

Tim Rutherford Johnson *The Rambler*

Borealis Festival Concert Review - 05/02/10

<http://johnsonsrambler.wordpress.com/>

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Finally, the item that probably attracted most attention: Simon Katan's composition for the King's Place escalators. The premise was simple: the performers (all Trinity students) each wore a sandwich board with a large coloured disc on the front, and a large coloured O on the back. When they stepped onto the escalators, a video tracking system would pick up the empty or filled-in circle and trigger a sample. The composing parameters were thus to do with how many performers were on the escalators, how fast they travelled, whether they went up or down, faced front or back, and so on. I think the sample bank also changed throughout the piece.

The pleasure in such pieces is always in the ways that the composer lays out his parameters, and then finds surprising flexibility and richness from an apparently closed system. They work best when the composer finds something that the audience – who are tempted to think 'I could have done that' – won't have thought of. Katan's piece thoroughly explored all of the possibilities that were available to him, and produced some intriguing moments, but I just didn't find that moment of inspiration that would really have lifted the piece. It's a neat idea, though, with a lot of potential – other venues would be present different opportunities. It would also be a great piece for kids.