

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN CONCERT SERIES 2018 – 2019
SHIFT-ENTER
AN EVENING OF SONIC ARTS

KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL
Thursday 4th October, 2018

COMPOSERS:

Silent Chaos (Ugo Vantini and Marta Noone) ITALY
Kwang-Rae Kim SOUTH KOREA
Jamie Lawson AUSTRALIA (now Glasgow)
Sunglow Sound (Mark and Bea Dunsmore) ABERDEEN

PERFORMERS:

Ugo Vantini and Marta Noone: Cymbals and much more besides
Jamie Lawson: Laptop
Thomas Michie: Piano
Ben Light: Saxophones

Now well into my seventies, I thought I had seen and heard almost everything, but after an evening in the company of **SHIFT-ENTER** and their evening of **SONIC ARTS**, I discovered that the world of new music is replete with never before seen or heard experiences, even for me.

The first duo to perform on Thursday were Ugo Vantini and Marta Noone who work under the name of Silent Chaos. One of the instruments used in their new work entitled Synbals is called a Dronin or perhaps D(Ronin) a bowed handmade instrument created by the Sardinian musician and instrument maker Massimo Olla. Look it up on the internet where you will both see and hear it. It is amazing.

Synbals opened with Marta hitting a small bell like instrument and then Ugo Vantini began activating the cymbals by stroking them with thin chains. Later, Ugo used beaters or just the nails of his fingers to draw different sounds from his cymbals while Marta bowed the Dronin or sang notes, some of them remarkably deep, into a microphone. All these amazing things were amplified or reshaped electronically. The resultant sounds ranged from whispers to explosive roars. They sounded metallic, percussive, becoming almost orchestral or like a large choral extravaganza. Altogether it was new and hugely entertaining to both watch and to hear.

Kwang-Rae Kim was unable to appear on Thursday so his piece, Echoes, was introduced by Thomas Michie who was the pianist for the piece. There were at least three layers of sound in this piece. There was Thomas Michie's acoustic piano sound played from a written score which came across unaltered, there was his piano sound electronically shaped and there was a tape giving "audible imaginary sounds" inspired by the piano notes and by the "motion and gestures of the performer". The music was brittle, crystalline and often very attractive and I was impressed by how well the different sonic aspects were so well melded together.

Fragments, by Jamie Lawson was musically very interesting. I guessed (and I could be wrong) that there were two very different sound worlds created which I felt were based on place. The first seemed to be an outside pastoral landscape with a running stream and birdsong, the second possibly a changing room in a swimming bath. These were changed and developed electronically – I thought of themes and variations, and then the two ideas were cleverly brought together and intertwined shaping the work in a very musical way.

The final work by Sunglow Sound (Mark and Bea Dunsmore) was entitled Methods of Madness. It employed virtuoso saxophonist Ben Light as its performer. We in the audience were fortunate to be

able to see the instructions that were being sent to Ben Light telling him which of the four saxophones he was to use, baritone, tenor, alto or soprano. Some of the music on the screens was easy to follow. Ben did follow the melodic lines but was free to use his own ideas regarding rhythm. Some of the instructions were more general - "Descending Patterns – Unusual Rhythms or just Freedom". Other instructions used more advanced writing, squiggles, coloured shapes and so on. I thought Ben Light's performance was amazing. At one point he played two saxophones at once or made percussive sounds on the baritone.

There was a degree of electronic shaping of the sax sounds but my attention was largely captured by the instructions on the screen and Ben Light's high speed response to them.

So on Thursday, we had four very different works, some entirely abstract, others more representational and some more or less related to musical shaping but above all every one hugely entertaining.