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Reflections on Music Programming for Conferences: The Case of SMC 2009

We see emerging, piecemeal and with the greatest ambiguity, the seeds of a new noise, one exterior to the institutions and customary sites of political conflict. A noise of Festival and Freedom, it may create the conditions for a major discontinuity extending far beyond its field. It may be the essential element in a strategy of emergence of a truly new society (Attali 1985, p. 132).

In his still-pertinent text *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, first published in 1977, Jacques Attali foresaw an era he called *Composition*, in which technological developments would lead to an increase in musical instrument construction and the spread of musical practice outside the canonical ways of presenting and distributing music. According to him, this would lead not to a new music but to a “new way of making music” (p. 134).

Attali foresaw the resurgence of the medieval *jongleurs*, musicians wandering from town to town presenting their own music, and the decreased institutionalized control over music that was produced and presented. Attali's stunning premonition was based on the problems the mechanical reproduction of music was posing to its face value as a cultural asset, the (by then) emerging interest in creating new musical instruments, and how free jazz had already emerged as a style against the institutionalized codes of music-making. The only thing he did not

predict at the time was the role the Internet would have in contributing to the new “noise of Festival and Freedom.”

No doubt we live fully immersed in the Attalian Composition era at the dawn of this millennium. Making music is at everyone's reach through the use of computers, electronic devices, mobile phones, game controllers, etc. There is an unprecedented increase in electronic instrument creation either by using do-it-yourself technologies (e.g., by employing sensors connected to digitizing devices, or by hacking electronic circuits), by adapting all kinds of devices to music performance (e.g., the Wii controller or the iPhone), or even by the effort of established musical instrument manufacturers in creating novel interfaces for music performance (e.g., Yamaha's Tenori-on). Electronic music has followed a path that is shifting progressively from fixed-format representation of works to be played back in concerts to live performances using all kinds of interfaces, sometimes interacting with live performers playing traditional instruments, in which an improvisatory element is ever more present.

The World Wide Web has become an important repository of knowledge, making it simple to acquire highly specialized information on virtually any aspect related to electronic music composition and training. The Web has also become an unprecedented source for accessing tools for music-making and a preferred channel for musical diffusion. The seamless access to specialized information and easy-to-operate tools has led to communities of musicians gathering in Web

forums to discuss sophisticated issues about electronic music-making—for example, Cycling 74's discussion forum (<http://cycling74.com/forums/>) or Peter Kirn's blog on digital music creation (<http://createdigitalmusic.com>).

Furthermore, the emergence of places outside of academic institutions where musicians and nonmusicians can go and informally learn about new technologies for electronic music creation, like STEIM in Amsterdam, Harvestworks in New York, or Casa da Música's Digitopia in Porto (Penha et al. 2008), contributes to educating specialists in the field of electronic music who do not necessarily come through traditional educational institutions nor from a traditional musical background. Yet members from these virtual and physical communities often produce work that is artistically relevant and cutting-edge, and often this work is presented outside the institutionalized sites of music performance (for example, Merzbow, Ryoji Ikeda, and Kaffe Matthews).

Aside from the multitude of musical practices one can identify in both academic and non-academic worlds, the advent of digital technology has turned the field of music technology into a complex multidisciplinary area of activity. There is no common language uniting researchers and practitioners of music technology, just as there is no single idiom inherent in the technology itself. This potentially poses challenges for the organizing of conferences where specialists in the research of music technology gather to share and discuss aspects in the evolution of technology and musical practice. The first challenge is the question of what kind of specialists the event is addressing.

It has not been surprising to see, in the past ten years, a profusion of specialized conferences addressing different aspects of music technology: the International Conference on New Interfaces for Musical Expression (NIME), the International Symposium [or Conference] on Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR), the International Symposium on Computer Music Modeling and Retrieval (CMMR), the Sound and Music Computing Conference (SMC), etc. These conferences address several aspects of the complexity of the field of music technology, which by definition com-

prises arts and humanities as well as scientific disciplines. As a result of the makeup of this fragmented field, one might argue it is necessary to simultaneously address multiple aspects of the discipline with a mixture of what are traditionally regarded as “scientific and artistic programs.” This approach would articulate how the field is ultimately dependent on these two approaches' feeding off each other in a fluid and complex dialogue. This dialogue involving two distinct modes of presentation is not always present at conferences in the field. For example, ISMIR, even though focusing on certain technologies that are utilized in electronic music performance, still does not carry a musical program that is presented as the result of a call for musical works. Clearly, one could find an analogous omission in music festivals that do not present aspects of music-related research except those manifest in practice itself.

