



A Fusion of Sound and Visuals

The ConTempo String Quartet made a unique visual and musical event combining live and video recorded performance.

Background

This “Irish” ensemble has an unusual background. The ConTempo String Quartet consists of four Romanian musicians. In 2002 the quartet went to Ireland, where they became the first Ensemble-in-residence in the city of Galway. They’ve been there since.

Originally focusing solely on contemporary music the quartet today has a broad repertoire, presenting the citizens of Galway to music from the classical period all the way up to the youngest Irish composers. The quartet is no alien to contemporary concert experiments including cross over repertoire, staging effects and collaboration with other art forms. The Con Tempo Quartet has done concerts where they’ve in their own words “risked everything”.

Concept

For its first NewAud event, The Galway Music Residency presented ‘Minus 3: Sound & Visual Happening’, a unique visual and music exhibition/event – perfect for The Galway City Museum. They selected The Galway City Museum for its location in the city centre, both community members and tourists visit it frequently and the museum is very interested in partnerships with organisations of other art forms. The museum is an accessible venue and provides good promotion for all its events.

Each member of ConTempo performed Santa Ratiniece's *Alveoles* live, in front of an LCD screen, with a pre-recorded video of the other three members of the quartet. The audience was guided by the sound of music from one floor to another and from one room to another. Each room had one member of the quartet and the fifth room had the Romanian video artist Mihai Cucu, who created visuals for the piece. The audience was given the opportunity to hear the music and see the visuals from five different perspectives.

The aim was to keep each audience member engaged for as long as possible as if they were viewing a work of art. Most spent the entire 14 minutes with each musician. They were also able to talk to each of the artists and exchange thoughts with other members of the audience.

Process

Preparations for this event were done over the course of several months. The visuals needed to be created to accompany the music, and the video and audio recordings of the members of the quartet were made with three members at a time four times. The quartet held several days of rehearsals to

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make sure that the live performances were in sync with the audio and visual.

On the day of the performance, the rooms were set up with the LCD screens as well as posters with information on the composer as well as posters created with sheet music.

Target audience

This concert was aimed for:

- 1) New audiences of any age that would visit the museum on a Saturday afternoon
- 2) Families with young children who cannot go out in the evening to see a concert
- 3) Students (€20 evening concert tickets are not affordable to them)
- 4) Tourists
- 5) People looking for something different and interesting.

Conclusions

The ensemble found that people who frequently attend ConTempo Quartet concerts were present, but to their delight, they also saw many new faces – especially college-age and couples with small children.

Members of the The Galway Music Residency staff handed out audience cards and encouraged visitors to share their impressions of the concert. Some of the comments included ‘Dynamic, intriguing, challenging, thought-provoking and innovative,’ ‘Artistic, experimental, innovation, interesting’ and ‘A mini feast for the senses.’

At the end of the day, one of the staff members commented, ‘This was a very different way of presenting music and the audience particularly appreciated guidance and direction in how to engage with it.’

Facts

Ensemble: The Galway Ensemble in Residence: ConTempo Quartet

Date: November 23rd 2013, 3pm

Venue: The Galway City Museum, The Spanish Arch, Galway, Ireland

Programme: Santa Ratiniece: *Alveoles for String Quartet*

Further information: www.contempoquartet.com

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