Concert 19
Friday, Aug 10, 8:00 p.m.
Daegu Concert Hall, Grand Hall
Reviewed by Wanjun Yang

Friday was the last day of the ICMC 2018 in Daegu Korea, and this concert, which could be called the final concert, was perfect for ending the conference.
The program list of the concert was long, including 10 different pieces composed for instrument and electronics, VR, acousmatic, fixed media and video.

The first piece of the concert was *Sonic Environment Daegu*, composed by Andreas Weixler and Se-Lien Chuang for ensemble and electronics, mixing eastern and western music and culture. The ensemble, which consisted of piano, harp, and three traditional Korean instruments, Daegeum (a transverse bamboo flute with seven large holes and a buzzing membrane), Geomungo (a fretted bass zither with six to eleven silk strings plucked with a bamboo stick and played with a weight made out of cloth) and Haegeum (a vertical fiddle with two strings), was combined with live painting and video creating a very appealing and distinct impression. The painter was situated on stage. A camera captured the big canvas which was used for painting as well as the movements of the painter, and the resulting images were sent to a computer and processed in order to control the electronics and the live video, which was projected on the screen. The interaction between video, live instruments and electronics was well-designed and constantly kept attraction. Only the sound that appeared when the painter used fork and painting spatula to scratch on the canvas was too sharp to appreciate.

Hibiki Mukai's *Drama queen/Euphoria/ Navel-gazing (2017)* was composed for harp and electronics. The composer combined prepared samples in the electronics, some of them excessively rhythmic, popular, and several played in loops with special sounds created by the harp player using glass and other objects to stop the vibration of the strings, which created very special sounds and timbre. Harp sounds picked up by microphone and processed in real-time completed the piece.

The third piece, Francesco Bossi's acousmatic and spatial music piece *In Memory of a Little Soldier*, was composed for an 8 channel system. The composer

recorded the sounds of trumpet, female singer, male singer, snare drum and percussion into buffers of a Max/MSP patch, and processed the sound samples based on an FFT analysis module, extracting the spectrum of the sounds and playing back the spectral frames at different speed and direction. The processed sounds were then assigned to variable channels. Altogether, the audience could experience a very special spatial audio piece, which, however, embraced a little too much reverb.

It followed Judith Shatin's *Gregor's Dream* for piano, violin, cello and electronics. The performance was carried by the skillful play of the musicians, who presented the well composed instrumental part on piano, violin and cello with emotion and precision. The electronics, for which the composer recorded many different sounds from nature and processed them by electronics, produced mostly background sounds. The electronic part completed and enhanced the wonderful instrumental part, appearing just like sounds in a dream. Even though it would have been more successful if instruments and electronics worked together more coherently and in balance, the audiences could follow the main idea of the composer well, and the

music matched to the title of the piece.

Listening to the image - 'Angelus arquitect nico de Millet', an audiovisual piece composed and performed by Minchang Han, was one of my favorite pieces of the concert. The Architectonic Angelus of Millet is a famous masterpiece of Salvador Dali. The composer's idea was to transform the image into musical data by the help of electronic music technology. The piece was composed for 6 MIDI channels, and followed the main goal of converting space-based art into time-based art. During the performance, the composer (who was also the performer) moved a mouse over a representation of *The Architectonic Angelus of Millet* in order to get the information on RGB data of each pixel, and assigned this to one of the 6 MIDI channels which were mapped to different parameters and triggered the music. In moving the mouse over the painting by following each line, the audiences could hear the process of painting: the performer explained the audiences how the painting was created. Undoubtedly, this music piece is an impressive work, but there is still some room for improvements. During the performance, the console of the software was visible on the screen. The audience

could see all parameters changing with the mouse movements done by the performer, which led to the impression that the performance remained in rehearsal status rather than presenting a complete performance. If the composer can change the way of picking pixel information, hiding cursor and console panel of the software, and show only the image of the painting on the screen, the audience could get a better immersive experience with painting and music. In addition, the use of more output channels could provide the composer with more options to map image information to music information, and the piece would sound and look better.

Visby, S:t Nicolai, a piece for voice and electronics, was very special. It started with a picture of a bright church ruin on the screen, and a very sweet and beautiful soprano voice. When the singer showed up on the stage, the audience found out that the singer was a male soprano singer, Paul Botelho, who was also the composer of the piece. The composition was focused on the sonic environment of medieval church ruins, which the composer had captured with first-order ambisonic field recordings in order to get the impulse responses. In the performance, the singer's voice was captured with a microphone, and then processed with the impulse responses in real-time. The sonic environment of the ruins was expressed through vocal performance and sound transformations. The composer also offered the audience to visit a website with their mobile phone during the performance, where they could explore the church ruins of Visby in a 3D model, and experience the sonic characteristics.