If one assumes that specialist conferences in music technology should have a representative counterpart music program that displays cutting-edge technology and the current variety of practices in the academic and non-academic world and that, at the same time, tries to engage with the general public to aim at a broader audience for the music program, the approach to take for selecting the musical works is just one part in a complex set of possibilities. Recent changes in the nature of the specialist practitioner, and in the nature of musical practice itself, combined with the political/economical model under which these specialist conferences have flourished, pose pertinent questions for the selection of a program that encompasses diversity and audience engagement. Although it is clear that vivid discussion occurs at the time of the organization of each event, there is a remarkable lack of literature and wider discussion on this issue. In this article, we address these issues through our experience with the organization of the musical programs for SMC 2009 and the 2008 International Computer Music Conference (ICMC), combined with statements gathered from senior members of the community with extensive experience in programming such events.

The Conference-Plus-Festival Format

The desire to include the presentation of music in a conference dealing with technical, aesthetic, or cultural aspects of that same music seems to be widespread. Music presentation sessions (sometimes in the form of concerts, but not exclusively) offer a welcome break from endless paper sessions and provide the delegates with opportunities for venue swapping. An important aspect of music presentation is the opportunity it provides for public engagement. Either through association with particular venues or production organizations, conferences often feature public-facing events which are clearly aimed at the wider dissemination of work brought together in the conference itself. The introduction of the public in addition to conference delegates raises significant presentation questions. How can a specialist area of activity be simultaneously presented for specialists and the public as an audience? In contrast to categorized and themed paper sessions, the conference concert often aims to be all-encompassing and open, perhaps akin to the role of keynote addresses, which often focus on general issues that might be of interest to a wider audience.

Assuming that the conference concert takes on this wider role, with both delegates and the public as its audience, how does one go about programming such events? For the moment, let us assume that the programming of these events is preceded by an open call for works which generates a pool of materials supposedly representative of current artistic practice in a community defined by the conference itself. What is the balance between the requirement of programming an event that can be understood by the public and the need to represent current practice through a cross-section of submitted work? Moreover, what are the strategies to be implemented in order to program artists who are outside the academic sphere associated with such conferences?

In a review of the 2008 Seoul International Computer Music Festival, Jeremy Baguyos points out the advantages of an uncluttered schedule of one concert per day as providing a better environment for composers and performers through extended

rehearsal and a selection process that programmed 15 out of 80 submitted works.

[A]ll composers, performers, and concert organizers are after the same ultimate goal, concert performance of high quality, and this was achieved through the choice of limiting the numbers of concerts and increasing the amount of resources for adequate preparation ... (Baguyos 2009)

The Florida Electroacoustic Music Festival has programmed both juried and non-juried concerts which, for example, in 2008 included a curated "studio concert." "Most of the composers attending are at the professional and faculty level, with approximately 30 percent of the program comprising works from graduate students in composition and electronic music" (Dotson 2008).

An interesting hybrid model when it comes to selection is practiced by the International Symposium of Electronic Arts, which relies on anonymous peer review (at a preliminary selection stage) for the creation of a shortlist which is then refined and programmed by an international curator in partnership with the local organizers.

The relationship between an academic conference and a public festival was a key aspect in the organization of the ICMC 2008 at the Sonic Arts Research Centre in Belfast, which was co-hosted by the Sonorities Festival of Contemporary Music. The organizers were Michael Alcorn (Chair), Pedro Rebelo (Music Chair), and Maarten van Walstijn (Paper Chair). In an attempt to address how programming responsibility is communicated to the audience, each concert program was introduced by its curator. The choice of curators was informed by the desire to represent programming criteria rooted in both the computer music community and the wider art world, through the contribution of practitioners such as Elliot Sharp and Pamela Z. Given the parallel requirements and agendas presented by a conference and a contemporary music festival, ICMC 2008 deliberately combined concert hall works with works more suited to alternative venues such as club spaces, hence removing aesthetic focuses sometimes associated with "official" programs in contrast to "off" programs. As each

curator was asked to select both a concert hall and a “club” program from works submitted to the call, both modes of presentation were eventually addressed by multiple aesthetic angles as represented by the preferences of the curators. Each curator’s experience and reputation, together with dedicated contemporary music performance experts (included the Roots Ensemble, which was created especially to address chamber performance needs), were regarded as strong guarantees of the quality of music programming for the event.

