

Introduction

UNYAZI

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Abstract

A summary of the first South African electro-acoustic music symposium/festival which took place in Johannesburg, 1-4 September 2005, reviewing its concerts, workshops, and lectures by local and international composers and researchers.

Introduction

South Africa is famous for many things but certainly not for its electronic music production. However, 35 years after the first electroacoustic music studio was constructed around an ARP-2500 synthesizer at the University of Natal, a small but dedicated number of computer music artists has evolved in the Johannesburg-Cape Town-Durban triangle, and university music departments across the country are now offering music technology courses. In 2003, feeling that it was about time to map the scene and to give it a boost simultaneously, NewMusicSA (the South African section of the International Society for Contemporary Music) proposed an electronic music symposium/festival with Dimitri Voudouris in charge of proceedings. After two years of networking, planning and fundraising, UNYAZI (the isiZulu word for lightning) took place 1-4 September 2005 at all three venues of the Wits Theatre complex in Johannesburg, assembling an illustrious group of local and international electronic music practitioners. Diversity was the obvious festival concept.

Halim El-Dabh, who as early as 1944 experimented with a wire recorder in Cairo's radio station, presented some of his vintage works. Among these were *Leiyla and the Poet* for tape, two dancers and two trampolines and *Michael and the Dragon* with trombone by George Lewis, who in his own festival slot performed *At Home in the World* in a trio with jazz drummer Louis Moholo (formerly of the Blue Notes and Brotherhood of Breath) and a laptop computer. Gaudeamus Prize winner Yannis Kyriakides [1] projected *Wordless*, a piece that uses only the pauses between words from various interviews as sound material, and Francisco López massaged a blindfolded audience with high sound pressure levels from eight sub-woofers surrounding the auditorium. Lukas Ligeti gave a virtuoso performance on a Buchla Marimba Lumina, while Matthew Ostrowski controlled his interactive system by means of a data glove. Canadian Maxime Rioux set up a large array of acoustic instruments that were struck, rubbed and scratched by various implements attached to small loudspeakers that in

turn were driven by sub-audio frequencies emanating from Digital Performer tracks. Rodrigo Sigal presented *Digital Ear*, for 8-channel audio and video projection, and Pauline Oliveros performed on her Expanded Instrument System (EIS). Austrian ensembles Schnee and My Kingdom for a Lullaby completed the international contingent.

Contrast was the motto of the South African deputation: The jazz set was represented by Carlo Mombeli and Zim Ngqawana; from the popular music branch Sandra Ndebele, the group Skid and Pops Mohamed put in memorable appearances. Warrick Sony of Kalahari Surfers and Trans Sky represented turntablism, mixing Ladysmith Black Mambazo with Stockhausen, while Toni Oliver exhibited two interactive audiovisual installations: *Waving Window* and *Bridge to the Sun and Other Sonic Tales*. James Webb played *Tokyo Gothic* in complete darkness, Brendon Bussy processed his mandolin with Audiomulch software, Theo Herbst and the Kemus Ensemble experimented with video, Dimitri Voudouris staged a large-scale multimedia work involving the Wits School of Arts Physical Theatre, while Sazi Dlamini, Ulrich Süsse and I explored the combination of African instruments and electronics in *Yinkosi Yeziziba* and anywhere far.

Workshops by several of the festival participants complemented the four days of concerts: Every morning Luc Houtkamp rehearsed with local musicians towards a POW Ensemble performance on the last evening of the festival, Pauline Oliveros demonstrated the Expanded Instrument System and introduced her Deep Listening concept, and Meryl van Noie from Cape Town reported on the Soundhouse's creative audiovisual work with school children.

Two mornings were dedicated to lectures. Abstracts of five selected papers from these sessions are presented on the following pages, with the full articles with audio examples available at, <http://leoalmanac.org/journal/Vol_15/lea_v15_n01-02/>

Four of the papers, each in its own way, deal with North-South relationships and collaborations: Pauline Oliveros recalls her encounter with the Argentinean heavy metal band Reynolds, which resulted in the CD *Pauline Oliveros in the Arms of Reynolds*, a mix of an Oliveros solo concert recording and Reynolds additions. After his collaboration with musicians from Ivory Coast in Beta Foly [2], Lukas Ligeti embarked on another project on the African continent this time in *Burkina Faso: Burkina Electric*. In his paper he explores the aesthetic and creative possibilities of the combination of African musical forms and electronics. Mexican composer Rodrigo Sigal discusses concepts of heritage and identity in Latin American contemporary music including the problem of teaching and judging contemporary composition from a European perspective. Theo Herbst examines the music technology program at the University of Stellenbosch in a South African context, and Matthew Ostrowski investigates the possibilities and implications of mapping databases on to sound as a compositional technique.

References and Notes

1. Yannis Kyriakides was awarded the Gaudeamus Prize in 2000. See www.gaudeamus.nl.
2. See Lukas Ligeti, "Beta Foly: Experiments with Tradition and Technology in West Africa", *Leonardo Music Journal* Vol. 10 (2000).

Author Biography

Jürgen Bräuninger was born in 1956 in Germany and studied in Stuttgart with Ulrich Süsse and Erhard Karkoschka and at San Jose State University, California, with Alan Strange and Daniel Wyman. Since 1985 he has lectured in composition and music technology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. In addition to many compositions for ensembles of acoustic and electronic instruments, he has also contributed to a number of film soundtracks. He has produced South African jazz albums as well as recordings for workers' cultural groups and neo-traditional praise poets. Furthermore, Bräuninger has collaborated with choreographer/director Jay Pather on various Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre productions, among them *Ahimsa-Ubuntu* and *A South African Siddhartha*. Some of his more recent work can be heard on the CD *dUrban Noise and scraps Works*.

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