

Taken Out of the Box, Has Something for

Ever been faced with the image of nine circles in a square, and been asked to connect the dots in four straight lines, or less, without lifting your pen? Know the solution? Start outside of the square, and go beyond the margins. That is ‘thinking outside of the box’, finding creative solutions to common challenges without being hindered by conventional restrictions, margins.

The founders of Festival Classique, the outdoor classical musical festival which takes place from June 18-20 applied it once and continue to apply it today in this fourth edition of an ever-growing, not to be missed, musical experience.

Unique in Multiple Ways

Festival Classique is the embodiment of ‘thinking outside of the box’. Among the challenges the founders posed for themselves were: ‘how does one engage a broader audience with the beauty of classical music?’ ‘How can we show off the city’s historical connection to classical music?’ ‘How do we ensure classical musicians engage with their audiences?’ In answer to all of the above questions and many more, Festival Classique undertook one simple step - they took the music out of the box; out of the traditional concert hall. Thereby they have provided unique settings, and opportunities to show off the city, as well as expose musicians and audiences alike to one another. Annemarie Goedvolk, Artistic Director for Festival Classique, has been involved with the Festival since its inception four years ago, and continues to apply this approach. “Why do I get upset when pop music artists don’t greet the crowd with ‘hello Amsterdam’, but think nothing of it that a classical musician remains distant from their audience? How is it possible that I do not miss the intimacy and engagement of a jazz performance at a recital?” Pondering these and simi-



lar thoughts, Annemarie, schooled at the Conservatorium in Maastricht and brought up with classical music, started a process which today is bearing fruits beyond what she imagined.

Festival Classique is by all accounts a unique worldwide event - an outdoor classical multi-day (and multi-location) event, for one and all. There are outdoor classical music series to be found in the world, such as the Chicago Outdoor Classical music series in Grant Park, or the Proms in the UK as well as events - one-off moments - but Festival Classique appears to be the only festival event of its kind worldwide. And it takes place here, in the Netherlands.

Buiten. Gewoon. Klassiek. In Dutch, *buiten* means outside, *gewoon* means ordinary. Together as one word, *buitengewoon* means extraordinary, exceptional. In this case even the Dutch language, with its ability to allow the formation of new words by joining words of independent meaning proves that ‘thinking out of the box’ has many virtues.

Where to Begin

It would do little justice to the Festival Classique to try and provide a list of the more than 80 performances, concerts and events which take place throughout the city of The Hague Friday June 18th through to Sunday June 20th. This can be found on the festival’s website (also in English). Besides, that would be ‘thinking in the box’ and that would give no credit to



Classical Music Everyone

Hofvijver

the organisers, sponsors, participants and musicians of this festival whose motivation, dedication and enthusiasm defy boundaries.

There are nonetheless a few elements of the festival worth using to tempt you. Imagine the sound of music drifting over water - and you have a reason to attend the concerts on the floating podium on the Buitenhof - as a paying spectator in the tribunes, or if you get there early enough from the banks of the Hofvijver. Imagine this on a summer's eve, with the slowly fading light of day, or in the midday sun with children and families engaged in a concert just for them. How about a concert for children aged 5-12 months, yes, months, not years - and their (grand)parents of course, or the opportunity to take part in an effort to be in the Guinness Book of World Records with the highest number of Air Conductors? Imagine the opportunity of listening to lesser known composers - female for instance - in a setting featuring works of art by women.

A final word for the 'Huismerk'-series: 'how do we reduce the costs of performances?' was another one of the challenges

confronted. Among the costs of any performance is location and in an effort to reduce these costs the organisers placed a small ad in a local paper asking for people to 'donate' a space. The response was overwhelming. And so, this year for a mere € 4.99 (plus transaction costs) lucky early birds can purchase tickets to experience exceptional classical music at the HEMA for instance, or at McDonald's, or even in the intimacy of someone's 17th-century living room. The Huismerk-series takes place in the week preceding Festival Classique, from the June 14 to 17.

Shakespeare once wrote: "if music be the food of love, play on; give me excess of it..." Festival Classique in The Hague is your opportunity to indulge in the sounds of music in unexpected places. Do not miss this feast.

Festival Classique: June 18-10, centre of The Hague. [Huismerk-series: June 14-17 on various locations].

For details of the programme and to order tickets to specific events visit www.festivalclassique.nl.