Curatorship and the Question of Peer Review

Conferences that have a music program resulting from a call for works often follow two different approaches, or a combination of these, to select works for presentation: the creation of a music committee in ways similar to a scientific committee, or the invitation of curators to select the program for one or more concerts in the conference. Both approaches present challenges. The curatorial approach can be criticized as presenting single-sided views for the selection of works to be played. The peer-review system can be problematized as often leading to an averaging out of aesthetic approaches and a potential rejection of more “controversial” or “extreme” works as a result of the marking process often used by jury panels. The assessment of the quality of individual works by a panel of composers does not necessarily produce concert programs with an identity and purpose that can be presented in a public context.

In this section we address the problems posed by music program selection, by reflecting on the nature of authorship and through statements collected from senior researchers and practitioners with extensive experience in programming musical works.

Who Is the Author?

Current practice seems to increasingly challenge the traditional model of composer as author (i.e., the individual who submits a proposal for evaluation). Models of new music creation have significantly expanded to include close composer–performer

collaboration which in some cases results in co-authorship. The significant increase in improvisational practice in the context of new technologies also suggests alternative models of authorship, particularly when a proposal for a performance might be based on an open collaboration with improvisers not identified in the proposal.

The diversity of documents representing artwork proposals that were received in conferences such as ICMC 2008 or SMC 2009 clearly demonstrates that the assumption of composer as author/promoter is no longer the only model. This diversity seems to currently overwhelm existing systems of submission (e.g., online submission systems primarily designed for paper proposals) to an extent that it becomes difficult to deal with, for example, open instrumentation works, improvisation projects, and full concert proposals based on performer–composer collaboration.

Another aspect of the increasingly complex landscape of artistic proposals lies in the financial responsibilities and assumptions implicated in each submission. Does the performer associated with a composer and coming to play one piece pay a delegate’s fee or get paid an honorarium? If the latter, by whom? The current conference financial model, as pointed out by Luke Dubois later in this article, is based on institutional funding, which artificially excludes a number of practices and activities.

The traditional model, in which a composer submits a score to be played by performers who are organized by a conference, is only one of the models. The relationship between the individual who submits a work and the production of that work is increasingly complex (group works, group events composed of individual pieces, composer-performers, flexible works, etc.). In order to adequately reflect the variety of approaches to music production and dissemination, the conference-plus-festival format needs to be able to expand and refine the process of submitting a work for public presentation.

Statements on Programming for Conferences

In an attempt to represent the views of a number of senior and experienced researchers and practitioners

on the topic of programming for conferences, the authors solicited short statements addressing key issues and the tensions between curation and jury selection. What follows are sections of statements by Robert Rowe, Leigh Landy, Joel Chabade, Bruce Pennycook, Luke Dubois, and Atau Tanaka. These statements reflect personal experiences and viewpoints based on direct involvement with conference organization. The fact that all statements come from individuals affiliated with academic institutions is reflective of how the community manages responsibility for issues of music programming. They are included here with a view to better articulating the key issues that surround music programming.

Robert Rowe has noted the complexity in music selection processes and its dependence on different kinds of forces:

Among these are aesthetic and financial pressures, as well as issues of diversity. The financial pressures are well known: Most every festival based on submissions faces the problem of taking sufficient work to encourage enough delegates to attend to make the conference as a whole viable, while at the same time trying to minimize production costs. In terms of diversity, curators or jury members are always sensitive to maintaining some kind of balance of geographic areas, gender, early- versus late-career composers, and so on. And finally there are the aesthetic issues, revolving . . . around the inherent quality of the submissions as well as their affinity to one or another stylistic trend (Rowe 2010).

He points toward advantages and disadvantages in both jury and curatorial approaches:

At its best, the jury system encourages a kind of give-and-take and informed discussion between members of widely varying backgrounds that can lead to an outstanding program none of them might have chosen individually. At its worst, the jury system can produce a hodge-podge of compromises after the members have found they cannot reach consensus, so everyone gets to pick one or two of their favorites for each show. The curatorial system is attractive

in that there is one person responsible for the program, so you know as an audience member that someone has thought about the mix of pieces on a given show and even the order of their presentation

One can react to and think about the basic statement of a curated show in a way that is not possible with regard to the consensus of a juried show (Rowe 2010).

