



# Music and Machines

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St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra engaged young students from the Vilnius Technical University as collaborators in a unique concert. They played newly written compositions on technical instruments, old machines and turbines.

## Background

The St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra is well known as a daring and innovative ensemble, which is keen on expanding its repertoire and is constantly involved in a number of original projects, such as jazz performances, rock operas or pop-events. It also has a reputation as an “old scores reviver” as well as a patron of young musicians and composers. So the ensemble is familiar with musical experiments including repertoire, forms of the performance, discovering of new spaces and so on.

## Concept

The idea of the MUTE project was to create a link between music and technology, looking at the music from a technological angle. Composing modern music is often based on appropriate techniques or using the most modern technologies. Even looking through history, composing and performing music in general is a kind of technology.

So, the space and the content of the concert should be strongly related. Therefore the program was compiled of works by composers who were inspired by the sound of acoustic instruments and complemented the sound with minor interventions by technological devices.

Since the primary goal was to develop the audience of the ensemble, they tried for the first time involving students with a technical background quite far away from music and even further away from contemporary music. To be sure of their motivation, the ensemble invited them not only as listeners, but as performers as well.

## Aims and goals

- To involve and motivate young people to take part in the project presenting contemporary music as catchy and attractive
- To use the potentials of the space (bringing to life technical devices, transforming them to musical instruments during the concert)
  - To select an appropriate repertoire of modern music and to create musical interventions which would be professional and fitting the context, but not too difficult for the students to perform
  - To create a new experience of listening to music

## **Target audience**

The concert had two main target groups:

- Young professionals with a technical background
- People attentive to technological innovations and interested in development of technology in general.

## **Process**

The ensemble made an agreement with the Museum of Energy and Technology to use the Turbine Hall as venue for the concert, and for permission to use museum exhibits (old turbines and other devices) as musical instruments during the concert

They found a project partner – Vilnius Gediminas Technical University

The ensemble created sound performances for the students to be played between the pieces performed by The St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra.

The challenges of the project were mainly connected to the collaboration with the students.

How would they react to the ideas of the ensemble?

How could they solve logistics, schedule of rehearsals and other administrative questions with a large group of individuals?

Also it was a huge challenge to write the “compositions” for the students. Making them interesting according to the theme of the concert, but not too difficult to perform.

## **Conclusions**

The MUTE project was successful for different reasons

- Enthusiastic, responsible, great partners
- Clear conception and idea of the project
- Interesting, attractive space
- Interaction
- Appropriate communication channels

The audience became part of a truly unique experience: the students were sitting among the audience and surprised them by suddenly shouting, jumping up, singing, playing the turbines and so on.

The audience had a great chance to experience how the musical action can change the whole mood of a space – the silent old turbine hall turned into something absolutely new. There was a very strong educational element in the concert, seeing how the development of art and technologies are integral and influence each other a lot.

For the ensemble, the concert strengthened their image as daring and innovative. They identified new target groups and found new ways to reach them. They established a close relationship with those new target groups and got a lot of inspiration and ideas for further activities.

The ensemble was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm and motivation of the students. According to them, it was very interesting to collaborate with professionals and they emphasized the experience of the process even more than the final result.

This response from the students inspired the ensemble to continue creating new projects not only ditching usual venues, but working more with the involvement of young people and audiences in general.

## Facts

Ensemble: St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra

Title of concert: MUTE: *Music and Technology*

Date: June 11<sup>th</sup> 2014

Venue: Turbine Hall, Museum of Energy and Technology, Vilnius, Lithuania

Performers:

St Christopher Chamber Orchestra of Vilnius City Municipality

Conductor: Donatas Katkus

The mixed choir *Gabija* of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Conductor: Rasa Viskantaitė  
Liudas Mockūnas (bass clarinet, bass saxophone).

Programme:

Gregory d'Hoop (Belgium): *Une roe qui tourne*

Jean-Marie Rens (Belgium): *Monolithe*

Osvaldas Balakauskas (Lithuania): *Prayer to Maidan*

Algirdas Martinaitis (Lithuania): *Artizarra*

Gintaras Sodeika (Lithuania): *Tuba plumbum D'N'G*

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