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Emerging Technology Trends

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Bot(i)Cello's band of robots

Posted by **Roland Piquepaille** @ 9:27 am

If you happen to be in Boston on Wednesday, January 25, be sure to go to the Museum of Science to attend a concert by Bot(i)Cello, its robotic friends and some real musicians such as Balinese gamelan players. The Bot(i)Cello has three arms, each holding a electric guitar string on one end, and needs about \$1,000 in parts to be made. It will be joined by the Heliphon, a double-helix shaped robotic metallophone, and the BloBot, a dancing and pipe-playing robotic tetrahedron. And after several years of development to build them, these robots no longer sound like slot machines, but like real instruments.

This show is named "Music & The Invasion of Technology" and here is a link to [some details](#) about it provided by the MIT.

As reports the Boston Globe, you'll be [dancing to the beat of a robot drummer](#). And here are two short quotes about music and robots from this article by two composers of music pieces which will be played on Wednesday, [Christine Southworth](#), a student composer, and [Evan Ziporyn](#), his music professor.

"My music, I just want it to be pretty and rhythmic," Southworth said. "I like music that you can dance to, if you want to. A lot of music you think of as robotic is ugly, like robots making their own music."

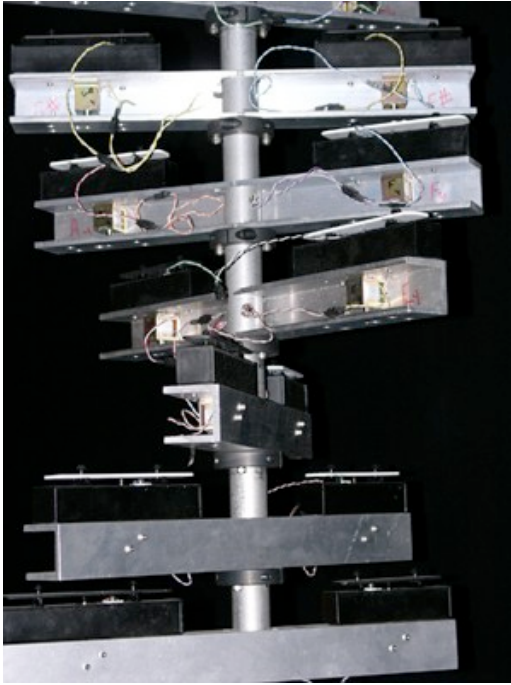
Unlike typical electronic music, "a robot is an actual physical being," said Evan Ziporyn, Southworth's music professor at MIT, who composed two of the pieces to be played Wednesday. "It gives you the possibility of what electronics can do — in terms of precision and playing impossible rhythms — but it's an actual acoustic sound."

Now, it's time to visit [Ensemble Robot](#), the website dedicated to these musical robots and maintained by Christine Southworth. All the pictures below come from [this page](#).

Here is a photo of the Bot(i)Cello, "a tree-shaped electric string robot that uses fans to pluck strings of changing lengths. It has three arms, each holding a electric guitar string on one end. The arms curl in and out like the petals of a flower, and as they move they change the pitch of the guitar string." Bot(i)cello was built by Christine Southworth, Leila Hasan, and Yu-Cheng Hsu. (Photo by Yu-Cheng Hsu)



Then is a picture of Heliphon, "a double-helix shaped robotic metallophone, built in 2004 by Leila Hasan, Alexandra Andriessen, and Giles Hall." (Photo by Bill Southworth)



Finally, here is a picture of the BloBot, the group's newest robot, which is "a dancing and pipe-playing robotic tetrahedron made of air cylinders, designed and built by Andy Cavatorta in 2005-06." (Photo by Christine Southworth)



And as says Cavatorta, "It's easy to make sound effects. It's difficult to make instruments." So if you listen to Wednesday's concert — which will cost you only \$10 — please tell me how was the music.

Sources: Kimberly W. Moy, The Boston Globe, January 23, 2006; and various web sites

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