Leigh Landy (2010), referring to direct experience with the Electroacoustic Music Studies (EMS) Conference, states that this is foremost a “conference with music selected by the organizers which either serves the papers or has to do with the host country or organization.” Looking at ICMC, Landy exposes problems with maintaining its original format despite a significant growth in scale that has created disparate communities. Landy further identifies a gap between the purely technological nature of the majority of papers and the presentation of music, making it difficult to build relationships between the paper sessions and concerts, which in some cases are most successful when they circumvent the conference organization through the organization of “off” events: “Juries have become slightly more eclectic over the years, but even in 1989 (Glasgow) the ‘off’ events were the ones that were most memorable and hadn’t been through the jury at all.”

Landy recognizes the difficulty in the organization of events that attempt to represent practices across work presented as papers or artwork. “These events should respect and celebrate the broad spectrum of innovative work in terms of its papers and concerts/installations. In my experience, such a holistic eclectic event [. . .] has yet to take place” (Landy 2010).

Joel Chabade has approached this topic by clearly articulating the difference between specialist and public interests:

In a conference, for example, the goal is to find out what your colleagues are doing, so it’s entirely appropriate for a committee to decide what gets heard and what doesn’t. In this situation, I like the idea of a committee of selectors, because it’s close to a representation

of the public that's going to hear the presentation and so it's likely that the group will choose things of interest.

But if a performance is intended for the public, it's another matter entirely. Advice from associates, as a group or individually, is always important, but one curator should take the responsibility for a final choice, and the success of that choice will depend upon the curator's knowledge of the field and ability to address the intended audience with something useful and enjoyable. In a public situation, it's very important that a presentation has a personality and that it makes a point (Chabade 2010).

Bruce Pennycook reflects back on the experience of chairing the 1991 ICMC and identifies how a curatorship system can function:

As Chair of the 1991 ICMC in Montreal, I instituted for the first time (to my knowledge) a set of curated concerts for ICMC. Having attended countless electroacoustic concerts that offered little or no continuity among the individual works, I chose to borrow the idea of curating from the art gallery and film festival organizers. My intention was to draw upon the aesthetic experiences and musical knowledge of the music selection committee to construct a set of concerts that were shaped into a more or less uniform 90-minute listening experience. To make their task a little easier, the agreement was that each curator could pick works that had passed the general selection process in which we all participated, then they could add one or two pieces from any of the submitted works.

The obvious question is: Did this work as planned? That is very hard to say, but there were some very strong reactions from the audience, meaning we hit a nerve with some of the concerts; and that, I am certain, is much more interesting than the pervasive unmoved exhaustion one usually observes in audiences at these kinds of events (Pennycook 2010).

Luke Dubois chaired the performance program for NIME 2007 in New York and has worked as

a jury member in events such as the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (known as CHI, for "computer-human interaction"), the New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival, and the ICMC. Working primarily as an artist and composer, Dubois identifies key challenges in the funding model, curation, jury selection and program coordination.

Regarding the funding model, Dubois (2010) points out that academic conferences raise funds through attendance fees, which in turn are paid for by people that have access to travel funds from their academic institutions. In the case of music performance this imposes an unusual "pay-to-play" burden upon artists, which essentially excludes professionals outside of academia.

This might not seem to matter, except for the fact that the majority of exciting contemporary and avant-garde music gets done not at universities, but in art galleries, experimental performance spaces, and alternative music festivals, by composers and performers who have no connection to university life, and who strive to make music for a living (Dubois 2010).

According to Dubois, this hurts everyone equally. On the one hand, researchers miss an opportunity for closer contact with those in non-academic professional practice, and students and artists within universities "lose out on a perfect opportunity to listen to, learn from, and play with artists who are working in vibrant musical communities" (Dubois 2010). On the other hand, non-academic professionals get deprived from meeting, learning from and collaborating with the academic community. Dubois further elaborates on this problem:

At the same time, the artificial distinction of "academic" versus "downtown" music production continues, perpetuating a self-inflicted divide that began in the 20th century and, if let to continue into the 21st, will further segregate and alienate communities that, after all, are working in an art form that relies on collaboration, cross-pollination, and hybridity to survive and evolve (Dubois 2010).

