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**Concerts****Concert No 8**

**Tuesday, June 18, 2019, 8-10pm**

**Sheen Center, Loreto Theater**

*Reviewed by Chryssie Nanou*

Part of the Sheen Center for Thought and Culture, the Loreto Theater is a small neoclassical house, that has had its 19th century architecture details restored to a beautiful small capacity space with sharp acoustics.

The order of the program in this review follows the actual performance order of the pieces and not the one on the printed programs. Included highlights were two of the 2019 ICMC Music Awards: Deborah Kim's *Rhythms of Rain*, Best Music Award for Asia/Oceania and Marta Gentilucci's *Auf die Lieder*, Best Music Award for Europe, and Akkermann's *Shadow*. The program was a mix of fixed media and electroacoustic works.

The evening started with *Echoes* by Kwang Rae Kim with Keith Kirchhoff on the piano. The warm and easy to listen piece was nicely executed. The material used for the electronics was

inspired and generated not only by piano sounds but also by the motion and gestures of the pianist. The spatialization though did not come out very clearly through the mix.

Following was *Mutation* (as the mark that noise leaves upon presence) by Robert Seaback.

*Mutation*, played by Samuel Wells, trumpet, Adam Vidiksis, percussion and Keith Kirchoff on the piano, seemed to derive from the idea that noise erupts and re-shapes material forms. It explored artificial structures made of resonances and noise that emerged from the acoustic instruments' manipulations. A pleasant sound environment, amplified by the complicity of the performers, the piece had interesting interplays between traditional notation and experimentation.

The three performers continued on stage with *Kucha Lar* by Bahar Royae. Processed sounds from all three instruments blended and slowly transformed through the electronics. *Kucha Lar* originated from a folk tune from Azerbaijan, a tune that came clear towards the end to wrap up the journey.

Miriam Akkermann's *Shadow* for fixed media, focused the audience with a constant pulsing soundscape. The piece was a study of texture and motion. The layers constantly shifted from transparent to opaque and their motion within the room reinforced the game of density. It was an immersive soundscape with a beautiful ending.

Inspired by the legend of Go-shirakawa, a Japanese emperor who was torn between Buddhism and military, *Ryojinfu* by Hiromi Ishii for fixed media, exploited singing voices of Buddhist Chant, noises of a Buddhist ceremony and sounds of rice grains. The work was framed with ringing resonances of bells, traditional singing and had a ceremonial structure. The result was a compelling, dark and introspective piece with a dramatic unfolding towards lighter textures in time and space.

Next came PVC pipes, guitar picks roll, zither and drum sets designed and built by Worcester Polytechnic Institute's Music, Perception and Robotics Lab: they were the Expressive Machines Musical Instruments (EMMI) that performed *Tempo Mecho* by Scott Barton, an exhilarating exploration of

tempi. Grooves and accelerations persisted throughout the piece. The visualization of all the polyrhythms rendered by the machines' motions was fascinating to watch and translated the processes very clearly.

After the intermission Eleonora Claps, soprano and a percussionist whose name was not announced performed Marta Gentilucci's *Auf die Lieder*, 2019 Best ICMC Composition award for Europe, a beautifully crafted and performed piece although a bit too fast. An ode to the voice, the artful mix of phonemes and fragments of words was blended and shadowed by percussive sounds and electronics. The blend created a delicate and intriguing sound environment where the listener was eased in all sorts of voice treatments such as hushing, breathing, frictions, and trilling along with an intricate play of subtle ringing percussive sounds. The piece that mainly gave the stage to the acoustic instruments, is part of a wider composition project that includes a Song Cycle based on the text of the Italian poet Elisa Biagini.

Using granular synthesis, *Cerevo*, for fixed media by Cort Lippe, was

created, as the composer mentions, at the request of Felipe de Almeida Ribeiro for a premiere at the 2018 Symposia International de Musica in Curitiba, Brazil.

A tribute to the Surrealist technique of 'cadavre exquis', its explosive introduction gave place to well punctuated passages where we barely had enough time to recognize sound material before they transformed to their essence.

Best Composition award for Asia/Oceania at ICMC 2019, Deborah Kim's *Rhythms of Rain* for Janggu (Korean traditional drum) and fixed media with its motion graphics score, images and sounds of rain tied together into an energetic story telling. Kim's compelling Janggu performance drove the piece, a mix of raw drum sound with well balanced electronics.

Two short fixed media pieces followed in the program: Antonio Scarcia's *Interludio ("And I rejoice in my bonnie Bell")* and Hsien-Te Hsieh's *Crazy kitchen!*. The first inspired by the words of a poem by Robert Burns, "My Bonnie Bell" of 1791 was clearly articulated on interactions of two different registers while the second

was a three part chef's meal with preparation, cooking, eating and cleaning up. *Crazy kitchen!* had a familiar feel and a fast pace bringing us in only four minutes very distinct sounds and a detailed and clear story of the meal.

The last piece on the concert was Brian Lee Topp's **...to travel the distance of a changing feeling...** The piece used Robert Pritchard's technology for responsive user body suit (RUBS), a tactile interface worn by the performers that allowed them to process audio output in real time, simultaneously triggering and manipulating audio samples by controlling fabric strip potentiometers sewn onto the suit. As per the program notes, the suit allows for discrete and continuous audio changes being generated through two different motions of contact; touch and stroking. The collaboration between Sarah Wasik, dancer and Margaret Lancaster, flute and movement, was choreographed by Emmalena Fredriksson and made the piece compelling and entertaining.

### Concert No 10

Wednesday, July 19, 2019, 1.30 p.m.

Sheen Center, Loreto Theater

Reviewed by Juan Parra Cancino

As it is tradition at ICMC concerts, there is a delicate balance between complexity, fragility and excessiveness that programmers, performers and audience are invited to negotiate. This particular instantiation was a good example of it from the get go, when it was announced that two of the pieces in the program, Stylianos Dimou's *Machine Learning* for baritone saxophone and Paulo Brito's *...nothing but a string of songs* for piano, had been cancelled. In turn, two pieces from previous concerts (Devin Maxwell's *Cloudseeding 9 - Wind Harmonics* and Fred Szymanski's *Horn Volley*) were given a second chance to overcome some technical difficulties.

The concert opened with **Spring Breeze Sweeps beyond Yumen Pass** by Yang Wanjun, with the collaboration of Lichuan Wang (composition) and Jinhao Han (live coding), a multimedia piece that presented three different layers of performative activity: Electronic sounds (which after reading the program notes seem to consist