Although I firmly believe that many of these works deserve praise, what I am more interested in is their being understood and, in consequence, appreciated. The panel I chaired at ICMC 2004 focused on appreciation—something most ICMC artists encounter much too little of. Until we have found a better balance to that "economics" problem introduced above, the place of the post-mortem review is not clear to me. I would prefer to see active musical debate (and distribution) replace the review until the status of appreciation has been improved.

Festival Reviews

Spark Festival of Electronic Music and Art
February 16-20, 2005
University of Minnesota
Brian Kane

Spark 2005, hosted by the University of Minnesota and organized by Douglas Geers, presented a broad array of compositional, conceptual, intellectual and improvisational work in electronic music. Transcending the stylistic and artistic preconceptions that often pigeonhole the vast terrain of electronic music into distinct categories, Spark 2005 presented an exciting, arresting and balanced sampling of recent pieces and research. Spanning four days, the festival included panel discussions; papers on recent research in computer music, technology and aesthetics; concerts of live electroacoustic music, eight-channel tape pieces, multimedia works and improvised sets; installations; lectures and seminars; and demonstrations of new technology.

The keynote artist was composer Philippe Manoury, who lectured on two recent works: *Sound and Fury*, commissioned by the Chicago Symphony, and *K*, his most recent opera based on Kafka's *The Trial*. The majority of the lecture was devoted to explaining the analogies between Faulkner's great novel and Manoury's work. Disregarding any programmatic representation of the novel, Manoury discussed the musical way in which the novel unfolds in time. Through the negation of chronological narrativity, both Faulkner and Manoury unfold events that become fully clarified only as the piece develops. In addition to his lecture, Manoury's *Jupiter*, a seminal piece in the development and application of computer-based score-following techniques, was brilliantly performed by Elizabeth McNutt. Manoury also held a master class seminar where he looked at the work of graduate composers at the University of Minnesota.

As for live performance, some of the festival highlights included a concert of chamber pieces with electronics performed by NeXT Ens, which included works by Burton Beerman, Douglas Geers, Gabriel Ottoson-Deal, Zack Browning and Margaret Schedel. This group is dedicated to performing works of live electronic and computer music, and its musical, intelligent and intense performance reveals a tremendous commitment to their mission. In particular, Shiau-uen Ding, the director and pianist, is a powerful force on the new music scene. Her solo recital, where she

performed a wide variety of pieces by composers James Mobberly, Christopher Bailey, Katherine Norman, Eric Chasalow, Corte Lippe and Jonathan Harvey, was staggering in its sheer breadth. Her handling of Lippe's classic *Music for Piano and Computer* and Harvey's eerie *Tombeau de Messiaen* was truly remarkable: clear, smart, aggressive, precise and lovely. Another excellent concert featured an assortment of electroacoustic works by such composers as Noel Zahler, Alicyn Warren, Butch Rovan, and Anthony Cornicello. In particular, Rovan's work for cello, electronics and video was a true multimedia masterpiece. Based on the poetry of Anne Carson, *Hopper Confessions* simultaneously presents a series of short musical pieces (which beautifully integrated the cello and the electronics) with words and video. Rovan managed to capture the pacing and the feel that one gets while reading poetry silently to oneself by slowly superimposing the text over a video filled with dark and moody images.

In addition to the concerts and performances, many of the papers presented at Spark 2005 were of unusually high quality. Robert Rowe's "Personal Effects: Weaning Interactive Systems from MIDI" addressed the impact of technological obsolescence on the survival of electronic and interactive pieces that are facing imminent extinction from the repertoire. By reconstructing obsolete hardware in environments like MAX/MSP

or in open source code, older pieces can be saved from technological destruction. Scott Miller's paper "Audio Mobiles" explored some exciting new directions in eco-systemic programming based on Agostino Di Scipio's ideas. By using the computer as an autonomous system within the sonic ecology of some given space, Miller creates fascinating sound sculptures that cause and effect changes in the sonic landscape. In addition, his work raises interesting and complex questions about the nature and grounding of aesthetic experience.

Several papers on Friday morning's session addressed aspects of Pierre Schaeffer's work. Marcus Bittencourt used Schaeffer's criteria for musical instruments as a framework within which to create an unusual virtual instrument—a "Tusk Harp" that he uses in his radio-opera entitled *KA*. George Brunner's lecture on the evolution and development of Text Sound traced the origins of this fascinating movement back to Schaeffer and some of his original premises and goals concerning *musique concréte*. These premises were challenged in this reviewer's own presentation on Schaeffer and the philosophical origins of *musique concréte*.

With a new generation of composers, and with the general increase in access to recording technology, the line between popular music and academic electronic music is beginning to vanish. One of the great virtues of Spark 2005 was the

way it wove these two strands seamlessly together. The festival began with an opening lecture by DJ Spooky, who has managed to straddle both the academic and popular worlds through sheer musical and intellectual force. But it is clear that DJ Spooky is not alone. In fact, many of the events and performances at Spark were engaged, directly or indirectly, with popular music. J. Anthony Allen, Margaret Schedel, Per Bloland and Robert Hamilton held a round-table discussion on the problems facing the young composer today. Not surprisingly, much of the discussion was centered around the role and influences of popular music on young composers versus the academic pressures to produce autonomous art music. But what was surprising was the way in which the festival, through its vast array of performances of widely divergent styles and its appropriation of non-academic performance spaces, made the question moot. In particular, each night of the festival was capped off by a set of experimental performances held in a casual setting. Some memorable performances were J. Anthony Allen's set of music for drum, bass, electronics and video, an improvised set by Seji Takahasi and Michi Yokota, and an evening featuring Keith O'Brien and some local DJs.

