

ICMC 2021 breaks new ground in the pandemic

By Kerry Hagan

The International Computer Music Association (ICMA) convened the first International Computer Music Conference (ICMC) in 1974 at Michigan State University in the US. The ICMA was a new organization, only just incorporated as a non-profit in California, USA. For nearly ten years of ICMC, various institutions in the US hosted the event. Then, in 1982, the Venice Biennial hosted the ICMC outside of the US for the first time. That marked the beginning of a tour of locations in the US and Europe. Eleven years later, the first ICMC in Asia took place in Japan.

In 2021, the Pontifical Universidad Católica de Chile hosted the first ICMC in South America. It was, however, a bittersweet first. Covid-19 derailed our 2020 conference hopes and our wishes to visit Santiago. And, as 2021 approached, we realized that traveling to Santiago was still not possible. So, though it was a first for being hosted in South America, ICMC 2021 was the first time the conference went online.

Rodrigo Cádiz and his team were the perfect partners for undertaking such a challenging task. They quickly responded to the fluid changes of lockdowns and restrictions and ultimately hosted a marvelous conference. With virtual concerts, installations, paper sessions, workshops and booths, we could meet each other online and share our work and research.

Although I took on the role of President of ICMA in March of 2021, the real work on behalf of the ICMA Board came from the previous President, Tae Hong Park, and our former VP of Conferences, Rob Hamilton. Rob worked with Rodrigo and supported virtual installations on Mozilla Hubs, creating more firsts for us.

We learned a lot about presenting virtual events, experiencing what worked well and what did not. It gave us experiences that will help us in future ICMCs to be more accessible to a broader membership. Given this knowledge, the next ICMC will be a hybrid conference hosted in Limerick, Ireland, and online.

Since the University of Limerick is hosting ICMC 2022, I am tasked with

two roles: President of the ICMA and Conference Chair of ICMC 2022, and I cannot express my excitement for the conference to come. I'm working with a phenomenal committee of colleagues in Limerick and relying on the years of expertise of the ICMA Board, including Rodrigo. He continues with the ICMA as an Americas Regional Director.

ICMC 2021 taught us many valuable lessons, and it demonstrated the large and global community in computer music. Cádiz and his team pulled off a great accomplishment and gave us a model for online content in future ICMCs. The online format broadened the contributors and connected us around the world in virtual concerts, workshops, booths, installations and through meeting rooms and chats. In these ways, ICMC 2021 truly broke new ground.

We hope that this encourages you to actively engage with us. If you are, e.g. interested in hosting an ICMC in your region, or if you plan concerts or festivals that might be of interest for our community, please contact me or one of your region directors for more information.