How should the breath of water sound like? Mara Helmuth and Esther Lamneck gave the answer. In *Breath of Water*, for clarinet and electronics, the composer captured the sound of the clarinet, analyzed the sound, and extracted the subharmonic parts, which then were processed and amplified, so that the tiny sounds were clearly audible. The clarinet player's gestures were captured with sensors on the hands. This data was used to control the parameters of the sound processing, which made the sounds more vivid. The first part of the piece was an allegro part: the clarinet produced fast notes, which sounded like a small stream running down the rocks; the second part was quiet: the audience could feel the stream flowing gently; the final part was rather exciting: the loud sounds made the

audience experience a waterfall.

The next piece was another one about water. Kim SunJin's *Big Bang in Water* was a 4 channel fixed media piece. The main motive was the sound of a drop of water. The composer captured the sound and processed it in diverse ways, using EQ, reverse, delay, echo, dynamic, reverb, pitch shift, etc. The tiny sounds of water drops were sent to the speakers in a well-designed logic, and created a very special sounding space. The dynamic range was quite wide; the sounds came out with power, and the audiences could sense the explosion – the big bang of a water bubble –, and get the main idea of the composer. This piece was one of my favorite fixed media pieces of the conference. Unluckily, this piece came after the *Breath of Water*. As both pieces were about water, in some moments, the materials of the two pieces seemed similar, and this piece sounded like an extension of the previous one.

The Geomungo (also spelled komungo or hyeongeum, literally "black zither") is a traditional Korean string instrument of the family of zither instruments with both, bridges and frets. In Keun-Hong Kim's *The Four Elements for Geomungo*, the composer expressed his understanding of the four elements of the universe with Geomungo and electronics. In the first section, the Geomungo was played in a non-traditional way: the player used bow and bow hair of Haegeum (a traditional Korean vertical fiddle with two strings) to trigger the strings of the Geomungo, clapped the body of Geomungo with her hands, and plucked the strings with a bamboo pick in order to generate different sound effects. The sounds were captured with a microphone, processed with a Max/MSP patch, and sent to the speakers. In the second section, the Geomungo was played in traditional way, and was presented with less computer processing. The audiences could hear the original sound of the traditional Geomungo. In section three, the player changed the playing technique again, using a bow to rub the strings, and rapping strings and body with a bamboo pick. The Geomungo generated a unique timbre. The sounds were also processed with effects, such as reverb, flanger, and delay. The combination of traditional Korean music and electronic techniques, the resulting diverse sounds, and the skillful player created a very nice piece. A better balance of acoustic and electronic parts would make the piece even more enjoyable.

The final piece of the night was Garling Wu's *Island Universes*, a very special live interactive electronic piece. The composer set up a three-dimensional space using VR devices on the stage; a female dancer with sensors on her arms was the performer. The movement of her body and the gestures of her hands triggered sound materials, noise and sound textures. The positions and movements of the sensors in the 3D space were captured and sent to a computer, which transformed the data into parameters of the music, controlling amplitude, pan, distortion, harmony, and effects. There were no special marks in the 3D space, and the audience didn't know what sounds would be triggered with the movement of the dancer. It was like navigation in the darkness, uncertainty was the most special design of the piece. Unfortunately, there was no interactive image on the screen. With a length of less than 10 minutes, the piece was too short to fulfill the expectation concerning the musical development and the implementation of VR technology.

In summary, the concluding night of ICMC 2018 was a full blast. The well-composed works were presented in great performances, and the different types of electronics music made the concert a great success. The long program took more than 2 hours, which was both, a great pleasure and challenge to the audiences. Unfortunately, there occurred some technical problems during the performance, which could have been avoided with more time for rehearsals and technical checks. Nevertheless, the night was still a successful finale of the conference, which provided a wonderful platform for a rich electronic music feast. I am looking very much forward to next year's conference and concerts.

Installation Reviews

Hunter Ewen: *LEDpaint*
Aug 6–10, 2018, Daegu Art Factory
Reviewed by Teresa Marie Connors

Hunter Ewen's *LEDpaint* (2016–17) is an engaging audiovisual installation of improvisational practices. The work contains 22 images on 18x22 inch brushed aluminum panels, sonic material and light sensors. Shot in the dark with LED lights and audio microphones, each panel consists of various exposures to different bodies in motion: "musicians, performance artists, dancers and movements artists." Ewen suggests the panels represents a short improvisational