
EDITORIAL

I

Working with other artists or across sensory disciplines offers challenges and rewards very different from those encountered working in isolation or in a single art form. Crosstalk between artists or between fields is growing in popularity as artists seek to expand their immersive capabilities and engage audiences in multiple dimensions. Arts funding organisations and promoters, as well as universities, are actively encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations, especially those involving new technologies. Technology can serve as a catalyst for collaboration – enabling data to be shared quickly and easily, acting as a translator between different realms, or simply functioning as a common bond between artists working in disparate media.

Many artists enjoy working with others, while some find that sharing creative control can be a frustrating experience. The competing visions of several strong personalities can certainly lead to conflict, but can also result in works that transcend the imagination of any single creator. The process of resolving disputes, of being forced to think in new, mutually compatible directions, is an inherent part of the collaborative adventure. This journey often results in unusually unique work from artists inspiring each other, as dialogue and enhanced perspective ideally lead to holistic resolution. Alternately, when an artist works across media independently, the final result may be similar to a collaborative artwork, but the process is very different, with the primary difficulty being a balanced expertise in each medium. However, adherence to a personal vision can achieve equally profound results, as an intermedia artist seizes the opportunity for multifaceted expression and strives for a more persuasively realised creative reality.

This issue is the third in a series of collaborations between *Organised Sound* and the International Computer Music Association (ICMA). The ICMA is one of the few organisations to integrate research, composition and performance – the crucial components of advancing both the art and science of computer music. The annual International Computer Music Conference (ICMC) brings together exceptional practitioners in these disciplines to share their work and inspiration, epitomising this synergistic ideal. Performance of

intermedia and collaborative works has been a growing trend in recent conferences, yet there has not been a commensurate increase in the number of papers published on the aesthetics and techniques of these approaches. In this issue we strive to diminish that gap with articles describing a number of collaborations which formally address the challenges and rewards of collective artistic endeavour. Every story of intermedia and collaboration is distinct. We present here eight such stories of crossing traditional artistic boundaries, as the authors explore their roles in the shared process of creation.

J. Anthony Allen describes collaborating with a fire-dancer in his recent composition *Firewire*, focusing on the interaction between dancer and computer operator/composer during the creative process and performance. ‘Playing with fire: an unexpected collaboration’ details this partnership forged at the intersection of experimental music and dance. In *Firewire*, the sound arises directly from the flames themselves, spatially controlled by the dancer and processed by the computer operator/composer in real-time. This arrangement required adaptation by both partners, the musician relinquishing some control over the audio, and the dancer developing acute awareness of acoustic as well as physical presence.

The next paper also relates a collaborative duet, between performers and sound engineers in various realisations of Kaija Saariaho’s flute music. Taina Riikonen’s ‘Shared sounds in detached movements: flautist identities inside the “local-field” spaces’ is an in-depth exploration of a frequently overlooked relationship. This thoughtful paper examines collaboration through the lens of two theoretical approaches: that of ‘local/field’ concepts by Simon Emmerson, and the philosophy of narrative identity developed by Paul Ricoeur. The article investigates experiences of control and identity through interviews with both flautists and sound technicians.

Christopher Bailey’s ‘An interface for “Flat Music”’ explores another neglected collaboration – that of audience and composer. His composition, *Sand*, a twenty-five-minute long work for computer-synthesised and processed sounds, was composed specifically to be experienced via a computer-music

interface. This paper explains Bailey's interpretation and definition of Flat Music, how he came to terms with it as a listener, and how this resolution spawned the idea and construction of the interface. He believes his composition is best experienced directly as software, in a one-on-one confrontation between listener and composition with the interface acting as mediator.

Randall Packer also describes a computer interface, a multimedia instrument called 'Pavilion 21'. His project is based on original designs of the Pepsi Pavilion created by members of Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) in 1970. The new pavilion is conceived as a public sculpture for constructing worlds of the imagination that defy the constraints of physical laws and everyday reality, revealing to the audience in the most extravagant manner what reality might be, given the tools and minds to reshape it. *'The Pavilion: Into the 21st Century: a space for reflection'* is an essay on the history of the original pavilion and the collaboration involved in creating a new complex audio/visual environment that extends and distributes the notion of collective, non-hierarchical, audience participation into virtual, networked space with a programmable, interactive multimedia performance instrument.

While Packer assembled a diverse team to implement 'Pavilion 21', Edison Studio is comprised of four artists in the same discipline, working as one with similar skills and tools. In 'Collective composition: the case of Edison Studio', the authors describe the process that leads to the collective composition of live computer soundtracks to silent movies. They describe their work methodology, pre-production, production and performance, as well as analyse and explain their choices and what they have learned as a result. Edison Studio asserts that audio technology has provided them with the potential to create a synchrony of styles, an open collaboration without pre-established roles or schemes.

