

## ICMC 2003 Concert Reviews

### 30th September Tuesday Evening Diana Soh

The opening concert to ICMC 2003 was no disappointment. Presenting works by Naotoshi Osaka, Diane Thome, Anne LeBaron, Matthew Adkins and Heinrich Taube, that night showcased a variety of high quality music that prefigures the other concerts to come.

The concert opened with *Chiekagami* by Naotoshi Osaka. It is a composition for Hichirikiki and Live Electronics. The Hichirikiki is a Japanese double reed woodwind instrument sounding rather similar to a 'higher pitched' oboe. The appearance of performance in a traditional Japanese costume added to the virtual impact of the piece. Otherwise, the piece remains an obscure interest without understanding. At least it is so for a layman like me whose interest is only kept alive by the unique sound of the instrument and the awaiting of the next interesting element that was to be presented.

*Estuaries of Enchantment* by Diane Thome seemed to appeal to me more with the

images of the river and sea and water in general being evoked. A composition for oboe and tape, the sounds from the oboe and the electronic part were integrated nicely, truly enchanting listeners with the at times dramatic outburst and the move towards a resolution of that.

Following that, *Inner Voice* by Anne LeBaron was a virtuosic success for the double bass and live electronics. The eye-popping 'stunts' that the double bass player pulled complemented by the live electronics were successful in simulating the compositional intent and forming the 4 primary sources of the sound environment of the piece. This piece is well received judging from the volume of the applause from the audience.

The penultimate work was by Matthew Adkins. *Symbiont* is a work that plays with the notion of balancing opposites. By defusing the sounds into 8 channels, the work provided much appreciated stimulation for the audience. The effect of which was amazement.

*Aeolian Harp* by Heinrich Taube concluded the opening night nicely with the composition for piano and live electronics. Performed by Albert Tiu, assistant professor of the piano department at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, the sounds from the tape and that from the piano fused really well and the overall

effect presented felt rather rhapsodic. The idea of transformation is clearly evident in the music. It dawns upon me that there is a huge difference listening to a piece of electronic music on a recording and listening to it live. The impact of the live performance was much more intense and it was almost as though the recording of the piece and the live performance were of two different sound environments. However, I delight in the fact that had I not tested the tapes (to make sure they played in our equipment) I wouldn't experience the difference firsthand.

### 1st October Wednesday Afternoon Bonnie Miksch

Ian Whalley's *Kasumi*, an evocative tape work which uses environmental sounds and recordings of traditional Māori instruments from New Zealand, invites the listener into a world of quietude and lingering moments of beauty. Simple unprocessed sounds, such as the opening flute, reflect the austerity of the Japanese poem on which this piece is based. As the work unfolds, some sounds are treated with processing techniques, but the transparent nature of the sonic materials is never compromised. Throughout the piece, the composer reveals a meticulous attention to temporal articulation and clarity of events. Overall, this stunning work was fresh and enticing to hear, but increased attention to spatialization would have helped to further refine the intricacies of this lovely world.

*Retake* for flute and live computer by Andrew May and Elizabeth McNutt puts a performer-oriented spin on the process of composition. One of the few improvisational works on the festival, *Retake* uses an intricate web of response-based improvisation. The improvisations are manifested through three distinct relationships: between flute and pre-recorded/transformed flute, between computer and flute, and between computer and pre-recorded/transformed flute. McNutt, who improvises the live flute part and controls the onset of sections of pre-recorded/transformed flute, traverses this alternative performance environment with the grace of a seasoned traveler, instigating and building upon diverse textures and gestures with a willingness to engage her virtual colleagues. The live computer part, programmed by May, adds synthesized tones and drum parts to complement the flute sounds, and these virtual instruments respond to McNutt's performance. Strikingly absent from this piece is the traditional relationship between composer and performer we have come to expect from concert music. Instead, May and McNutt obliterate the stifling roles of performer and composer; even the computer has a chance to express herself in real time.

*Noemata*, a video piece by Shigenobu Nakamura and Robert Darroll, shows the chaos of modern Japanese society.

Throughout the work, dichotomies between the organic world and the technological world are explored. Scenes of water, plants, clouds, and sunspots were contrasted with scientific imagery and digital graphs. According to the composer, the music was created “to amplify characteristics and features of the image,” and this goal is accomplished through rather literal correspondences, such as a direct correlation between visual density and sonic amplitude. The binary nature of the video is mirrored in the music, with the contrast of organic sounds such as breathing with synthetic blurps. Overall, the piece presented an overload of information in a brief timeframe, accomplishing the goal of expressing chaos.

Hideko Kawamoto’s *After the Summer Rain* for piano and tape seemed to occupy two simultaneous worlds. The tape part is texturally and gesturally rich, evoking natural sounds without using them literally. The piano part, on the other hand, adheres to a strict pitch sensibility, and its note-oriented nature keeps it quite separate from the tape. According to the composer’s own notes, the two parts serve unique referential functions, so this disparity is not surprising. Rather, it presents a challenge for the performer to use interpretation to help connect these conflicting musical words. Having heard a more inspired performance at the Bonk Festival of New

Music, I am inclined to believe that the fragility of this work did not stand up to this particular performance. That being said, there was much to admire in the composition of this work, particularly in regards to the superbly crafted tape part.

