



A Brand New Concert Format

Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen integrated their experimental concert format Brand New Tuesdays as a part of the avant-garde music festival KLANG.

Author: Research partner Anne Karina Nortung

Background

Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen has long been established as a leading Danish chamber ensemble and the nation's foremost new music ensemble. Their ambition is to direct the repertoire towards an even sharper contemporary profile – and to work more radically with the concert formats.

Brand New Tuesdays is part of the ensembles aims of performing New Modern Classical compositional music in unconventional settings. The ensemble is working towards developing the concert format and presenting the newly-written music in different settings to attract a wider audience.

Brand New Tuesdays was a series of concerts performed in 2013 and 2014. The first two concerts were performed in the spring of 2013 at the venue Huset in Copenhagen and the 3rd was performed at Koncertkirken, also in Copenhagen.

Concept

Brand New Tuesdays vol. 4 was performed during the KLANG festival, which is Denmark's largest international music festival for avant-garde music. The KLANG festival takes place at the festival stage of the venue Republique in Copenhagen. The settings for the concerts were the theatre, lobby and the café of Republique.

For Athelas the KLANG Festival is a good way to support the ensembles vision of showcasing new music by younger composers from both the international and national scene.

Athelas' vision behind Brand New Tuesdays is to create a direct dialogue with the audience. After the music events they invite the audience to stay for a drink and an informal chat about the works. The aim is to provide the audience with an opportunity to interact with musicians and composers and have an influence on the concept with ideas regarding works and venues in the series of concerts.

The concert

All of the pieces selected for the concert were written for classical instruments with added electronic equipment and film clips, weird electronic sounds and video pieces.

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Johannes Kreidler's *Sheet Music* includes video with Kreidler's graphic notation miniatures. The piece starts with a graphic display of a Haydn sonata expressed in a manipulated soundscape.

Carola Bauckholt's *Treibsoff* consists of delicate sounds and lets pounding rhythms drive the piece forward.

Leopold Hurt's *Fred Ott's Sneeze* includes a short film with a sneeze which inspired a creation of this piece changing back and forth between acoustic and computer generated sounds.

Julia Hodkinson's *When the Wind Blows* is a multi-faceted soundscape created with toys, piano and recordings of various sounds.

Johannes Kreidler's *Shutter Piece* is characterised by short flashing video clips of 80's German football icons and commentators with eccentric sounds thrown in.

The ensemble performed classical chamber music with few instruments combined with electronic equipment, toys, everyday items and rock instruments.

The concert included recorded Skype interviews with the composers in which they introduced their works. The interviews shown during the concert had also been available prior to the show via a YouTube link on Athelas' website. Johannes Kreidler was present and on stage with the musicians after his last piece which ended the concert.

The research methodology

Ensemble manager and producer Mads Brammer and research partner Anne Karina Nortung held a meeting before the show and discussed Athelas' intentions with the Brand New Tuesdays concept. They discussed how Brand New Tuesdays could work as a part of a festival like KLANG. Together they developed a number of questions for a focus group interview with members of the audience, and picked out questions from the NewAud Information Shopping List.

Athelas was interested in knowing:

- 1) Is the audience member participating as part of the KLANG Festival or just the Brand New Tuesdays concert?
- 2) How did the audience perceive Brand New Tuesdays as part of a festival?
- 3) Which effect did the videos with the composers have on the audience?

Practical approach

The approach was to attempt a combination of Wondering Cards on the day of the concert and afterwards interview audience members as part of a focus group. This was a way to interact with the audience after the concert and finding interested concert goers who filled out the Wondering Cards. The purpose of this was to interact with and invite the audience to a more thorough and informal talk about the concert-going experience.

After an extended and long-running correspondence and planning, four audience members agreed to a focus group interview. The interview took place at The Living Room café in central Copenhagen on 26th of June 2014 from 5.30-6.30 pm. The interview was conducted in a quiet and informal manner in a living-room like setting, snacks and drinks were served. Their participation in the focus

group interview was rewarded with a Rune Glerup CD.

The interview was conducted as an open conversation with dialogue between the interviewer and subjects. The interviewer, controlled the conversation and asked questions during. The interview was recorded and transcribed and chosen questions and answers will make up the frame work for the following conversation.

Participants

Research partner (I)

Subject (1) Experienced listener, IT systems developer. Age: 50 +.

Subject (2) Experienced listener, studies composition. Age 20+.

Subject (3) Experienced listener, musician. Age 20 +.

Subject (4) Inexperienced listener, IT software. Age 40 +.

Interview findings

Does the audience attend the KLANG Festival or just the Brand New Tuesday concert?

Question from Information Shopping List: (A) Which communication channels or platforms should we use?

What follows is a discussion about Athelas' marketing and communication with its audience.

(I) Did you check out the program before going to the concert? Do you receive newsletters? How is the information stream from Athelas besides that? Do you follow Athelas on Facebook?

The experienced listeners use Facebook to receive information about concerts. One subject receives the email newsletter. None of the subjects use the Athelas Sinfoniettas website for information.

(4) Normally I would never go to a concert like this as it is miles from what I normally listen to. The way they were marketing the concert – the words and phrases used to sell it was spot-on. But one was not met with posters and such walking down Østerbrogade on the day of the event.

All subjects were primarily there to participate in the KLANG Festival. Two of the subjects also attended a KLANG Festival concert afterwards. Two of the subjects' motivation was also professional in an attempt to meet colleagues and network. A combination of seeing friends and participating in the festival in general. An inexperienced listener was invited by word of mouth. All subjects had visited the KLANG Festival website prior to the concert.

(1) I didn't realize until I saw the KLANG program, that Brand New Tuesdays had been snuck in on Tuesday.

