

Throughout the concert, Xelo Giner played the saxophones with great versatility and conviction.

A review of this concert would be incomplete without mentioning an aspect of all the 19:30 concerts: there was no interval and minimal gaps between the pieces. Preparing for the next work by checking the title or program notes was not possible unless one had brought a torch. My notes on some of these pieces were written in total darkness and so hard to read. In ICMC 2003 the conference pen incorporated a light, and I wished I had that with me to record more fully my impressions.

ICMC 2006 Reviews

Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

**Concert V: Tuesday, 7 November
1:30pm, McAllister Auditorium**

by Jon Appleton and Daniel Shapira

Path to the Serene - Yuriko Kojima
Japanese composer Yuriko Kojima's chamber work for the Azure Ensemble was beautifully performed. It was a lovely, gentle, colorful, post-Debussy work without any significant appearance of computer-generated sound or modification of the flute, violin, cello, harp or piano.

Balacoire #15 - Jeremy Baguyos
Goelle Leandre's vocal techniques are the source of Jeremy Baguyos's *Balacoire #15*. An arresting and highly original work, it suggests life in a surrealist bird sanctuary. Sometimes the music alternated between the effective use of silence and highly humorous organic sounds. Perhaps the looping audio was excessive, even if the repetition was intentional.

Fragmentary Seven - Haruka Hirayama
A rising star of Japanese computer

music is Haruka Hirayama. Her works have been recognized in competitions and by inclusion in recent ICMC concerts. Her virtuoso double bass solo was superbly performed. The inharmonic string-like attacks were striking and sometimes even grotesque. Noticeable in many works like this one performed at the conference was the return of feedback techniques updated through granular synthesis.

Das Bleierne Klavier - Hans Tutschku
Composer and pianist Tutschku's 11-minute work seemed to last an eternity. Filled with the tired gestured of the European avant-garde, this second-rate import featured the most simplistic delay and processing modifications of the strident piano timbres. Harvard University, Tutschku's home, has proved itself again to be an ultra-conservative bastion of "modernism." Many in the audience were angered by being subjected to this drudgery.

Seven Lonely Rivers - Kristi McGarity
A rising star of the American computer music scene is oboist-composer Kristi McGarity. Her work for oboe and tape was a wandering, impressionistic, modal melody over a tonic pad with contrasting sections of wildlife sounds. Verging on new-age ambiance, it occasionally breaks out in unexpected and adventurous ways.

les jeux sont faits - Tommaso Perego
Violinist Viktoria Horti of the Onix

Ensemble (of Mexico) brilliantly performed Italian composer Tommaso Perego's *les jeux sont faits*. In one steady gesture, from near silence to a violent climax, this piece meticulously explores one high-pitched dyad. This is extended by computer-generated filigree. Explosive interjections ultimately dominate the progress of this work.

**Concert VII: Wednesday, 8 November
11:00am, Dixon Hall**

by Adam Jenkins

DUST – for tape - Hans Timmermans (Netherlands) 10:28

This piece started with short crisp popping sounds. These were used as grains to create a mountain of sound which washed over the audience. Raindrops joined in and soon clips of a female speaking did too. The sound of her voice was cut short, but it was long enough to recognize it as a woman's voice. Robust low frequencies rumbled into the landscape, creating a warm foundation while the crisp popping sounds continued. Deep wisps of wind blew louder and louder, as well as what seemed like a wave of water crashing onto the shore. The sound of wind and water merged and symbiotically form a vicious storm. A synthesized choral pad sustained near the end of the piece. It ended the same way it began. The popping degenerated from an enveloping wall of

sound to sparse droplets.

For me, the piece was very effective in leading the mind to see, hear, and feel the power of dust. Dust on its own is small, scant, and almost insignificant. However, when dust is thought of as dirt, you can imagine how a mass of dirt, dust, or grains can create undeniable density. It is like a sandstorm, a swarm of bees, or a flood of water molecules. I truly enjoyed the soundscape.

Dreamtime – for didgeridoo and digital playback – Eric Honour (USA) 8:42

This piece starts with solo didgeridoo. Popping sounds enter as well as what sounds like sped up voices. Deep sonic waves which feel like angry winds rumble in. At this point the didgeridoo player has dropped out and the digital playback is the only instrument. The deep waves create the feeling of a chasm. The quick vocal chatter continues and builds to a whooshing sound. This whooshing escalates and then collapses on itself to silence. Fiery ruffles emerge and the didgeridoo joins in as well. We then hear a percussive beat, a primitive keyboard synth patch, what sounds like a large barking pit bull, and quick chipmunk chatter. This swells and everything exits except the didgeridoo and the synth pad. The sound of a beating heart comes in for a few seconds. Eventually, the didgeridoo exits and new sounds enter creating an uneasy feeling – angry, lamented, painful.

If there was a sound which represents the pain of being ripped and torn apart, this would be that sound. To me, it would represent the anguish of being put back together after having your entire body disassembled like a jigsaw puzzle – as painful as being torn apart. The piece ends with just the didgeridoo – calm, peaceful, whole.

