Gesture and Texture in the Electroacoustic Improvised Music of Jin Sangtae, Hong Chulki and Tetuzi Akiyama

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This article will examine the music of two improvisation scenes – Seoul's 'Dotolim' and Tokyo's *onkyô* – with a particular focus on their use of gesture and texture. The article centres on an analysis of a trio performance by Jin Sangtae, Hong Chulki and Tetuzi Akiyama, which effectively brings these two musical communities together in a collaborative performance. This analysis demonstrates that focusing on gesture and texture can help in perceiving essential aspects of an improvised performance, including understanding strategic modes of listening and interplay, musical structural developments (both micro and macro) as well as identifying applied roles of instrumental technique and approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the late 1990s and 2000s, new developments in the fields of improvised and noise musics emerged in Seoul and Tokyo. In Seoul, a venue called Dotolim, founded by musician Jin Sangtae in the late 2000s, has hosted over one hundred events of improvised music (닻올림 dotolim n.d.). Jin and other Dotolim associates, including Hong Chulki, Choi Joonyong and Ryu Hankil, often create their sounds using hacked and repurposed electronic appliances as well as other non-musical objects and audio feedback. In Tokyo, starting in the late 1990s, the musical genre *onkyô* emerged, which focused on extremely quiet and sparse electronic and acoustic sounds, silence and environmental sounds (Novak 2010: 36, 39). Among its small core group of musicians were Ôtomo Yoshihide, Sachiko M, Ami Yoshida, Taku Sugimoto, Toshimaru Nakamura and Tetuzi Akiyama (ibid.: 39). Although the Dotolim scene is not directly linked to *onkyô*, I would argue that the two movements share similar elements. For example, essential to *onkyô* is an emphasis on new modes of listening and a particular attention to sound texture (Plourde 2008: 270). In addition, like the Dotolim scene, some of the musicians associated with *onkyô* used consumer electronics in innovative ways to produce sounds (Novak 2010: 45).

This article will examine music connected to these two scenes, with a particular focus on the deployment of gesture and texture in the creation of a unique and recognisable performance style. Fittingly, the material chosen for analysis in this article is a collaborative effort between two proponents of the Dotolim scene, Jin Sangtae and Hong Chulki, and the *onkyô*-associated Tetuzi Akiyama. The music in question is the CD release of a live recording from a concert on 11 December 2010 at Dotolim. In addition to the CD there is an accompanying video edit of the concert available online on Dotolim's YouTube channel (연주회 dotolim 2011).

The analysis focuses on the roles and uses of texture and gesture in constructing this particular improvised music performance. The questions that will be considered are:

- What kinds of gestures and textures are used in the music and what are their roles and functions?
- What kind of modes of listening and interplay are employed in the performance and how are these modes connected to the uses of gestures and textures?
- How does the mix of electronic, mechanical and acoustic instruments guide these parameters?

The approach taken in this article has been informed by my own background, having been actively involved in the free improvisation and experimental music scenes for over a decade – as a performer, concert curator and listener – together with my training as a musicologist, with studies focusing on the theory and practice of free improvisation.

The article will begin by taking a look into prior research on the topic, followed by detailing the backgrounds of the research subjects. The musical activities of the performers will then be contextualised with relevant musico-historical trajectories, followed by an analysis of the performance, and finally my conclusions and findings.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The different applications of improvisation in music (and in many other fields) is a rapidly growing field

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of interest, with recent major publications including Piekut and Lewis (2016a, 2016b). Some notable publications focusing specifically on free improvisation include Borgo (2005), Toop (2016), Cobussen (2017) and Denzler and Guionnet (2021). A number of texts concerning some of the more recent trends in improvised music have included *onkyô*, and Akiyama's name appears in a variety of these (e.g., Plourde 2008; Novak 2010; Blažanović 2012; Gleason 2015). Akiyama is also featured in Gleason's (2015) article that proposes a 'phenomenological' analysis of a recording of Ôtomo Yoshihide's composition *Anode 2* on which Akiyama performs.

Another area of increasing interest is research into noise in and as music. Publications regarding the general field are too many to list. More specifically, although the contemporary South Korean experimental music scene is largely excluded, some publications concerning or featuring Japanese noise music include Novak (2013) and Hegarty (2007). Fermont and della Faille (2016), detailing the recent noise music scenes in South East Asia, are also noteworthy, although the artists considered in this article are geographically excluded.