Virgil Moorefield and Jeffrey Weeter present another fixed group of collaborators without pre-established roles in 'The Lucid Dream Ensemble: a laboratory of discovery in the age of convergence'. The ensemble consists mainly of composers working in an audiovisual context towards the development of shared language across media. The authors describe adoption of a computing model of distributed intelligence as a means of social organisation within the ensemble. In performance, both the audio and visual components are created in real-time, producing a kind of sensory overload tank, their own version of an immersive experience.

In 'The Meta-Orchestra: research by practice in group multi-disciplinary electronic arts', Yolande Harris writes about a very different kind of creative collection. The Meta-Orchestra does not constitute a fixed group of people or specific roles; it exists in any variation with changing members and an essentially

multi-disciplinary character. This paper investigates several instantiations of the orchestra on three levels: the social, the technical and the aesthetic. The article concludes with a descriptive section on the recent meeting of the Meta-Orchestra, which connects the initial theoretical discussions to a practical situation.

The final paper in this issue focuses almost entirely on practical considerations. Christopher Watts calls for curriculum changes in the arts to support collaboration between disciplines, especially where technology is involved. Watts believes education in the arts runs the risk of losing its relevance if it fails to address the interdisciplinary and collaborative possibilities of digital technologies. 'Mixing things up: collaboration, converging disciplines, and the music curriculum' is a frank discussion of the challenges facing the development of courses integrating collaboration and technology. Watts describes his own forays into intermedia education, a course called 'Collaboration across the Arts'. While none of the projects thereof reached the level of complexity described elsewhere in this issue, this personal perspective still serves as a welcome reminder of the importance of education in the continuing struggle to advance the potential of unifying arts, artists and technologies.

In this issue we have brought together eight distinctive papers addressing the aesthetics and techniques of collaboration and intermedia. Ideally, this publication will engender further formal discussion about the practice and potential of artistic crosstalk, as technology continues to facilitate interconnection across the spectrum of creators, disciplines and media. As we learn new artistic languages or translate between them for the benefit of expanding our understanding, we must communicate our ideas to others in order to collectively shape an artistic vision. Collaboration and intermedia reflect a perspective that art is life, an endeavour of community, relationships, and interconnected ecology that form a complete artistic landscape without limits or ownership.

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II

This ICMA issue of *Organised Sound* continues a tradition commenced in our issue 5(3) (12/00) which included a number of papers from that year's International Computer Music Conference (ICMC, Berlin) panels and workshops. At this year's ICMC (Miami), I chaired a panel focusing on access and appreciation issues concerning electroacoustic (computer) music. Borrowing the conference's 'Expanding Horizons' theme, the panel's title was 'Are our expanded

horizons leading us to new audiences?'. Panel members were to address the following statement:

Computer music, electroacoustic music or however you call the body of work in which music and digital technology are intertwined is decades old. Other than its more popular variants, how has this combination aided our creative work's being appreciated by an audience larger than our peers? Should we be restricting our musical community or looking to broaden it and, if so, how?

I must admit that I have vested interests in the subject area and am therefore writing a more personal editorial than usual. The panel proposal was a follow-up of a paper I had given at the ICMC 1990 (in Glasgow).¹ The public discussion that took place during this session was so enthusiastic that a second session was scheduled to allow for its continuation. Almost a decade and a half later, have things improved? My point of departure was that digital sound is everywhere, but electroacoustic music, the most used term in this journal for the relevant body of work, five and a half decades old, is still having teething problems in most countries in terms of its acceptance.

Rosemary Mountain, Meg Schedel and Joel Chadabe all answered my invitation with enthusiasm and include their thoughts within this issue. It is remarkable how this basic issue can be looked at from such highly different angles. Meg Schedel is aware of the fact that contemporary art seems to be reaching a much larger public than contemporary art music, including certain varieties of computer music. Her suggestion is that musicians consider presenting their wares as sound art in non-concert hall situations and offers three examples to support her point of view. Rosemary Mountain has offered us her talk in the form of a full article. Her exploration concerns possible strategies for appraising electroacoustic and computer music to enhance 'marketability'. Where my premise (see below) that the art of sounds is in dire need of a re-categorisation of music, her goal is to acknowledge salient features of these works that correspond to existent musical contexts, in particular aesthetic ones. In consequence, she argues that the marketing of these works through their adherence to various technological developments is not the ideal means of propagating them. Finally, Joel Chadabe concludes the issue on an optimistic note. Running through computer music's history, he sees clear opportunities of gaining a broader community through education and participation. His conclusion is that '[i]t is far healthier for us to engage a new and large public of practitioners, already open to ideas and experimentation and receptive to new sounds, than to view ourselves as the marginalized defenders of concert halls with empty stages'.

