
EDITORIAL

Language

This issue of *Organised Sound* presents research from this year's Electroacoustic Music Studies Network's Conference, EMS06, in Beijing. The conference was to focus on the theme of language, that is, the language of electroacoustic music. Very soon, a major aspect of the field became evident: as electroacoustic music becomes a global phenomenon, and not just the concern of a few developed countries, the alignment of terminology (multilingual) with domain concepts comes to the fore. What is called for is a community-wide (open) knowledge organisation strategy for electroacoustic music, enabled by next-generation Web technologies, using both ontologic and folksonomic methods. EARS, the ElectroAcoustic Resouce Site, is perhaps the best example of such an effort in an early stage.

As China, India, Southeast and Central Asia, and Eastern Europe, etc., begin to localise new concepts in the fields of the electronic arts, they are pressed to search for internal linguistic precedents rather than being inundated by ready-made terminology systems. Of course, such periods usher in a very creative time for artists and scholars. Another positive aspect of localisation is that attention is drawn to neglected regional histories, even more so if literate/objective visiting ethno-electroacoustic musicologists provoke internal controversies among aural/subjective perspectives. It would be a great loss if centres of more developed practice were not to recognise broadly relevant research opportunities reflected in such localisation issues, and by and large, the turnout at the MusicAcoustica Festival / EMS Conference 2006 in Beijing showed this not to be the case.

The conference was hosted jointly by the Electronic Music Association of China (EMAC) at China's Central Conservatory of Music's Center for Electronic Music (CEMC) and the Electroacoustic Music Studies Network (EMS). Expressed both in scholarly papers and in music performances, the breadth of subjects was impressive: translation, ontology, semantics, categorisation, terminology, semiotics, narrative, history, phonetics, representation, pedagogy and more.¹ A selection of representative papers is presented in this issue of

Organised Sound. This is not to say that there still was much missing below the surface in this collection. For me, this signals a latent potential and further calling in the thread of this research.

Perhaps the initial impetus that began this theme and pilgrimage of EMS people to Beijing was the project of translating the *Computer Music Tutorial* by Curtis Roads into Chinese. This project could not possibly have been as straightforward as that of the French translation because China has a minimum of academic infrastructure in the discipline of electroacoustic music. The Japanese translation may have helped if it were not for the fact that Japan transliterates most Western terminology; the Chinese language does not afford this method. Thus, Chinese characters play an important aspect in terminology derivation. The term 'computer music' was itself a problem: should it be translated as 'electronic brain music' or 'calculator music'? It is not a straightforward issue for an English speaker to participate in the discussion. Nor for that matter has that term been an unproblematic one in the English language: should we use the term electronic music, computer music, electroacoustic music, acousmatic, etc.? One of the most ironic of options was the translation of the term 'Max Language' into 'Marx Language' (dialectical oriented programming). The book will be used as the first comprehensive textbook in China on the subject.

Terminology is the footprint of an expert community; a word/term is the artifactual evidence of a living concept or thing. To get a 'handle' then on words, to utilise the potential which the new Neo Science (the semantic web) affords, would be to tame the conceptual domain; that is a possible working hypothesis anyway. The intention of the Beijing gathering was a language summit, both a practical call to explore the application of new language processing techniques in the service of knowledge management, and also a more speculative thread is hinted at for the future – in exploring how Web 2.0 techniques might be applied to electroacoustic music 2.0 (tagging, metadata, syndication, autonomy, mobility, peer models).

The papers gathered for this issue seem to lend themselves to being grouped under their appropriate -logia: ontology (Fields), semiology (Atkinson), morphology (Patton, Thoresen, Beaudoin), historiography

¹For an overview of the conference and paper abstracts for MusicAcoustica/EMS 2006, see: <<http://cemc.daohaus.org/tiki-index.php?page=MusicAcoustica2006>> and <http://www.ems-network.org/article.php3?id_article=8>

(Zagaykevych and Zavada, Wahid), and last but not least, laptopology (Trueman).

The article by Ken Fields, co-organiser of Musicacoustica/EMS 2006, on Categories, Ontologies and Folksonomies gives an overview of the possibilities in the current realm of Internet-based classification practices. An example of a computer music ontology is constructed – if only for the purpose of conveying the difficulties involved in solo specification efforts; a domain ontology requires a sustained community effort (*à la* Semantic Wikipedia) which has not been forthcoming in the field of electroacoustic music. The indication is that the terminology game has gone nuclear and there are powerful new technologies, strategies and discourses waiting to be addressed. Open collaborative work lies at the heart of the issue.

Simon Atkinson offers a fruitful critique of semiotic approaches; he does so through the lens of an ‘ecological’ theory, which emphasises the relationship between a perceiver and the environment while stressing context (social). Furthermore, in the laboratory of the acousmatic situation we are presented with a very pure affordance of experimentation with subject-centred listening and interpretation – instead of “‘authoritative’ accounts of musical meaning’. From the perspective of the individual, Atkinson moves into a discussion of social context (contextualities), as ‘textual approaches may offer means of accessing broader relations between works’. We end comfortably in the resonance of multitextualities – emanating from a simple sound source.

