

ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY MUSIC CONCERT SERIES 2018 – 2019

REDISCOVERIES X

BUTCHART RECREATIONAL HALL

Thursday 11th October, 2018

INTRODUCTION AND CONTROLS BY:

PROFESSOR PETE STOLLERY and

Dr SUK-JUN KIM

As today's concert programme note stated, "REDISCOVERIES is a new series of performances of electroacoustic music and sound art events, presented by **SERG** (Sound Emporium Research Group) from the Department of Music at the University of Aberdeen". Thursday's performance, the tenth in its series, presented as promised, three pieces by PhD students at the university alongside two works by senior staff members. It was nice to see so many young eager looking students at the performance. Nearly all the audience seats were taken.

I personally am always interested in a number of questions surrounding the world of electro-acoustic music and several of today's pieces touched on these thoughts. Firstly should one try to identify the sources of the sounds projected towards us? I think that whether one wants to or not, ones ears and brain tend towards doing that? To what extent are the sounds purely non representational that is to say abstract? Are the sounds trying to say extra-musical things to us? For instance in his introduction to the opening work Luca Nasciuti writes, "SWARMS is a composition that responds to issues of noise pollution and urban planning making use of recorded soundwalks from two cities: Aberdeen, Scotland and Parma, Italy". Finally, to what extent and in what ways does the electronic shaping and altering of basic sounds move the overall work into the realm of music as such? These are just some of the things that run through my head during and after listening.

The first work we heard on Thursday was **SWARMS** (2015) by PhD student Luca Nasciuti. Given that the basic sounds were taken from walks in Aberdeen and Parma they had been given a kind of hollow ringing sound almost as if played on a bass flute or even something bigger than that. There was a feeling of spatial expansiveness in this sound world. The sounds were very much continuous but ever changing and developing with a decisive sense of forward movement. Is this not what happens in most extensive passages of music? How interesting!

A TRACE OF DIRECTIONALITY (2018) by Kwangrae Kim was listed as being not stereophonic like all the other pieces but Ambisonic (8Channel). This means essentially multi-spatial, not just left-right but back-front and possibly up-down and more.

This work opened with what sounded like rushing water interrupted by little sonic 'blips'. The word water came through whispered by an audible voice too. Unlike the continuity that was the principal feature of the first piece, here there was a sense of moving through distinctive sound sections contrasting with one another. As the piece moved forward, and here forward movement was equally important, pitched sounds became more important but even more so rhythm. It ended up as a percussion piece and in that sense was powerfully musical.

Pete Stollery's piece was the earliest in the programme. **ONSET/OFFSET** was composed in 1996. In his introduction, Pete writes, "Onset/Offset is concerned with exploiting the interplay between the original 'meaning' of sound objects.... there are many recognisable sounds in a piece which can, and should be perceived on both levels – the sound of a key in a lock on one level refers to the action of unlocking a door, but on another, is also interesting as a pure sound in itself". Thank-you

Pete for answering so clearly one of the questions I ask myself when listening to electro-acoustic music. I think Pete goes further than this in giving his sounds a special meaning which is music itself. His work opened with brittle crackling sounds which could be considered advanced percussion? Like the previous piece there were many contrasting colours of sound blending and the full range of his sonic orchestra, if I may be allowed to call it that, was really wide ranging. Some of the sounds I have heard before so that they have become for me welcome regular players in Pete's sonic 'orchestra'.

AUX-IN-PULSE was composed this year by PhD student Jamie Lawson whom we heard also in last week's concert. Sounds like swishing winds and a high toned upper note like a high pedal note was sustained. Like the opening piece, but even more so here, the music expressed a special sense of stasis but with evolving sound colours contained therein.

The longest piece in the concert was **HUMMING POTS (SONADA VER.)** composed this year by Suk-Jun Kim It began with the sounds of voices which were deliberately indistinguishable so that they would be accepted just for their pure sound qualities alone, could we call this a kind of continuo. Soon after a crackle, these voices became encased in an envelope of upper and lower tones which grew and developed becoming more important in the piece. They were enriched and altered, beginning at one point, to sound almost as if emanating from a gigantic cathedral organ. What an amazing conclusion to a fascinating and stimulating performance, designed to expand both minds and ears.