I suggest that *Pre-Composition* by Mark Applebaum be required listening for anyone in the academic computer music community. Applebaum performs a schizo-analysis upon a hypothetical composer, dividing their psyche into eight independent voices; the crafty Applebaum uses his own voice to realize each of these mental agents, and they are assigned to a unique loudspeaker in performance. The piece is a dialogue of these eight independent personality fragments which act through negotiation to construct a new piece of computer music. Though a hilarious vocal simulation of computer music, *Pre-Composition* deftly parodies a compositional process which simply chooses “to select a desired message out of a set of possible messages”. Clever and engaging, the piece is an important antidote to the monolithic calcification of academic computer music aesthetics.\*

The “electrocution aesthetic” of Gerard Eckert’s *Klangräume* for piccolo and tape was powerful indeed. The textures in the tape part were deliciously fat, and the agitated and granulated piccolo, punctuated with high register squeals, propelled the work

forward in a mad flurry of hyper-activity. The piccolo part, hovering on the edge of impossibility, lent a marvelous frenzy to this work. This precarious balance was maintained through the herculean efforts of flautist Beatrix Wagner, a virtuoso of monumental proportions. Although a mere six minutes in length, *Klangräume* packed a whallop!

Konstantinos Karathansis’ *Allegoriae Sonates* used recorded piano sounds excited with a small copper bar to create an extensive palette of sonic material treated as discrete sound objects. Throughout the work, the composer’s technical chops were revealed in the skillful application of processing techniques. While some gestures in this work mimic too closely the hand-me-down effects of the acousmatic variety, the composer explored an exceptionally wide range of frequency, amplitude, textural density, timbre, and temporal density. This maximalist approach could have benefited from an increased use of spatialization. Occasional loud bludgeoning sounds were difficult to stomach at the performance level chosen, but this could no doubt be corrected.

Jon Christopher Nelson’s *L’horloge Imaginaire*, an 8-channel fantasy based on a wide range of clock sounds, maintained remarkable equilibrium between precisely pitched and percussive sounds and between referential and abstract sounds.

Throughout the work, the composer demonstrated a skillful use of space in the placement of easily localizable sounds and a marvelous attention to contrasting textures. Several intense crescendos provided moments of invigoration, yet the all too familiar “thwack” which followed each one confined the work to a more derivative aesthetic.

Per-Anders Nilsson and Jim Berggen’s stark video work *Memento Mori* led the audience through a trance-like trek which slowly unearthed the mysteries of mortality. Images of time suspended were mirrored in the accompanying sound, and the composer used processed metal sounds and filtered noise to create an eerie backdrop. The video literally portrays a lingering walk through several animation sculptures, many of which reveal an anthropomorphic embodiment. Although static in nature, the video cleverly shows the passage of time with changes in lighting. A brilliant collaboration, *Memento Mori* distinguishes itself through its novel use of temporal and virtual spaces, sinister sounds and silences, virtual apparitions and omens.

\* comments on Mark Applebaum’s work written by Christopher Penrose

1st October Wednesday Evening  
Christopher Penrose

Paul Rudy  
*Fantasie*

Taken in entirety, Paul Rudy's work, *Fantasie*, for gaohu and computer music accompaniment was an odd juxtaposition of musics. Much of the piece was subtle and beautiful; the idiomatic writing for the Chinese gaohu was accompanied by rich sustained tones whose pitch trajectory evolved ever so slowly. Teo Kar Li, the remarkable gaohu performer, unleashed an excellent performance -- yet the cadenza in the work was less interesting than the surrounding music which emphasizes the strong synergistic effectiveness of the piece. Also notable: the piece was thankfully free of the many bombastic and hackneyed gestures common to computer music of the academy.

But toward the end of the work, I encountered a cataclysm of astonishment. The elegance of the piece was rapidly erased by a strange bluegrass music. I am not at all prejudiced against the folk music of Appalachia, but this hoedown ending was downright corny and reeked of forced simulation -- it was as if Teo had a Tomahawk cruise missile aimed at her head and was emphatically forced to "play like an American!" The music sent a strange and

unequivocal message that I don't think Paul intended: "American imperialism is victorious!"

Antonio Ferreira  
*Gist*

*Gist* was a competent piece, well assembled from a technical perspective, but I had a strong sense of déjà vu as the piece unfolded. Antonio Ferreira's studio work, unfortunately, was a de rigeur parade of cliché timbres and gestures that are all too common in computer music of the academy. For the most part, the music served to perpetuate an established aesthetic without making a significantly unique and individual artistic statement. The acousmatic **thwack!** (an ominous crescendo followed by a sudden percussive attack), was employed several times during the piece. It is amusing that a piece like Mark Applebaum's *Pre-Composition*, which was programmed earlier at the conference, openly parodies this particular gesture, and this work, "Gist", utilizes it openly in dogged earnest. The contrast of intentions is profound and interesting in of itself. While a composer may employ any musical forms of their desire, a composer may want to consider how the interpretation of established gestures may vary and evolve as their bombast and ubiquity drives others to parody them.

