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### NUS sonic music project hints at what the future holds

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## NUS sonic music project hints at what the future holds

Written by [Paul Lim](#)

Photo by [Paul Lim](#)

'Telematic arts' is a confusing domain: Music, electronics and multimedia are often jumbled together in pictures and sounds. But for the NUS [Yong Siew Toh Music Conservatory](#), this is where musical opportunities abound.

The conservatory extended its reach globally on Jan. 30 in a breakthrough collaborative concert with leading musical institutes from around the world. Avant-garde music pieces "Nuo RiLang" and "Stones" were broadcasted live to audiences in four different time zones.

It was a display of synchronicity as musicians in Canada, Beijing, United States and Singapore played live from their studios, with accompanying electronic elements from laptops and synthesizers.

Steven M. Miller, NUS associate professor of sonic arts, said that advanced technology is breathing new life into telematic arts.

"It's been really going on in various ways for 20 years or more, but it's just now that technology is starting to get to the point where you don't have to run major research institutes to do it," he said.

The global performance was synchronised via audio and video feeds that used Internet2, an advanced network that offers a "faster guarantee of service," said Communications and New Media associate professor Lonce Wyse, director of the [Arts and Creativity Lab](#), Interactive and Digital Media Institute, who was responsible for the technical aspects of the performance.

Wyse was responsible for the technical aspects of the performance, together with research fellow Norikazu Mitani.

"We have four different places, and we are all communicating, and everybody has to get their video and audio to everybody else. Every time we do a musical rehearsal, we have to do two hours of technical preparation," he said.

It wasn't just electronic signals that had to be right. Even more crucial was the musical element. Ty Constante, performer and lecturer in world music at the conservatory, noted that the eclectic mix of traditional percussion and electronic elements required close coordination.

"You have to know the timing. You have to work around it," he said. "You have to literally practice the composition over and over, and we listen and we talk about what we like and don't like. And we make changes, and then slowly it evolves into something that we're happy with," he said.

Between the pieces, students from various faculties gathered in the performance hall to discuss how these advancements in music and technology could impact their own fields of studies.

Pua Jun Hong, a fourth-year computing science major, described how music can expand his mind.

"I'm into creation of games and multi-player stuff, so this kind of global collaboration is very interesting, and it could be the way to go in the next stage of interactive media," he said. "I expect to expand my view, because only when you open your mind, then you can imagine more things. And from there on, I can



**From left:** Steven Miller, Ty Constante and Peter Edwards perform "Stones".

think of what can we do next.”

The performance also created new research opportunities for students from other faculties. Sudarshan Balachandran, a fourth-year electrical engineering student who is doing a final-year project under Wyse, said such performances could influence his research.

“My interest is in signal analysis,” he said. “Actually I just want to get some inspiration for my own sound module.”

*A version of this article is to appear in the Communications and New Media Programme departmental publication CNM Magazine.*

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