There is little to no existing academic research on Jin Sangtae and Hong Chulki, on other associated musicians with the Dotolim scene, or on the contemporary South Korean improvised and experimental music scenes in general. However, some articles and features detailing the South Korean experimental music scenes, including Jin and Hong, can be found in the music magazine *The Wire* (e.g., Roe 2010; Hutchinson 2017.

Examples of previous analysis-based research on free improvisation include Brooks (2014) and Costa (2011), while De Menezes (2010) has focused specifically on the collective interaction between improvising musicians. However, these examples do not explicitly address the functions of gesture and texture in improvisation.

This article therefore attempts to begin to fill a gap in the existing research described previously, by drawing attention to the Dotolim and *onkyô* scenes both as exemplars of noise-based improvisation and as internationally situated music communities, and also by emphasising gesture and texture as sites of central analytical interest in electroacoustic improvisation practice.

3. RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Jin Sangtae (b. 1975) and Hong Chulki (b. 1976) are key performers in the experimental music scene centred on the venue Dotolim in Seoul, South Korea (Roe 2010: 37). Jin is the founder of Dotolim, which has been a central meeting point of the Seoul experimental noise improvisation scene since the late 2000s (Hutchinson 2017: 18).The venue hosts numerous concert events involving meetings between local and international musicians. Jin approaches sound-making by using 'non-musical objects' adapted as instruments (진상태 Jin Sangtae n.d.). In 2010, his setup was described as consisting of exposed and disassembled computer hard drives used to form a feedback loop with an amplifier, a mixing console and a guitar pickup (Roe 2010: 37).

Hong Chulki creates his sonic material by amplifying and generating feedback from a variety of electronic devices such as turntables, mixers, broken minidisc players, laptops and CD players (Hong Chulki n.d.). Hong runs the record label Balloon and Needle with Dotolim associate Choi Joonyong (Roe 2010: 37). The label documents the work of Dotolim-related artists as well as a larger scope of international associates. Hong and Jin have presented their music globally at significant venues and on seminal record labels, such as the electroacoustic improvisation-focused Erstwhile Records. Besides Hong and Jin, key performers associated with Dotolim include the aforementioned Choi Joonyong as well as Ryu Hankil, the four make up a group of musicians who have been collaborating together for a number of years (Roe 2010: 37).

Tetuzi Akiyama (b. 1964) is a Japanese guitar player mainly associated with the 'musically ascetic' and quiet *onkyô* scene in Tokyo (Blazžanović 2012: 35), but is also known to operate in noisy and loud contexts (Bell 2003: 44). Akiyama was part of a core group of musicians (others including Taku Sugimoto, Sachiko M, Yoshida Ami, Toshimaru Nakamura and Ôtomo Yoshihide) responsible for the majority of the activity of the 'Off Site' concert series – a series of improvisational music concerts taking place in a venue of the same name. This series helped associate the *onkyô* movement with this particular space (Novak 2010: 38–9). Akiyama works within a global network of improvising musicians, touring, collaborating and releasing his music internationally.

4. CONTEXTUALIZATION

Although Hong and Jin are not directly connected to *onkyô* and it would be unjust to reduce Akiyama's diverse approaches to just one genre, *onkyô* can function as a relevant contextual starting point for our purposes here. Its prevalent modes of listening and approaches offer valuable insight, whether or not these prove to have been deployed as such in the musical performance under consideration here.

In academic literature, *onkyô* is seen to be connected to two main trajectories: free improvisation and noise (e.g., Hegarty 2007: 148; Novak 2010; della Faille and

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Fermont 2016: 28). Tokyo's *onkyô* was part of a paradigm shift that also took place during the 1990s and early 2000s in Berlin, Vienna and London (Blažanović 2012: 35) and saw the associated musicians seek to liberate themselves from the too narrowly defined musical practices of the preceding generations of improvisers (Scott 2014: 5). Central to this was the reconceptualising of the role and importance of silence in improvisation. In addition to silence, value was placed on the acceptance of background noise, occasionally punctured by sparse, disciplined and quiet musical interventions (Novak 2010: 36).

