

Chilean guitarist and researcher, University of Huddersfield, UK; William Teixeira, cellist and researcher, Universidade de São Paulo, BR; Fabrice Marandola, xylophonist and researcher, Sorbonne Universités, FR, McGill University CA or Guisy Caruso, pianist and researcher, Ghent University, BE, among many. It is quite understandable that in an ordered society scientists have proper scientific conditions for their work, so it is not surprising that behind most of the participants were different kinds of institutes for music research or labs, grants and the support of foundations. The importance and investment in scientific research in the arts is what we aspire to in our country as well, even though it might be difficult to see “the light at the end of the tunnel” at this precise moment.

If someone counted how many times during three days the term “Musical Gesture” was uttered, surely it would be a very big number. Considering the multiple meanings of this word, this conference aimed and succeeded in examining the unfolding of its theorization from various standpoints. But after all, there was no proposed convention, no definition of the term which could cover all its possible meanings, as a metaphor for the expression, the instance of embodied cognition, and as a bodily and visual component of performance and composition. Its success, however, lay in answering the many questions posed, emphasizing the importance of music-mind-body research with the musical gesture being an instance of communication and human behavior, and the raising of some new questions that need to be answered in the future.

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### ***Gaudeamus Muziekweek* (7–11 September 2016)**

Since 1947, when the first review of Dutch contemporary music was held, the development of *Gaudeamus Muziekweek* has gone through a number of stages. The most significant stage occurred during the late 1950s, when the project was complemented with an international competition in contemporary music. Some of the first laureates included Louis Andriessen and Pauline Oliveros, and later also Vinko Globokar, while the 2010 laureate was the Serbian composer Marko Nikodijević. This is a major music competition, based in Utrecht, and offers young artists various opportunities to develop their careers. Each year, a three-member jury nominates several authors, who are given an opportunity to present three compositions each, one of which must be written specifically for the festival's resident ensemble.

This year, the jury comprised Seung-Won Oh from Korea, Willem Jeths from the Netherlands, and Pierre Jodlowski from France. They selected five composers with various poetics, who were given an oppor-

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tunity to collaborate with the ensembles Oerknal! and Quatuor Bozzini. The composers included James O'Callaghan from Canada, David Bird and Anthony Vine from the United States, Shih-Wei Lo from Taiwan, and Giulio Colangelo from Italy. Their works were performed at the festival, while the opening itself, featuring the ensembles Amsterdam Sinfonietta and Slagwerk Den Haag, was dedicated to established authors.

Unlike previous years, when the focus was on experimental music, this year's festival opening featured mostly lyrical works, with tonal structures and frequent references to spectral music. Thus, we had a chance to hear an exceptionally contemplative piece titled *Fern* by Kate Moore, dominated by broad melodic lines and tonal harmonic patterns, as well as *Lullaby* by Maxim Shalygin, characterized by a music aesthetic reminiscent of Arvo Pärt. The central feature of the concert was certainly Michel van der Aa's *Up-close* for solo violoncello, chamber ensemble, and film tape. The most specific feature of this piece were elements of musical theatre, since the author sought to establish in it certain correlations between the soloist and the main protagonist of a film. They are brought together by music and by searching for its beauty, and that quest takes them on an unpredictable journey: it takes the protagonist to a forest and an abandoned house and the soloist through virtuosic passages and rather effective solo sections.

In his *Aria*, Jörg Widmann retained the musical framework of a concerto, whereas Hugo Morales's *Music for Bones* was the only piece that stood out, owing to its effective percussion moves, peculiar temperament, and attempt to generate a

different, pagan-sounding environment, which added freshness to the otherwise stylistically monotonous concert programme.

On the second day of the festival, we had an opportunity to hear two brief but effective performances by Quatuor Bozzini; a performance by the Ensemble Modelo62, who performed pieces by Anthony Vine and James O'Callaghan, as well as a recital by the double-bass player Dario Calderone, who demonstrated an exceptionally virtuosic technique and musicality. Still, the central event was the performance of the vocal-instrumental work *Ob-literate* by Zeno van der Broek and Gagi Petrović. This is a monumental piece for a vocal ensemble, electronics, and keyboards, based on playing with the relationship between sound and space. Setting up a dialogue between the performers and electronically modified sounds, the authors produced a dramaturgically rather tense work that has a claustrophobic impact on the listener. Using texts by Walter Benjamin and poetry by Adam Staley Groves, Van der Broek and Petrović succeeded in conceiving an effective work characterized by a continuous flow of tension, without too many points of repose.