I did find some interest in the initial stages of the piece. Contrasting filtered noise tex-

tures would fuse gradually through use of global resonance, or change suddenly to a different configuration. But many of the textures were constructed from white distributions of pitch and time -- the lack of specificity was tiring to the ear and I readily recognized the sounds as being unerringly similar to sounds found in countless other works. I longed to experience a music that at least sounded as if it was crafted, rather than experiencing sound which seemed to be built from the most commonly used GRM Tools presets.

Ryan H. Torchia  
"... and then eventually, 10<sup>-43</sup> second later ..."

This work had a simple, singular form which served as an effective vehicle of timbral exploration. The dramatic volume of the introduction gently ebbed and subsided level establishing a rich beating drone. The texture ebbed with dynamic peaks and sudden shifts of harmony. At times the work was articulated with clear high frequency resonances and others, the harmonicity was more vague. The smooth, ominous continuity established in the work reminded me somewhat of Johannes Goebel's *Vom Übersetzen Über Den Fluss*. An interesting yet somewhat singular exploration of timbre and continuity, I felt that the piece was a very good duration for its musical ideas.

Evidence  
(Scott Smallwood & Stephan Moore)  
**"Chain Of..."**

It was refreshing to experience a collaborative laptop piece on this concert. There are two ways of describing the opening of this work: the banal and unimaginative reviewer would suggest that they were reminded of autos passing on a highway, and the new age liberal reviewer would perhaps hear the cries of gray whales asking gently for a new water reclamation system. The multiplicity of interpretations that I heard alone indicated that the opening of their performance was effectively evocative.

As the piece evolved the performers would obscure their textures with the sonic equivalent of venetian blinds. Continuous, masking sounds would ebb and shift -- they changed the frame of reference for the surrounding rich, vaguely acoustic texture. Also there were airplanes, which gently revealed themselves, though they had served as processed source sound for quite some time in the performance. Their revelation was a bit of a disappointment, as it unveiled the mysteriousness of their performance. The piece took a robotic turn with the entry of a particularly metronomic pulse. While the performers are obviously nodding to dance music, I felt that they could learn a thing or three from the intricate dance music of the late 1990's. I felt that the pulse served more to

make a dated subcultural association than it added to the musical context. Overall I enjoyed the dense and free sonic explorations of their performance.

Eiji Murata

### ***Cross Projection***

A work for flutist and computer performer, *Cross Projection* was well performed by both musicians - human and software. Unlike other pieces on the program, this work sported a significant number of silences. A computer happily accompanied the measured flute performance; she, the computer, dutifully tracked the flute utterances and she never seemed to make sound while the performer rested. For much of the piece, the harmonizations and counterpoint provided by the computer were quite rich and dynamic. They even provided convincing and rich timbral evolutions. Yet despite the dramatic golden mean contour of the piece, which provided an evolving large-scale change, the consistent relationship of the computer accompaniment to the flute was somewhat static; it could have been less strict in its nature.

David Kim-Boyle

### ***Chorale***

This work uses a studio recording to resonate the strings and soundboard of a handy piano. The recording is played by loudspeakers positioned inside the piano and a

microphone is used to project the resulting sound to the audience. The resulting work is a beautiful, smooth texture ebbing with rich beating. The piece was quite singular and encapsulated in form, yet the timbral evolution of the piece was subtle and compelling. Though brief, I found it quite difficult not to fall into a relaxing alpha state as the piece unfolded.

It is impossible for me not to mention David Behrman's *Wavebrain* here. While I found *Chorale* to be very beautiful, I can't help but think that a work like *Chorale* would be even more rich, dynamic and interesting if he had chosen a live electronics approach for his work that employed feedback between the output of the resonance system and its inputs.

### **2nd October Thursday Afternoon**

*Johanna Devaney*

Thursday October 2nd's afternoon concert showcased five works inspired by a variety of music traditions. These works linked with each other in a variety of ways -- the most obvious link being the use of traditional materials; either writing that inspired the development of the piece's musical material or the use of traditional instruments either as sample sources or live in performance.

The concert opened with *The Empty Palace* by Pär Johansson, a tape piece built on a

timbrally disparate collection of samples. Effective use of spatialization and a seemingly "organic" development of the material served to balance the sample material. This "organic" development worked well through the opening and mid-sections of the piece, where it provided internal and relational senses of cohesiveness. The sense of development halted in the final section leaving the impression that this material was appended, rather than being an integral part of the whole.

The second piece on the program stood in marked contrast to the first; *Traditionally Electronic* by Shahrokh Yadegari combined traditional Persian vocals, violin, and kamancheh, with computer processing. The stated aim of the composer was for the performers not to stray too far from the performance practices of traditional Persian music and that the computer merely serve to complement the performance. The performance was very good; the performers achieved a wonderful sense of a swelling development through the piece while the computer supplemented this with layering and a extensive amount of reverb. However, one was left wondering if the possibilities of integrating the capabilities of computer processing into the traditional performance practice were fully considered and explored. The piece's strength truly rested with the performers and the computer was very much relegated to the role of an interesting supplement.

The third work, a the tape piece by Yasuhiro Takenaka entitled *Kagula* was build on samples of a traditional flute (kagula), birds, and a set drum loops. The opening section of the piece introduced the samples and explored their timbral interaction before moving into an intense electronic mid-section. The intensity faded to a glissy synthesized section before returning to the drum and flute patterns of the opening supplemented with vocal samples. The composer's aim of two contrasting "poles" was clearly audible and the piece achieved a well-developed climax, however the fall off from this climax was a little abrupt leaving the listener a little unfulfilled.