Overlooked – for video – Edrex Fontanilla (USA) 8:52

The description of *Overlooked* states, “The work attempts to explore ideas of being, structure, and stability through ambiguity between the use of analogue and digital processes.” The video starts with darkness. Slowly, from the bottom right hand corner, a white fuzzy light begins to emerge. There are soft rumbling and tumbling sounds. The rest of the screen slowly illuminates, exposing a blurred black image of what looks like tree branches swaying from gusts of wind. Sounds of wind increase the sensation that we, the audience, are looking at tree branches. However, the image is distorted and leaves the mind to wonder what we are looking at. The image is not in color—it is simply black and pale yellow. It is a little brighter in the center of the screen and that leads the audience to assume it is the sun shining through the branches. The wind and branch movements continue for a while, giving the audience a meditative feeling. This is caused by looking and

hearing the single almost indistinguishable concept—the blowing limbs of a tree. A little later, there is more movement with the leaves, and a darker image seems to be seen, though the image is still fuzzy. The sound of crows cawing leads us to think the image is a bird stopping for a rest. The sound of wind bleeds to sounds of waves on a beach and then back to sounds of wind. This increases the meditative feeling of stability through ambiguity. The piece ends with a visual and auditory fade to black and silence.

Microcosmos – for tape – Chih-Fang Huang 5:05

This piece is built from many different sound samples derived from direct and indirect synthesis techniques. The best way I can describe this piece is simply by stating what the ears would communicate to the conscious mind. Most of these sounds only play for a short while: a loud piercing blast; a banjo; horns trumpeting; a variety of different instruments; laughter; the plunking of an eastern stringed instrument; the hum of soft wind and a variety of instruments that inhabit the same space; a high “ding” and then the low “dong” of a bell; soft wind, almost like white noise; a low stringed instrument that sounds like moaning; more and more sounds join to create a sonic tapestry. All the timbres and sonic qualities of each instrument make an appearance and then are taken away.

The piece does indeed create vast layers of sonic microcosms.

Et Iterum Venturus Est—for real-time Csound5
— Arthur Hunkins (USA) 4:30

This piece is sonically simple. For this reason, it is also very relaxed and meditative. It begins with a quiet low hum which rises gradually and steadily. A second note starts, then a third, and then a fourth. All of these notes take their time to enter. A single note is held and its intensity builds and becomes louder. A low note rumbles in and takes over. Its pitch rises slowly over a few minutes. The higher pitch then becomes more prominent. After a few minutes, the high pitch diminishes in volume as if it were fading farther and farther away. The note begins as low and majestic and it ends as quiet and faint. The sustain of these notes lends us to focus completely on the music and the piece itself, but it mostly occupies our ears enough so that we can be with the foundation of our own minds—which is one of the things that meditation attempts to accomplish.

The Gongs of Tiny Incerts—for tape—Jeffrey Stolet (USA) 9:05

Like *Microcosmos*, *The Gongs of Tiny Incerts* is best described by stating what was heard and felt: A crash of cymbals; what sounds like many wind chimes rustling and howling wind; screeching bats; the mood is dark and damp; a boomerang whooshing

by; crisp popping; fast chattering voices; the sound of glass slowly cracking; the ringing of an old alarm clock bell circles the audience; a hit on a damp metal drum; more metal hits which sound like the clanking of metal machines working in a large echoing factory with cement floors, ceilings, and walls; the alarm clock bell which seems more like a fire alarm bell continuing to ring; machines rhythmically hammering and wind howling again; wooden blocks clunking, falling, and tumbling down. As a whole, this piece created a feeling of a metal machine factory dripping with water. It was cold, damp, and expansive.

lines—for video—Stephanie Loveless (Canada) 9:30

This piece has a series of video images that are all connected by the concept of lines. The first video is like the beginning of a film reel as shown through an old movie projector. It is scratchy and there is a vertical pale blue line in the center of the screen. The colors and tone are pale and worn. It feels like watching the beginning of an old home movie before the days of DVDs or VCRs. A piano phrase accompanies this video and continues throughout the entire piece. The next video is train tracks in what seems like an industrial area. These straight tracks stretching to the horizon are another depiction of lines. The image is not stationary. The camera person is walking forward, giving a sense of movement. There

is then also the view of telephone wires on which two birds are perched. These images are in inversed black and white, like photo negatives. The music mirrors this inversion by playing the piano phrase backwards as well as forwards. The next video is of an older roller coaster, one whose support beams are layered and made of metal and wood. The beams create a grid of lines. The next video is of a carnival ride called a swing. Wikipedia describes these rides as the following: “The swings are types of amusement rides that have seats attached below a metal structure. Each seat is suspended by metal chains. The swing ride will spin around the center axis of the ride, and travel at a moderate speed.” The metal chains hoisting the seat again reinforce the image of lines. As the ride spins, there is the sound of children chattering. The video of the blue line from the film reel reemerges, reminding us of the older faded medium that this video is representing. The music continues with low piano notes played in reverse. The music is quite minimalistic and has a somber tone reminiscent of Radiohead. The piece ends with a fade to white, which makes sense; since a variety of images were inverted, the end is not a fade to black, but a fade to white.

Editor’s note: There are two reviews for Concert VIII. However, since they represent two unique perspectives on the concert, we have decided to publish both.

**Concert VIII: Wednesday, 8 November
1:30pm, McAllister Auditorium**

by Christopher Bailey

Concert VIII of the ICMC featured mostly works for some sort of live performer with computer music.

William Kleinsasser’s *Protean Profile*’s large time scale (the work was 20’ in duration) caught me a bit off guard at first (I had barely glanced at the program). Not expecting its extended length, I found that there were a large number of moments where I thought “wow, that’s a beautiful ending...” only to have the work start up again. That’s often a source of frustration for a listener, but upon reflection afterwards, if I had known what I was in for, I think I would have loved the piece for the very fact of it being a “collection of beautiful endings.” Kleinsasser has a beautiful sense of pitch choice, modernist in heritage, but gorgeous and romantic in ultimate effect.