¹Is more than three decades of computer music reaching the public it deserves?', *Int. Computer Music Conf. Glasgow Proc.*, pp. 369–72. ICMC, 2000.

As we all know, digital sound *is* ubiquitous. It is perhaps this fact that makes the lack of acceptance of at least part of the electroacoustic repertoire seem so odd. Clearly, when this type of music is heard (by stealth?) in appropriate audio-visual contexts, it is digested without difficulty. When presented on a fixed medium or in concert form, there are (too) few takers. Is this a necessary state of affairs?

I have spent a good deal of the last decade and a half investigating why we are in this state of affairs and whether it is necessary. In my first book,² I concluded that much of the problem concerning the lack of our music's acceptance had to do with education, particularly at lower levels, ignoring innovative (art) music and, simultaneously, the communications media doing the same. With no obvious means to discover this oeuvre, how do people gain access?

That said, I also suggested that musicians might consider meeting the outside world halfway, lobbying to better the situations in education and the media. Furthermore, the notion of the composer's lending a helping hand to potential listeners was suggested. The two means of help I discovered during this period can be captured in the terms, the 'something to hold on to factor'³ in electroacoustic music and the music's dramaturgy.⁴ The former was originally developed from the listener's, that is, esthetic point of view. When a work offers a tangible musical aspect that an inexperienced listener can follow, then perhaps (s)he has less difficulty coming to grips with something new. The dramaturgy, that is the artist's articulation of intention, the 'why' of a work, is another way to help people cross the threshold of access to such musical works. Today, I am convinced that this combination that is, the dramaturgy of a work can also be something to hold on to – offers an excellent means to address this fundamental question of appreciation.

But this is easy to write from my armchair. What is more difficult is to go out and prove these ideas. It is with this in mind that the Music, Technology and Innovation Group at De Montfort university embarked upon its Intention/Reception project, currently spearheaded by Ph.D. student, Rob Weale.⁵ This project investigates not only whether listeners coming from

²*What's the Matter with Today's Experimental Music? Organized Sound Too Rarely Heard*. Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991.

³This notion was launched in: 'The "something to hold on to factor" in electroacoustic timbral composition', *Contemporary Music Review* 10(2): 49–60, 1994.

⁴In fact this particular usage of dramaturgy was launched in the 1990 ICMC paper – please refer to footnote 1.

⁵Measuring intention against reception in electroacoustic music: a new opportunity for analysis', in *Proc. Int. Computer Music Conf. Havana*, pp. 26–9, ICMC, 2001. Both Weale and I are planning further publications in 2005–2006 now that the research is in an advanced phase. The Intention/Reception project has been inspired by the work of Andra McCartney who has done many experiments in electroacoustic music involving participants coming from diverse backgrounds.

a variety of experience levels receive composers' intentions; more importantly, it tries to identify to what extent this information aids in terms of the appreciation of relevant electroacoustic works. The word 'relevant' in this sentence deserves to be treated with care. Currently we have restricted ourselves to works that include real-world references in the main, i.e. there is already something for listeners to hold on to in these sonic works, (some of) the material.

This editorial is not the place to describe this project at length (although those attending the panel did receive a fairly good impression of the project's methodology). Suffice to say that compositions ranging from straightforward soundscape works to electroacoustic compositions involving sophisticated sound transformations were seen to be of interest by the majority of participants in all tests run thus far. In other words, if our society offered appropriate means of access, including opportunities to be creative in this field, appreciation would grow accordingly, especially in terms of works where listeners indeed find something or things to hold on to in terms of their coming to grips with what it is communicating and/or its specific content. In short, my answer to the panel's title is an unequivocal 'no'.

One issue raised at the ICMC session, and one that *Organised Sound* must return to again and again, is the music's placement. If the sounds are ubiquitous, might it also be true that our art music / pop music categories might not be the obvious starting points for the placement of sonic works? If this assumption is true, how might these works be categorised ideally? Might the works being categorised in a more relevant manner help them reach more listeners? Your answers are most welcome by way of the journal's e-mail address.

I would like to thank Meg Schedel for her work on the exciting theme of this ICMA issue and remind readers that these themes are not one-offs. Please feel free to submit work concerning collaborative or intermedia developments at any time. *Organised Sound* is also always open to any submission within its scope. I would like to let readers know that next year's ICMA theme is to be *Networked Music*. 'Networked' is to be seen in any capacity ranging from the Internet to any other means of distributed music making. A call will have been distributed by the time the issue is printed, but interested readers should contact us at os@dmu.ac.uk if they would still like to receive the call.

Leigh Landy