The musical results see texture move to the forefront, at the expense of other musical parameters (Plourde 2008: 270). In fact, *onkyô* has been seen to completely lack rhythmic, harmonic or otherwise discernible musical structure (ibid.). This lack of traditional musical parameters has led *onkyô* to be identified as part of the multifaceted trajectories of noise music (della Faille and Fermont 2016: 28). However, the quiet and controlled nature of *onkyô* can be seen as an antithesis of the more stereotypically loud and unrestrained styles such as Japanoise or power electronics (ibid.). Another connection point with noise is the innovative use of consumer electronics (Novak 2010: 45), which in *onkyô*'s case is mixed with acoustic and electric instruments (Plourde 2008: 276). Novak (2010: 45) observes a 'non-idiomatic' nature in examples of repurposed equipment such as Toshimaru Nakamura's 'no-input mixer' (a mixing board with no external input signal, feeding back into itself), or Sachiko M's sampler without samples. Treated this way, the instruments only create self-noise or feedback, not material that is directly connected to a recognized musical vocabulary (ibid.).

This non-referential quality of the sounds is further emphasised in the modes of listening present in *onkyô*. Instead of the performative execution of sound, the emphasis is on the act of concentrated and attentive listening itself, focused on the conscious recognition of the most physical and raw components of sound; for example, its reverberations in an acoustic space (Plourde 2008: 273). Because of the exceptionally quiet volume level of the musical actions, the performed sounds are often mixed with non-intentional sounds emerging from outside of the performance space (Novak 2010: 39), other background noises and extra-musical sounds (Plourde 2008: 270–271). However this mix of various sounds is viewed as intentional and appreciated (Novak 2010: 39).

The *onkyô* musicians' challenge of the erstwhile norms of free improvisation can also be observed in their modes of interplay. Toshimaru Nakamura has described his approach as not directly playing or communicating together with other musicians, but instead engaging with all elements in the surrounding physical space (Novak 2010: 46). In addition to the removal of a direct call-and-response style of playing, musician Jason Kahn (ibid.: 47) observed the approach as distancing itself from the physicality of playing, from soloistic hierarchy and even from musicality.

In the liner notes of their trio CD, Akiyama identifies some tendencies similar to the ones described earlier in Hong's and Jin's approaches, namely the use of non-musical instruments, the virtue of 'non-musicality' and the use of noise elements in a manner opposed to the 'catharsis of violent sound energy like [in] Japanese noise' (Hong, Akiyama and Jin 2014).

5. GESTURE AND TEXTURE

Smalley (1997) identifies gesture and texture as the main organising elements of electroacoustic music and has asserted the importance of their interrelations and interplay in creating form. The same holds true in electroacoustic improvisation. As gesture and texture will therefore serve as the focus of the upcoming analysis of Jin, Hong and Akiyama's performance, we should briefly consider these two musical terms.

In traditional instrumental music, gesture is seen as physical activity, and here sound-making and the perception of sound are interrelated (Smalley 1997: 109). Thus, gesture is connected to the physical aspects of the creation of a sound, even if the act is not directly observable, as is the case with acousmatic music (Smalley 2007: 39). A gesture is perceived as a short moment with a clear start, duration and end (Hagan 2017: 34). In opposition with silence, a musical gesture is a distinctive, dynamic action (Callingham 2007: 99), representing a sense of forward motion, linearity and narrativity (Smalley 1997: 113). Especially in relation to an improvised performance, a gesture can also be seen to signify extramusical communication (Hickey 2015: 429), but our focus here is primarily on the musical aspects of gestures.

Musical texture, on the other hand, has traditionally, especially in relation to Western classical music, been used to refer to the horizontal and vertical relationships of several sound sources used for melodic, dynamic or structural reasons (Stein 1979: 61, 234). In more contemporary contexts, 'sonic texture' has a similar meaning, referring to the collective, cumulative sound of an ensemble (Callingham 2007: 34) or the overall auditory scene ('global texture') in a piece of music (Van Nort, Oliveros and Braasch 2010: 112). Texture in music can act as a distinctly useful metaphor for the experience and construction of music, especially when used in opposition to gesture. Therefore, as opposed to gesture, texture is a sustained sonic phenomenon that has a stationary function in the overall

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performance, but includes local micro-variations (Van Nort et al. 2010: 113). In short, texture can be used to describe the inner details of a sustained sound, often initiated by a gesture (Hagan 2017: 34).

