Concert No. 19
Friday, June 21, 2019, 8:00 p.m.
Sheen Center, Loreto Theater
Reviewed by Peter Hulen

The first performance on this concert
was *Âme lie* by Alessio Gabriele, for
soprano, alto saxophone, and live
processing. Soprano Eleonora Claps
and saxophonist Enzo Filippetti
performed onstage as Alessio Gabriele
oversaw the processing of signals
from the house mixing console. The
piece was added to the concert as a
reschedule from the previous evening,
due to technical difficulties.
Uninterrupted flow and resonance
were the themes of this piece.
Claps sang with resonant closed and
open phonation, while Filippetti
played squeaks, multiphonics, long
quiet tones, and pitch bends, along
with a few brief melodic figures or
tremolos. The electronics were
relatively minimal, consisting of echo
and other effects. The three parts
intertwined and interacted within
a long, barely evolving texture
augmented by an effects feedback
system referred to as *WindBack*. The
overall effect was one of very slow,
quiet interaction among the three
elements.

The second piece, listed first on the
program, was *Alchemist* by Tabor
Szirovicza, for cello and fixed media
soundtrack. Madeleine Shapiro was
the cellist. A technician joined Shapiro
onstage, following a printed score and
cueing sections of the soundtrack
from a laptop. Contemporary
techniques such as harmonic trills,
sul ponticello motivic gestures and
melodic fragments in the cello part
were carefully timed with swooping
reverse phrase endings in the
electronic part. In addition to artificial
sounds and effects, the electronics
included increasing samples of cello
gestures and pizzicatos that
coordinated with and were reflexive
of materials in the live cello part. The
dialog between these elements
resulted in a thoughtful, brooding
texture.

Following was a fixed media piece in
eight studio-spatialized channels
entitled *If Bees are few*, composed by
Kari Vakeva. Program notes describe
an initial "cloud of buzzing noises";
however, these materials contained
a fair amount of microtonally related,
pitch-suggestive content. Written
with C++ and synthesis software
designed by the composer, it was a

complex, slow-moving collage of temporally long sounds, with short, periodic buzzing sounds heard at times. The overall texture built in intensity then subsided at formally significant junctures. Materials rising in pitch were evocative of a Shepard tone. For such temporally elongated sounds, the complex, interlaced texture was consistently interesting; and, for having no sudden or especially distinct gestures, the dynamics, formal structure and overall dramaturgy of the piece was excellent.

Another piece for cello and electronics followed, again featuring Madeleine Shapiro. It was **falling out of time** by Iddo Aharony, inspired by David Grossman's novel of the same name. Rather than a soundtrack, this piece included live processing, along with samples of psalm cantillation in Hebrew. The piece began with long, high melodic figures with harmonics and glissandi in the cello, accompanied by processed sounds. The cello part ultimately exploited the greater register of the instrument. The cantillation faded in after the introduction by cello and effects, standing alone as these initial elements faded out. The cello again

joined the texture, punctuating and separating passages of singing with subtle harmonics and shimmering processing. Brief, slow, high cello gestures and digital processing dovetailed and combined with cantillation samples in a convincingly integral way. The effect was humane and moving. The cello writing was in character with the sampled voice, and complimented it well. The processed cello sounds pulled the other two parts together into a texture of continuity wherein each element was allowed at times to speak alone. The piece culminated with a reflective solo passage for the cello.

The program alternated again back to fixed media with an eight-channel, studio spatialized piece by Clemens von Reusner, entitled **Anamorphosis**. It began with sweeping, juddering gestural materials dramatically separated by silence, followed with a textural collage of continuous materials made distinct by separations in register. According to the notes, both were based on a brief sample of a wooden door. They were combined into a carefully crafted overall structure of varied distinct sound objects interacting to form a texture

which maintained continuity without having to rely on unceasingly continuous sound. Sonic objects were made discernible through register, dynamics, and contrasting character, while being woven into a continuous whole.

There followed yet another piece for cello entitled **Inharmonic Fantasy No. 9**. This one included a fixed-media component for the electronics. It was composed by NYCEMF Director Hubert Howe. Andrew Borkowski was the cellist. As the title suggests, the spectral content of pitched sounds in the electronic part was manipulated in such a way that the ratios between their components were rendered inharmonic. Long, shimmering bell-like sounds in rising accumulation were paired with a long-breathed cello melody in the mid-low register that was both in character with and complementary to the electronics. Swells in the combined synthesized textures and cello passages were built, relieved, and varied according to phrase- or section-like structures, creating a pleasingly human-scale formal structure. The fact that the piece was coordinated with a click track was never evident in its beautiful ebb and flow.

After the Intermission, a short performance not listed on the program was given by Brad Garton, Director of the Computer Music Center at Columbia University. He also gave a brief, informative spoken introduction in lieu of program notes. Over time, on sabbaticals and during creative periods, he had created three different reader apps containing his own reflective writing, sonic media he composed, and still graphics. These were designed for public readings, accompanied by the sonic elements and visuals. The first app contains reflections on music (**My Music Book**), the second recounts dreams (**The Book of Dreams**), and the third relates and reflects on memories, and memory itself (**Memory Book**). Garton performed three brief excerpts, one from the dreams book and two from the memory book. The first was a rather humorous passage relating a dream that included composer Paul Lansky. If understood correctly, the sonic background featured physical modeling of a clarinet. The second brief excerpt was from a reflection on the acceptance of mortality after a difficult diagnosis. The long, quiet,

flowing electronics beautifully complimented the live reading.
The third reflected on experiences that invoke memories of earlier experiences, and the flowing together of the two. This was in context of a travel experience in Japan. The sonic background was based on samples of his grandfather's piano. Garton was careful to keep the explanation and excerpt performances brief, leaving this reviewer wanting to hear more.