Kevin Patton’s paper outlines a system for interactive computer music notation that links 3D typo-morphological representations of sound to the system of spectromorphology developed by Denis Smalley. Patton’s extension to the field makes use of a Z-plane to represent more fully the spectral space and motion and growth processes of sound objects. This primarily theoretical paper introduces the qualitative aspects of the problem and leaves open the challenging technical issues which are sure to follow in this important area of inquiry. There is adequate development here, however, to kick-off a discussion contrasting the musical circumstances under which and for what cognitive intention acoustic qualia or quanta need alternatively to be emphasised. The categories alluded to in this discussion cover significant terrain.

Lasse Thorensen’s deep involvement with Schaeffer’s typo-morphology from the late 1970s gives the reader of this article a confidence that the knowledge has been lived with. Thorensen has developed a notational system that aims to build a practical bridge to Schaeffer’s grand, though unwieldy theory of sound. He introduces utility on both ends of the spectrum: by reducing the complexity of the conceptual and terminological system and by working with a shorthand graphical language to represent the concepts. Issues that surround the concept

of reductionism would be *pertinent* to a critique of the article, while the functional use of discrete graphic notational symbols versus the continuous, qualitative type of representation described above in Kevin Patton’s article, would also invite discussion. The terminology and categories revisited in this article are thorough and systematic.

Richard Beaudoin presents a technical analysis of Ussachevsky’s *Wireless Fantasy*. The paper follows Patton’s and Thorensen’s in its consideration of both morphological and traditional approaches to notation of electroacoustic music while pointing out how the lack of traditional score (representation) places this piece (and most electroacoustic music) outside the scope of traditional music theory. Thus it is most interesting to follow how he proceeds to wield a very traditional style of discourse with the intention of bringing the piece back into the fold of traditional music theory. Beaudoin outlines the two main aspects of the piece; Ussachevsky’s treatment of Morse code in its ambivalent role as meaningful code or sonic event and the rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint of source material. This paper was submitted independently of the EMS06 conference.

Zagaykevych and Zavada’s paper is a cultural and historical contextualisation of electroacoustic music through twentieth-century Ukraine. The authors do an admirable job in sorting out a familiar scenario: global influences (ideas and technology) impact artists in a specific social reality (authoritarian politics and conservative institutions for the most part) while a strong internal pursuit to identify elements of a national artistic style results in a unique story. History-making is a fascinating process, a reflection of what happened, what was remembered, but mostly what was written and published. Beyond the expected local experiments with major trends such as *musique concrète* and commercial synthesizers, it is the unique events that begin to make a solid history: the Warsaw Spring Festival in 1956, the Russian translation of Marvin Minsky which inspired a framework for music analysis. Finally, it is noted how electroacoustic music terminology was for the most part directly borrowed or transliterated from the English language – which, given the strong French and Russian influence, is interesting.

Hasnizam Abdul Wahid surveys the brief (late 1990s) Malaysian involvement with electroacoustic music – a term that in itself suggests a high water mark of knowledge and sophistication. Wahid cites the influence of the electronic visual arts in raising awareness of the field though the work of the University of Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), the National Art Gallery, and an online platform called E-Art ASEAN Online. An Electroacoustic Group (EAG) was established at the University of Malaysia Sarawak in 1997. Music and technology courses were established at UNIMAS and the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). A prominent

feature of Malaysian music practice is that it is imbued with 'communal, participative and lively performing qualities ...' (shadow puppet play, picture recitation and improvisation). It will be most interesting to follow the development of electroacoustic music in such a context.

Dan Trueman discusses the issues and challenges of forming the Princeton Laptop Orchestra (PLOrk). While one laptop is essentially an orchestra in itself, an orchestra of orchestras is seemingly a paradox. Performance with laptops is standard now in our field, while the success of the form, in terms of presenting visually exciting spectacle, is the issue on the table. The musical problems encountered by the project are some of the most interesting in the field: synchronisation over wireless networks, sound projection/separation, live coding, timbre strategies, suitable compositions for the genre, interfaces/controllers, managing the overall mix (before the conductor's role), and what degree of automation to apply (algorithmic/generative). Why a

laptop orchestra; because it is possible and it's communal. As in the case of Beaudoin, this paper was submitted independently of the EMS06 conference.

In closing, a welcome aspect of the Musicacoustica/EMS conference was that it attracted neglected areas of interdisciplinary collaboration to the field of electroacoustic music: semantic web, collaborative communities, social software platforms and methodologies, ontology and pragmatics. This year, Criticalartware² was honoured for their presentation on the development of a Wiki platform called Liken which yields community semantics. This paper can be read on the EMS website (see below) or in an article soon to appear in *Leonardo Journal*. The strength of the EMS Network is that it invites contribution from non-electroacoustic music-specific topics which contribute to the field.

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²Criticalartware, <<http://criticalartware.net>>