Hottinen Merja

***Institutionalizing the unexpected – contemporary music festivals in Finland from 1980s to 2010s***

Helsinki Biennale, the first Finnish festival dedicated only to new music, was established in 1981. It was soon followed by Time of Music in Viitasaari (est. 1982) and Tampere Biennale (est. 1986), each with their own distinctive features but also shared interests to bring contemporary music to the audiences and to strengthen the role of new music in Finnish cultural sphere. To this day, the three festivals have had an important role in defining the spectrum of contemporary music in practical terms, as well as creating new contact points for the audience and new musical creation. In my presentation, I will examine how Helsinki Biennale (later named Musica nova Helsinki), Tampere Biennale and Time of Music have contributed to the institutionalization of contemporary music in the Finnish cultural context. The research material consists of Finnish press coverage of the festivals from 1981 to 2017. The material shows that many aspects of public discussion about the festivals have remained constant over the years, guiding the audience’s expectations towards new music and the festivals presenting it. But the festivals have also been active in challenging the expectations and creating new forms of interaction. Over time, the media texts indicate a clear change in cultural practices, for example in the ways contemporary music is experienced and listened to.

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