniques to those in the golden age of recordings. Only one stereo microphone for smaller ensembles, and up to four microphones for full orchestras, recording directly to two track analog tape and high resolution digital.

Don't worry, Yarlung's recordings are all on iTunes, Amazon MP3 and so forth, but you can also order 180 Gram virgin vinyl LPs, exquisitely made CDs mastered by mighty Steve Hoffman, and high resolution downloads, all available worldwide through Naxos Global Logistics in Munich. Most exciting for analog tape enthusiasts might be the SonoruS Series of recordings on ¼ inch master tape. I recently reviewed Yarlung's *Martin Chalifour and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Walt Disney Concert Hall*, another album I recommend highly.¹ Yarlung offers us a true feast for the ears, and this reviewer for one, wants more.

-Mori Shima
Stereo Sound, Japan

¹ *Stereo Sound*, June 2013

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- 1 Avner Dorman *Udacrept Akubrad*
- 2 Diego Schissi *Juego de Relojes / Game of Clocks*
- 3 Ernst Toch *Geographical Fugue*
- 4 Derek Tywoniuk *watch me vanish, watch me?*
- 5 Alejandro Viñao *Book of Grooves IV, Dance Groove Drifting*

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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exaSound
DSD

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

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