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Artikel



Valérie Vivancos *Sleep in Opera*

The Opera of Sleep

-An unusual sleep-in experience *Sleep in Opera* by French artist **Valérie Vivancos** one night in the Bunker in H.C. Ørstedsparken in Copenhagen. As part of The Contemplation Room Project. Text by **Kristine Ilsøe**.

At 11.45 at night, Saturday the 25th of May 2002, snoring and heavy breathing arose from the ground just behind the café Hacienda. Steep stairs led us down to the dome-shaped room lit by candles. The air in the bunker was rather cold and moist, but equipped with sleeping bags, jumpers, mattresses and excitement we quickly adjusted to the environment.



artist leading the flock

Our Host

French artist Valérie Vivancos, our host, had put up microphones and served us half a cup of dark rum to loosen up our throats and tongues. Then tennis-balls were attached to our arms and stomachs, to encourage us to sleep on our

backs, and hence snore as much as possible.



entering bunker

Bed time stories

Valérie initiated us in her project based on artistic as well as scientific studies of the mysteries of sleep.

-Some people live their dreams and their bodies start fishing during the nights.

-Some neuroleptic people sleep most of their lives and instantly fall asleep by pleasant emotions.

-The abneics only breath 6 hours during an 8-hour sleep, and can stop breathing for up to 3 and a half-minute at the time. This is not only dangerous due to lack of oxygen, but also because some lorry-drivers won't admit it.

I also realized that I should have been a lot taller, as you grow in your deep sleep.

Accompanied by anecdotes from a French neurologic center, and Valéries composition evolving from a sleep ballad into a piece with 10 vocals in the disturbing areas of their sleep, with talk and snoring, we drowsed into the experiment.



crowded bunker

The Origin of the Opera

Asked what made her go into sleeping as an audiotive artistic area, Valérie explains that the idea was to use minimalistic non-instrumental sounds with a tempo. Music compositions, as we know them, are inspired by natural rhythms, and sleeping sounds represents one of these accessible natural rhythms. The opera at the same time involves the human sound-organs, and in this sense the sleeping-sounds can be seen as the origin of the opera.



falling asleep

The concert

We missed our own show, but according to Valérie we did very well. Towards 3 in the morning the performance kicked

off.

We had a lead solo performer, who did some loud and fluffy flat-lip snoring. Then I contributed with a few high moaning sounds, adding a touch of feminine sensitivity to the piece. The chorus politely waited till we had done our pieces, and then performed a less dominant and more rhythmical breathing/snoring, that gave structure and tempo to the piece.

"As the artist I felt emotional at that point, because it was the end of the loop of a few months research, and just hearing this concept coming to live was a magic moment."



fallen asleep

Sleeping as stage

Asked about the night, the solo-singer replied:

"I slept. But I like the idea that we are seen as improvisers in a musical term. She made me feel that we had done a piece of performance, held a little concert down there. I like that it had an essence that we were sleeping together, that the sounds we made are seen as music from her perspective. "

Personally I agree and I am thrilled by the concept, but never the less my experience was two-fold. At first the environment transformed sleeping-noises into pleasant rhythms and sounds. But somehow the unusual environment and sounds infiltrated my dreams and developed into a prolonged stage of panic in the early morning. I managed to go back to sleep after a while, but it was exhausting to recall the emotional stages of the first time I was to dive into a narrow cave years ago.

Some dogs had visited our chorus-performer during the night as well, but he had had a good nights sleep and seemed relaxed and satisfied in the morning.

Contemplating?

-Well, to me it was more like a really exciting experience.

More..

Contemplation Room Project

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