Concert 1
Monday, Aug 6, 2018, 10:30 a.m.
Chamber Hall, Daegu Concert House
Reviewed by Martin Ritter

The first concert took place in the Chamber Hall in Daegu, a modern hall that suited the electronic performances well. There were several works programmed with high technical demands – these demands were facilitated by a team of audio engineering professionals, a feature not present at all ICMCs. For this review I will look at four of the seven pieces on the concert.

Prior to attending the concert I made the decision to react solely on the sound alone, reserving the reading of the program notes for after my initial reaction. This was partly also a practical decision since the pieces followed each other in quick succession and there was no time to read all the notes between them. Before writing the reviews I read the notes and biographical information, which were used to (re)inform my initial reactions. The issue with the a review of a premier or previously unknown piece of music, specially ones as technically, timbral, formally, etc. complex as pieces with cutting edge electronics, is that the initial reaction might not be appropriate and

further contemplation over a period of time is required. These pieces deserve more than a single listen if a fair and appropriate review is to be attempted.

Inherence002.opposition for live laptop by Alyssa Aska officially started the concert program of this ICMC (although there was a pre-conference concert the previous night). It was a curious piece that did not conform to one's expectations. As stated in the program notes, it is a piece for Leap Motion controller, however the controller was violently unplugged about 1/3 into the performance, after which the composer continued the piece on laptop alone. The first part, with Leap Motion, created the source material, which was recorded in some fashion to be manipulated and improvised with at the laptop during the second portion of the performance. The whole composition was restrained in many ways. It had only two modes of interaction (Leap Motion and laptop), two large formal sections, and one synthesize technique (potentially FM with some distortion). The synthesized sound was somewhat grating and since the timbre did not change much throughout the piece it created a very tense and overwhelming experience. There was only one short pause in the continuous

soundscape when the composer unplugged the Leap Motion to continue on laptop. At this point, the monophonic line created by the Leap Motion controller was layered on top of itself at various levels of transposition and time stretching, creating at times a thick all-encompassing texture, which the composer skillfully manipulated. The piece ended abruptly, without warning and the sudden void created by this was pregnant with psychoacoustic afterimages.

Almost for fixed media (audio) by Yunze Mu started very strong with clean samples, good energy and direction. As the piece progressed, I initially lost interest due to a lack of real formal or musical development. Reading the program notes revealed that the piece was based on meditation and immersion. With this knowledge we can somewhat adjust our listening and understanding of the piece with regards to form and development. However, the claims made by the composer of "self-discovery" or large philosophical questions such as "the nature of meditation and the motivations behind it" again remove me from the music as these elements are exceedingly difficult to portrait in a medium such as sound. In the end Almost was almost able

to capture my imagination but fell short on some minor compositional shortcomings, and was altogether too difficult to achieve philosophical goals.

The entire program note reads: "*Lilith, Cometh* is a new work for live computer and flute performer, it is a deconstruction of fixed-media and computer dichotomies, as well as an examination of the Feminine anti-hero in Patriarchal fiction/myth." The piece for flute and computer by Patricia Surman and Mark Oliveiro featured a live flute performance, live computer, and live interactive video projection. It was technically very demanding and had many interdependent parts. Unfortunately, one of these parts, the video component, did fail about two-thirds through the performance, and neither the composer nor the technicians were able to remedy the situation for the remainder of the piece. The flute and electronic portions of the piece were well done, if not a little on the safe and traditional side of the spectrum. The video component was perplexing. It featured imagery of apples and snakes and the female body (not a very subtle nod to a "Feminine anti-hero"). It is still not entirely clear to me how the composer deconstructed the fixed-media/computer

dichotomies. What seems clear is that the flute was tracked by the system (likely pitch and amplitude) and these were simplistically mapped to the deformation of the female body in the video. However, since the projection failed partway through the performance, it is difficult to say how, or if the composer developed the interaction further.

Shall I compare Thee to a Summer's Day? For live laptop orchestra by Lee Cheng had the most intriguing opening of any piece I witnessed at ICMC 2018. As the lights were dimmed, 16 performers with tablets completely surrounded the audience quickly and quietly. Then the lights were turned off. What followed was a frenzy of 16 people tapping their devices in Morse code and the flickering of the devices' flash lights in response, recreating the Shakespearian sonnet in sound and visuals as words were projected on stage. There seemed to be a gaming element to the way the performers were interacting with their screens. A very tense and focused performance was the result. Unfortunately, the Morse code with the flickering lights, the gamifications of performers restoring the sonnet line by line wore thin as no new elements were added or developed throughout the piece.

Soundfiles were triggered at some points to underscore the tapping and to keep the audience's interest. This however felt more like a gimmick than an earnest attempt to develop this intriguing concept.

Concert 6
Tuesday, Aug 7, 4:30 p.m.
Chamber Hall, Daegu Concert House
Reviewed by Peter Hulen

The program for this afternoon's general concert was a mix of pieces for a variety of solo performers with electronics, and fixed media pieces. The opening piece was フロー *(Flow)* for soprano, acoustic guitar and electronics by Alexander Sigman. The electronics were projected through the use of transducers attached to the acoustic guitar, played by Woojae Kim. Computer-generated voice rendering of the text — from the 1600 John Dowland lute song "Flow My Tears," translated into Japanese through a digital algorithm — seemed to be actuated by means of playing or taps on the guitar. The soprano, Jooyoung Bang, sang the simple melodic material, similarly translated, in a plain-voice style. Various elements of the composition were well integrated, and the overall effect was balanced and contemplative. The piece featured a