

## EDITORIAL

When I was offered to curate a joint monographic issue of *Ricerca* and *Ideas Sónicas*, I almost immediately thought of a subject to which I have been drawn during the recent past: augmented instruments. As the topic was relatively new for me, I did not foresee the variety of approaches and observations that it eventually accrued and that are represented in this publication. As it happens, meanings of the word “augmented,” when applied to instruments, range from efforts to perfect the mechanics of traditional instruments to radical modifications of their functioning. But this issue also problematizes the significance of what exactly it is that is being “augmented”: is it just the instrument’s mode of producing sound? Is it the way in which the performer interacts with it? Or, perhaps, the way augmentation yields a new creative paradigm? Furthermore, does augmenting mean improving or degrading? Indeed, do the adjectives “better” or “worse” hold any interest at all when the category of “augmented instruments” is itself vague and broad?

Several of these questions are explored in the articles contained in this publication. We begin with the theoretical reflections of Gardner and Ramos Flores, who present different but related overviews of the relationship between the performer and the augmented/manipulated instrument. Pierre Schaeffer and Murray Schafer are mandatory references for both authors, but each undertakes a personal route through insightful observations and a wide range of quotes from other writers. The contribution of Show and Richards follows. The authors lead the reader in an engaging dialogue that fosters a discussion about the ambiguity and problematics of what is entailed by the augmentation of an instrument. Throughout their journey, they introduce examples from their own practice and creative process. Koutsomichalis pursues a similar approach, but his theoretical framework is centered around a phenomenological core based on the opposition between the perception and the structure of matter. In

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Cuando se me ofreció la curaduría de un número monográfico conjunto de *Ricerca* e *Ideas Sónicas*, se me ocurrió casi de inmediato un tema que ha atraído mi atención en el último tiempo: los instrumentos aumentados. Tema relativamente nuevo para mí, no anticipé la variedad de enfoques y observaciones que eventualmente terminarían reunidos en esta publicación. Como pude comprobar, el número de significados que puede tener la palabra “aumentado” cuando se la aplica a los instrumentos va desde los perfeccionamientos de la mecánica tradicional de los instrumentos hasta modificaciones radicales de su funcionamiento. Pero también se cuestiona el significado de qué es exactamente lo que se aumenta: ¿simplemente el modo en que el instrumento produce sonido? ¿o la manera en que el intérprete interactúa con él? ¿o, tal vez, cómo es que la aumentación genera un nuevo paradigma creativo? Más aún, aumentar ¿significa mejorar, o empeorar? Al fin y al cabo, ¿son de interés alguno los adjetivos “mejor” o “peor” cuando la categoría de “instrumento aumentado” es ya así de vaga y amplia?

Los artículos de este número exploran varias de estas cuestiones. Comenzamos con las reflexiones teóricas de Gardner y Ramos Flores, que presentan panoramas diferentes—pero relacionados—del vínculo existente entre el intérprete y el instrumento aumentado/manipulado. Para ambos autores son referencias obligadas Pierre Schaeffer y Murray Schafer, pero cada uno emprende una ruta personal a través de observaciones penetrantes y un buen número de citas de otros estudiosos. Sigue la contribución de Show y Richards, quienes guían al lector en un diálogo cautivador que promueve la discusión sobre la ambigüedad y la problemática de lo que implica la aumentación de un instrumento. En este recorrido, los autores introducen ejemplos de su propia práctica y proceso creativo. Koutsomichalis adopta un enfoque similar, pero su marco teórico se centra en un núcleo fenomenológico basado en la oposición entre la percepción y la estructura de la

his text, the author retells the 'stories' of augmented instruments from a personal taxonomic viewpoint, highlighting ontological concerns about their nature. Koutsomichalis' partly auto-ethnographic exploration is mirrored by Tovar Henao's illustration of his own experience as a builder and performer who examines the possibilities afforded by his light-dependent musical interface. He presents the characteristics of a semi-improvisational work that exploits the unique features of his instrument, and raises ontological questions concerning aspects of the relationship between composers, performers, designers, instruments, and audiences. Alonso too investigates the affordances of her ongoing project. She examines seven years of work with the piano and the ways she manipulated the instrument in a search for the expansion of its possibilities. Like Tovar Henao, Alonso is the constructor, composer and performer of her own creations. Her questions address fundamental dilemmas such as rethinking the history and technology of the instrument under scrutiny, as well as the way in which the performer's body interacts with and affects the formation of a musical output. Finally, this publication closes with two articles that deal with tools for practical use in educational contexts (Wilde and Duarte García) and the performance of multimedia works (Covarrubias). The former provides a taxonomy of musical interfaces, the latter devises a set of procedures to convey multimedia aspects of music composition in written form. Neither subject is tangential to the topic of augmented instruments, as the first illustrates the difficult integration of such instruments in the current organological paradigm and the second endeavors to augment the Western music writing system. Also, both articles appraise their theories and effectiveness through experiments and case studies.

