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**MUSIC | MUSIC REVIEW**

## A Journey Into the Mind, Beginning at the Ear

Bora Yoon's 'Sunken Cathedral,' at the Prototype Festival



Bora Yoon is performing her piece "Sunken Cathedral," which includes projections by Adam Larsen, at La MaMa as part of the Prototype festival. Credit Tina Fineberg for The New York Times

**By VIVIEN SCHWEITZER | JAN. 16, 2015**

The origin of sound is often concealed in a blur of fast-moving arms, fingers and bows — a thick tapestry of notes created by instruments clustered together and sometimes only partly visible to the audience. A crucial element of the Korean-American vocalist and composer [Bora Yoon](#)'s performance art is highlighting the tactile elements of sound production, as she does during her mesmerizing "Sunken Cathedral": a soundscape blending electronic, acoustic and visual components that opened on Wednesday at La MaMa as part of the [Prototype festival](#).

Wearing a long purple dress, Ms. Yoon coaxes sonorities from an eclectic range of objects, including a metronome, Tibetan bowls, empty cans and sticks. Her deliberate motions draw a viewer's attention to every nuance of the process.

Ms. Yoon designed the piece, co-produced by [Beth Morrison](#) Projects and Here, to explore "the architecture of the subconscious." The work, directed by Glynis Rigsby, reflects Buddhist philosophies of cycles and orbits as well as issues of identity and Ms. Yoon's Korean heritage.

"The architecture of the mind is an infinite space full of rooms, corridors and stairwells that unfold and converge in curious ways," Ms. Yoon says slowly at the opening of the piece, as a large crystal placed on a red record spins gently.

Images of cathedrals figure prominently in the striking visuals (designed by Adam Larsen), which include gorgeously rendered silhouettes. One surreal tableau features the silhouette of Ms. Yoon on a screen, carrying a bow and chased by what appears to be a huge squid, its tentacles drifting outward over the screen.

During another segment, Ms. Yoon stands against a flickering starscape, her lovely voice soaring enigmatically over a misty electronic tapestry. The reverie is interrupted by a recurring theme in the work, a voice mail message featuring a woman's voice (which may be Ms. Yoon's mother) saying, "Bora, how are you; Bora, where are you?"

The other varied musical elements include Korean drumming by [Vong Pak](#), who wears traditional dress, and Ms. Yoon accompanying herself on keyboard as she sings a bluesy number. The moods shift evocatively between agitated and dreamy episodes, the unfolding sequences fascinating throughout.

Even if it is sometimes hard to relate the various happenings to the complex intentions of "Sunken Cathedral," it nonetheless proves alluring on its own terms.

"Sunken Cathedral" runs through Saturday at La MaMa, 74 East Fourth Street, East Village; 212-352-3101, [prototypefestival.org](http://prototypefestival.org). Sold out; waiting list begins one hour before each show.

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