NADAR ENSEMBLE

Adventure, multidisciplinarity and above all a strong and critical contact with today's world through, the use of new technologies (among other means)." These are some of the main objectives for the Nadar Ensemble and they are what we hope to share with Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (1820-1910), whose pseudonym was Nadar. In his time, Nadar not only was a well-known photographer, balloonist, caricaturist, spy, art critic and curator, but he also regularly organized informal "salons" to which he invited artists, thinkers, writers and scientists, thus creating a true cross-disciplinary dialogue.

In the same spirit, the Nadar Ensemble is not only fascinated by contemporary music, but also by film, the visual arts, performance, theatre, installation art and all that is contained — or not — by these categories. We want to share this interest with audiences. Not only out of enthusiasm (although that is a crucial factor), but also because we are convinced that new music needs to be programmed and presented in ways that match its content and context. Our 21st century is pluriform, multi- and transmedial, and it is more and more inhabited by digital natives and a networked generation. The Nadar Ensemble wishes to develop forms of musical presentation that reflect this world, in an attempt to anchor new music more strongly in today's world.

We are not so much interested in "presenting concerts" as we are in creating unique "events" that are consciously and actively curated by the ensemble — sometimes in collaboration with other artists or curators. These events are carefully developed with an eye on the conceptual consistency of the program, the scenography and the overall dramaturgy, which takes into account *every* action, from the moment a musician walks to his/her chair to the moment (s)he receives the final applause. This also implies that the concert hall is not necessarily the most suitable location.

The following examples will hopefully clarify our intentions. In our program "Long Live the New Flesh" for example, which was premiered at the Darmstädter Ferienkurse in 2012, we focused on the phenomenon of "sampling" in music and video. Compositions which made structural use of sampling in very different ways were alternated with short videos of artists who did the same in the visual realm (using samples of Charlie Chaplin, Walt Disney cartoons, B-horror films etc). The whole event was presented without interruptions, as a meta-composition.

In "Doppelgänger," we investigated the concept of the "avatar" through specific compositions that make extensive and structural use of video doubles of the performer(s). This program was (metaphorically *and* literally) developed as a multi-layered event, in which the four different screens that are used for the video projections in the different compositions were constantly rearranged on stage, exposing or hiding the performers and instruments and constantly transforming the concert space — a metaphor for the constantly changing cross-reality in which we live nowadays. Georges Méliès' 1900 silent film, "L'Homme Orchestre," served as the upbeat in this program.

"Dead Serious" shows yet another realization of our way of programming. This event,

which will be premiered at the Darmstädter Ferienkurse 2014, is developed in close collaboration with the Iraqi/American media-artist Wafaa Bilal, who is creating interventions and performances that react onto or relate to the presented compositions. The whole evening will take place in open air and is to be situated somewhere in between concert, immersive installation and political performance, with "surveillance" and the related blurring of the borders between reality and virtuality as recurring themes.

Also the virtual concert hall of the internet and social media is a terrain that we like to tap into by investing in good audio-visual concert documentation that we put online, together with supplementary documentaries. An attractive and multi-facetted website functions as a hub for this and all related information.

Such a modus operandi has severe consequences for the practical and conceptual organization of an ensemble. Besides the crucial importance of an artistic board that is not afraid of taking artistic risks, the importance of the sound engineer and scenographer cannot be overestimated, as they are as integral and crucial part of the ensemble as, say, the cellist. Investing in the technological tools that are needed is equally important: rehearsals need to include the used technologies as soon as possible (waiting for the general rehearsal to do this is not an option).
But truly essential for a project like this is the commitment and sense of adventure of every single musician. This commitment does not only imply a mastery of the presented scores on their "normal" instruments, but also the willingness, like a true "Homme Orchestre," to engage with new technologies and other instruments (learning how to "play gamecontrollers," playing balloons, or becoming a cameraman) as well as to develop a truly intuitive relationship with them. This often implies that musicians themselves also invest in a computer, soundcard, etc. Very often our events thus become technically rather challenging (it is no exception to have 7 laptops, 4 soundcards and 4 video-projectors video projector on stage) and require help from every musician, from setup until strike. This *collective* action has proven to be truly important for the harmonious functioning of the ensemble as one organism.

It must be clear by now that collaboration and synergy are the necessary ways of interaction in our entire workflow. This is not only true for the performing artists but also for the creating artists with whom we develop long-term relationships and with whom we share a desire to present art that is not afraid to take risks, that raises questions and develops a complex and critical relation with today's world.

Pieter Matthynssens & Stefan Prins
On behalf of Nadar Ensemble
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