There followed the first video piece on the program. It was *Pollock's Dreams*: *Liquified Sounds* by Konstantinos Karathanasis. As the title suggests, the composer was inspired by the dripped painting techniques of Jackson Pollock. Sonic materials were based on samples captured around the campus where Karathanasis is a Professor of Composition and Music Technology. These were subjected to phase vocoding, granular techniques, filtering, envelope shaping, and pitch shifting using Max/MSP, before being sequenced in Pro Tools. Visuals were animated with particle systems using volumetric renders, filters, and effects, all composited in layers.
The piece began with a coruscating, teeming, black-and-white visual texture integrated with a complex, droned sonic texture of interwoven inharmonic and pitch-indistinct sounds. There followed the introduction of deep red, green, purple, and predominantly blue colors into a dark visual texture of increased activity and internal motion.
The sonic texture dramatically reflected the visual as it began to include flashes of yellow, and then faded — an animated and musically scored Pollock.
Audio texture continued through the credits with indistinct bell and speech-like sounds for a continuous, organic whole.

A third fixed-media piece followed: *Moving On* by Joel Gressel. All sounds were digitally synthesized using an updated version of the MUSIC 4BF program, originally developed at Princeton in 1967 as a derivative of the MUSIC IV program/language developed at Bell Labs. The sonic texture was artfully composed according to various 12-tone frameworks and shifting rhythmic procedures. The outcome featured a collage of softly metallic, brass-like or twanging sounds in their envelopes and spectral content, sometimes

against a high, string-like background. The texture was formally apportioned with collage-like passages where one or the other of the various timbres predominated. The overall result was that of a flowing and rather dreamy texture.

The second video piece on the concert was *Maze* by veteran and frequent contributor Sylvia Pengilly. As suggested by the title, its palindromic form was based on the composer's experiences going through a maze. Visuals and music synthesized a colorfully glowing and continuously rotating layered meshwork of bar shapes morphing back and forth from color to monochrome, at times forming laterally symmetrical, moving Rorschach patterns, with a sophisticated synthetic soundtrack to match. Following the program notes, the monochrome sections represent "wrong turns" in the maze, culminating in a retrograde return to the start of the piece.

There followed yet another piece for cello with electronics, this time also with piano: *Memories* by Nicolas Chuaqui. Madeleine Shapiro again performed on the cello, with Marija Ilić

on the piano. And again, a technician was present onstage to cue electronic parts. The piece was divided into four short movements inspired by salient moments and anonymous fellow travelers on a trip to Rome. The first movement, entitled "The Sant' Angelo bridge, sunset, looking east to west," began with brooding, low tones in the piano and then cello, with rumbling, droning electronics, along with a change of register to slow, somber harmonics in the cello. The second movement, entitled "A statue in the Courtyard of the Vestal Virgins showing the decay of time," featured a similar texture, but with dramatic pauses, harmonics in the cello, and repeated midrange notes and chords in the piano, as well as samples of breathing or panting in reference to other people present on the composer's sojourn. The movement ended with accumulating high metallic wind-chime-like sounds in the electronics. The third movement, entitled "Three memorial stones on Via della Reginella," was evocatively minimal with quietly repeating and slowly developing melodic motifs in the piano, visited briefly by a crescendo of electronic droning, and tones from the cello. The final

movement, "Saint Peter's Square, noon; the immensity of space," featured toccata-like figures in the cello, into which a growing electronic simultaneity was introduced as a background, followed by evocative restatements of an earlier piano motif.

The final work on the concert was a third video piece: *Cylindrical Dimensions* by Michael Rhoades. Audio was created using Csound, and video using Maya, the whole being presented as "a visual music composition," as "an exploration of the effects of reflective curvatures in light." Three-dimensional representations of rotating aquamarine string-like figures against a monochrome background gave way to a monochrome, rotating survey of the overall visual texture. Lavender, then blue colors were introduced, transitioning to a shimmering blue, then green.
As a formal component, the piece became more sonically active and visually flashing as it moved through a series of sound events produced by means of generative algorithms created by the composer. The piece culminated with a rapid, palindromic return through its scenic types.

Installation Reviews

Haein Kang: *Illusion: you can hear, but you cannot see (2018)* NYU Blackbox Theater, June 19, 2019
Reviewed by Teresa Marie Connors

Haein Kang's performance-based installation, *Illusion: you can hear, but you cannot see,* combinations high-tech equipment + code with video projection and eight customized percussion instruments. Each instrument is equipped with an up and down mechanical moving arm device, elastic string attached to the arm, and a fishing line weight at the end of the string. Each weight hovers above a material object made from either metal, glass or wood. When the mechanical arm is triggered to move, each weight strikes their respective object causing it to sound.

What triggers the movement of the mechanical elements are alpha brain waves. For the ICMC2019 perfor-mance-based installation, Kang sat in the middle of the semi-circularly placed instruments wearing an EEG headset. A customized computer program transcoded the data from her