The tape piece *Changing Weights* by Ron Herrema opened with synthesized tones and string samples juxtaposed in rapid rhythmic patterns. While initially engaging, the lack of development throughout the opening section left one waiting for "something" to happen. Eventually a third element was added, but while this synthesized piano sound did present new musical material it did not add anything timbrally to the mix. The bell-like sound added later did provide some interesting timbral variation but overall the piece felt rather static.

The final piece on the program was Paul Hogan's *Drum and Grain* for percussion trio and tape. The rhythmic material in the piece was inspired by drum 'n bass break-beat style rhythms and the tape

component, as the title suggests, made use of various granular synthesis techniques. Like Traditionally Electronic the performers were the focal point of the piece, though here the electronic (tape) component assumes a more central role in the development of the musical material. The performance, while commendable in a number of respects, did not provide the accuracy that the complex rhythms of the piece required to achieve the correct balance in the trio. In general the conductor kept the ensemble together but at times the performance was not entirely 'tight'. Due to technical constraints gamelans were substituted for the toy pianos stipulated in the score in the final section of the piece. While not achieving the "playful" element intended by the piano pianos, the gamelans did, in the context of this particular concert, provide a link with the traditional instruments used in some of the other pieces on the program.

**2nd October Thursday Evening**  
**David Kim-Boyle and Ryan H.**  
**Torchia**

The "Italian Night" concert was one of the more highly anticipated events of the 2003 ICMC, and did not disappoint. The evening began with an introduction and a brief address by the Italian Ambassador to Singapore, H.E. Guido Scalici. In his speech, the Ambassador called the screening and soundtrack performance of *Das*

*Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* "A Truly European Project" noting that the German film had been restored in Bologna.

Prior to the screening of the film, the audience was treated to two other videos: Dennis Miller's *Vis-à-vis* and Kristine Burns' *Liquid Gold*.

*Vis-à-vis* combined synthetic sound and images into flowing, beautifully rich liquid forms. The work was organized into three distinct sections of approximately equal length; each section introduced its own unique elements while developing material that preceded it. Throughout the video, the striking, abstract metallic images and scraping, vaguely mechanical sonic material complemented each other perfectly. By deftly balancing the importance of sound and image in this work, Miller was able to create a true multimedia experience which functioned beautifully as an artistic whole.

Unfortunately, technical problems caused the screening of Kristine Burns' *Liquid Gold* to be postponed to the following night.

The feature attraction of the evening, and one of the true musical highlights of the conference, was the world premier performance by the Italian ensemble Edison Studio of their soundtrack to the German horror film *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*. The film, made in 1920, was directed by Robert Wiene and had been brilliantly restored.

Visually stunning and with powerful Expressionist imagery, the music composed and performed by Luigi Ceccarelli, Fabio Cifariello Ciardi, Alessandro Cipriani, and Mauro Cardi provided a compelling accompaniment to this silent classic.

Inspired by the unsolved murder of a girl during a carnival, director Wiene hired Expressionistic designers Hermann Warm, Walter Roehrig, and Walter Reimann, all affiliated to the magazine *Sturm*, to design the innovative painted sets that included distorted perspectives, twisted shapes and sharp angles with the purpose of trying to expand the cinema beyond its obsession with simply mimicking reality. The finished film, originally released with an elaborate green, brown and cold blue tints, thrust German cinema to world prominence and had a tremendous influence on cinematic art worldwide.

Providing a soundtrack for such an important piece of cinematic history must have been a daunting challenge, but Edison Studio met and exceeded expectations. Using symbolic sonic backgrounds and foregrounds, and dialogs in "improbable" languages, the soundtrack was a richly layered and aggressively beautiful piece of work, often as angular and unsettling as the film's visuals. At times, the performance blurred the lines between music and foley, and was often a dramatic melding of textures and timbres familiar to computer

music composers and the more theatrical musical drama one would expect in a suspense movie soundtrack. All in all, the performance was a respectful yet arresting, loving homage to what in less capable hands could easily have descended into parody.

**3rd October Friday Afternoon**  
**Andrew May**

Like many of the events in ICMC 2003, the afternoon concert on Friday 3 October presented a wide variety of delightful and imaginative sound worlds. Sadly, nearly half of the composers involved in this concert were not there to experience the fascinating context in which the concert's organizers placed their works.

The concert opened with Jøran Rudi's *Babel Study* for tape in 5.1-surround sound, an odd and sometimes grating work that lives up to the composer's description of "an exploration of noise – broadband, unpitched, and non-referential." Rudi showed a wide-ranging sonic imagination in this work: outbursts of grainy broadband noise were transformed into metallic rattles, and later glassy percussive hits and clusters; a gradual sweep from a high whine to a low roar, punctuated with almost vocal filtered timbres, gave way to clouds of granular sonic dust and the rushing of wind-like noise bands. The composer compounded the challenge of the refractory sound materials

by giving many of the sounds (particularly in the opening section of the piece) simple on/off envelopes. While many sections were reproduced at an uncomfortable dynamic level, and a good deal of the sound world of the piece is resolutely abrasive, on a formal level the piece presents a plausible language of noises.