Even within the usual electroacoustic and chamber music setting, a few pieces stood out because of the manner in which they tied the academic and the popular together.

Josh Clausen, a young composer studying in Minneapolis, created dense, aggressive and funky rhythms based on pre-recorded phonemes in his eight-channel piece *Phoneme Play*. Zack Browning's *Secret Pulse* for flute, violin, cello and computer generated sound applied magic squares onto musical structures such as density, timbre, rhythm, style and orchestration. The result is a collage of rapid crosscuts, evoking the flashy production of pop music and the jagged complexity of Frank Zappa.

In surveying the variety of artistic and intellectual activity presented at Spark 2005, one clear theme emerged: the issue of mapping in music. For example, how can some set of originally non-musical data be mapped onto musical parameters? This question was explored by three works in particular: Michael Berkowski's *Species*, Craig A. Coburn's lecture on musical landscapes and satellite data, and Henrik Frisk's *etherSound*. In *Species*, Berkowski takes John Conway's classic "Game of Life" algorithm and maps its generations of cells onto harmonic partials, creating giant spectral structures that evolve over time into more or less stable states. Coburn's work, based on satellite images taken over Canadian cities, takes another approach to parametric mapping. Each pixel of the image, which possesses five different parameters (three for color, two for location), is mapped onto musical

parameters, transforming these images into a riotous and dynamic player piano. Frisk's *etherSound* installation allows the audience to send a text message to a computer that maps their message into a stretch of sound. The transformations are based on factors such as the number of words in the message, syllables per word, vowel sounds, and other phonological data. Some technical problems arose due to the differences between European and American cell phone protocols, but in an ideal setting, the work would allow the audience members a unique opportunity to investigate the nature of the mapping through trial and error.

In all of these works, the mapping of parameters from one domain to another was much like an act of translation. Other works handled the question of mapping differently, moving towards an artistic investigation that seemed more akin to poetic metaphor than translation. Dennis Miller's *faktura*, a work for sound and video, presented a continuously evolving series of virtual textured landscapes paired with musical soundscapes. Both the audio and the video were on equal footing here, one mutually supporting the other, highlighting similarities between the aural and the tactile senses. In Margaret Schedel's *Cassini Division*, written for cello, violin, flute, percussion, bowed piano, electronics and video, a different balance was struck between the aural and the visual. Here,

a single video image is superimposed upon itself and transformed over time based on information gathered from the performers. The visual impression of a single, slowly transforming object was the perfect complement to the music, which explored an extremely reduced palate of sound objects in an astonishing variety of ways. Finally, the *60x60 Project* premiered a video accompaniment to the collection of sixty short tape pieces, each one minute in length. Video artist Shimpei Takeda worked with a series of visual motives, mostly taken from rural and urban landscapes, transforming the piece from a compilation into a "meta-composition." The imagery, which focused intensely on specific aspects of the landscape, acted like a well-chosen metaphor for the music, which was also constrained to a small amount of material due to the formal limits of composing a one-minute piece. In many respects, Takeda's visuals, as sophisticated and modern as they were, also reminded this reviewer of the classic short film by Ray and Charles Eames where an asphalt playground is being washed down; both reveal the unexpected beauty and complexity of the common visual landscape.

In conclusion, Spark 2005 was a tremendous success, and the credit goes to Douglas Geers (with the help of his students) and the University of Minnesota. If, in future years, the Spark festival

continues to present a large variety of high-quality works and papers, there is no doubt that it will become one of the nation's premiere festivals for new work in electronic music and art.

Electronic Music Midwest
September 16-18, 2004
Lewis University
Doug Geers

The sixth Electronic Music Midwest festival happened September 16-18, 2004 in Romeoville, Illinois (USA), south of Chicago. Organized by Mike McFerron (Lewis University), Paul Rudy (University of Missouri-Kansas City), Connie Mayfield (Kansas City Community College), Ian Corbett (Kansas City Community College), and Jay C. Batzner (University of Missouri-Kansas City), this festival alternates its location annually, and was hosted this time by Mike McFerron at Lewis University.

Presented with a particular interest in the theme of globalization, EMM 2004 consisted of eight concerts, several paper sessions, a roundtable discussion, and a special opening event meant to reach out to non-aficionados of electroacoustic music. Guest artists included a large number of composers and performers from across the world, and featured composer Kevin Austin (Concordia University) and a concert by the Cincinnati-based NeXT Ens.

The theme of globalization was integrated into the festival as part of an ongoing series of events at Lewis University called "The Many Faces of Globalization." With this theme in mind, the first event of the festival on the evening of September 16 was the "EMM/Globalization Welcoming Concert," a two-hour presentation by Kevin Austin that could loosely be called a lecture. However, Austin's presentation style, as well as his use of both sound and video, gave the evening an atmosphere more like a variety show, albeit a thoughtful and intellectual one (if such things exist). Austin strode, stalked, and even danced in the Philip Lynch Theater as he spoke about the changes that globalization and electroacoustic sound reproduction have brought to music since their inception, making extensive use of diverse audio and video examples. The audience included many Lewis University faculty and students of various majors. Music played during this concert included recordings of traditional Chinese music played on MIDI instruments, a video of the Twelve Girls Band playing a medley of classical themes, Hugh LeCaine's *Dripsody*, Max Mathews's 1958 realization of *Bicycle Built for Two*, readings by Jack Kerouac, James Joyce, and Dylan Thomas, and more.

After this opening presentation, the remaining concerts featured a wide variety of works, including music for live performers with electronics, pieces