

Monday 6th December 2021

Meet Me on the Move: a trip to Canada Water Theatre (London)

for a Comfortable Classical concert

Artist report by Tim Gardner for Entelechy Arts

Meet Me on the Move is generously supported by City Bridge Trust

Meet Me On The Move 6th December 2021

We all arrived to Canada Water Theatre on a drizzly Monday, in high spirits, ready to hear some music from members of the City of London Sinfonia as part of their Comfortable Classical concert series.

We heard The Skater's Waltz, In The Bleak Midwinter, excerpts from Shostakovich's 8th Quartet and Corelli's Christmas Concerto, Westhoff's The Sound of Bells, and Vivaldi's Winter. We also heard an arrangement of The Look of Love, and a song explaining how rhythm works by clapping and using the names of members of the audience.

It was a lovely programme, thoughtfully explained for an audience with likely varying levels of classical music experience. The players' explanations gave us a tactile sense of the music and weather, and the sense of winter throughout the music: the crunch of snow, getting cosy inside, crisp air outside, and the wintery terror of Shostakovich, lovely!



The players on stage + the back of Rosemary's head, clearly showing how much she's enjoying the concert!

Before the concert we were taken upstairs in the library to a room that overlooked the water. On the way we passed pictures that documented the changes and development of the area over the last century or so. Looking at a picture of some men stood by the docks, Ted joked that he'd probably see a relative in the picture.

Ash, Aubrey and I looked out over the water and across to the shopping centre, a bit bleak really. Ash spotted a swan in the water, such a vibrant white against the grey everything else!

After the concert I had a lovely chat

with Moira, a member I've not spent any time with before. She spoke about her friend Bill who has recently passed away. They first met via a Classic Films group on Facebook. He was also a fan of Shostakovich, and Moira remembered him telling her the composer's story. We had heard an excerpt of Shostakovich's 8th string quartet, it was great to hear his music and be able to talk about his life with someone, as I think people get a lot out of connecting his music to his biography.

Back upstairs in the room, Ted sang us The Tennessee Waltz, a speciality of his! I wrote about his rendition of this in the report for the last Meet Me trip I was on, it's certainly a theme! It was really lovely when Rosemary joined in too.

Throughout the day there were lots of mentions of the recent Meet Me trip to the Noel Coward exhibition. Rose and Pauline were particularly taken with it.

I was struck by the way that everyone feeds off of everyone else's enjoyment and engagement with culture, be that the concert, a Facebook group, a group trip to an exhibition, or even looking at the beauty of the Surrey Quays landscape!



Ted brightens up a bleak Surrey Quays with his rendition of The Tennessee Waltz

We spoke about how people listen to music. Ted has stacks of CDs, Aubrey mentioned listening to the radio through his TV, but recently struggling with one of the channels he normally listens to.

Having fairly recently returned to in person sessions at the Albany, and fresh from some covid absences amongst us, there was a lot of discussion about the Meet Me phone calls and what the remote sessions of the choir and other clusters meant for the members. During the choir sessions our members singing voices thrived, and ironically there was a more intense socialising that went on. Members spoke with one another in a more direct way than often happens when running an in person session, at least as it looks from my position in the sessions.

In some ways, having to use the technology democratised the running of the sessions (I'm not a complete convert, it was a pain in many other ways!) But it made me think about ways that everyone, including, but not limited to, the elderly, might be able to engage with music and other people while listening remotely.

So I wanted to explore making an imagined streaming service, or maybe it's closer to internet radio, where there is a sense that other people are there interacting with the music at the same time as you. This exists to a certain extent with live streaming (youtube/tiktok live. etc) where viewers can engage with the creator in real time by writing a comment that will then appear in a stream of comments alongside the video. However I think this is limited by a production model that separates the art and the artist from the viewers. The viewers buy in (in one form or another) to one point of contact, a kind of nuclear model centred on the creator. Any engagement with each other is through text.

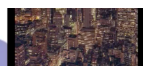
I wanted to create something where there was a sensory experience of the other people listening, like you have at a concert, or watching tv with someone, or having people sing around a table.

With programming help from my friend Rory McDonnell, I want to create a website with a loop of music about an hour long, with a blob - for want of a better word - for every active listener.

The website is still in progress, as programming is much harder than I anticipated(!), but the building blocks and the thinking behind it are there.

The blobs can bump into each other, and this could potentially be developed into more movement, and more intricate reactions to what's happening musically. The loop is there as a kind of prototype but it could also be expanded to include features from artists, video, live performances. The music in the loop was kindly donated by friends who will be credited on the website. I thought it was also a nice format for people to share music and ideas that they otherwise haven't found a home for yet.

A weakness of this is its accessibility. One of the programming obstacles is that for the blobs to appear, users need to have an account. Having to have an account can put even the tech literate off, so those who aren't as experienced with the internet might not feel comfortable with the format as it is currently. But as a prototype I hope it gives a sense of an alternative way of engaging with culture remotely.



A screenshot of a draft of the website