Joao Pedro Oliveira was represented by *Mahakala Sadhana* for tape. This elegant soundscape, described by the composer as “a western perspective about some musical traditions of the eastern countries,” focused primarily on sounds hearkening to vocal and metallic percussion archetypes. The reverberant cymbal-like sounds of the opening morphed into low vocal timbres, followed by gong-like outbursts and glides, chimes and bowed metal sounds, and other elegant and imaginative sonic textures. Oliveira showed subtlety in balancing shifting timbre groups, mediating between clusters and areas of harmonic clarity, and creating a seamless flow through a beautiful palette of timbres. On the larger scale, the work seemed to lack shape, in part owing to a relatively flat overall dynamic and timbral density. The deliciousness of the sounds sufficed to maintain interest in any case.

*Relief Okett* for 8-channel tape by Sun-Young Pahg was constructed from environmental sounds recorded in Korea. The admirable spaciousness of this work, both

in time and timbre, seems to grow naturally from these varied sources. Starting softly with sounds of air, metal clanging, and buzzing resonances layered with distant tones in the background, the sound moved quickly into an array of distant voices, followed by a distant and somewhat menacing low percussive sound that gradually closed in, crescendoing to the slamming of a door. A long pause ushers in another crescendo of rushing air, crossfaded with the rhythmic sounds of metal scissors. Later in the work, loud explosive, gong-like, and rumbling sounds are balanced against spatialized sounds of spinning objects and small metallic percussive sounds. The composer invokes her experience of Korean landscape painting as a metaphor for the construction of this piece: “if one’s focus slightly moves, another point may become foreground and the previous foreground recedes.” This metaphor for musical form is reminiscent of ideas of Charles Ives, as is Pahg’s use of strongly iconic materials layered in varying degrees of density and contrast.

The intermission of the concert was enlivened by an installation by Margaret Schedel, *Corporealization of Microphone*, with percussionist Ngoh Keng Seng in the center of a multi-microphone cage whose various outputs were recycled in various delayed combinations by a Max/MSP patch. The output of the patch was diffused through speakers at the corners of the cage, firing

outward—which successfully prevented feedback, but must have created an odd sonic environment for the performer! Claves, bamboo chimes, a snakeskin frame drum with rattles, a rain stick, cymbals, darabukka, and other instruments were played according to a graphic score in various locations within the cage. Despite some dropouts, occasional distortion, clicks and other artifacts of the technical apparatus, the work was effective and well suited to the open space of the concert hall’s foyer. The composer’s intention to “create multi-dimensional, recursively folding sound cascades” was generally realized in the performance, though somewhat greater density and interpenetration of sounds would have been needed to realize the goal of an “aural equivalent of M.C. Escher lithographs.” The installation presented an intriguing sonic/spatial conundrum for conference participants throughout the weekend.

Christopher Morgan’s *Brittle* for 8-channel tape lived up to its name with a panoply of thumps, jingles, scrapes, and other knocking, bouncing, rattling, rolling, and wobbling sounds made with “recordings of everyday household sounds.” These whirled around the audience, dividing, refracting, and interpenetrating one another in lovely combinations and clouds of sound. Another concertgoer suggested that the diffusion should have been louder to allow us to hear the definition of the sounds

better, but the sounds were nevertheless quite clear and distinct in spite of the wild turmoil of their commingled textures. The abundant generosity of sonic materials made for an enjoyable ride, even though the piece didn’t really establish a coherent language of timbres and textures.

Bob Sturm diffused his *Pacific Pulse* for 8-channel tape in concert. Based on the composer’s work in “ocean buoy spectral sonification,” which he describes as “parametrical representation of data using sound,” this work included four distinct sections. The first focused on continuous timbres, pitched and ringing, grouped in a few well-defined outbursts and then growing to a continuous pulsing, roaring, rushing onslaught of sounds. The second section focused on tingly, metallic high partial sounds, continuous but wavering. The third created a seamless texture of undulating timbres and intensities out of what sounded like bursts of filtered noise. The fourth section focused on non-harmonic timbres, glissandos and filter sweeps, punctuated by low bass rumbles. It is unclear to what extent the composer mediated the data taken from observations of the California coastline and its various movements, and to what extent he simply transformed them into sound through strict algorithms. The results, at any rate, are interesting representations of one of the great forces of nature through a varied and often beautiful sonic landscape.

Cort Lippe's *Music for Cello and Computer* was the only interactive work on this program. Cellist Chan Wei Shing presented this unusual and beautiful work with meditative focus and intensity, relying on an elegant tone and refined technique (in keeping with the overall level of live performances at this ICMC, which was exceptionally high). The form of this work was unambiguous: a gradual crescendo from a spacious and thoughtful opening of isolated gestures to a frenzied peak of activity, followed by another more varied buildup and decay of musical activity. The cello's role was almost self-denying: short gestures and outbursts including pizzicatos, *sul ponticello* passages on open strings, brief chromatic gestures, chromatic clusters across strings, and glissando gestures take the place of the soaring melodic lines cellists are usually given. The computer matched the cello's asceticism, beginning with quiet chirps and flutters and only gradually building in density and amplitude with increasingly disturbed churning, sizzling, and exploding timbres. Lippe nevertheless used a full range of technical opportunities in a virtuoso computer part that he described as using "granular sampling, cross-synthesis, and FFT analysis/resynthesis using an oscillator bank, as well as more standard signal processing such as harmonizing, frequency shifting, phasing, reverberation, spatialization, etc." This varied technical apparatus thankfully did not claim the foreground: instead, the shifting chamber

music relationship between cello and computer made for a fascinating conversation that shaded and reinforced the sonic tapestry of the work.