6. ANALYSIS MATERIAL

The analysis that follows is based on the music on the CD entitled *Hong Chulki, Tetuzi Akiyama, Jin Sangtae* (Hong et al. 2014), published on the Dotolim Live Series imprint, and an accompanying video document. The music was recorded live in concert at Dotolim in Seoul, South Korea on 11 December 2010. The CD consists of a single track with a running time of 51:20. What is heard seems to be an unedited performance. In addition to the audio release, there is an accompanying video on Dotolim's YouTube channel(연주회 dotolim 2011). This video features material of the same concert, edited into three segments, resulting in a run time of 11:58. For further information, there are liner notes of the performance written by Akiyama included on the CD (Hong et al. 2014).

For this performance Akiyama is credited as playing an acoustic guitar, while Jin works with hard drives, contact microphones and a mixer and Hong with an 'unamplified turntable' and 'various objects' (ibid.). Observing the details in the video, it becomes evident that Hong's instrumentation in this case means the manipulation of the rotating metal surfaces of the turntable with various objects with the intent of producing friction that results in various acoustic sound phenomena. Hong's turntable does have a microphone placed in front, but it remains unclear if this is used to amplify the acoustic sounds in the performance space or if this configuration is used solely for the purpose of recording. The video provides the further detail that the sound of Akiyama's guitar is picked up by a microphone and run through an Electro-Harmonix Freeze[1] effects pedal and a small mixing board. In addition, Akiyama seems to employ several metal objects to play the guitar.

6.1. Analysis method

In focusing on the roles of gesture and texture in the construction of this improvised musical performance, I am using a descriptive analysis method, based on an adaptation of Lerdahl's notion of musical 'salience' (Brooks 2014). Lerdahl provides an approach to the analysis of non-tonal music by identifying 'salient' musical events – f.ex. relative loudness, density, duration, metrical and registral position – as primary organisational units (Lerdahl 1989). While he developed this theory primarily in connection to the atonal compositions of Schönberg, on a more recent and case-appropriate note, the method has been used by Brooks (2014) to analyse the free improvised music of Derek Bailey.

6.2. Analysis: salient events

The recording starts with the sound of a plucked acoustic guitar string (0:02), quickly morphing into booming feedback between the resonating body of the instrument, a microphone placed in front of it and sound monitors in the performance space. The tone settles into a stable, continuous tone with an almost sine wave quality. A looping, cyclical percussive motif appears (0:22). It sounds like it could be objects placed on the rotating surface of the turntable, but the video document reveals a similar rhythmic motif initiated by Jin's electronics. Layered on top of the looping element, high-frequency sounds emerge (0:25) – first static in pitch, but soon there are variations in the texture, transforming into a glitching sound. The high-frequency sounds become more prominent (1:20). At 1:33 another guitar pluck is heard; this time the ringing frequency intertwines with the feedback, creating beatings. This gestural repetition draws the listener's attention to the minimal variations and changes in the texture. The static high frequencies burst into blocks of glitchy electronic sounds. At 2:17 and 2:51 more elements are added to the electronic looping texture, resulting in greater overall density. Another guitar pluck that interferes with the feedback is heard (3:00). The feedback starts to form into a loop-like, pulsating rhythm (4:00). At 6:51, Akiyama creates a creaking and rumbling sound by holding a tuning fork or similar object on the vibrating top surface of the guitar. This element is noticeably louder and more present than the still ongoing layer of feedback. Starting at 4:29, high-frequency bursts lead into a dialogue-like barrage of sounds (4:55). Brief pulses of white noise appear (6:06), transforming first into glitching sounds (6:30) then into short bursts of high frequencies (6:40). Hong's operation of the turntable creates a chirping texture (6:35). At 7:08 there is an added layer of lower frequencies to the electronics, the temporal distribution becoming more random. There is subtle interplay within the frequency registers, which at times leads into fragmented motivic structures. At 8:00 this material transforms back into high-frequency stabs with a more dense, but rhythmically irregular distribution. The looping percussive element heard before reappears (9:06) introducing a new rhythmic motif. The guitar feedback alternates between a droning tone and another tone, creating beatings (9:24).