Long Train Running by Sinichiro Toyoda was an odd little sonic snipshion. I found myself listening into its swaths of mostly low-end noise, recordings of ambience in subway stations and so on; occasionally picking out pattering footsteps, a crash of this or that, and so on. Another exploration of noisiness was found in dirty grooves by Iain Armstrong, which, to my ear, focused on a dialogue (or perhaps a parent-child relationship) between LP

scratch noise, radio static, and other audio detritus, and what sounded to me like harmonies synthesized via sharply filtered noise (though according to the composer's program notes, they were from a clockwork music box).

Victor Lazzarini's *Timelines 1a* was a curious experience. Although the guitar writing was skillful, and there were some moments of effective combination between the laptop processing and the acoustic guitar sound, the guitar was often dwarfed by the purposefully brash and often distorted processing. At the opening of the piece, the processing was loud and distorted for a lengthy chunk of time, causing a neighboring audience member and I to wonder whether there were problems with the performance patch. In a way, this kind of ambiguity made the piece more interesting, but I still have no idea whether this was intentional or not.

Both Jen Wang's *Spaces Between* and Sam Pluta's *noise + mobile* were effective works for instrument(s) and tape, but there the similarities ended. Wang's work was relatively quiet, subtle and coloristic, carefully weaving the mostly diatonic, sensitively arranged pitch and timbral material between the live and recorded sounds. In contrast, Pluta pitted Cecil Taylor-inspired mayhem in the piano part with Autechre-inspired derangement in the tape part. For the first half of the work, the

only common thread between them was the intensity of energy. For the last part of the piece, the two came together, with the piano riffing more quietly over sensuous electronica-esque harmonies.

Finally, Christopher Dobrian's *Mannam (Encounter)* for daegum and computer and Jason Bolte's *Forgotten Dreams* for double bass and computer were gorgeous, sensuous works, and both received superb, expressive performances. Mannam's electronic sounds entered in a very subtle manner, growing and morphing atop and around the live daegum. *Forgotten Dreams* was a darker work. Some poetic fragments that occurred to me during this piece: "... dark trigger for noisy blasts, a scream in an industrial hell..."

**Concert VIII: Wednesday, 8 November
1:30pm, McAllister Auditorium**

by Spencer Stuart Topel

An important theme during ICMC 2006 was the employment of ancient or non-western instruments with electronics. This was an integral component of the conference, as there were fantastic guest artists from the Korean Traditional Ensemble participating in various performances. It was exciting to see how many pieces either incorporated these instruments or samples of these instruments into their tape part or as a component of live manipulation.

The results were pleasantly effective, with an often-ethereal blend of something that could be perceived as both electronic and exotic.

A highlight of Concert VIII was the first piece on the program: *Spaces Between* by Jen Wang. This trio plus tape featured an "east meets west" quality, and from the dramatic unearthly pizzicato opening this was immediately apparent. The music seemed to have an unsettling tension between members of Onix Ensemble and the electronic backdrop, while at times returning to a carefully wrought repose. At certain moments one could perceive an exotic flavor in the electronic tape part, yet Wang playfully avoided any direct reference to one particular idiom. This was an effective play on expectations that lasted the entire piece. At times the music seemed traditional, but it was not a drawback. Rather, the juxtaposition between ancient and electronic contributed to the east-west dichotomy that the composer describes in the program note as an inspiration for the composition.

Christopher Dobrian's piece *Mannam (Encounter)* tapped into folk instrument-plus-electronic motif with interesting uses of a Korean instrument called a daegum coupled with real-time processing. The approach to the electronics was organic and worked to highlight aspects of the instrument's timbral characteristics. It was

a very successful approach.

Timelines 1a by Victor Lazzarini (Ireland) had a folk-like quality as well, but of a Spanish flavor. Lazzarini offered an extended work for guitar and an electronic mixture of what sounded like tape elements and live processing (though I suppose most of it could have gone either way). The music was driving and at times turbulent. The timbre of the electronics often seemed born from the guitar itself and this was effective. The performance was given by Javier Olondo, a talented and technically gifted guitar player.

A piece that paid respect to a different tradition was a laptop improvisation aptly entitled *Long Train Running* by Shinichiro Toyoda (a nice reference to train inspired pieces). The music didn't stray far from the metaphor, but the composer balanced this potential vice by sprinkling sonic curiosities within the texture that would come and go in interesting ways. This was one of the works on the program that seemed a bit long, but I should point out that it was improvisation, and that I have a special fondness for train pieces.

dirty grooves, the "lone" tape piece on the program by Iain Armstrong, provided an interesting foil to the other works. Like the title suggests, this piece was raucous and jovial. I especially liked the expressiveness of the samples, as they were strong in

character and were well matched. This is definitely one of the pieces in the festival that I felt could have benefited from a different venue, simply because the scale of the work suggested a more intimate atmosphere. In addition, the lights were rarely, if ever, lowered for electronics-only compositions, which would have helped the reception of tape pieces, at least for me.

Of the eight pieces on the program, two involved the piano timbre explicitly. The first was a mammoth (by ICMC standards) twenty-minute work by William Kleinsasser entitled *Protean Profile* for amplified pianos and computer, performed by duo runedako. Technically, it seemed that the amplification detracted from the performance, while at times the pianos seemed to overwhelm any sense of the electronic background. (Having had a piece on an earlier concert in McAllister, I could definitely relate to technical problems.) Even so, the feeling of the piece did come across. In many ways this piece paid the greatest homage to some of the classic piano plus tape pieces by Milton Babbitt and Mario Davidovsky.