**4th October Saturday Afternoon**  
*Andrés Lewin-Richter*

We regret that on this ICMC meeting many composers did not attend, which could always enhance the performance and give more emphasis on certain aspects of the pieces. The concert started with Eric Chasalow's *Due (Cinta) mani* performed by pianist Albert Lin (due mani = two hands), deriving its title from the "cintamani" pattern, three flaming pearls over sea waves occurring in many oriental textiles, a clever piece with good tape interaction, it almost sounded as a live computer interaction, it reminded a Boulezian type of piece, which keeps the public a bit distant, but overall an interesting piece. *Umidi Soni Colores* by Kotoka Suzuki is a video piece showing geometrical figures in the background with developing images supporting the action of Anna Widmer as dancer, the music is very appropriate for the image but has very little relationship with the image development. David Berezan *Baoding*, based on the baoding balls, is a noise study in three parts bearing very little relationship with the Chinese world and the supposed motif of the title, in spite of the literature of the program text by the author. *Hang Time 2 on Jones Street* by Reynold Weidenaar for

video and live performer, Geard Errante, clarinet, showed no relationship image with music, it shows the degradation of a street in NYC, it was thought by the artist as a soundscape, it could have been an installation, the reality sounded as an improvisation, cleverly played by the clarinetist. *Chant des Femmes* by Howard Sandroff, played by Alexander Viazovtsev on several flutes is based on a tape material developed from flutes, the piece resulted little musically attractive and too long, Video-artist Samantha Krukowski *Salt and Glue* with music by Daniel Nass was a rather nervous film and the music did not help to correct the situation. Bonnie Miksch performed her piece *Solstice*, using her voice and a digeridoo, the tape material was well elaborated, instead the performance was more an improvisation at a delay from the tape material. Surprisingly fresh, rather oldish in style, sounded the six very short noise studies under the title *Wushien* by Yu-Chung Tseng, very well managed by the composer at the mixing table. *Arioso/ Doubles* by Benjamin Broening for clarinet (Gerard Errante) was a very musical piece using excellent interaction between the player and the recorded material.

**4th October Saturday Evening**  
*John P. Young*

The final concert of ICMC 2003 showcased an unusually diverse and consistently engaging array of works,

focusing my attention despite the fact I was enraptured by the free self-illuminated pen provided by the conference organizers with which this text was written. The evening began with a crash and a whisper. But that was the sound of my head hitting the seat in front of me in a powerful foreshadowing of jet-lag to come, and subsequently the person sitting there admonishing me not to fall asleep--the concert hadn't even started yet. Perhaps I just succumbed to the warm embrace of the beautifully appointed venue, and five nights spent trying to keep up with my computer music elders, who always seem to possess the furious energy of the damned at these events (not to mention an astonishing tolerance for spirits). All this to give you a hint of my state of mind as I gave over all senses to the luminous spectacle appearing before me.

At first I thought perhaps the Muse herself had graced us with her incarnation, but blinking my eyes in wonder I soon recognized Maja Cerar gliding onto the stage, violin in hand as if she had been born the prodigal sister of John Henry. Bathed in otherworldly chromatic shades, she began Doug Geers' *Enkidu* with virtuosic trills, eliciting a shimmering metallic wash in response. Acoustic tone entering the machine in circular scales, clean then distorted. Melodic fragments. Electronics extending and elaborating the violin figures, evolving into heavy power chords distorting with echoed return of

spiral scales and trills, thematic significance unclear. Though the piece is inspired by the myth of Gilgamesh, exploring the psychological trajectory of Enkidu in his struggle with the will of the gods, a single hearing was not enough for me to sense any specific evocations thereof. Cerar's playing is consistently a joy to behold, but her location relatively far back on the stage denied us the full force of her presence. The violin part itself felt somewhat confined, and didn't tug me from my seat in the way that much of Geers' past work has. Perhaps these qualities were purposeful, part of the intended elucidation of character, but my high expectations were left somewhat unfulfilled. Pizzicati reflecting, rebounding, naive tune yielding to aggressive multi-stops, collapsing into a haltingly tentative melody over restless, foreboding bass.

As I pondered the similarities between *Enkidu* and Colin Powell, the hall suddenly plunged into darkness. Ah, my eyes had closed. Lost without the comforting glow of my magical pen, I opened them again, thus confusing my ears with superfluous data during the next tape piece, *Night Pulses* by Apostolos Loufopoulos. Rhythmic static, high sine drone, gong resonance scurrying. Electric jungle, rising harmonic overwhelmed by chirping patterns. Diminuendo to a single voice, static returns, more chaotic now, breaking in successive waves. Crickets. Background still beating harmonically, frequencies diverging into

deep resonance. Multiple layers distill to paired voices, one sustained, one pulsing. It was as if the Singapore of hundreds of years ago superimposed itself upon the present, an aural apparition of tropical organisms nibbling at the speaker wires. Please remember, I was heading towards twelve hours of electroacoustic music in the space of four days, like the Eco-Challenge without rescue helicopters--though most of us at least seemed to be keeping up with personal hygiene. I enjoyed the piece, if you need me to spell it out. Subtext, dear reader, subtext. Loufopoulos created a coherent soundworld and took us on an inventive journey amongst its denizens. Technically impeccable. Now if only my enchanted pen were filled with DEET.

