



Let's Play With the New Music!

Kwartludium mixed concert and workshops for children based on the belief that new music should be reachable for the young audience – the audience that is the most open minded.

Evaluation by Malgorzata Zamorska

Background

The energy between musicians and audience is central to the Polish ensemble Kwartludium, a small contemporary ensemble consisting of violin, clarinet, percussion and piano. Formed in 2002 and constantly commuting between the cities of Warsaw and Gdansk, the ensemble works with improvisations, graphic illustrations of the music and good old fashioned talking-with-the-audience as ways of securing the energy and understanding between the musicians and the listeners.

Concept

Kwartludium prepared a concert dedicated to a new audience – children from 4 to 12 years old. The first two concerts took place at Warsaw Autumn – International Festival of Contemporary Music 2013 and were part of the New Music New Audiences project. The idea for the concert came from a very strong belief that new music should be available for young audiences. Kwartludium wants to open a door to contemporary music for the audience that is the most open minded - children. Young listeners are free of prejudice and experience music in a free, boundless way. Based on children's openness and curiosity the ensemble wanted to be a tutor, partner and translator of contemporary music.

„Kwartludium in Wonderland” is both a concert and a playground. Using the language of fairytales Kwartludium invited children on a journey into the wonderful new music land. In a very skillful way this music event combined the concert of contemporary music with all activities that children love. They were invited to watch a movie, play instruments, draw pictures, move around, play in a group or just sit by themselves. It made children play music and play with music, listen and experience new music and last but not least LIKE contemporary music.

Aims of the concert

- make new music playable and approachable for the youngest audience
- turn children into new music researchers
- show how important a young audience is
- build a bridge between adults and young audiences by offering the same repertoire at various

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concerts during Warsaw Autumn Festival

Concert

The concert was divided into 14 parts, with 7 short concert pieces of contemporary music. The programme included the same composers as at the „main” festival for an adult audience so that parents had the opportunity to invite their children to a music event similar to what they had experienced earlier. Compositions by Eduardo Mogueillansky, Jagoda Szmytka, Aleksandra Gryka, Jean Pierre Deleuze, Sławomir Wojciechowski, Matthias Ockert and Dariusz Przybylski were in the programme. Between the music pieces there were 7 activities that children were invited to participate in. On stage performed Kwartludium - Dagna Sadkowska (violin), Michał Górczyński (clarinet, bass clarinet), Piotr Nowicki (piano), Paweł Nowicki (percussion). The ensemble played contemporary compositions and ran all workshop activities during the concert.

Evaluation

The concert for young audience „Kwartludium in Wonderland” was performed twice at International Festival of Contemporary Music Warsaw Autumn, on September 28 th.

First concert – for children at the age of 4 to 7– was given at 11 am.

Second concert – for children at the age of 8 to 12– was given at 4 pm.

Both concerts took place at ZACHĘTA National Gallery of Art.

The evaluation report is divided into three parts. First part describes how children and their parents evaluated the first concert. Second part describes how children and their parents evaluated the second concert. The third part presents general conclusions of the whole project.

Evaluation part I – The First concert for the children at the age of 4 to 7 years

General conclusions and information

50 children participated in the concert 30 children that participated in the evaluation game liked the concert. 20 out of 32 children that participated in the survey were at a concert of contemporary music for the first time. 20 out of 32 parents that participated in the survey said that their children would „definitely” like to attend a similar concert in the future. All of the young audience listened to the contemporary music with attention and curiosity, most children were truly engaged while participating in activities

Evaluation game – conclusions

After the show children were asked to participate in an evaluation game. There was a rope on the floor with a big plus on one end and with a big minus on the other. The task was: „if you liked the concert please stand on the plus or close to it. If you did not like the concert please stand on the minus or close to it.”

While the children were taking part in the evaluation game their parents were asked to participate in the survey. This means that the parents could not influence the children's evaluation. 30 children who participated in the evaluation game liked the concert. 10 children who participated in the evaluation game did not like the concert. 10 children stood somewhere in between the plus and the minus which meant „I liked it a little” or „I am not sure if I liked it”.

