

ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY MUSIC CONCERT SERIES 2018 – 2019

REDISCOVERIES XI

MUSIC BY STAFF AND STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

STAFF:

TIM HOWLE (Present at concert)
ESTHER KIBURI (Also present)
PAUL FRETWELL
AKI PASOULAS

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:

LACHLAN MACKAY
ROSS WESTERN
MOLLY WRIGHT

BUTCHART RECREATION HALL

Thursday 14th February, 2019

As most of you will know by now, **REDISCOVERIES** is a series of performances of electroacoustic music and sound arts presented by **SERG** (Sound Emporium Research Group) from the Department of Music at the University of Aberdeen. Thursday's performance, the eleventh in the series, showcased works from staff and students from the University of Kent. The performance was introduced by Suk-Jun Kim.

It began with three short works by undergraduate students from Kent. The first by Lachlan Mackay was called Pipes (2018). Given its title and the Scottish sounding name of the young composer I was expecting sounds of bagpipes. Not at all. I heard bell-like chimes and metallic sounds.

Movement of the sounds around the Hall gave a feeling of space as well as movement. Sound quality and pitch were important elements in a rather attractive piece. In all three of these student works there was a sense of similitude in the sound palette. Ross Western was the composer of the second work Unearthly Cadence (2018). It had swooshing sounds delivering a sense of movement, percussive rolling sounds, sometimes metallic. It was, I thought, more abstract in its sound colours. The third of the student pieces was Nightmare (2018). Despite its title it sounded rather light and delicate.

The staff works were much longer and more complex in their appeal. The first by Paul Fretwell was entitled King's Cross (2015). I was reminded of something that is crucial in the music of our own Pete Stollery, namely the representation of the place, in this case King's Cross Station. The piece also had many scraps of conversation, some of them dealing with similar subjects, others quite unconnected. I was reminded of the cinematic concept of 'montage' or even in non moving art, the idea of collage. A sense of drama, presence in a particular place and the passage of time were all important. Sounds recorded in the station including vehicles were blended with more abstract and thus musical sounds.

There followed two fascinating works by Aki Pasoulas, the first entitled Paramnesia (2009) meaning 'near' and 'memory' relating to "a condition that causes confusion between reality and fantasy". The composer's commentary mentions loss of memory and *déjà vu*. There are two parts, Pasoulas writes, representing daytime and night respectively. At the beginning the threadlike sounds were thin and crackling. Very soon there were children's voices the words of which were indistinguishable. Rattles rolls and rumbles led to a powerful crescendo and the music speeded up considerably becoming more and more abstract.

The second piece by Pasoulas was entitled Irides (2017) which means Rainbow. It was suddenly very startling with what sounded like violent claps of thunder. Sounds of rain followed, more and more torrential. Then rushing water and sounds of drops of water falling into metal containers as if the roof were leaking. Gradually more abstract and therefore musical sounds followed.

Sonic Shores of Sheerness (2017) by Esther Kiburi followed a short intermission. Once again a strong sense of place was delivered. Sheerness is a town at the mouth of the River Medway on the

North-West corner of the Isle of Sheppey. The background sound projected a strong sense of spaciousness. The three movements were indeed soundscapes linked to the idea of seascapes. Some of the tiny additions to the sounds suggested the cries of seabirds and later, the voices of children. Water crashing or lapping on the seashore were there, I thought. What a splendidly colourful and graphic piece of music.

The first of two works by Tim Howle was *False Memory of Normandy* (2018) with words by J. M. Fox relating to memories of sounds from the Second World War or even before. These sounds remembered in the texts conjured up all sorts of pictures while an undercurrent of electroacoustic sounds bound the whole together in the most imaginative way.

Tim Howle's second piece had visuals (a triple screen) by Nick Cope. There were colourful rows of bunting flags, a vast empty landscape and in the middle, more ragged and weather torn flags. The soundtrack delivered the strength and movements of wind quite splendidly. I felt that the visuals tended to define the sounds but the sounds also gave life to the visuals. The title 'Sarva Mangalam!' relates to a Hindu peace chant. I found it rather soothing after some of the more galvanizing works. Suk-Jun Kim will be making a reciprocal visit to the University of Kent to let them hear some of our finest music. I wish him well!