He proposes three possible ways of addressing this situation: (1) dispense with the “pay-to-play” model for composers and performers by relying on external funding for the performance counterpart of the event; (2) adopt a mixed jury/curation approach by inviting paid performers to perform alongside the juried academic community as special guest artists; and (3) work with commercial or nonprofit venues in combination with the first two strategies in order to reach the general public to whom tickets are sold, thus generating revenue that further minimizes the costs. At NIME 2007 in New York, the organization tried, to a certain degree, to address these three models:

By partnering NYU [New York University] with Harvestworks, a nonprofit downtown arts production organization with a 30-year history, we were able to get grant support for producing concerts. We were able to use this money to commission two New York performers of the highest caliber, Kathleen Supové and Todd Reynolds, to perform a concert of commissioned works that went through the NIME adjudication process, as well as play some of their own repertoire. In addition, performers and composers who participated in the concert part of NIME were not expected to pay a registration fee, and they could purchase discounted passes for the academic side of the conference. Finally, by hosting two of the concerts at late-night club venues in New York City, and doing all of the publicity and promotion work required to get a wider audience, we were able to make money on ticket sales that was given back to the conference organization (Dubois 2010).

Atau Tanaka, reflecting on chairing the art events during NIME 2006 in Paris, comments:

The basic tension I found interesting chairing the artistic [program] at NIME '06 was to navigate the difference between academic conference and art festival. With this came the interesting dynamic to navigate between a curated approach from art, and a conference-type submission and ranking system for selection.

... Along with that was to identify from the submissions emerging themes, then shape programs around these themes, to go with the specific characteristics of the different venues we had partnered with (Tanaka 2010).

Reflections on the SMC 2009 Music Program

The organization of the musical program for SMC 2009 could be considered a case study on conference programming that addresses artistic relevance from both academic and non-academic worlds, having in mind the engagement of a wider audience through opening the concerts to the general public. Our initial intent was far from addressing this task as a case study, but the challenges we faced in organizing an event with such characteristics made us reflect more deeply into the problem. From the outset, we wanted to select a program of high quality that complemented what is regularly shown at the events dedicated to experimental/electronic music performance in Portugal, such as Festival Música Viva (www.misomusic.com). For example, we wanted to display how state-of-the-art technological research can contribute to the musical practice and to new forms of performance (e.g., network performances), how human performance is more alive than ever in electronic music, and how improvisation has penetrated this practice so deeply. Furthermore, SMC 2009 had an important component dedicated to students from European universities, including the organization of the SMC Summer School prior to the conference. The music program also emphasized this educational focus through a specific call for student works—out of the 196 registrations for the conference and/or summer school, 77 were from students.

The music program itself consisted of eight concerts: the so-called curators' concert, involving works from the invited curators, and seven concerts of works that were selected through the call for music, one of which was a concert of student works.

The Call and Initial Considerations

The call for music was announced at the end of January 2009. The call particularly encouraged

submissions of works of electronic music that in any way had a performance aspect. The goal was to display the great diversity of practices involving electronic media and to provide a music program that was as eclectic as possible. This consideration influenced the choice of venues for music performance at the conference.

There were two main venues for the concerts: (1) Casa da Música (www.casadamusica.com), the conference main site and Porto's main venue for institutionalized music performance (classical and contemporary music, as well as renowned artists from pop, electronica, and jazz), and (2) Passos Manuel (www.passosmanuel.net), a privately owned bar that programs experimental music and emerging talents in rock music from Portugal and the rest of Europe. The inclusion of Passos Manuel was to make place for the performance of musical works that are not so suited for formal concert halls and could benefit from being programmed at late hours in a more informal setting.

From very early on we decided to invite curators to select the pieces for the concerts. This decision had to do with several aspects: (1) our awareness that the richness of today's musical practice involving electronic media does not lie forcibly within academia; (2) the fact that human performance is assuming an increasing importance in electronic music; (3) our desire to have the concerts display this richness and variety together with a strong coherence in terms of program; (4) our goal to display innovative work, as the conference is dedicated to the state of the art in sound and music computing; and finally, (5) a criterion that the concerts be open to the general public for a very small fee.

We decided to invite four musicians with extensive experience in different facets of electronic music performance to curate the concerts for the conference: Nicolas Collins, Pauline Oliveros, Evan Parker, and Robert Rowe. Each of the invited curators has a different degree of involvement with academia, so we thought we would have a good degree of balance in terms of potential choice of works to be presented. Collins, Oliveros, and Parker were each assigned the task of organizing two concerts, one for each venue, taking into account the characteristics of that performance space. Rowe was

invited to curate the students' concert at Casa da Música. Each curator was asked to select a program around one hour in length, to choose the order of the pieces to be presented, and to write an introductory text to the program.