Soprano Khor Ai Ming emerged in a long white flowing dress, a graceful apparition performing *Spiritus* by Paul Wilson. Synthetic and organic vocals begin in unison, then counterpoint with vast reverberation, smearing harmonics. Stuttering shh... ahh... glissando sweep to strained heights. Electronics veer away into modulating tones, ricochet consonants, growing pulse. Vowels, consonants blending. Zipper convergence. Reset. This piece was inspired by a photograph of a ghostly entity allegedly taken at England's Raynham Hall in 1936. More than two centuries previous, Dorothy Walpole, the Prime Minister's sister, died there of smallpox, after long imprisonment by her

husband for adultery. We can only hope she spent the intervening years kicking her abusive spouse's spectral ass. Noisy breathing. Gasps. Words? Vocables? Feeling I should understand the elusive speech. Emotional intimation inevitable, still incoherent. Intensified interplay, gestural counterpoint, building in volume and density, ringing bells, vocalist declaiming nonsense, singing in tongues, peaking then slow dissolve into silence. Performed a little over the edge, and rightly so, skillfully embodying the fervid temper of the disembodied. A striking and unsettling piece. Now if we only had the budget for those spooky Pirates of the Caribbean special effects. I'll put in a request for next year. Come on, we should be able to do that with Jitter on a G5, no problem.

What can I contribute about Russell Pinkston's *Gerrymander*, and the noble clarinetist Gerard Errante for whom the piece is named? I won't mention the technical difficulties suffered by these two veterans, nor Gerry's astounding tap solo and raucous impersonations of famous computer musicians (catch him at the Improv next week) in the meantime. Reboot and roll, as they say. Boom and rumble. Shake and sizzle. Seemingly incomplete clarinet gestures flowing into the next. Merging, dispersing into electronics which construct harmonies, coalesce into sustained backdrop. Boom. Insistent restlessness, handing off melody

to virtual percussion and back again. Building in strata towards shrillness, voices multiplying. Agitated percussion, melodies recap in settled diminuendo. Pinkston and Errante both seem to know how to dance that fine line between substance and spectacle, giving us something we can enjoy on many levels and not feel guilty about afterwards. I mean, how often does the word 'rollicking' occur to you at an ICMC concert? Not often enough, unless you happen to be sitting next to Cort Lippe. Bring it on, boys, can't wait for "G-mander Part Deux".

I have to admit, my favorite moment from the whole conference was seeing ICMA President and all-around role model Mary Simoni sit down to play one of the two pianos in *SlipstreamscapesLullaby* by Ivica Bukvic. It was a flash of instant nostalgia, like the breathlessness felt in childhood, a second before Mom opened her heart to croon a lilting embrace, transforming the whole world to peace and abiding tranquility. As Mary began to play, this remembered premonition was made manifest. A delicate third in the upper register slowly expanding, then detuning, reverberating, and returning to acoustic purity. Innocent rhythmic arpeggios, simultaneously static and dynamic. Then Ivica, on the other piano, enters with underpinning block chords. Electronics amplify and spiral detuned figures. Lush, gorgeous sonorities emerge, but are soon



submerged in random virtual pianolas. Wacky FM sweeps strafe through the soundfield. Half vinyl scratch, half surprised alien. Effects fade out, acoustic arps remain and dwindle away. Mom apparently forgot her medication and got a little out of control in the middle there, but all's well that ends well. Frankly, I'd pay money for an unplugged version, but as we're all supposed to be pushing the technological envelope, boldly going where no audience has gone before, blah blah blah, I suppose we can only mix our physical instruments on the virtual rocks. Too bad, because sometimes the acoustic parts are so eloquent that dilution is a travesty.

At intermission, I bounded out into the lobby, hoping for some play time with Margaret Schedel's installation *Corporealization Of Microphone*. Alas, it had mysteriously disappeared, perhaps to another dimension, leaving an inexplicable void where just the day before there had been 256 cubic feet of electroacoustic fun. CQ. CQ. This is W-9 GFO here. Come back.

Two tape pieces in a row after the break. Uh oh. Be strong, you can do this. Rikhardur Fridriksson gave us *Lidan II*, a new and improved version of 'an Icelandic word for the state of one's health.' Swirling extraterrestrial voices, annoyed. Static, anguished cries. Coughs. Lots of coughs.