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Observation - conclusions

During the concert 6 children in the age of 2 to 7 years were observed. Also the whole group was observed by one organizer and the ensemble.

The most important conclusion from the observation was that the children showed interest in the music. All 6 children that were observed during the concert were highly involved in the event. They listened carefully to the music – their behaviour might be described as follows:

- they leaned towards musicians and scene
- they gazed at the musicians without looking away for whole music pieces (2-4 minutes)
- they watched musicians with open mouth
- they did not move around when music was played
- they did not talk to each other when music was played
- their faces showed interest and curiosity
- they showed their emotions (e.g. at the beginning of the concert when music was dramatic, two of the youngest girls from the observation group exclaimed „I am scared!”)

Also the whole group during the concert was quiet and concentrated. Children remained in their seats and listened with curiosity.

Out of the 6 children being observed 5 participated in all activities and understood the instructions. Only one girl at the age of 2 was too young to participate, but she came to the concert with her older brothers. The children liked the games, played the instruments with great pleasure and were able to follow the instructions precisely. However, the beginning of the game as well as the end always caused some kind of chaos in the room. Here, the children were distracted and started to move around, wanted to approach their parents or lay on the floor.

Although one may think that activities and plays were more attractive to the children than the music was, the observation proves the opposite. It may easily be claimed that the observed children were as much engaged into the music as into the „play” part.

Only at the very end of the event (last 10 minutes) 3 out of 6 observed children became distracted; their behaviour might be described as follows:

- they walked around the room
- they approached their parents or other children
- they did not participate in the activities
- they did something else, than what they were asked to do (e.g. they kept on drawing a picture while other children were doing something completely different)
- they lay down on the floor, changed their positions and showed their lack of interest.

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that such behaviour was expressed by less than 10 % of the youngest children, and what is more it took place at the end of the concert.

Parents survey

Parents who came to the concert with their children remained in the concert room and watched the whole event. At the end they were asked to fill in a short questionnaire. The outcome of this research shows the following data:

- 32 parents participated in the survey

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- 31 parents said that their children would „definitely“ or probably” like to attend a similar concert in the future,
- 25 parents gave the grades 5 and 4 which stated „this concert will make my child interested in contemporary music
- 20 children had never attended a contemporary music concert before
- 28 children did not attend music school

The survey proved that the concert reached its aim – it generated the interest in contemporary music among people who had never heard contemporary music before. It is very important that the young audience would participate in such musical events in the future.

Evaluation group

After the concert Kwartludium asked four parents to share their opinions about the concert. Generally people liked the concert and said that they would definitely come to similar events in the future. We asked them what they liked most and what should be changed.

Some of the most common opinions were:

Question: What do you think the children liked most?

- „I think the children liked most those parts when they could play the instruments”
- „The children liked the concert part with the movie 'Space journey',
- „I think that there was a good balance of music and activities. Sometimes when we go to the philharmonic concerts for the young audience concerts are too long for the kids. Here the concert parts were short enough to keep children interested”
- „It was a good idea to divide music (concert) part with games. If it had been the other way children would have been bored and distracted very quickly.”
- „I liked this part when children could relax and listen to music with closed eyes”
- „I liked the great final when children could dance and jump to the music”

Question: What, in your opinion, should be changed?

- „I think that the parents should be seated closer to their kids, so they could control their behaviour more and children would not walk around to be in contact with their parents”

Question: Do you think such a concert will make children more familiar with contemporary music?

- „Such events (with lots of games and activities) are the best way to familiarize children with contemporary music”
- „This concert had a great atmosphere. I was far more relaxed as a parent, then I am at philharmonic concert for kids. I was not scared that my kid would exclaim something while the whole audience is quiet or do something „forbidden””
- „I think it is the best way for promoting contemporary music – give children a chance to participate in it. The spontaneous reactions of children proved that a child is a much more open listener than the adult audience. Adult listeners are often bucked up and during a concert they think „what is allowed to do and what is not allowed”. Such workshops give children a chance to grow up to this music, to become a listener of new music in future.”
- „I think it is thanks to the band who makes this free and friendly atmosphere”

This last part of the evaluation proved that the concert had a well planned and balanced structure, that the atmosphere was good and friendly, and that the event reached its aim - making new music approachable for the youngest audience.