The other piece involving piano was Samuel Pluta's *noise + mobile* featuring pianist Teresa McCollough. Unlike *Protean Profile*, this piece could have benefited from better sound reinforcement of the piano, since at times the electronics would overtake the piano even in places when the piano was playing loudly. The musical material

composed seemed idiomatic to play and the expressive and charged nature of the writing lent itself well to the electronic backdrop.

Another standout in the program was Jason Bolte's *Forgotten Dreams*, with a great performance by double bassist Jeremy Baguyos. This work has a lively interaction between the solo double bass and laptop, and these two components are handled expertly. At times the mood was psychedelic and vibrant, which seems to agree with the composer's note that the piece is inspired by "abruptly waking from a dream." *Forgotten Dreams* appeared at the end of the program, which was a suitable choice considering the pyrotechnics in the music.

Overall, the program encapsulated much of the music heard during ICMC 2006, especially since there were so many interactive pieces presented during the festival. I am curious to see if the ancient/non-western instrument motif that was heard so much during the week will continue in coming years. For me, I found the wedding of technology and traditional, the ancient and the very new extremely appealing, and I look forward to seeing work of composers engaging in these kind of projects in the future. I think I am going to go start a piece for sheng and electronics right now.

**Shutting out sound: the ICMC unplugging
Late-night Concert Two
Wednesday, 8 November 9:30pm,
Mimi's**

by *Stephanie Loveless*

I arrived late for this particular event, the second of the late-night concerts at the 2006 International Computer Music Conference in New Orleans. The event was being held at a bar called Mimi's on Royal Street. On the ground floor were pool tables, locals, and rock music. I made my way to the back of the bar and up the stairs, passing scores of ICMC attendees going the other way. "Loud," they told me, some with resigned smiles, some visibly annoyed.

Scott Smallwood and Newton Armstrong organized four late-night concerts at ICMC 2006. Their laudable (and successfully realized) intention was to expand the ICMC community's reach beyond academic acousmatic music. According to Smallwood, these events sought to recognize the interesting and intelligent music being made in communities outside of academia, with its own "long history and streams of discourse." One of the artists selected for this series was Hiroki Nishino, whose performance was programmed as part of the Noise-themed late-night concert on Wednesday, November 8th.

There were still plenty of people on the top floor of the Mimi's when I arrived, but I didn't have to push my way through a crowd to reach the back area where Niroshi was performing. I inserted my earplugs and made my way towards the performance, my ears acclimatizing to the sound field at hand: piercing, complex, beautiful, and loud. But just as I reached the performance area, someone rushed behind the artist and the sound was abruptly cut off.

The 2006 ICMC was not without its moments of performance art (Meg Schedel's instructional Max/MSP/Jitter piece involving a rubber chicken comes to mind), and when Nishino's performance was unplugged by another composer, that was the lens through which I found myself viewing it. For, regardless of the appropriateness of the action, what happened sparked an incredibly responsive set of dialogues, going so far as to challenge the accepted relationship between artist and audience at a concert event.

The general post-incident analysis was straightforward. No one contested that an artist has the right to play loud—particularly, as in this case, when this volume is integral to their work. It was understood that this was a Noise piece, and that part of the aesthetic of Noise music is its loud volume, "just like some pieces need to be played soft," as Nishino pointed out in a later discussion. Also widely agreed

upon was that unplugging an artist is an inappropriate way to voice one's concerns.

What interested me, however, were other things I heard being discussed immediately after and in the days following this incident. For the first time, I heard people addressing larger concerns about playback levels at the ICMC that I had been struggling with myself. I overheard two people grumbling about the level of the concerts in general, and other complaints about the need to wear earplugs even during the daytime concerts. Of course, I heard and remember these grumbles because they resonated with me. Are we, culturally, bowing to the deafest denominator?

Personally, I love noisy sound; I just like it quiet. But then, I might be the most sound-sensitive, hyper-acusis-inflicted person I know. I am protective of my ears. So I avoid extremely loud shows and carry around earplugs. I do regret the amazing performances that I miss out on because I can't take the volume, or pieces that I hear a modified, muffled version of through my earplugs. But mostly, it hurts my sensibilities that we are shouting at one another. I don't want a silenced world, but I am also a bit of an underdog lover—I sympathize with the small, and would like to argue for creating the space for sounds of all sizes.

What happened when the composer unplugged the amplifier was that he shut out the sound that he seems to have felt violated by. While a more civilized response may have been to leave, I believe that the frustration that erupted onto Nishino's performance can be seen as a symptom of widespread inattention to sound levels, and of a culture in which the omnipresence and amplification of sound is increasingly naturalized.

It seems as though this incident was timely. Issue 9.4 of the Canadian Electroacoustic Communities journal *eContact!*, which appeared shortly after the conference, focused on "Hearing (Loss) and Related Issues." A recent article in the CBC argued that the problem is reaching "epidemic proportions."

In a recent conversation, after making clear how deeply he regrets his actions on the night of the concert in question, the unplugging made several constructive suggestions about how the creation of new protocols might address this contentious issue. Performers could mix in front of speakers, giving them access to the sound level in the space as the audience will experience it. Decibel readings could be made at rehearsals, and earplugs could be made available to the audience. To these, I would add that the expected sound levels of concerts could be made a standard part of event publicity.

