

The musical programme in Muziekcentrum Frits Philips

While the American presidential election is in progress, the dominant East Coast and West Coast of the world's sole superpower will inevitably claim most attention. In the multidisciplinary Heartland project, the Van Abbemuseum and Muziekcentrum Frits Philips offer a valuable counterweight to the positive and negative clichés about the area that lies between the two Coasts, through the art and music from this region. The melting pot of immigrants and cultures in the Heartland, an area alongside the Mississippi River, extending from New Orleans up to Minneapolis in the west and Detroit in the east, has been the basis for the impressive fusion and genesis of many popular musical genres. From 3 October 2008 to 25 January 2009, the musical programme at the Muziekcentrum will shed light on the musical culture of the American Heartland through lectures and performances by Low, Peter Guralnick and David Olney, and a documentary film by The Watchman.

To speak of the Heartland is to speak of the Heart of Music. Never before has such an explosive musical mixture arisen in a region a mixture that has changed Western popular music forever, and has left in its slipstream an ineradicable impression on man and society, with the Blues as its birth cry, Country as its vox populi, Soul as the banner of the black community and, of course, Rock 'n Roll as the ultimate fusion. All this sprang to life in the region between the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, the Third Coast of America. The musical programme is a study towards a more finely shaded and up-to-date picture of the musical culture of the Heartland.

Opening concert

Woven Hand, Zapp String Quartet and Muzsikás
Sat 4/10/08

Dave Eugene Edwards (previous frontman of 16Horsepower and now the creative force behind Woven Hand) opens the Heartland festival with his own take on the roots and country of the Heartland. In the '90s Edwards invented his own version of Alt-Country, a type of Country Noire which mixes traditional Folk, Americana, Country and Alternative Rock. During the opening concert, Edwards will add a new ingredient to his personal Country elixir. He received a "carte blanche" from the Muziekcentrum Frits Philips and invited the Zapp String Quartet (NL) and the foremost Hungarian folkgroup at present, Muzikás from whom he adapted the song 'Outlaw Songs'. During the course of this unique cooperation, Edward searched for the European roots of Country music while simultaneously enriching the mix with – rather curiously – the "Dutch mountain" sounds of Zapp.

Introducing the Heartland

Muziekcentrum Frits Philips
Fri 10/10/08 & Fri 23/10/08

A road movie in text and music. Two evenings on the musical icons of the Heartland, from Elvis Presley via Robert Johnson to Otis Redding. Music buff Frank de Munnik presents a resounding picture through numerous recordings of the Heartland's musical culture. Besides the iconic Robert Johnson, Elvis Presley, Otis Redding and Martin Luther King, the spotlight will pause on Aaron Copland, Louis Moreau Gottschalk and the oldest surviving jazz recordings.

The Devil's Music: Blues & Elvis

Muziekcentrum Frits Philips
Fri 10/10/08

The tale of the Blues through the life story and myth of Robert Johnson. Archetypical Blues. Me And The Devil Blues. Or maybe not. Johnson had become a barely remembered footnote, until 1961 when the LP King Of The Delta Blues appeared. How did the popular conception of the Blues arise? For example, while most African Americans lived in cities in the 1950s, the romantic Blues image was one of the country, of the unspoiled Delta. The pure music that arose there was labelled Country Blues or Delta Blues – synonymous with authenticity. But what did the people of the Delta themselves listen to? Back in 1957, the beeps of Sputnik were still as fresh in everyone's ears as the frenzied performances of that kid from Memphis, Elvis Presley. Presley was a passionate music lover, and there are dozens of numbers which he was known to enjoy covering. Somewhere out of that crucible, the Rock 'n Roll sound emerged. But how did that come about? What records did Elvis himself admire, and how did they sound? Exploring the roots and early days of The King.

The Soul's Music: Otis, Stax & Civil Rights Movement

Van Abbemuseum
Thu 23/10/08

Stax Studio, Memphis. This was the cradle of the very opposite of Motown, of pure Soul, with Otis Redding as its famous begetter. Though Memphis was strongly segregated, the white songwriter Steve Cropper contributed to the hits and the white bass guitarist Donald 'Duck' Dunn was unmatched on his instrument. Add the black musician Booker T. and you get the golden sound of Stax and Otis. Their story is the story of the soul. His name became known during the months-long bus strike in Montgomery: a young preacher who emerged as a leader, Martin Luther King. And he grew into an icon. People sang at his meetings, and music was at the heart of the civil rights movement. How did it sound? Where did that come from? A story in which music goes hand in hand with a strident history.