[1]The Electro-Harmonix Freeze is a guitar effects pedal used to sample, or to freeze, a fraction of an audio signal, creating a droning, perpetually sustained sound.

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The repeating rhythmic motif disappears (9:28). Starting at 9:29, a very high-frequency sine tone transforms into a noisier texture. High-frequency stabs morph into layers of stable tones and short bursts of sound. At 9:54 the lower register pitch is electronically sustained and then augmented by another pitch, creating a consonant interval. The feedback ignites string resonance (10:46). A dense mesh of electronic high frequencies develops (11:17). The creaking sound element on the guitar reappears (11:47). More frequencies are added to the electronic texture as well as more sputtering, random bursts (11:56). The guitar's creaking sound changes into more layers of added pitches that create beatings with the feedback and the sustained pitches in the low-frequency range (13:12). Sustained electronic pitches create a brief consonance with the guitar drone (14:30). Gaps start to appear in the sustained tones (15:40). The guitar goes into a high-pitched feedback while the sustained drone stays in the background (16:00). A buzzing electronic texture enters and is sustained (18:06–19:12). At 18:05 there is a major shift in the guitar gesture: a metal object is rubbed against the string in a vertical direction, creating a cyclical texture. This is maintained until 24:37, when the gesture changes into an expressive, rhythmically irregular plinking, played by lightly muting the strings on the fretboard with the strumming hand and using the fretting hand to produce pitches. Hong uses a metal measuring tape on the rotating surface of the turntable (19:20). Like a ricocheting bow, this creates a percussive and rustling texture, going into higher pitches occasionally (20:52). Starting at 26:06, a brief period of near silence marks the end of the first movement of this performance.

The second movement starts with a repeating percussive element similar to the one heard in the beginning of the recording, as well as a scraping sound from the turntable (26:27). This morphs into pitch fluctuations and what sounds like a contact microphone dragged on a hard surface. A sequence of crackly sounds changes into various extremely high pitches just within the limit of human hearing, then suddenly stops (28:45). Electronics create a loud feedback sound, varying in pitch (29:41). The percussive, repetitive element becomes denser, sounding like a typewriter, the even distribution soon transforming into uncontrollable bursts (31:15). Hong generates several long fluctuating high-pitched phrases from the turntable (34:15). The guitar enters with a rustling sound, similar to nails tapping the soundboard (36:00). At 37:00, the trio settles into a compound texture of the elements, with an almost call-and-response type interplay, each musician leaving gaps for the others to instil their sounds. The end of the second movement arrives at 38:37.

After a brief silence, a droning sound generated by Hong marks the start of the third movement (38:45). From 39:03 the electronics take a more active role, with quick fragments of sound. The guitar goes into a booming feedback (40:00). The electronics form into a less sporadic, repeating figure, fluctuating between high- and low-frequency ranges (41:30), settling into a semi-stable high-frequency drone (42:33). Akiyama starts an expressive tambour-style chordal playing (43:20).[2] The pitch of the electronic drone changes (43:30). Akiyama combines the tambour chordal playing with what seems to be experimentation with a rustling percussive technique. There are sudden shifts in the dynamics of the electronics. At 50:34 the last tambour chord is heard and the recording ends at 51:20.

6.3. Formal analysis

The recording can be divided into three major movements. These are distinguished by momentary resolutions in the music, which are indicated by brief periods of silence. The role of silence as a sign of a resolution is explicit due to two factors: first, these periods are the only instances of total non-action from the musicians, acting as musical rests; second, these periods are followed by shifts in gestures and the resulting textures. The first movement, which is the longest of the three, lasts about 26 minutes and ends in a brief period of silence. The second movement lasts for about 12 minutes and ends in another brief period of silence. The third lasts for about 13 minutes and ends in a collective diminuendo.

The first part features the musicians trying out a variety of gestures and sonic ideas, and playing freely within a wide dynamic range. The overall texture is dense, the motifs are extended in duration and the pace and frequency of events is intense. Each musician occupies his own space in the frequency ranges, Akiyama occupying the lower frequencies, while Jin and Hong operate in the high frequency range, although the musicians occasionally overlap each other.

