

Syndicate for the New Arts: Transmitter Series at St. John's (Apr. 10)

by David Kulma



The Syndicate for the New Arts kicked off their new Transmitter series at Historic St. John's on Tuesday night, April 10. Focusing on a collaboration among experimental *noise* musicians and video and performance artists, this first night had the Parish Hall both visually and aurally glowing.

I arrived for the 9 pm performance at 8:45 to find the space already full

of music and images. Oberlin-based DJ Yan (Yan Yu) curated the music surrounding the night's three sets. His choices smoothly moved between pretty, ambient electronica and harder-driving, beat-oriented sounds. The glorious, grand-scale, often psychedelic projections by Pope Visor (Frank Oberle) ran continuously on the cupolaed wall. Visor's video swung between highly distorted images with pungent colors and visually clear scenes of canyons, a space shuttle, and computerized molecules.

The opening 15-minute set began at 9:15, when Oberlin student percussionist Rachel Gibson gave a sample of her new theremin project. Armed with Max/MSP (the electronic music software for controlling complex musical effects) and her pedalboard, she manipulated sounds by waving her hands in the air. She started with the usual confusingly human wail of the theremin, then switched to buzzing pops like angry crickets unleashed on the world.

At 9:50, the unannounced Adam Parks (from Timber Rattle) opened the middle set with a meditative span of melancholy singing and powerful drones. For 20 minutes, his electronically modified music created a suspended epic. Drekka, the headline act, slowly joined and replaced Parks at 10:10.

Michael Anderson's well documented project as Drekka began more than 20 years ago, and is built upon collaborative recorded memory. His table of electronics included two tape decks on which he played his previous recordings, and more amazingly, what I'm almost certain were samples from the other musicians that night. He also jingled bells around his neck, rubbed two metal bowls together, and sang in otherworldly falsetto tones. Drekka crafted a present out of his past, creating a spur-of-the-moment rite and filling the space with inexplicable primordial emotion.

Just after 11:00, Aaron Dilloway and Matthew Frerck began the final set. Their music of nightmares and unseen horror movies painted the space with sounds like cars racing through your body or a dying elephant screaming through its final moments. Frerck is a jazz student at Oberlin with a penchant for producing fidgety, overactive sounds on his amplified upright bass. Dilloway is an exemplary noise musician and a connoisseur of aural pain. The contact mic in his mouth amplified his violent breaths and — at his most frenetic moments — screams. Dilloway and Frerck were so exuberant that this explosive music had no sense of proportion — their set was full of highs, some of which required hearing protection. Although everything had already been said by 11:30, they continued for another 15 minutes.

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