I do believe that all of these ideas are useful. They do not limit an artist's freedom to play as loud as they like, but they do encourage sound levels to be approached rigorously, and with care. In fact, I feel that such protocols can create the space in which conceptually intended loud concerts can be far more meaningfully engaged with. I would argue that in a context in which the level of sound is not attended to with the same diligence as any other sonic element, we are missing the framework for sound art that seriously explores volume—whether the barely audible or the painfully loud.

R. Murray Schafer once wrote that it is not through increased legislation that issues of sound ecology will be successfully addressed, but rather through increased listening. Scott Smallwood's closing thoughts in one of our email exchanges about the incident demonstrates this idea beautifully, I think:

In any case, what happened happened. I think this might best be summed up by Pauline Oliveros's comment to me, when I asked her what she said to (the unplugging) that night at the concert, after he pulled the plug. She said, "I just listened."

**Concert X, Thursday, 9 November
1:30pm, McAllister Auditorium**

by Seongah Shin

The tenth concert of ICMC 2006 started with an announcement of a change in the order of works to be performed at McAllister Auditorium. The venue is a huge charming auditorium with many doors in various locations and a high ceiling that gives a very long delay time with various different times from almost-round walls. This character of the space gives the perception that the sound of the music is roomier than in a normal space. The performance ran smoothly without any major issues.

The first piece was composed by Christopher Ariza, *metalloidesque electronico-clankered* for two percussionists and computer, and was performed by Ensemble Surplus and NeXT Ens. The opening of the piece was very peaceful, with microscopic sound and minor movements by the performers. The small musical gestures moved very slowly, but also gave way to huge dynamic changes within a very static musical form. The metallic sounds by percussion and computer had similar timbral characters and sounded well with the delay characteristics of the room. The continuous development of musical elements was impressive gestures until the end.

I thought the second piece, Ronald

Parks's *Afterimage 7* for flute, violin, cello, piano, percussion and computer, was the best piece in this concert. It also got very impressive feedback from the audience. Flute, piano, and cello were grouped in a sustained timbral sound with percussion. Flutes have an excellent role as a typical jazz instrument. Parks's musical idea in this piece was an improvisational jazz style with a walking bass for the rhythmic pulse and sustaining washes of sound with the piano and metallic percussion instruments. Those two musical elements were alternated from the opening and toward the middle, until at the end the opposing forces mixed both horizontally and vertically. The interaction of the computer with the musical elements was more active than the vertical musical elements. The action of the ending happened without any warning, but it seemed very natural and effective.

One of the noticeable themes of this 2006 conference was the Korean composers' works that were composed for traditional Korean instruments. It is an encouraging attempt to combine traditional music and new computer music with constructive technology. In this concert, *Parang* by Korean composer Su Jin Ko was a piece for the traditional Korean instrument Haegum and tape. A Haegum is a major Asian fiddle instrument with two strings. There are similar instruments in various cultures (including China and Japan), and all have a very characteristic expression

with microtonal pitches and moving tones. The tape part sounded like flowing sustained grains and micro-sonic sound. The instrumental part was rather like a solo piece, and tape part was working as an accompaniment throughout the piece. Curiously, the solo instrument and tape was just ended without any particular musical attempt. It is hard to say what is a good example of traditional instrumentation and computer music. We just continuously need to try to make various musical events for every kind of musical gesture with traditional instruments. Only this kind of attempt will expand the new language of musical expression with music and technology. I am also looking forward to hearing more combinations of various traditional sound and instruments with technology at future conferences.

The fourth piece, *balanfo* for tape, was composed by Austrian composer Daniel Blinkhorn and lasted almost 15 minutes. This tape piece used very natural sound material with wood, cracking wood, wooden instruments, the natural voice of Guinean, etc. Two-thirds of the piece consisted of wooden sounds with very natural sound effects and wide dynamic level changes. Toward the end, a voice sound came in. The natural voice was not touched by special signal processing. The sound of the voice and the natural wooden sounds made an intimate timbral reaction together. The duration was long; however,

it did not feel that long for the listeners.

The fifth piece, *Luna* for saxophone and tape, was by American composer Lou Bunk. The program note was very short without any musical or technical explanation. I am guessing that the topic was the moon. The saxophonist stood on stage with two stands, a microphone and headphones. The opening was a deconstructed musical gesture with various unsettled pitches. The form of the piece was rather diffuse without settling in any particular form. The dynamic range of the saxophone and tape seemed constrained, but the saxophone sound flowed naturally and the tape part never took over the instrument part. The function of the accompaniment in the tape was effective and there were two parts that had a similar variation in timbre with micro-sonic development. The performance was smooth and attractive and the technology was unobtrusive, except that the page-turning noise made by the performer was rather distracting in very calm musical moments.

The sixth piece, *Vague Speech* for tape composed by American composer Daniel Zajicek, started with a characteristic bell-like metallic sound. The entire piece sounded like timbral variations of this metallic sound. Other granular micro-sonic sounds moved as ascending and descending directional gestures throughout the piece. These two musical elements sometimes

stood alone and also mixed together later with various development. Lower frequency pulse sounds appeared toward the end and filled the lower frequency spectrum effectively. Another typical bell-like metallic sound pulled the power up to make a nice matching ending.

The last piece was *Nebulae* for harp and computer by Stephen Taylor. The musical intent of this piece seems to be to extend the instrumentation beyond idiomatic musical expression by using various extended techniques. The opening gesture of plucking the string was impressive. The placement of the microphone covered the weakness of the amplitude of sustained notes, but it also brought out note attacks. The harp part may have blended better with the electronics if the microphone had been slightly further away, but overall the acoustic instrument and electronics blended well and brought a calm and harmonized end to the concert.

