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Cracking Bamboo to go further

12:19' 26/09/2008 (GMT+7)

VietNamNet Bridge - Cracking Bamboo International Percussion Music Festival, a festival to increase exchange between Southeast Asian and European music, was held for the first time in Ha Noi and HCM City from September 15-26. The festival focused on percussion instruments and consisted of workshops, master classes and public performances. Up to 40 young musicians, composers, and musicologists from Europe and Asia participated and shared their passion for music creation. Professor Bernhard Wulff, the programme's artistic director talked about the event.

**How do you come up with the idea for organising this programme in Viet Nam?**

I've been organising many festivals in surprising places such as Kyrgyzstan and the Gobi desert of Mongolia. On the occasion of an international music festival I organised for local people in Mongolia, I met a Vietnamese participant Vu Nhat Tan, a composer from Ha Noi. He was deeply impressed by the unification of so many cultures and musical traditions, and he invited me to come to Viet Nam to try to organise that kind of event. With Tan's strong wish to do this, after eight years we finally made it happen.

Organising the event took a long time, despite continuous effort, particularly because of the need to find the right sponsor. Suddenly, the moment came when we found the right sponsors which are the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Goethe Institute Ha Noi and the Viet Nam Academy of Music.

What is the meaning of the name 'Cracking Bamboo'?

Well, it's simple. Bamboo is a plant which is very popular in Southeast Asia. And 'Cracking' gets your attention. Imagine, if something is cracking around you, you are either nervous, scared or very alert. So the name of the programme suggests "be attentive, listen carefully to something new and unknown."

Why does the programme only focus on percussion instruments?

Well, because percussion instruments are familiar to ordinary people, so playing them rather than other instruments is an easier way to communicate with audiences. Percussion instruments are everywhere in the world and are made from simple and similar materials like wood, metal. In this programme, we borrow many instruments from the Viet Nam National Academy of Music.

In the festival performances, audiences can enjoy the mixing of music and sounds from traditional percussion instruments in Asia with contemporary music from Europe. What would you say to Vietnamese audiences, who may find it hard to understand some contemporary European music?

I would say: What does it mean by 'understand'? Do you understand the flower? Do you understand the sky? It simply happens. Art is something that attracts our attention, our perception, and that is enough. Imagine, you walk thousands of meters to climb a mountain.

Nobody wants to live there; it's uncomfortably windy, stormy or cold. But, you still go there to enjoy the feeling and broad view from being high above. If you are open-minded, there is no need to understand why we climb the mountain. The thing is to just do it, and you will enjoy it.

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Do you intend to bring the idea to other countries?

At the beginning, this programme focused only on Viet Nam. Then, we got support from the Asia-Europe Foundation in Singapore, who wish us to expand and bring the idea to other countries.

In the first phase of the programme, musicians have worked together and shared experiences here. Now, in the second phase, they will take what they learned and move to other countries in the region so music communication can spread.

Right now we are creating a way for musicians from many different places to connect to each other. In this programme, I met a musician from the Philippines who said it is only the second time he has travelled outside his country. I also saw many others exchanging their addresses and saying they want to perform together next year. This programme really creates an enormous opportunity for musicians to meet each other, exchange ideas and build relationships.

(Source: VNS)



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