*Marco Alunno*

materia. En su texto, el autor describe las 'historias' de los instrumentos aumentados desde una perspectiva taxonómica con la cual aborda cuestiones ontológicas referentes a las propiedades de estos instrumentos. La exploración en parte auto-etnográfica de Koutsomichalis la encontramos también en Tovar Henao, el cual ilustra, a través de su propia experiencia como constructor e intérprete, las posibilidades abiertas por su interfaz musical activada por la luz. El autor presenta las características de una obra semi-improvisacional que explota las propiedades únicas de su instrumento, y abre preguntas ontológicas acerca de varios aspectos de la relación entre compositores, intérpretes, diseñadores, instrumentos y audiencias. También Alonso investiga las posibilidades ofrecidas por su proyecto todavía en curso, examinando siete años de trabajo con el piano y las formas con las cuales manipula el instrumento en búsqueda de expandir sus capacidades. Como Tovar Henao, Alonso es la constructora, compositora e intérprete de sus propias creaciones, y sus interrogantes plantean dilemas fundamentales sobre la historia y tecnologías de los instrumentos en consideración, así como la manera en la cual el cuerpo del intérprete interactúa y afecta la formación de un resultado musical. La publicación cierra con dos artículos dedicados a herramientas de uso práctico en contextos educativos (Wilde y Duarte García), y a la ejecución de obras multimediales (Covarrubias). El primero ofrece una taxonomía de interfaces musicales, el segundo una serie de procedimientos para comunicar en forma escrita los aspectos multimediales de la composición musical. Ninguno de los dos temas es tangencial al de los instrumentos aumentados, dado que el primero ilustra las dificultades de la integración de tales instrumentos en el paradigma organológico actual, mientras que el segundo intenta aumentar el sistema occidental de notación musical. Además, ambos artículos evalúan sus teorías y su efectividad con experimentos y estudio de casos.

*Marco Alunno*

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## BIOGRAPHIES / BIOGRAFÍAS

### Thomas Gardner

Thomas Gardner is a cellist, composer and soundartist.

His current interest is in the links between music, field recording and speech, and the ways in which the ruptures of post war art-music are being addressed by an increasingly political understanding of sound art.

His work with the performance group AWC has been a key way to explore these issues in practice and consists of the composition of new work, improvisation, the design of instruments and software, and the exploration of new performance contexts.

His research has been developed through a variety of publications, most recently the book published by Zero Books “Colloquium: Sound Art – Music” and the recent conference on “Audio Testimonies”. He is a member of CRISAP (<https://www.crisap.org>) and in the course director of the MA in Sound Art at LCC.

### Cristopher Ramos Flores

Originally from Morelia, Mexico, Cristopher Ramos Flores is a composer and instrument builder based in Wellington, NZ. He studied composition with Hebert Vazquez and Horacio Uribe at UNSMH. Additionally, he took many workshops with composers such as Rodrigo Sigal, Julio Estrada, Mario Lavista, Helmut Lachenmann, Alejandro Viñao, Ricardo Climent, and many others.

He completed his master’s degree at Wesleyan University with Paula Matthusen, who influenced his creative approach and led him to immerse himself in experimental music and sonic arts. In 2014, he started the first Mexican laptop orchestra, Kurhanguni, at CMMAS. In 2021, he finished his PhD with Michael Norris and Jim Murphy at Victoria University of Wellington researching and designing hyperinstruments.

He is currently interested in exploring embodiment and the medium as the foundation of his creative process.

### John Richards / Tim Shaw

John Richards explores Dirty Electronics focusing on shared experiences, social interaction and critical making. He is concerned with the performance of large-group electronic music and DIY electronics, and he has come to consider these activities as a holistic action. It is a fluid, live practice associated with the ideas of workshop-installation and performance-installation. His work pushes the boundaries between music, performance art, electronics, and graphic design and is transdisciplinary as well as having a socio-political dimension. He has also written numerous texts on DIY practices, performance of electronic music, and object-orientated and material approaches in relation to sound art.

