

Review of Shuffle Concert at the Tel-Aviv Museum on April 11th 2011

Shuffle Concert. Over 40 dishes.

You Choose - We Play.

A brilliant idea for the opening concert of the Felicija Blumenthal Festive in Tel-Aviv: The audience is handed menus at the door, yes - like in a restaurant, and selects the musical items that it wishes to hear. The Ensemble serves what the audience requests. Interesting.

Yon Feder for Ynet, April 12 2011

Without a doubt, this is one cool idea. At the entrance to the hall each one of us received a musical menu with more than 40 "dishes" (musical items) organized by different genres. On the menu there are Baroque dishes and there are Pop and Rock dishes. There are operatic pieces and of course Classical and Neo-Classical, Romantic and Modern. There are also Israeli songs and even children-dishes. In each category two to three items.

The Shuffle Concert People. Varied menu for the interested audience.

This way, we could for example choose an aria from the Stabat Mater by Pergolesi (in the Baroque category); a piano trio by Shostakovitch in the 1900-1950 category; a piece for Clarinet and Piano in the Impressionism category; and a lullaby by Sasha Argov, arranged for Oboe and Piano, in the Israeli Songs Category.

Each menu is numbered. On the stage, a quick raffle is held, a number is selected, its happy owner gets to order a piece from the menu and the ensemble quickly goes into action. The next round, again the raffle, again an audience member gets to choose (except he/she can't choose from a category that was already selected) and the show goes on.

The name of this kind of show is a Shuffle Concert. The idea behind this concert is not just a fusion of classical and Jazz, romantic and Pop. This is about completely changing the accepted performance rules in the classical music world. Both the audience and the performers don't know which pieces will be chosen each night.

This musical deck of cards is shuffled randomly each night and the result is an exceptional event each time. A concert in which the individual taste of random spectators dictates the evening's content.

But not only that: very soon you learn who in the ensemble you would like to hear more of. For example, the fantastic clarinetist really captured my attention very quickly and so I immediately marked all the piece in my menu that had the clarinet in them in the hope that if I get selected I will be able to choose her again.

Of course, there is no way to guarantee that my taste will be similar to my neighbor's, whose number was just chosen. This active involvement of the audience in shaping the concert, promises a high level of alertness, active listening, and a much more complex enjoyment. Like I said: a cool idea.

Who is who in Shuffle.

The Shuffle Ensemble from New York is an uncommon mixed chamber ensemble which includes piano, two winds (clarinet and oboe), two strings (violin and cello) and a soprano. All young and talented, some Juilliard grads and all with rising international musical careers.

To guarantee these mixed performances, the ensemble prepares more than 40 pieces in 18 different styles, and it seems that indeed they are very capable of maintaining such a diverse repertoire.