Concert XII, Friday, 10 November 11:00am, Dixon Hall

by Carmen Caruso

When I came into Dixon Hall that morning to review a concert, I found that Concert XII was one of the stronger sets of performances I'd heard at the conference. It started out with a fast-paced video piece called *Underground* by Tom Lopez. Lopez

used constantly moving slotted bars on the screen to capture the rhythm of subway trains. Sometimes the bars would even contain video of the underground itself. The music also had a steady rhythmic component, becoming more frenzied at the end. The one thing I wished more from this piece was that music and video were more closely connected at the end. As the music got more and more turbulent, the video didn't completely follow suit. However, overall, the idea was very unique and I enjoyed this piece very much.

Annie Mahtani's piece, *Cidade Maravilhosa*, was very suggestive, with electronic whooshes and clicks that suggested waves, reverberant chimes, and even cicadas. Natural field recordings are also incorporated into the sound, including Brazilian chanting and chirping tropical birds. If I closed my eyes (easy to do in a dark hall), I felt transported to some exotic land. The piece also had a very ambient texture underlying these accent sounds, which gave it an almost foreboding element.

The next piece, *Nodule*, was very interesting. Donna Hewitt and Julian Knowles moved the concert toward a more secular vein, which was refreshing. Hewitt's voice provided some very interesting rhythmic vocal percussion. Towards the end, the piece reminded me of IDM (Intelligent Dance Music) with its building complex rhythmic

collection of vocal pops and clicks. What also amazed me was their ability to sustain interest throughout a 20-minute piece. To me, this was a very difficult task in a concert setting, and they really pulled this piece off well. Part of the reason for this was the vocal performance. Hewitt took the visual role of a lead singer (albeit not in the traditional sense) on stage as she moved the eMic (a mic stand controller) around her to create different sonic textures, providing a strong focal point for the audience. I did feel, however, that a morning concert was not the best setting for this piece; it would have been much more suited to an evening or even a late-night concert.

Charles Nichols's *The Blue Box* was unfortunately stunted by the fact that the dance element was missing from the piece. The piece was designed to use a motion-capture system with a dancer to create an interaction between computer and dancer, and in turn project the interactive animation of the computer on the screen. Thus, because there was no interactive live performance, only video, this piece really lost one of its core elements, leaving me unable to write a comprehensive review of this piece.

Paul Rudy's *November Sycamore Leaf* starts with an unveiling of chimes. Rudy describes the piece as inspired by a particular Christmas card: "The moment I slid the card out of the envelope sound literally exploded in my

head. The bright orange leaf leapt off the card and into my sonic imagination." The introduction of his piece also reminds me of drawing an explosion of sound out from underneath its cover. This segues into a series of electronic chirps that reminded me of crickets, grasshoppers, and frogs. These quiet chirps are taken over by a building harmonious ambient texture, which also brings in touches of cello, organ, and the chimes played earlier, resolving the piece nicely, and bringing a wonderful concert to a close.

Concert XIV: Friday, 10 November 8:00pm, Dixon Hall

by John Arroyo

This concert, in my opinion, was one of the finest of the conference. There was an eclectic mix of styles and presentations. Above all, the quality was rather high and consistent. Many of my favorite pieces from ICMC 2006 were in this concert.

The night began with the piece *American Dreamscape* by Steven Ricks. It is a piece for saxophone and video with plenty of free jazz interludes. There was heavy use of sounds whirling around the speaker array. In the middle of the piece was some staccato sax work, which served to divide the piece nicely. It played out like the unfolding of a classic jazz piece. The fading between the video and performer was simple yet

quite effective. In the video, however, the juxtaposition of old jazz footage and bubbles was not as effective. Unfortunately, the sound textures were not rich enough to sustain long-term enjoyment and the piece failed to ever take off.

Lametta by Ewan Stefani began with a somewhat cliché intro, then soon became interesting. The composition incorporated field recordings of children and animals as well as other sounds like bells. The piece expertly incorporated rhythm, including a great bass drum sound. Mr. Stefani managed to pull off the piece without overdoing it. He maintained a nice balance between subtleties and full audio texture.

Torrid Mix: featuring Jazzy King and Master L.T. by Mike McFerron was a piece for piano and tape. The sound texture of the piece used gibberish talking, clangs, and banging pipes, erupting into a powerful crescendo near the end. The vocals of the piece were very effective; however, the dialogue between the piano and electronics was often disconnected. Although the piece was good, it needed more unity. I found that each part was more effective on its own rather than together.

Under the Sea by Chien-Wen Cheng incorporated some very beautiful sounds. They were rich and inviting, but they never came together as a composition. The sounds were too sporadic to get the listener

to become engaged in them. I felt as though the piece was very close to becoming fully engaging, but failed to coalesce in the end.

Secret Pulse by Zack Browning followed and was performed by the NeXT Ensemble. This composition was definitely one of the highlights of the week! It began very powerfully, with all of the members of the ensemble engaged. The whole piece had a great interplay of the electronics and the performers. The cello's reinforcement of the electronic part was brilliantly syncopated. Sounds seemed to flutter in and out of the sound texture. The rhythm of the piece was beautiful and avoided common rhythmic pitfalls and clichés. Overall, there was an excellent synergy between the performers and the electronics that eluded many of the ICMC works.