On the festival's third day, we had a chance to hear the accordionist Vincent van Amsterdam. He presented a selection of works varying in expressive range: from Maxim Shalygin's rather contemplative *Trembling Music*, exploring the instrument's technical potentials, to Maja Matić's standard neo-avant-garde work *Unseen, Unheard, Unspoken*, dominated by using elements of so-called extended instrumental technique, to Ton de Leeuw's neo-classically tinged *Modal Music*. Nonetheless, the festival's third day was dominated by a concert of the ensemble Silbersee, titled

*Great Expectations*. In the acoustic surroundings of the Pieterskerk, we could hear works by Shih-Wei Lo (*Madhye II*), Anna Korsun (*Ulenflucht*), Christian Mason (*Somewhere between Us*), Samantha Fernando (*Look Up*), and Jerzy Bielski (*Nieuw Werk*). Especially noteworthy were the pieces by Christian Mason and Shih-Wei Lo. Mason's *Somewhere between Us* is based on the idea of establishing a complementary relation between independent vocal parts and the bass recorder part. The vocal parts are organized in different tempi, never quite catching up with one another, but constantly on the verge of doing so. With the inclusive treatment of the audience, who are invited to vocally join in, in the part that suited them the best, the author generated an authentic sound picture, which works especially well in a highly acoustic environment. As in a sort of "time capsule", as it says in the programme notes, Shih-Wei Lo plays with his own musical past. Thinking of Vladimir Nabokov's meta-fiction literary device deployed in his *Pale Fire*, Lo conceived a piece relying on the principle of self-reflective deliberation on the relationship between the old and the new, between different approaches to interpretation. Improvisatory in character and colourful in sound, the work rests upon the process of varying elements borrowed from his piece *Madhye*, fragments of which may be heard in the electronics part.

The fourth day of the festival was especially interesting, owing not only to a violoncello marathon of several hours, featuring the exceptional skill of Katharina Gross, but also to a performance by the Egyptian Contemporary Music Ensemble. This ensemble performs pioneering work in promoting new music in Egypt, compris-

ing experienced performers with exceptional interpretative skills. They performed several pieces by Dutch, Egyptian, and Syrian composers, with Bahaa al Ansary's *L'éternité du Nil* standing out in terms of quality and poetic consistency. Although the youngest among the composers whose works we heard that evening, Al Ansary produced a rather accomplished, ingeniously conceived piece. Using a software application, he performed a meticulous analysis of certain frequencies of sound and then turned the results into notation. The result is a spectral piece featuring a subtle alternation of colours, which generate a compact system where each tone occupies a corresponding position in the work's rich audio palette. That evening we also heard *Fluctus* by Zaid Jabri, *Nieuw Werk* by Vilbert Bulsink, *Meenemenemenem, elegie voor de nachtbrakers* by Bart de Vrees, and *Monument to a Universal Marriage* by Willem Jeths.

The final festival day in Utrecht was marked by the performances of the Insomnio ensemble for contemporary music and their partner ensemble Noom (comprising amateur musicians), the Keuris Quartet, as well as a concert peculiarly entitled *Jacob 3.0*. This was an interesting project whose concept and character diverged from the rest of the festival programme. Namely, exploring the work of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century musician Jacob van Eyck, who left a deep mark on Utrecht's cultural history, the flutist Erik Bosgraaf, sound artist Jorrit Tamminga, and DJ DNA attempted to offer a contemporary take on his work. Subjecting fragments from his pieces to electronic manipulation, the artists created an unusual, one might even say bizarre, world, combining audio recordings of flute lessons and street

sounds and rhythms with Van Eyck's simple melodies. This concert programme, so different from everything else that we heard in this year's Gaudeamus, was organized in a former church, right above the composer's final resting place.

The festival ended with a provocative performance by the Looptail ensemble, who performed Thanasis Deligiannis's work *Thieves*. In a sort of witty, interactive, and dramaturgically dynamic piece of musical theatre, the Greek composer used a cleverly guided quasi-narrative to problematize the phenomenon stolen and the victim of the theft. The work features rather bare-sounding musical lines accompanying dynamic and sonic relations framed by short sentences spoken by the performers, often caricaturing the contents of their speech. Following numerous twists and turns, this ingeniously conceived piece ends with yet another surprise: the performers point the lights at the audience, suggesting that, symbolically speaking, everybody was in fact complicit in this sort of emotive or social crime.

Following this concert, the festival proclaimed its 2016 laureate. The award went to the US artist Anthony Vine, who, according to the jury, stood out by virtue of "his attitude to composition". The work that perhaps best illustrated his compositional procedure, performed at the festival by the Ensemble Modelo62, was *From a Forest of Standing Mirrors*. It is a piece realized in one breath, relatively static in character and featuring a directional type of dramaturgy that entails expanding the potentials of a single sonic impulse. As if in slow motion, the piece features numerous sonic echoes and blurred harmonic movements, with occasional distortions of

its quasi-melodic flow – "quasi-" because the piece is reduced to a bare minimum of movement and the focus is on the very atmosphere that the piece engenders. Although the award could have, perhaps, also gone to Shih-Wei Lo, who demonstrated in his pieces a high degree of musicality and compositional skill, with the most mature approach to the score itself, the choice of Anthony Vine is not surprising. It seems that this artist corresponded to the jury's sensibility and, moreover, to the concept of this year's festival, which, unlike before, did not favour neo-avant-garde or experimental strivings, but spectralism and musical explorations of harmony and inter-tonal relations – and in that sense, Anthony Vine was the most logical choice.

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### **25<sup>th</sup> International Composers' Review**

Unlike some previous editions of the International Composers' Review, last year's 25<sup>th</sup> Review did not have a subtitle that might determine the structure of its pro-

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