(4) I had a good feeling that half of it would be interesting and the rest would just be filler.

How does the audience perceive Brand New Tuesdays as part of a festival?

Question from Information Shopping List: (B) Venue (C) Which concert formats would work the best?

The starting time of the concert suited everybody well, after dinner and the news. All subjects agreed the time frame and interval between Brand New Tuesday and the next KLANG concert was adequate.

(4) The start time after work and dinner time suited me well. The music is pretty challenging so you have to be pretty tuned-in to it. Maybe I could have managed 90 minutes. but it would have been rough.

As opposed to earlier Brand New Tuesdays concerts, several of the subjects thought Republique was fine as a venue. Others thought the venue institutional or dull.

(1) The Brand New Tuesday concert in Huset with its more informal setting made it more natural to sit down at a table and talk to other audience members which is different from when sitting on chairs lined up in rows at Republique.

Several of the subjects used the café after the concert and it provided a nice setting for the break between Brand New Tuesdays and the following concert.

(3) It gives you the option of going back in to listen to some more.

(1) It is pretty cool that there is a break where you can go across the street. It gives you the chance to become more intimate, right?

The inexperienced listener was unaware of the café across the street. One subject thought the venue was better than Koncertkirken which easily becomes very “classical”. Another subject thought that Brand New Tuesdays was sort of invisible as an event in the KLANG Festival.

How does the videos with the composers influence the audience?

Question from information Shopping List: (D) The concert experience, how can we add value to the concerts? (E) What added value to do the audience expect?

The three experienced listeners agreed that the music was a bit monotonous or the same passages but without much variation. The inexperienced listener got more out of it.

(4) As an inexperienced listener I had to take it all in – I was provoked.

One of the subjects described an experience under the concert thus:

(3) I was accompanied by a female friend, who is also a musician. When the Kreidler piece (Shutter Piece) started she started feeling ill. She got all stressed and said she was glad she did not suffer from epilepsy, otherwise she would be having a seizure by now. She had to sit down and cover her eyes. I guess it all comes down to what you are used to.

The interviewer then asked the subjects what they got out of the videos with the composers and what level of information they gained from them? Most thought it a funny and good part of the experience. Though the experienced listeners thought it had been done before so it was not an overwhelming experience for them. They also found the repetition of the video pieces before each music piece a bit boring after a while.

(2) At first, you are introduced to these videos and like I said, at first it was a great gimmick but

after the third I thought “No, I don’t need to be caught between these presentations and the music anymore“.

Also, the attempt to make it appear live when it was obviously a recording was unconvincing. But on the other hand, the videos also helped create a relation that is not otherwise present in a standard printed program. The interviewer asked if any of the subjects had seen the videos prior to the concert but no one knew they were available. The subjects all thought the presentation before or after the concert would be a good idea. The marketing of the videos had been non-existent, at least to the subjects.

To them it seemed far more interesting to talk about composer Johannes Kreidler, who was actually present after the concert. This was thought to be a change from a well-known alienation from the music. On the other hand, the inexperienced listener found it to be an idolization of one individual and extremely alienating.

(1) Well, he is a flamboyant character, who likes to wallow in the attention.

The dialogue between the composer and the musicians after the concert was the subject that held the most interest among the experienced concert goers.

They also talked about how the music was pretty complicated and concentrated and the fact that there were little-to-no communication between the musicians and their audience, except from the percussionist.

A discussion followed in which the subject was proper behaviour at a Brand New Tuesday as opposed to a traditional classical concert.

To an inexperienced listener, it would seem one would have to be quiet like at a traditional classical concert.

(1) One gets the impression you have to sit quietly and coughing is frowned upon.

(4) If the goal is to find new audiences, you need to bridge the gap between other genres also part of a subculture. Something other than mainstream. When thinking about classical music, one tends to think about Mozart and Beethoven.

Recommendations for changes in response to the findings.

Republique, as a venue, has to a certain extent been different because it was part of the KLANG Festival. Brand New Tuesdays got pushed into the background among the many other concerts. Most of the subjects had festival passes and participated in the KLANG Festival and not Brand New Tuesdays specifically.

Even though most of the subjects do not appreciate all the aspects of the music, subjects (1) and (4) felt alienated in relation to the rest of the audience, who were professionals. They longed for someone to share the experience with afterwards though (1) was willing to be more proactive in seeking out other people. More work needs to be done, in relation to adding more value to the ensemble's attempt to create a social setting after the concerts.

Facebook seems in general to be the best means of sending out invitations and creating motivation for participating. There has been no debate afterwards on Facebook about the concert.

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The added value of the video presentations was generally seen as a good idea but like the repertoire, it was also seen as a bit repetitive after a while. But continue with new and different initiatives like the videos. Athelas need to view their marketing of Brand New Tuesdays as communication with a different audience. The current marketing does not reach a potential audience.

This report shows that Athelas' Brand New Tuesdays concerts have a strong and supportive audience. Athelas still need to open up new ways to attract a new, potential audience. One way of doing this could be to find venues used by other subcultures and begin a dialogue with their audience. They must continue to try new venues.

Facts

Ensemble: Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen

Conductor: Casper Schreiber

Title: Brand New Tuesday concert vol. 4.

Time and date: June 3rd, 7:30pm

Venue: Festivalscenen, Republique, Copenhagen, Denmark

Programme:

Johannes Kreidler: *Sheet Music* (2013)

Carola Bauckholt: *Treibsoff* (1995)

Leopold Hurt: *Fred Ott's Sneeze* (2011)

Julia Hodkinson: *When the Wind Blows* (2009)

Johannes Kreidler: *Shutter Piece* (2013)

Further information: www.athelas.dk