Circles and Rounds by Dennis Miller was a tape piece with video. The first thing to mention is the beautiful visuals. The video accompanying the music was great, non-representational and quite exquisite. It began with abstract shapes resembling aquatic plants in outer space. The shapes morphed and grew a brilliant texture of fur. There was a great fusion of sound and image. Later in the piece some plant and water 3-D spirals moved around and morphed from organic shapes into a rigid spaceship-like object. The video definitely steals the show, but the sound is still strong enough to hold up on its own. This was

one of the best pieces of the week.

Erwin's Playground by Fishman Rajmil was a tape piece with some great sounds. These start out sounding like a metallic jungle. Later, it sounds like insects running around on a tin roof. At times, the passages are too long, even teetering on self-indulgence. The excellent sounds, however, are not quite interesting enough on their own to hold your attention for the whole 9 minutes of the piece's duration.

Substitute Judgement + Metal Catalogue by Jeffrey Treviño was a piece for video and percussion. This was a very unique use of video. The video was rear projected onto 4 round disks that look like a cross between an art installation and an instrument. Three of the disks were translucent, the fourth was opaque (metal). Percussionist Ross Karre and the video were very engaging. Occasionally the video was too bright, and watching it hurt your eyes. I felt that the live drums should have been complimented by the use of electronic drums (either triggered or sequenced). Overall it's a cool piece, very artistic and creative. It would be great to see more works in this vein in the future.

Finishing the concert was *Juggernaut* by Paul Oehlers, a cello and tape piece. The juxtaposed classical playing and harsh noises doesn't work for me most of the time. Perhaps the room acoustics or micing

were detrimental to the performance. The melody is effective only part of the time. It incorporated some neat sounds, but the plucked string sounds (possibly a clavichord) were timbrally weak. The composition was good, but it falls short in its realization.

The concert had many great moments and truly was one of my favorite of the week. *Secret Pulse* and *Circles and Rounds* were standouts of the night. All of the pieces in this concert, even the pieces above that were criticized negatively, were good compositions.

Concert XVI: Saturday, 11 November 1:30pm, McAllister Auditorium

by Noah Keesecker

The Saturday afternoon concert (XVI) proved to be one of the more diverse collections of works during the conference. The focus on electronic works with live musicians always adds a welcome physicality to any electronic music conference, and this concert certainly had its fair share of corporeal performances.

Oddly enough, the first piece of the concert, *Multiplication Virtuelle* by Mei-Fang Lin, was intended for percussion and computer, but was instead represented by a recorded performance. The documentary quality of the recording (complete with applause at the end) lent an interesting performance

juxtaposition of the absent musicians. The interspersed gestural and rhythmic percussion against the more depictive use of a distant creaking ship noise and residual processing effects actually served to create a dynamic space that was not at all devoid of a human touch. Similarly, the contrast between atmospheric and localized sounds accentuated the "missing" performers in a way that pulled the listener into a different contextual dialogue between audience, performer and machine, as well as ideas of live performance works compressed into fixed media format. This was most likely not the composer's intent, but it was an intriguing artifact nonetheless.

The grouping of the first three pieces of the concert also served to accentuate notions of "presence." Mark Applebaum's John Oswald-esque *Plundergraphic* performed/piloted by Guys w/ Big Cars tackled a vast and intricate onslaught of sounds that came across as both wonderfully chaotic as well as sonically relevant in a most peculiar way. The slightly alienating disconnect between the dry acoustic material—particularly the subtleness of the piano—and the diffusion work kept the piece on its toes, but in the end left something to be desired structurally. On a macro level, the work felt like something more complex than could be appreciated in a single listening.

The third piece that helped to culminate this strikingly distinct trio of opening works

was Eric Lyon's *Introduction and Allegro*. This work was both intriguing and confounding at the same time. The pervasiveness of an overtly ironic wit behind what could potentially be described as a type of neo-classical-post-modern circus betrayed any air of stuffiness. Yet the stark referential character of the sectionalized structure and tongue-in-cheek "beats" compared to traditional chamber ensemble practice as well as orchestral hat-tipping (was there a ghost of Respighi present?) did not allow for a clear understanding of the topics at hand. The pastiche quality of traditional instrumental techniques of tremolo and coloristic pairings against deliberately (?) alienating electronic elements such as the stiff vibrato or pointed tertiary harmonic progressions, dashed together with minimalism, Americana and impressionistic swaths of material was almost too much to digest. However, it was packaged so neatly and so openly that it was difficult not to be constantly engaged by the music. Certainly the work was enjoyable on the surface. More importantly, it raises a number of deeper aesthetic questions, but leaves the answers to the listener.

The final work of the first half, James Brody's *transport* for tape, felt distant in comparison to the previous works. This was in no way due to a lack of quality, but the sudden contrast of the performance space. Brody's work actually complimented some of the previously mentioned

trends in sectionalized structure and compartmentalized sound. The seemingly vertical windows of sound were coupled with spatialization that was visual, yet not as dynamic as one would have expected. However, this conflict or joining of ideas between transport and stasis rounded out the first half of the concert subtly.

The second half of the concert felt as though it was still recovering from the first. *I understand, sort of* for saxophone and tape by Brian Willkie gave a fitting impression of the title. The textural and ambient quality of the work, coupled with the distinctiveness of the very physical and recognizable sound of the anvil, explored an area of interaction that was minutely changing and slowly organic. Similarly, *Firmament* by Hyejung Yoon for bassoon and computer felt equally reserved and nuanced in a way that perhaps suffered a bit due to the performance space. Both works felt like they were reaching for small, intimate sonic spaces that invited a personal, introverted contemplation.