The second part is more relaxed in nature, featuring sparser and shorter motifs. The overall dynamics are quieter and the interplay between the musicians is different compared with the first part. There is an impression of a deliberately more controlled and calm overall sonic texture.

The third and final part is characterised by a generally similar tranquil atmosphere as in the preceding

[2]'Tambour' is a guitar technique used traditionally in flamenco and classical music, intended to emulate the sound of a drum, where the guitarist strikes the strings close to the bridge with, for example, the side of the thumb of the picking hand (Josel and Tsao 2014: 154–5).

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part, but the dynamics are occasionally more varied. There is a sense of reintroduction and variation of previously heard motifs and fragments; for example, Akiyama's guitar seems to mimic the percussive rhythms heard earlier in the piece. The sudden shifts in dynamics of the electronics are reminiscent of the more jagged moments of the first part.

6.4. Dynamics

There are several approaches to dynamics. Occasionally the global dynamics are unified, meaning loud sounds call for other loud sounds, but at other times there are layers of different dynamics, some events occupying a more forefront position and others staying in the background. Yet at some points where the overall texture is sparse, there is a sense of even a call-and-response type interplay. In addition, when gaps in the playing are introduced, it also allows for quieter sounds to be heard. Inversely, a stable, quiet overall dynamic can be at times broken up by sudden bursts of louder sounds. This shows that often each performer's processes follow their individual logic, but collectively the musicians find subtle, non-direct ways of intervening and reacting to each other.

6.5. Instruments

The choice of instrumentation in this performance is an interesting mix of acoustic sound sources (amplified acoustic guitar), tactile electronic sound sources (exposed hard drives and contact microphones) and mechanical friction (objects on rotating turntable surfaces). The ways in which the instruments are used all share a strong physical dimension. Even if the instrument is electronic, the gestural attack is often pronounced. The significance of gesture is exemplified by the physicality of the instruments and playing styles: the sound production methods are clearly physical gestures. That said, occasionally the instrumental roles are reversed: the mechanical devices are used as acoustic sound sources or acoustic instruments function as feedback generators.

The physical and haphazard quality of the instruments and sound-production techniques creates an interplay between control and surprise. It guides the musicians to be focused on their individual processes, and engage in contemplative listening of the outcome. The prevalent repetition in the performance is much informed by the mechanical nature of the devices that are used to create the sounds. Akiyama, playing acoustic guitar in this performance, seems to be sympathetic to this, as he also adopts a repetitive playing style.

6.6. Texture and gesture in the performance

In this performance of improvised music, both gesture and texture are distinctive and serve particular functions in defining the sonic outcome. Smalley's (2007: 39) definition of gesture in traditional instrumental music as dynamic, distinctive action resonates well here, as all observable gestures have a physical quality to them. This applies to electronic sounds as well: even though it is not possible to distinguish the exact physical act that is igniting these sounds, there is a clear dynamic action taking place. An example of this would be Jin's use of audio feedback loops to create impulses guiding the rhythmic pulsations of his exposed computer hard drives rigged with contact microphones.

The main categories of observable gestures are:

- traditional instrumental gestures – for example, acoustic guitar played by plucking the strings or tambour-style;
- processes using friction on an instrument or on a mechanical moving surface by using different objects on the surfaces;
- mechanical processes, such as contact microphones controlled by audio feedback loops;
- sustaining/adding/deducting layers, including widening the frequency range.

Furthermore, gestures can be seen as 'intentional', as the outcomes of the gestures are variable and indeterminate. An important feature in the performance is the use of repetition, as individual gestures are often repeated persistently. This further emphasises the role of gesture as intention, as the actions stay identifiably similar, but the resulting textures are constantly evolving and varying, thus creating changes in the resulting overall texture. Some progressions take a long time and are focused on reflecting on minor variations of the same material; for example, a guitar segment in the beginning of the piece lasting for 18 minutes.

