

HUMORESQUE

Musik and Humor - Concentus Moraviae 2018

“A smile is the shortest distance between people”, said Victor Borge, one of the greatest musician-entertainers of all time. This smile is exactly what Concentus Moraviae 2018 is looking for. With Antonin Dvořák's well-known seventh Humoresque as main tune the Festival explores the fascinating links between music and humor. Is it true that humoresques are “notoriously unfunny”?

As an introduction to the live recording of the Pier NYC concert of Frank Zappa on the 26th of August 1984 appears the following text: “No laser weapons, no fog, no over-dubs and still some people have the nerve to ask ... does humor belong in music?” In the same year pianist Alfred Brendel writes his brilliant essay “The sublime in reverse” in which he tackles the question of music and humor. He states: “For most performers and virtually all concert audiences of our time, music is an entirely serious business.” To define humor he uses a definition of Jean Paul: humor is “the sublime in reverse”.

Many music festivals focus on the sublime, not many on “the sublime in reverse”. In the few cases music and humor are linked it is mostly by musical clowns but one can do more than replacing musical notes with red noses. Famous comedians as Charlie Chaplin and Louis de Funès knew this. The different ways of laughing by philosophers and writers as Socrates, Diogenes, Cervantes, Montaigne, Nietzsche and Kundera helped defining Europe. Milan Kundera even defines laughter as a metaphor for Europe: the ability to doubt, to be critical. Music adds to this in a refined and subtle way. With the words of Pliny the Younger: “Aliquando praeterea rideo, iocor, ludo, homo sum.” Sometimes I laugh, I joke, I play, I am human. This humanity is not only mirrored in the seriousness of music, but also in its ability to connect itself with humor.

The Festival ranges from all kinds of Flimflams, Bamboozlers and Lollapaloozas to the mesmerizing compositions of P.D.Q. Bach. From scherzetti to scherzi musicali, from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's „musikalischer Spaß“ to musical pieces „in the shape of a pear“.

Of course some of the contemporary high level “musical clowns” as the duo Igudesman & Joo or The Classic Buskers will be part of Concentus Moraviae, but that's the most obvious representation of the festival theme. There are many more subtle ways to tackle the topic. Starting with some key compositions that feature all possible variations of humour: Parade (by Erik Satie), 4'33 (by John Cage), Janáček's opera about the adventures of Mr. Brouček, Aventures/Nouvelles Aventures (György Ligeti), Ein musikalischer Spaß by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, La Matrone d'Ephèse by Nicolas Racot de Grandval or Frankenstein!! By H.K.Gruber (a “pan-demonium for chansonnier and orchestra after children's rhymes by HC Artmann). With some compositions the link is very refined, as with the Diabelli-variations by Ludwig van Beethoven, the Scherzi Musicali by Claudio Monteverdi or Les soirées de Nazelles by Francis Poulenc.

Besides the view from the composer side, the festival also invites several ensembles that tackle the festival theme in a unique or a fresh way:

Ensemble Atonor plays on instruments invented by Erwin Stache (from a phone orchestra to pieces for amplified flower pots), the orchestra Les Passions de L'Amé investigates Baroque Schabernack (baroque pranks) with music by Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber (*Harmonia Artificiosa-Ariosa*) to Johann Joseph Fux (*Turcaria*). The Berg orchestra featuring violinist Martin Zbrožek combines the performance *Psssst, maestro is coming* by pieces as Teddy Bor's *McMozart. Eine Kleine Bricht Moonlicht Nicht Music*.

The Festival also features the Czech composer and performer Miloš Štědroň who will guide us through his wittiest compositions and will present his view on the festival theme.

Besides performances related to Fluxus and Dada (from „feeding a piano“ in Piano Piece for David Tudor #1 by La Monte Young till performances by the Berlin Sound Poets *Quoi Tête*) there are also many projects which play with the unexpected as *Tango feliz* (seeing the humorous side of life through the melancholic side of it) or an ode to Louis de Funès through jazz music (which he played himself) or a guitar recital with an actor reading literature from Milan Kundera who wrote in *The book of laughter and forgetting that* “The history of music is mortal, but the idiocy of the guitar is eternal.” Often the humour awakes in a changed context as in a concert for mobile phone and basso continuo or a concert for coughing soloists as the famous comedian Lorient wrote. And of course several humoresques will be intertwined with the Festival, from those by Schumann, Grieg and of course Dvořák to Mstislav Rostropowitsch's *Humoresque* for cello and piano, combined with *A smile for Slawa* for cello solo by Gija Kantscheli.

Concentus Moraviae 2018 will use „no laser weapons, no fog, no over-dubs“ but will smile in all possible musical keys!