Tim Shaw is an artist and researcher working with sound, light and communication media. Presenting work through performances, installations and sound walks Tim is interested in how listening environments can be constructed or explored using a diverse range of techniques and technologies. He works with field recordings, electronics, video, modular synthesis, sound objects, self-made hardware and DIY software.

### **Marinos Koutsomichalis**

Marinos Koutsomichalis is an artist, scholar, and creative technologist. He is broadly interested in the materiality of self-generative systems, (post-)digital objecthood, sound, image, data, electronic circuitry, perception, selfhood, landscapes/environments, and the media/technologies we rely upon to mediate, probe, interact, or otherwise engage with the former. He has exhibited or performed his work extensively and internationally and has held research or teaching positions in Greece, Italy, Norway, and the U.K. He is a Lecturer in Creative Multimedia at the Cyprus University of Technology (Limassol, CY) where he co-directs the Media Arts and Design Research Lab.

### **Felipe Tovar Henao**

Characterized by a strong interest in auditory perception, memory, and recognition, the music of Colombian composer Felipe Tovar-Henao (b. 1991) has been consistently awarded and performed throughout his emerging professional career. His creative work is deeply rooted in aesthetic experiences with technology, philosophy, and cinema, and exists primarily within the realms of chamber, electro-acoustic, multimedia, choral, vocal, and orchestral music.

Recent highlights include being a resident composer at the 2020 Mizzou International Composers Festival, being a finalist of the 2019 SEAMUS/ASCAP Award, as well as receiving the 2018 SCI/ASCAP Student Commission Award and the 2018 ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Award.

He currently serves as the 2021/22 CCCG Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Chicago.

### **Hara Alonso**

Hara Alonso (SE/ES) is a pianist and composer based in Stockholm. Her music blends electronic and instrumental elements generating complex and imaginative sonic universes.

Her creative practice questions the hegemonic narratives around music and technologies by resignifying its tools and knowledge. By means of improvisation, somatics, physicality, DIY interfaces and coding, Hara composes new sonic systems and languages.

Hara works as sound designer in various artistic research projects at the Stockholm University of the Arts and is an artist in residency at Elektronmusikstudion in Stockholm. In 2014 she initiated the participatory composition project The City Composing. Besides her artistic practice Hara teaches music programming at The Royal College of Music in Stockholm.

### **Emma Wilde / Mario Alberto Duarte García**

Emma Wilde is a composer and researcher from the UK who is currently based in Mexico. She completed a Phd in Composition at the University of Manchester, UK and forms part of the academic staff in the undergraduate degree in Music and Artistic Technology in the National School of Superior Studies Morelia, UNAM, Mexico. She is a member of the National System of Researchers in Mexico (Sistema Nacional de Investigadores) and was awarded the distinction of Honorable State Researcher in Michoacán. Her research interests include sound art in Latin America, sound pedagogies and access to music education.

Mario Duarte is a composer and researcher from Mexico. He completed a Phd in Composition at the University of Manchester, UK. Mario is an associate professor of Music and Artistic Technology in the National School of Superior

Studies Morelia UNAM, Mexico and a visiting scholar of Sound Art and Mixed Media Composition at The Superior School of Arts of Yucatán (ESAY). He founded the project Comunidades Sonoras (Sound Communities) with the objective of creating networks of educational access to music and technology in Mexico. He is a member of the National System of Art Creators of the Ministry of Culture of Mexico.

### **Sabina Covarrubias**

Sabina Covarrubias, PhD (1977-) is a composer, multimedia artist, and a researcher in the field of computer music. She is a researcher and professor (ATER) at the University of Paris 8 and at the laboratory MUSIDANSE/CICM – EA 1572 in Paris.

Her works encompass a wide array of genres, such as visual music, electroacoustic music, "musique mixte", experimental electronic music, symphonic, which have been shown in highly renowned concert halls and festivals.

Covarrubias received a PhD degree in Aesthetics, Science and Technology of the Arts from the University of Paris 8. She earned a Master's degree in Musicology, Creation, and Society in 2010 from the University of Paris 8 (France), where she specialised in Computer-assisted composition and Ethnomusicology. In 2016 she received a Bachelor of Music Composition degree in 2006 from the National School of Music at the UNAM in Mexico City.