



Review

By SUNE JOHANNESSON

in *Kristianstadsbladet*, November 29 and in *Ystads Allehanda*, November 30, 2016

<http://www.kristianstadsbladet.se/kultur-noje/klosterkyrkan-ystad-mighty-voices/>

<http://www.ystadsallehanda.se/kultur-noje/klosterkyrkan-ystad-mighty-voices/>

CONCERT in the Abbey Church, Ystad, November 27, 2016

"Mighty voices!"

John & Patrick Kenny, ancient wind instruments, such as Carnyx and Lituus.
Alberto Morelli, Emiliano Li Castro & Ute Goedecke, wind instruments, bullroarer, harp.

So old that it becomes new. Sunday's final concert of the Archæomusica exhibition was a powerful and surprising experience. Culture Editor Sune Johannesson was there.

This evening in the Abbey Church in Ystad is quite unique, not only for us in the audience, but also for British father and son musicians John and Patrick Kenny. And one really feels this - the performance ends up deviating in parts from the pre-arranged programme as John Kenny – the evening's key character in the role of composer, musician and avid music archaeologist – says that he wants to remain in the sounds of the ancient rarities they are playing.

"This is an historic evening. For the first time in 2,000 years, people can hear more than just a carnyx, this ancient instrument, at the same time," comments John Kenny.

The mighty sounds from these magical artwork instruments pervades the whole room, the bass lines and solos echo and develop. The musicians sometimes go out into the audience and allow us to be surrounded by eternal questions, and at times they are accompanied by pre-recorded electronic sounds.





The new and the old thus meet, blurring boundaries between times and cultures and creating a soundscape that is as ancient as it is modern. And if I have had any experience that comes anywhere near this, it would be from one of the concerts with newly written music, in which previously untried paths have dared to be taken.

In the programme, I also read that John Kenny is not at all against new music; on the contrary in fact, as it says that he is “internationally acclaimed for his interpretations of contemporary music.”

The stage houses a number of ancient wind instruments, with the carnyx and lituus being the most distinctive of them. Both of these are long, narrow instruments with clear heads, with the carnyx's, which is pig-shaped, providing quite an impression - in particular the tongue as it vibrated while being played.

What energy and skill are required to get a sound out of these instruments? Not least considering the sophisticated way they are used here - controlled, powerful, richly varied and striking, in order to feature in compositions in a contemporary setting. “The problem with these instruments”, explains John Kenny when he forgets, after playing a piece of music, what is coming next, “is that they drain the brain of oxygen.”

The evening's very first piece clearly indicates that this is to be a real music and sound experience, rather than a presentation of research about ancient times. Father and son Kenny enter from the wings, accompanied by the Italian musician Alberto Morelli. They each hold a conch horn, and with various sounds they create a conch shell atmosphere which soon fills the room, especially as the three of them move slowly among us in the audience. In my notes: “Sea sounds - the wind - echo - prayers - fairytales - mystery - life - dream.”

As a finale to the evening's concert, Morelli takes centre stage, along with Ensemble Mare Balticum's Ute Goedecke on the gothic harp and Emiliano Li Castro on various instruments. These provide completely different sounds than what the Kennys produced. Brighter, airier and lighter, but still with a clear feeling of past and present.





I spent the afternoon in the Archæomusica exhibition at the abbey, where I was able to follow music's path through history. From the oldest findings, and guesses about how they were used, right through to, among others things, newer and more familiar wind and string instruments. This fascinating, enjoyable and also educational exhibition will continue until early January (08.01.2017 – don't miss it!), before the sound-rich EU project moves on over the coming years to Spain and then several other European countries. And perhaps also to China.

However, the concert series that accompanied the exhibition through the autumn is now over after Sunday's concert. It could not have been a more fitting finale.

