

Yuko Mohri + Akio Suzuki

Camden Arts Centre, London UK

Camden Arts Centre's gallery #3 houses Yuko Mohri's work resembling a sprawling Rube Goldberg machine in a hubbub of feedback, albeit with enigmatic causes and effects.

Closer observation reveals multiple installations at play – *Flutter* being the most immediate – the elements of which form discrete systems and it's something of a brainteaser to unpick the cross-influences (many of which are electromagnetic). Fish swim past light sensors on their tank and electromechanically trigger notes from an adapted 1930s reed organ, which is surrounded by compasses that register magnetic force fields. Another component subtly influences the fish tank: spoons robotically strike a small Indian bell, completing a circuit triggering window shutters, shifting the overall light conditions. Meanwhile, suspended sleigh

bells are sounded whenever a magnetised rotating spoon snags their chaotically swinging chain. These bells allude to animal-drawn vehicles and suggest the fish are the unpredictable driving force.

Unbroken sounds are provided by the organ's rickety bellow motor and two *Voluta* installations: dual coils of cable partly embedded in concrete, connected in lieu of loudspeakers to an amplifier, exciting an electromagnetic field causing hanging magnets to quiver against magnifying glass lenses. An age-toned insurance document for the reed organ is framed on the wall. To non-Japanese readers its most recognisable symbol is the old Yamaha logo: three overlapping tuning forks. Colliding tuning forks play a prominent part in Akio Suzuki's performance. Coincidences and connections are blurred.

Mohri soulfully pits natural wonders against electro-industrial rigours. The age-old crisis of modernity those

opposites evoke is effectively subverted by Suzuki's entrance. Playing within the sublime and the (sublimely) mundane: striking pebbles in sympathy with the electric blinds' shutter clacks, or playing a bespoke flute-pipe to the fish. Both artists are skilled ear cleaners, fostering resensitisation to noise and sound environments.

Mohri begins by ceremoniously placing objects (Suzuki's trusty instrumentarium) on the floor. She then seats herself, awaiting the emergence of Suzuki's feline spirit – in his writings Suzuki often views himself as a curious cat in nods to his pet acoustical concepts of "throwing" and "following" (and their philosophical implications). Here, Suzuki embarks on a series of roving explorations with dangling tuning forks, clicking pebbles (the click being the most environmentally revealing of sounds, illuminating room qualities and even Suzuki's own mouth), styrofoam

squeaking against a polished mirror, tsuchibue (an ocarina-like instrument), a cloth pouch containing a bottle of liquid struck with sticks, bowed/scrapped card, flute tubes and lastly his unique Analapos: a lengthy reverberant spring connecting two metal cans. Suzuki has honed the art of eliciting uncanny sounds from unlikely objects/spaces since his Analapos's inception in 1970. As he hands one can to Mohri, with him on the other end sending vocalisations through it (à la tin cans and string), the image symbolises a connection between older and younger generations of sound experimentalists.

The collaborative performance marked the end of MODE's inaugural month-long series of events curated by Ryuichi Sakamoto. After the performance, when the last of the applause had decayed, Mohri's installation continued resounding, and would continue to do so until mid-September.

Dan Wilson

Akio Suzuki (left) and Yuko Mohri



Noh: Space In Between: Leon Michener/Yukihiro Isso/Mitsuhiro Kakiyama

King's Place, London UK

No words are used to introduce the improvisatory pianist Leon Michener's contribution to the Noh Reimagined Festival at London's Kings Place, now in its third year. Inside the nocturnal hall stands a grand piano, its lid lifted like a bird's wing; next to it the case of a clavichord and amplifiers arranged in front of a funeral curtain – this in sharp contrast to the traditional Noh backdrop of a painted pine tree. Once Michener arrives, he's hidden from view where I'm sitting.

Noh theatre is the oldest of Japan's dramatic art forms dating back at least 650 years, and the festival includes performances that either disrupt or meet our expectations of this tradition – actors

dressed in gorgeous cascades of silk pattern, a face clasped in a tight-fitting mask carved from cypress wood that tips and changes expression and musicians in line like notes on a staff. "Something will appear where there was nothing and then disappear," summarises Professor Keizo Miyamoto in a seminar on illusory devices elsewhere in the festival. "At the finish, the set is removed in front of the audience. This emphasises the illusion."

In the programme notes, Michener states he has used the notion of *ma* (a word that variously translates as an empty space filled with potential or a spatial rhythm in Japanese music or the space between sounds). He sets out to exploit "the empty space between piano and speaker and merely guiding the flow of sound like water". I've heard similar intentions before and I'm wary of the

overused conceit, but the performance is startling in its intensity and sonic variety.

During 45 minutes, I glimpse Michener's outstretched arm and hand in black rubber glove at work on the grand while the nohkan flautist Yukihiro Isso stands in full view as taut as a violin string, pulling an array of pipes and flutes from table and sash as if testing swords for size, and playing each with deft, frenetic fingers, muscles knitting tight on his face.

The dark curtain lights up with purplish churning strands, a nod perhaps to the colour and patterns of Noh while the flute calls and is answered by a thunderous pounding from the keyboard. There is a moment when its mechanical pulse and the raw shriek of the flute drive right through my body, turning it into a vibrating soundboard.

The purple light coils into crimson,

the flute sobs and wanders in a blasted landscape. With the gutsy twang of wires there are suddenly three pipes in the mouth and the colours have subsided into moss green and I am mollified and the storm calmed.

The drummer Mitsuhiro Kakiyama marks his entrance with a loud vocal "Yahoo!", and as he strikes his hip drum with rigid arm the sounds crunch and blister, and gashes of red slash the curtain. There's a trilogy of gestures to conclude: the fingers march on the flute, the concentrated slap of hand on drum, the invisible pianist moving between his work stations. This performance brought together two contrasting aesthetics: controlled discipline and instantaneous fluidity; and between the two an experience of theatre. No words required.

Deborah Nash