



How can one categorize Ben Verdery's *Ufonia*?

Ensemble Classical Music? World Music? New Age? Leo Kottke-esque guitar musings expanded to an ensemble setting???

Who cares, I'll just call it fun.

On tracks like *Seattle*, *Ellis Island* and *Groundhog Day*, flutist Keith Underwood kickstarts the disc with bright and crisp lines. Vicki Bodner, Underwood's alter-go on oboe, balances his fire with melancholy on tracks like *Song Before Spring* and *Voices in the Pajaro Valley*. The juiciest lines, though, come from bassist Harvie Swartz whose performance is all cool (check his work on *Midnight Mango* and his solo in *Voices in the Pajaro Valley*).

Verdery's solo, *Prelude and Wedding Dance*, is what is best about post-modern guitar composition. In design, it owes much to the baroque practice of bi-partite construction with the primary being toccata in nature and the second a brisk fugue (though, in this case, it isn't a fugue, but rather, a rondo). The vocabulary, though, starts like Villa-Lobos and transmutes in the second section to vintage Andrew York (*Sunburst*). This is what I wish I would hear as the set-piece in a GFA competition. A piece that is interesting, fun, raucous and yes, guitaristic.

So go ahead and crack that bottle of Oregonian Pinot Noir that you've been saving, invite over some music loving friends and watch the sunset with *Midnight Mango* (my favorite track on the disc) accompanying some good conversation.