Evaluation part II – the second concert for children at the age of 8 to 12 years

General conclusions and information

31 children participated in the concert

31 children who participated in the evaluation game liked the music and activities

27 children who participated in the evaluation game would like to attend similar concerts in the future

7 out of 18 parents who participated in the survey said that their children would „definitely“ like to attend a similar concert in the future.

9 out of 18 parents who participated in the survey said their children would „probably“ like to attend a similar concert in the future.

All of the young audience listened to the contemporary music with attention and curiosity, most children participated in activities with engagement

Evaluation game – conclusion

After the show the children were asked to participate in an evaluation game. There were three pieces of paper hanging on the wall. Each of them had a statement written on it:

I liked the music

I liked the games

I will come again

The task was” „Please put a sticker under the statement you agree with” and children were given stickers. They were informed that they didn't have to put any stickers at all. Also they could take additional stickers home. So there was no pressure on their judgments. While the children were participating in the evaluation game their parents were asked to participate in the survey. In this way parents did not influence the children's evaluation.

Results from the evaluation game:

31 children who participated in the evaluation game liked the music

31 children who participated in the evaluation game liked the activities

27 children who participated in the evaluation game would like to attend a similar concert in the future

Observation - conclusions

During the concert 6 children in the age group between 6 and 12 were observed. Also the whole group was observed by one organizer and the ensemble.

The most important conclusion from the observation was that the children showed their interest in the music. All children that were observed during the concert were highly involved in the event.

They listened carefully to the music – their behaviour might be described as follows:

- they leaned towards musicians and stage
- they gazed at the musicians without looking away for whole music pieces (2-4 minutes)
- they smiled while music was played

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- they expressed their emotions with words while music was played: „I am scared”, „It is so strange”, „It is too loud!”
- they did not move around when music was played
- they did not talk to each other when music was played
- their faces showed interest, curiosity and pleasure

From time to time one or two of the observed children were distracted, but then they „came back” to the group after a while.

What is more, the whole group was quiet and concentrated during the concert part. The children remained in their seats and listened with curiosity.

3 out of 6 observed children participated in all activities and understood the instructions. The other three participated in most activities, but at the end (two last games) they were tired and distracted – lay down on the floor, walked around and approached their parents.

Generally speaking, all observed children liked the games, played the instruments with great pleasure and were able to follow the instructions precisely. The exception was only one game, when children were asked to draw what they were hearing. At that moment not all the children were drawing, however, the whole group was listening to the music.

Parents survey

Parents that came to the concert with their children remained in the concert room and watched the whole event. At the end they were asked to fill in a short questionnaire. The outcome of this research shows the following data:

- 18 parents participated in the survey
- 7 parents said that their children would „definitely” like to attend a similar concert in the future
- 9 parents said that their children would „probably” like to attend a similar concert in the future
- 15 parents gave grade 5 and 4 that stated „this concert will make my child interested in contemporary music
- 10 children had never attended a contemporary music concert before
- 11 children did not attend music school

So the survey proved that the second concert had reached its aim – made children who had never heard contemporary music before interested in this kind of music. It is very important that the young audience will participate in such musical events in the future.

Evaluation group

After the concert we asked three parents to share their opinions about the concert. Generally people we talked to liked the concert and said that they would definitely come to similar events in the future. We asked them what they liked most and what should be changed.

Some of the most common opinions were:

Question: What do you think the children liked most?