The conference organization provided an ensemble of six performers with extensive experience in contemporary music performance and improvisation. Stephanie Wagner (flutes), Victor Pereira (clarinets), Jonathan Ayerst (piano), António Aguiar (contrabass), and Nuno Aroso (percussion) are all part of Casa da Música's Remix Ensemble, conducted by Peter Rundel; and Franziska Schroeder (saxophones) is a renowned player in contemporary music. Authors could submit pieces for any combination of these performers and were welcome to provide their own in case they wanted a different instrumental setting. There were a total of 268 submissions of musical works for SMC 2009, of which 61 were student works. The number of submissions, as well as their variety, highly exceeded initial expectations.

The Selection Process and Final Outcome

The music program chairs made an initial filtering of the submissions and assigned the remaining proposals to the curators. The initial filtering consisted of eliminating submissions that were unclear or incomplete, had an instrumentation that could not be provided, or required resources hard to provide due to the piece's technical specificities or because the authors were proposing events that did not comply with the format suggested by the call, such as full concert programs. The submissions or proposals in this latter form were surprisingly high and were mostly from experienced artists (composers or performers) with relevant activity in electronic music. This unexpected fact made us realize that creating opportunities for artists to present a concert-length event would perhaps make sense in this type of conference. However, this possibility was not fulfilled at SMC 2009, as this situation was simply unforeseen. In total, 43 pieces were played, in seven concerts. Each concert had its curator identified in the program, and in some cases

the curator gave a short introduction to the program at the beginning of the concert.

The variety of the programmed works is evident from the concerts' program (<http://smc2009.smcnetwork.org/programme/concerts.html>). SMC 2009 was able to display the wide diversity of performance practices involving electronic music, and this aspect was the main goal of the music program. However, presenting only 43 works out of 268 submissions created an unexpected and unwanted low acceptance rate. This was due to heavy constraints on the concerts' and technical rehearsals' durations, because of the already-packed conference schedule. There were no parallel sessions, and the concerts at Casa da Música were presented in the same location as some of the paper sessions.

The Aftermath

The music program of the SMC 2009 fulfilled its initial goals to a great extent, but it revealed the complexity of trying to accommodate the relevant multiple realities of today's electronic music practice in a conference through events that are open to the general public. The wide variety of current practices indeed challenges the organization of a music program that aims to display relevance, diversity, and audience engagement. Even though we were already aware of this fact, other interesting problems emerged unexpectedly, one relating to the actual political/economical model of conference organization and the other related to emerging trends in the submission process.

As poignantly pointed out by Dubois, the institutional funding model under which these events are organized poses problems for bridging the gap between academia and artists who live off their practice: Some artists whose works were initially accepted for the conference refused to come because they did not accept the situation of "pay to play" or because they were expecting some sort of financial support to come to Porto. Unfortunately, although there was a dedicated budget for the music program kindly provided by the School of Music and Performing Arts from the Polytechnic Institute of Porto, these funds were used to pay the performers and the

curators' stay in Porto. At least one artist per piece had to pay the registration fee for the conference.

Regarding new trends in the submission process, we received several proposals from artists or performers, most of them used to participating in this type of conference, who submitted concert-length programs that hardly fit into the two prevailing models of music program selection for conferences. As already mentioned, we did not anticipate this situation at all, and these proposals had to be eliminated in the very first stage of selection.

The Curators' Concert and Its Relevance to the Event

The presentation of an event dedicated to the curators' own work can promote better integration between curators and delegates. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity to delineate the various practices represented in the conference through the work of those who engage with the submissions. In the case of the curators' concert at SMC 2009, the program was devised by the organizers in collaboration with the curators themselves. This allowed some flexibility in terms of the resources and program development relating to each work, and it provided an opportunity to stage a networked performance between Porto and Bournemouth University featuring Evan Parker.

Conclusion

Using SMC2009 as a starting point, we have attempted to outline the issues and challenges surrounding music programming for specialist conferences that have music as a subject matter. The strategy for artistic programming plays a crucial role in the staging of an event that serves an increasingly dispersed and varied community whose interests are often brought together by music itself.

Invited statements from members of this community who have directly engaged in the organization of such events have revealed the topic's complexity, which goes beyond what one might initially expect. As mentioned in this article's introductory section, lively discussion takes place during the organization

of each event but there is surprisingly little in the way of literature or wider discussion on this subject. It is our hope that this article initiates a sharing of ideas and practices, with a view to the development of clear and confident strategies for the presentation of artwork in a context that addresses both specialist needs and the wider public. It is evident from the examples given above that diversity in approaches is key, as it reflects the differing motivations, desires, and ambitions of local organizers, who are ultimately responsible for an event's success.

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