



Acoustic Experiments at The Airport

Sinfonietta Rīga gave a concert at the old Spilve Airport, a half abandoned Soviet era heritage with neo-classical architecture and special acoustic qualities.

Background

Sinfonietta Rīga is a chamber orchestra based in Riga, the capital of Latvia. It has been established in 2006 as a state orchestra and currently resides at Spīķeru Concert Hall.

The main ambition of the orchestra is to perform at the highest professional level while being open to different genres of music ranging from baroque to the most contemporary compositions. The musicians of the orchestra are ready to experiment in both academic and non-academic musical directions.

Concept

The concert took place at the Spilve Airport notable both for its unique Stalinist, neo-classical aesthetics and particular acoustical qualities. The old airport is partly abandoned, housing an airplane museum, and only in recent years has the municipality started to host fashion shows and private events there. Sinfonietta Riga was the first music ensemble to perform a complete concert in this unusual historical venue.

Hence, the programme was related to the architectural and acoustical dimensions and built up references to the building's history.

Contemporary music in combination with 20th century soviet architecture is a powerful mix of art, and the concert wanted to touch upon subjects in the arts field which is not possible to evoke in traditional forms:

- 1) Spilve Airport as both a starting point and the end of the road, and music creating alternative paths.
- 2) Spilve Airport as an integral part of a historical and political context, and music as a substance which comments on the context, complements or ignores it.
- 3) Spilve Airport as a building endowed with unique acoustical qualities, and music as a substance making the void space sing.
- 4) Spilve Airport as a mixture of styles in the visual art, and music as a resonator of these styles.

The concert

The concert programme presented the premiere of young Latvian composer Kristaps Pētersons *Mastering of acoustics* which was performed simultaneously from 10 different spots in the building. Every spot was well exposed to the audience, audibly as well as visually, making the acoustical experiments possible, and including the references to the architectural elements.

Kristaps Pētersons said about the piece: “Music is a spatio-temporal art, and this is why a conceptual programme like this may be performed only at Spilve. At the same time, there is no ambition to deny the audience rights to come to conclusions by themselves or ignore any concepts in order just to enjoy the singing space.”

Aims and goals for the concert

- Diversify the contemporary repertoire of the ensemble
- Attract a new audience with a non-typical concert in a unique place
- Provide intellectual artistic content to the audience
- Use an unusual concert as a marketing tool for the ensemble

Target audience

The concert is part of Riga Festival, and was targeted at the wide audience group attending this festival. Other target groups were related to the special venue of the concert.

- Urban “diggers”
- Industrial soviet heritage enthusiasts
- Young creative entrepreneurs
- The intellectual elite
- Representatives of cultural industries
- Sinfonietta Riga's usual audience
- Students

Process

The process towards the concert can be divided into three groups

- Artistic production (choice of repertoire, contact with composer and producer)
- Technical production (setting up the venue, logistics, additional service staff)
- Marketing and promotion (selling ticket, producing promotional material, poster production, social media promotion, attending press conference of Riga’s Festival organisation)

Risks

Potential risks and challenges of the concert were related to the unusual venue

- The concert was technically difficult as the venue was not adapted as a concert place. The team worked longer than usual to plan the concert, visiting the venue several times in the process.
- The location of the venue was outside the centre of the city. The ensemble was ready to provide buses for the audience if the ticket sales were low.
- Concert visitors could feel uncomfortable in such an unusual place. Extra service staff was engaged to help audience find their way around and feel comfortable.
- Although the ensemble were sure about the quality of the acoustics, it was still an audial experiment.

Budget

Cost of the project: 8574,55EUR

Artistic expenses – 1829,31EUR

Technical expenses – 5526,10EUR

Marketing expenses – 1219,14EUR

Conclusions and recommendations

- The concert was a new experience for the audience. The audience research made during the concert shows that more than 50% says that a non traditional concert hall facilitates the experience of contemporary music better.
- It was an intellectual event very well attended by trend setters/intellectuals and highly represented by the media

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- The entrance ticket price was very affordable so also the younger audience and students were present at the concert

The ensemble learned that

- Interesting venues can motivate people to go to the concert
- Contemporary music is very well accepted by audience in non traditional venues
- This kind of project needs to have fundamental financial support as they are not profitable
- A concert like this can be used as effective promotion for the ensemble
- It is important to choose the appropriate season for a concert outside the city centre

Facts

Ensemble: Sinfonietta Rīga, 34 musicians involved

Date and time: May 24th 2014, 7pm

Venue: Former Spilve Airport Terminal

Programme:

Jesper Nordin: *The Aisle*

Gregory d'Hoop: *Une roe qui tourne*

Kristaps Pētersons: *Mastering of acoustics*

Further information: www.sinfoniettariga.lv