- „I think that children liked most those activities which engaged their bodies, those parts when they can move. But in my opinion most quality were those activities during which children could play instruments and experience music in active way. That play with ropes became a real concert.”
- „My children played instruments with great pleasure – illustrating moods with music (e.g.

sadness, hunger, joy etc). I think that this idea for the concert – that certain topics (e.g. magical words, communication) were illustrated with musical pieces – was ambitious but it succeeded. Very positive reactions from the young audience proves that.”

- „I liked the idea that musicians changed in leading workshop parts, so that children could have close contact with every musician from Kwartludium. This helped shorten the distance between the band and the audience.”
- „For me this concert was magical! They have a wonderful attitude towards children. They appeared on the stage with mystery and enchanted everybody. I liked all parts, the concert was led very clearly. The musicians managed to keep the children's attention.”

Question: What in your opinion should be changed?

- „For me this part with drawing should be changed. I noticed that children instead of drawing what they heard (that was the task) were focused on listening the music. So I think it would be better to ask them to do the task „draw what you hear” after the concert. For me it was a pleasant surprise that children prefer listening to drawing.”
 - „I would suggest composing musical parts especially for such kind of event. So that music pieces would illustrate better, more clearly, directly, some ideas and aesthetic themes that are the topic for the activity part.”
- “Maybe the concert was a bit long. Maybe there should have been a break”

Question: Do you think such a concert will make children more familiar with contemporary music?

- „Thanks to this unique idea – joining music parts with activities that engage the audience – the children could explore contemporary music. Otherwise they could listen to the concert but not accept it. Those workshop parts give children a chance to learn more about contemporary music, probe into it.”
- „This concert is a great idea. It promotes a natural perception of new music among a young audience. Children listened to contemporary compositions with utmost interest and participated fully in whole event. I believe that such concerts very well prepares young listeners to participate in contemporary music culture in the future.”
- “I am sure that this concert makes children familiar with contemporary music. It is a very authentic meeting. There is no boundary between musicians and the young audience. I think all musical events, not only for children, should be organized in this way – with close, human contact. Not only contemporary music concert would profit a lot if the concert was a real meeting - people with people.”
- “The musicians from Kwartludium presents this music in a way that enables children to listen to it in an open, boundless way. They delighted young listeners with contemporary music. I would say that they were delighted with this new sound as if they saw a beautiful beetle on a path.”

Evaluation part III

General conclusions

The concert was a great success and a huge step in presenting new music to young audiences. 80 children participated in the event. 7 music pieces by 7 different contemporary composers were presented. The children listened to new music with interest and curiosity. They were eager to participate in all proposed games and activities. They had fun and after the concert over a half of the group remained in the concert venue to play instruments and talk to musicians.

All kids took part in the evaluation game and showed their positive opinions towards the event.

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What is more, 50 parents participated in the survey and 7 parents shared their opinions about the concert during a short interview just after the event.

The evaluation part gave children and their parents the opportunity to express their opinions about the concert and as far as the organizers are concerned, it gave a clear response for a central question: Was the aim of the concert achieved? Both concerts reached their main aim – children listened to contemporary music, most of them liked it and were willing to come to similar events in the future.

30 out of 50 parents that participated in the survey said that their child was at such a concert for the first time and 39 of 50 children (from families that took part in the survey) did not attend music schools nor play instruments in general. That proves that the concert was presented to the new listeners – children that listened to contemporary music for the first time.

Apart from the conclusions from the evaluations we must mention some of the few impressions that members of the ensemble had. The atmosphere during both concerts was good, but during the first one with the youngest audience there was more enthusiasm and emotions towards the music. Kwartludium had a great contact with the young audience and was impressed by the way children participated in activities, especially when they were supposed to play instruments – they listened to each other and to the musicians.

All in all, the concert proved that children are open to new music and willing to explore it. Moreover, it showed that it is important to build an audience for contemporary music when they are young as there is an openness and curiosity that only children have.

Facts

Ensemble: Kwartludium

Title: Kwartludium in Wonderland

Date and time: September 28th, 11am and 4pm

Venue: ZACHĘTA National Gallery of Art

Further information: <http://www.kwartludium.com/>