



Mixing Contemporary Music and Animated Film

Cantus Ensemble joined forces with students of animated film to create a unique experience of listening to contemporary music, with the goal of attracting a new, young audience.

Report and evaluation by Sanda Božić (Croatian Composers' Society)



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Background

Founded in 2001 Cantus Ensemble creates and chooses its programme for each concert, with the aim of performing works which can be considered best of the best and newest of the newest. Their concerts often involve other art forms like theatre, dance and literature, always trying to find new ways to bring the experience of new music to new audiences.

Cantus Ensemble has 16 musicians at its core and the possibility to build larger formations when needed. This makes the ensemble able to adapt to unconventional instrumental combinations and constantly change their line-up, size, sound and stylistic characteristics.

Concept

In the NewAud project the Cantus Ensemble decided to work on every aspect of the concert infrastructure: content, form and message – and collaborate with other art forms. The initial idea was to develop a music video for an alternative presentation and a wider perception of the classical concert form. The idea was presented and discussed at the workshops on mixing art forms in the NewAud working community.

After the workshops, the goal of the Cantus Ensemble was developed into performing live music together with animated films, and supplementing the experience with recorded video statements from the represented composers in which they could introduce themselves and their work to the audience.

The target audience was mainly younger people and the idea was to show them a combination of a traditional live performance of contemporary music and the visual art created by talented young people. The video statements by the composers were meant to help both animators and audience put a face and character to the music, especially because some of the composers were young people like themselves.

The project was created in collaboration with students of the Academy of Fine Arts – Department for Animated Film and New Media and in coproduction with Student Centre's Music Showroom, Culture of Changes at the University in Zagreb.

Process

Artistic leader and conductor Ivan Josip Skender selected 5 musically diverse pieces by 5 composers from the repertoire pool.

The selected works were recorded at the studio of the Concert Hall Vatroslav Lisinski in Zagreb. Those recordings were given to the students of animated film. They had the freedom to make the animated films as they wished, inspired by the way they heard and visualized the music. During the two months of this creative process the ensemble had several meetings with the film makers, discussing the concept of the concert.

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Advertisement – promotion of the project

A lot of effort was put into spreading awareness of the concert. It was communicated on the websites of HDS, MBZ, Cantus Ensemble, Academy of Fine Arts, Music Showroom/ Culture of Change/ Student Centre of the University in Zagreb, Croatian Ministry of Culture and through their respective mailing lists. The project was also presented on social networks, mainly Facebook and Twitter, and through radio and newspapers.

During the realization of the project, word about the process spread, and soon people were talking about the creation of the project, as it was an innovative, creative and interesting process.

Even though it was highly advertised and present online, feedback from the questionnaires suggests most people found out about the concert through word of mouth, followed by Facebook and Twitter as second.



The concert

The concert took place on the 3rd of April 2014 in Multimedia Centre, Student Centre of the University in Zagreb.

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Located conveniently in the centre of the city this venue is very popular among young people due to its relaxed and informal atmosphere, and is known as a place where different events unfold throughout the year and where the audience have a chance to interact with the artists on stage.

During the concert conductor of the Cantus Ensemble, Ivan Josip Skender, was explaining the concept of the project to the audience. The filmed statements from the composers were interesting, informal and sometimes funny. For example Matyas Wettl from Hungary made his statement, filmed while taking a shower!

The concert was a new experience with surprising elements for everyone who participated in it. The musicians from the Cantus Ensemble saw the integral animated videos for the first time, the young video artists attended the live performance of the ensemble for the first time of, and they all, together with the audience, saw and heard the statements by the composers for the first time.

The outcome was a genuinely dynamic concert that the audience enjoyed very much. The feedback from the audience in the form of handed out questionnaires was all positive.

Audience feedback

Of all the handed out questionnaires 35 were filled out and returned.

1. Points awarded for the concert in general: 8,9 and 10.
2. Words to describe the concert: different, creative, interesting, emotional, inspiring, innovative, wonderful, strong, chaotic, powerful.
3. The venue is: very welcoming and easy to get to, well organized and somewhat comfortable.
4. Reasons for attending the concert:
 - a. It sounded like an interesting concert (14)
 - b. Someone recommended it to me (11)
 - c. Professional interest in music (5)
 - d. I enjoy hearing music of foreign composers (3)
 - e. I see as many music gigs as possible (2)
5. How did you find out about the concert:
 - a. Told by someone else (17)
 - b. Facebook/Twitter (10)
 - c. SC Zagreb website (5)
6. Male or female and age group:
 - a. Men (13)
 - b. Women (22)
 - c. 20-24 (9)

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- d. 25-34 (18)
 - e. 35-44 (8)
7. What 4 or 5 words describe your taste in music:
contemporary, jazz, experimental, classical, new.
8. What 4 or 5 words describe the kind of films you like: drama, well-acted, thrillers, meaningful, deep.
9. How often did you attend a contemporary music concert in the last year:
a. 10 or more times (6)
b. Twice (8)
c. First gig in the past year (11)
10. How often did you attend any other concert in the last year:
a. 10 or more times (18)
b. 3 to 5 times (9)
11. What is your preferred concert time:
a. 7:30 pm (4)
b. 8 pm (12)
c. 9 pm (7)
d. No preference (12)
12. How could we have improved your experience tonight?
Most of the audience was pleased and liked everything, though some stated the venue was a little bit too hot and needed more air. Also some made a point that it would have been nice if drinks were available.

Conclusions

The Cantus Ensemble has been very satisfied with the New Music:New Audiences project with its emphasis on cooperation between the ensembles involved through workshops and conferences. This unique possibility to be in direct contact with other ensembles, to exchange practical ideas, problems, experiences, suggestions, advice, thoughts and many other things, gave this project a special quality and value.

The project by the Cantus Ensemble was accomplished through the development of different ways of bringing new music to a wider audience: New concert formats and mixing with other art forms, performing in unconventional venues, engaging young people in the creation of the concert and interpretation of the music, integration of new technology and educational aspects of the project.

The involvement of the students at the Department for Animated Film and New Media in the creation of the concert was a great resource in addressing a new audience, as they are part of the target group familiar with the concept of mixing art forms but unfamiliar with new music.

For the students the animated films will be useful in their future study and career as material for entering different kinds of competitions etc.

Audio recordings of the selected works were sent to all participating composers. The entire concert was filmed and is available online on social networks and the NewAud website. It will serve as promotion of the new music, the ensemble and the whole NewAud project. The hope is, that this documentation in itself will be a way to reach a new audience.

The partnership with Music Showroom / Culture of Change / Student Centre of the University in Zagreb will continue for the next season of the Cantus Ensemble and will culminate in a multimedia project at the same venue.

Facts

Ensemble: Cantus Ensemble (18 musicians involved)

Conductor: Ivan Josip Skender

Collaborators: 6 students from The Academy of Fine Arts – Department for Animated Film and New Media, Zagreb

Venue: Multimedia Centre, The Student Centre of the University in Zagreb, Croatia

Date: April 3rd 2014

Programme:

Jana Kmit'ova (Slovakia) - Wound (2003)

L'ubica Čekovska (Slovakia) - Postludium (2005)

Matyas Wettl (Hungary) - My Former Band (2012)

Edmund Finnis (United Kingdom) - Focus/Pull (2011)

Gundega Šmite (Latvia) - Mysticism (2011)

Entrance: Free

Number of attenders: Approximately 80

NewAud working community: Mixing art forms

Additional information: www.cantus-ansambl.com