As gestures are seen to represent dynamic sound-initiating activity, texture can be used to describe the inner details of the resulting sounds. In this performance, texture is first mostly *observed* by the performer; because of this, the textures often appear raw and unstable. The sounds seem to be left 'untouched', meaning there is an element of indeterminacy, as the exact outcome of each gesture is not certain. The most clear indication of this would be the use of feedback, where, depending on the expected accuracy, the outcome is experimental and unstable to a certain degree as it is not possible to control the exact pitch or dynamics of the resulting sounds.

This creates a process where, whenever a gesture initiates a sound, first the resulting texture is observed, after which the gesture might be repeated or, if the texture is sustained, further manipulation might be

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added, including adding or deducting layers or elements, widening or narrowing the frequency range. This mode of action creates textures that have a static quality to them, but at the same time slight variations in details are constant and observable. Thus, in the structure of the performance, intentionality and coherence are created through repetition of gestures.

7. MODES OF LISTENING AND INTERPLAY

In this performance, the modes of action described earlier are closely connected with modes of listening and are intertwined with the methods of interplay. If *onkyô* serves as a reference point, at a surface level the musical output of the trio does not seem to represent the common characteristics associated with *onkyô*, such as the emphasis on silence or minimal sound output. There is no concern in this performance with leaving gaps for silence or for background noise to seep through, but instead an almost constant ongoing activity is at play. While there are momentary gaps in the global texture, the only times a durational silence occurs, it is a clear indicator of a collective conclusion of a musical structure. Nevertheless, a focus on sound texture at the expense of other musical parameters is prominent. Similar to *onkyô*, rather than a virtuosic display of skill, the musicians focus on the process of producing sound and attentively listening to it.

While the musicians play simultaneously almost throughout the performance, there are no distinctive roles or hierarchies, such as a divide between soloists and accompaniment. Instead, the players occupy their respective spaces in the registral positions, leaving space for each other, although the frequency ranges do occasionally overlap. Another frequently used strategy is to occupy the acoustic space by sustaining, adding or deducting layers of sound. This can happen in the global texture or within an individual process.

Even if the individual processes remain focused on the thorough investigation of each gesture and its outcome, and not on clearly or directly 'communicating' with the other elements, the musicians find ways to operate with each other: listening to their own and others' processes and sounds, but not reacting in an explicit way – meaning they do not seem to change their sounding material or approach according to what is happening in the overall texture.

8. CONCLUSIONS

To summarise: this improvisation performance by Jin Sangtae and Hong Chulki of Seoul's experimental improvised noise scene, centred on the venue Dotolim and guitarist Tetuzi Akiyama from the quiet and sonically restrained *onkyô* scene in Tokyo, serves as fertile ground for an examination of the roles of gesture and texture in current free improvisation practices. The performance in question features a layered mix of acoustic, electronic and mechanical sound sources whose resulting sounds at times are overlapped and obscured. Regardless of the instrument, the playing techniques are experimental and emphasise a physical approach to sound-making; as a result, gesture and texture are both distinctly identifiable in the music.

The physical playing styles of the performers display the prevalent dynamic, motional qualities of gestures as intention in performers' sonic intervention in the course of the performance. The gestural ignition of the sounds results in textures that the performer first observes, before then, through either sustaining or gestural repetition, introducing subtle variations. By repeating and sustaining, the musicians occupy their roles in the global texture of the sounding body of the work. These roles include taking up and operating within a specific frequency range, thereby leaving space in other areas of the spectrum for other players. As the musicians play almost continuously throughout the performance, and without a divide into hierarchical performance roles, this system allows the musicians to not have to rely on direct interplay with each other, but to instead focus on their own respective processes, and let their experimentation guide the direction of the performance. The experimental nature of their sounding techniques results in sounds that are often obscure; the observation of gestures can help distinguish those processes and their sources.

In conclusion, focusing on gesture and texture can help us identify essential aspects of an improvised performance, including musical structural developments (both micro and macro), strategic modes of listening and interplay, and the applied roles of instrumental technique and approach. It is hoped that the terminology and framework deployed in the analysis presented here can be adapted for future analysis of a larger body of musical works of experimental improvised music. Indeed, this could hopefully prove useful in both directions, with gesture and texture helping to clarify the inner workings of experimental improvisation, while these improvisation practices help shed new light on the functioning and affordances of musical gesture and musical texture.

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