Deconstructed. Ack. Spatialized and stretched. Pretty damn funny. Big delays, fusing into harmonic mass, perforated by hacking, yelling, and groaning, echo into subterranean chugging. Not exactly an encouraging advertisement for the Icelandic lifestyle. A vast untapped market for Robitussin and Triaminic? Was that exceptional diffusion or actual audience participation? Integration / disintegration of a single voice, redispersing into multiple timbral personalities. Hints at bitonal melodic gestures. Slapback echoes resolving to rich UFO landing thrum, cough becomes revving turbine launch, voices converge into noise. The little green men are here, and they desperately need Chloraseptic. The humor was more than welcome, a nod of thanks to the concert organizers as well as the composer for recognizing that levity is the fulcrum of genius, and after so many hours rooted to our seats, we could all enjoy a little levitation--minimizing any imminent threat of defenestration. That's in the ICMA bylaws, section 8.E.: 'Under no circumstances shall conference participants be permitted to exit a premises via windows, HVAC ducts, or other non-approved portals of egress.' You should really read those carefully, or risk running afoul of the ICMA Bylaw Compliance Task Force. They have amplification resources you can scarcely imagine, and that much sound focused on a single individual, well, let's just say biological FFT doesn't begin to describe the horror.

Moving on. Andreas Mähling's *Temple Days* provided the perfect material to completely trance out, and I mean that in a good way. Apparently the piece is based on layering repetitive rhythmic figures of differing periodicities, simple algorithmic rules yielding complex organic results. Bells. Outlining modal scale. Detuning, becoming wooden chimes, phasing unisons to arpeggios and back. Scalar xylophone, rotating and melting into square marching cadence, hammer-like, further into pitches with giant kettle drums, re-phasing. Eyes shut, head down, breathing slow and even. Ears attuned to nuance, short-circuiting sound to body. Hi-hats, vocals surfacing into melody, alternating feminine and masculine. Syncopated chords of electric piano into shrill chirps, chorale of pseudotext, increasing in density then withdrawing back into kettle drums, heartbeat against polyrhythm, pulsing with echoes. Bells reprise opening mode, and fade to equilibrium. Nice. If only I could have taken a recording with me for the week after my return home, when I kept bolting awake, ready to start my day at 2 AM. Seriously, it was supposed to be meditative, that was the point. It is accomplished.

And what did I witness next but a large orchestra, the Gamelan Asmaradana, assembling before us to perform *Ladrang Kampung* by Steve Everett. An excerpt from his two-hour intermedia shadow play "k

a M", described as a traditional setting of the Javanese cyclical form ladrang. Flute introduction, amplified with reverb, soon accompanied by slentem in parallel. Flute response, then full ensemble, gender and gong ageng, in thrilling cacophony. Rallentando led by flute, and resume. Hypnotic, both aurally and visually. Supposedly Kyma processing in there somewhere, but too subtle for me to distinguish. What I did notice was how ecstatic my ears felt to hear bona fide acoustic complexity, a riot of point sources across the entire stage sonically interacting with each other in continuous variation. Comforting to know we still have much work to do. I could have happily sat there for hours more, as long as the gamelan was willing to play, but alas it was over all too soon. and time to bid farewell to another ICMC.

Without warning, my nuclear-powered pen sprung to life, sketching madly on the back of my program. As I observed in astonishment, my bedevilled hand outlined a broad boulevard... lined with poles... no, foliage of some sort... could those be palm trees? Too exhausted to trifle with interpretation, I subdued the writing implement as it lost steam amidst a mess of illustrated marine creatures. Definitely have to save that thing for my next Pictionary competition. I chalked the hallucination up to PEAVD (Post Electro-Acoustic Vertiginous Disorder), crumpled

the program, and departed into the sultry Singaporean night. But, later, drifting into dream, a turtle on rollerblades, sporting mirrored shades, in the midst of a swamp (maybe the Everglades?) offered to rub lotion on my back, and that's where it fades. Probably just preemptive jet-lag again. Clearly should've stayed...

## Interview Series

### *John Paul Young vs. John Fariselli Young*

JPY) Let's start with some background—can you describe how you came to a career in computer music? (Please accept this term as broadly inclusive of acousmatic, electroacoustic, etc.—maybe we can debate aesthetic vs. functional definitions later. ;-)

If you could choose any possible career in the world, would this be it? Did particular epiphanies or formative experiences play significant roles, or was it more a winnowing away of other pursuits as you focused and refined your path? Were there particular mentors or idols that motivated you? Did you seriously consider some other discipline or direction in life that would not have related to computer music at all?

JFY) I gravitated to computer music through the opportunity to work in studios as a student at university, though there is some background to that. I had the usual interests as a very small child playing records, some classical, but mostly singing along to the whatever pop music my older sisters were listening to (like the Beatles or Cat Stevens).

But when I was 11 my father bought a portable cassette recorder (it seemed quite common at that time for people to send spoken 'letters' to each other and we had had a few of those). I became fascinated by the process of recording and playing back sounds around me—including the voices of family and, of course, myself. I'd record stories and string together 'scenarios' of different sound sources into little productions, and try to 'punch in' edits to these. Something about the whole idea of sound as a slice of experience being recorded and listened to as a mirror of that experience is still a large part of what sustains me as a composer. At about the same time, I suddenly started hearing classical music in a new way—listening with an understanding to the textures, the lines, the shapes (I mean suddenly quite literally, since it was actually the playing of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* from another room that one day literally stopped me in my tracks)! From then on I just started buying and hiring classical records, trying to absorb as much as I could—took piano lessons, started playing the trumpet, and composing. In my high school years, I was a pretty standard 'muso', aware of electroacoustic music, since we were taught at school that there were some good New Zealand composers working in that field, but without much of a feeling that it was especially what I wanted to do. On finishing high school I had no idea other than studying music and started