Consort for One by Kristina Wolfe, on the other hand, came across as refreshingly crisp, despite the technical complications. The choice to allow the natural beauty of the viola de Gamba to dominate the space, as well as the simple yet sinewy lines, spoke volumes in favor of a humanistic and thoroughly musical expression.

Javier Garavaglia's enigmatic *NINTH* for viola and tape was the endurance champion of the concert. The strength and determination of the long gestures and noise elements outside of the harmonic material allowed the performer to stretch out into a more rich and expressive realm.

The concert was concluded with J. Anthony Allen's frenetic and rhythmically driven *Saturations III-C*. This work, choreographed by Barbara Hayley, felt like a quiet riot of tenuously bound music that pulled the listener forward as much as the refreshingly clear beats pushed the boundary between dance music and art music.

Concert XVII: Saturday, 11 November 8:00pm, Dixon Hall
by James Harley

Concert seventeen—the last one. Phew! The audience had dwindled a bit, but those who were there were enthusiastic, either punch-drunk from over-stimulation, or rested from having already taken a break from the relentless six-day schedule. (Sightings of ICMC attendees lurking about Bourbon Street over in the French Quarter had been reported.) The evening's festivities began with a wild splurge of freebies tossed out into the clamoring crowd by conference organizer Tae Hong Park: cool software, t-shirts, and Radio

Batons autographed by Max Mathews (just kidding on that last one!).

The show got going with a dance piece, *Transparent Body*, featuring Rebecca Lazier along with composer Dan Trueman playing his e-violin through his custom-built hemispherical speakers. The choreography was very well done, and the music was fine, if somewhat unengaging, at least for me.

Howard Kenty's *Spider* followed. This electroacoustic piece was built on pulsations derived from physical modeling instruments, with various spatial and timbral trajectories spinning webs around us. It was also... short. Bravo!

Rodney Waschka, brave soul that he is, found a way to harness the dangerously manic energy of the Convolution Brothers (Cort Lippe, Zack Settel, Miller Puckette) by way of paying tribute to the equally dangerous Jerry Hunt. *Keeping the Core Pure: In Memory of Jerry Hunt* was good fun, and I suspect that Mr. Waschka succeeded so well in this performance because he is taller than the other guys.

Butch Rován's *Hopper Confessions: Room in Brooklyn*, for interactive cello and video, required a re-start, but was otherwise an interesting, complex work drawing inspiration from a poem by Anne Carson that refers, among other things, to a painting by Edward Hopper. The video

included bits of text and images taking off from the Hopper.

Manuel Rocha Iturbide's recorded work *Purusha-Prakrti*, produced in Bourges, makes use of a number of noisy sources, both natural and electronic. I particularly enjoyed the fine transitions across the rich, sustained textures.

Members of Cincinnati's NeXT Ens convened once again for Yu-Chung Tseng's *Reminiscence of Pipa* for flute, percussion, and recorded sounds. Inspired by a Tang Dynasty-era poem, this was dramatic music. The composer showed a definite flair for the flute and percussion instruments. I otherwise found the music pretty predictable.

Jacob Rundall's *This too shall pass...* is an electroacoustic work based on analyses of bell and cymbal sounds. The music didn't make much of an impression on me; I suppose it "passed" a bit too easily. It's all been done before, I suppose.

The concert concluded with an updated remix of Laurie Anderson's mega-hit from the early 1980s, *O Superman*. Joshua Clausen was joined by a couple of his (uncredited) colleagues from Minneapolis to perform live with their laptops. They got a nice groove going, and the video was cool, too. Imagine, tributes to Laurie and Jerry, all in one program!

ICMC 2007 Reviews
Aalborg University Esbjerg,
Copenhagen, Denmark

Monday, 27 August
17:00, PLEX Music Theatre

by Iowain Thomas

There could be no doubt that the concert was hot. An overflow crowd pressed forward, brandishing their hand-printed tickets at the bottom of the stairs leading to an elegant, steeply raked hall, where the temperature hovered around 30 degrees Celsius (hotter at the top). The less fortunate remained cooler in the cafe outside, speaking animatedly about (we may assume) the concert they were missing.

The overall form of the concert was (in pseudo-American parlance) a double-decker Chowning sandwich on harp bread. This programming choice was both practical (the harp parts were substantial, so consecutive performances would have been unkind at best) and refreshing.

The combination of harp and electronics, while by no means novel, is nevertheless unusual. This is a pity. The relative

consistency of the instrument's timbre is well complemented by the Protean world of disembodied sound, while the unusual constraints of the instrument itself can give direction to an electroacoustic composition in fascinating ways.

In some sense, Chowning's compositions on the program—particularly *Stria*—reflect a similar dichotomy between instrumental constraint and inventive freedom. After 30 years, *Stria* still astounds with its depth of exploration of a rigorously limited terrain. To elicit such musical range and force from a single compact harmonic/timbral structure and a single synthesis technique is no mean feat! Likewise, in *Voices*, Chowning relies on a simple event-driven score-following model and a well-chosen palette of timbres and techniques. He treats the voice with dignity in elegant, almost *bel canto* vocal lines that leave ample room for nuanced interpretation. The imaginative room he finds within these boundaries vastly exceeds that of most works that are more technologically profligate.

Either it was the digital reconstruction of the work by Olivier Baudouin and Kevin Dahan, or else it was the Princeton Sound Lab's 3-D rendering of its spectrograph, but this writer heard elements in *Stria* that he had never noticed before, despite years of engagement with the work. The creators of the spectrograph video may have been more entrenched in video game culture than