

ISE575c paper review (week 4)

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Reviewing Steve Reich's music

Before the last week's class, the name of Steve Reich is the new name for me. That's not because I am a fan of jazz and rock but because he is a modern-classic composer. I went to the concert hall on 7:40 or so but whole tickets were already sold out. Elaine told us to be there early, but that early? I was disappointed and took the pamphlet. After reading the brochure of his, he has been called "The America's greatest living composer". Reading after reading, I found an interesting name, Pat Metheny. He is the living legendary Guitarist in the world. He worked with Steve Reich on Electric Counterpoint in 1987. In his trio, quartet, or even the band, many enormous musicians who have released many albums by themselves just have played occupying in one position. Even Richard Bona, one of the greatest bass players in the world, took a part in playing percussion and chorus. Furthermore, he earned an honorary doctorate from Cal Arts, which is famous for experimental arts in Valencia, CA. So I was eagerly waiting for extra space for entering but nothing happened because nobody inside the hall wanted to leave early. I had no choice but to go back to my place. Instead of giving up listening to Steve Reich's songs, I chose to listen to some samples from internet. There were very limited numbers of samples and even limited to less than 1 minute. However, samples of all the songs played were found and tried to figure out what all the sounds mean.

Nagoya Marimbas are played with two marimbas. One played rhythmic and melodic parts and it sounded Japanese music and the other played bass line and went two 4/4 to two 3/4 back and forth. Key seemed to E harmonic minor and F# is flatted into F. Steve Reich's drumming technique could help to come up whole arrangement ideas. Going forward to Electric Counterpoint, The first part of this song was played like volume control playing style. That means, without first picking sound, dialing volume knob up and down or just switching on and off (Gibson model has it) can generate similar sound. Tom Morello, the former guitarist in Rage Against the Machine, played like this in his nineties' album. Bm and Gm9 and /Ab Cm9 chords were heard on the sample. Changing main volume up and down, he made wave-flowing feeling of the parade of chords, which is gradually changed with some delays of each notes with different time slots. The second part was the slow mellow songs with syncopated E and C notes made jazzy.

Steve Reich really made me rethink about 20th century's classical song, especially minimalistic structures. Simple idea can evolve within his song even within a very short period of samples. Compared to the short stories or short films, many experimental trials from the start of simple idea have contributed the entire universe of their works. His previous works might be focused on the future mind, and the future is now. I should change my point of view which is a simple but unique idea that will be an epitome of future standard. It's been a great experience about researching him. Thanks, Elaine.