Heartland Café

Ad van Meurs, alias The Watchman, is one of Holland's most talented singer-songwriter in the Americana genre. He blends influences from folk, roots-pop, country and rock into an idiosyncratic amalgam, which is highly regarded in the United States. On six Monday evenings, Ad will present outstanding Heartlanders in Grand Café Meneer Frits (the third hall of Muziekcentrum Frits Philips).

Ben Weaver

Mon 6/10/08

This singer-songwriter from Minnesota has just completed his sixth album, *The Axe in the Oak*. This is his second album for the quality German label, Glitterhouse. In his new album, Weaver seeks to experiment and plays with urban and industrial themes. He was most likely influenced by his recent stay in Berlin where he released his record. Also included are Weavers usual motifs – visions of nature, road stories, hard blue collar life in the underbelly of America – and a clear sense of Country-like Americana oozes out of his songwriting. Ominous Country songs and dark Blues, stilled melancholy and epic storytelling – it's all there. Without overstating, his simple (small man) Blues sounds comes across as seasoned.

David Olney & Tommy Womack

Mon 20/10/08

David Olney is a singer-songwriter with a keen literary intelligence and lyrics which cut to the quick. Whether the subject is heartbreak or banditry, Olney's near-filmic style and uncompromising texts confirm his reputation as a musical outlaw. Olney's songs have been recorded by such eminences as Emmylou Harris, Linda Rondstadt and Steve Earle. Cabaret artist Freek de Jonge is an admirer of Olney and has translated several of his songs into Dutch. On Olney's last CD, *One Tough Town*, he takes us on what is practically a ghetto tour of American music. The sight is not a pretty one but it is invariably fascinating. Only someone who been through life can write songs like that.

www.myspace.com/davidolney

www.myspace.com/tommywomack

Boo Boo Davis Mississippi Blues band

Mon 3/11/08

A son of a Blues musician, Davis came into contact with the Blues at an early age. He began his career as a drummer and changed only later to vocals and harmonica. He travelled the international Blues circuit in the latter role as a soloist. 'Davis is the real deal when it comes to traditional Blues,' Ad van Meurs says. On his European tour, Davis generally opts for the group around Jan Mittendorp as accompanists. The

combo consists of Boo Boo Davis (vocals and harmonica), Jan Mittendorp (guitar), Nico Heilijgers (bass guitar) and John Gerritse (drums). Black Mississippi Blues.

www.myspace.com/booboodavis

Stacey Earle & Mark Stuart and

Tim Easton & Leeroy Stagger

Mon 10/11/08

Stacey Earle started young with singing and playing guitar, but it was not until she accompanied her famous brother Steve Earle on his Hard Way Tour in 1990 that she found her element. Now she goes her own way within the American Folk idiom. In 2008, Earle and her musical partner Mark Stuart are both putting out new solo CDs as well as a compilation of their musical joys and sorrows. The daily *Het Brabants Dagblad* described one of their performances as follows: 'They slide from Country to Rhythm & Blues, and from Folk to Rock; armed only with two microphones and two guitars. Their repertoire gives you shivers down the spine, but they are unequalled in the way they make light of it.' As an additional act, the singer-songwriters, Tim Easton and Leeroy Stagger, from Joshua Tree and Alaska, respectively bring with them beautiful self-composed songs, fine lyrics, harmonic vocal lines and are accompanied by several instruments.

www.myspace.com/staceyearleandmarkstuart

Jeffrey Foucault

Mon 17/11/08

(+ lecture on 16 November in the Van Abbemuseum)
Wisconsin is one of those American states that rarely gets into the news. But this area is the real America. It is the underbelly of a gigantic nation and a perfect home base for quietly influencing the course of history. Jeffrey Foucault is an intriguing singer/songwriter from Wisconsin. Despite his youth, the oeuvre of this chronicler of small-town America sounds like that of someone chastened by life. He drifts between Blues and Country. Jeffrey made an impression in Meneer Frits last year as an authentic storyteller with natural authority and a voice somewhere between Chris Rea and Chris Whitley. On 17 November, Foucault will be interviewed by Frank de Munnik.

www.myspace.com/jeffrejfoucault

Lecture by Peter Guralnick

Mon 8/12/08

The American critic, pop journalist, author and screenplay writer Peter Guralnick has been invited to one of the Heartland Cafés in Meneer Frits. On 8 December, he will be interviewed by Frank de Munnik. Guralnick is an authority on Blues, Country, Rock 'n Roll and Soul. He has published more than ten books on popular

music including a biography of Elvis Presley. Themes touched on include 'What remains of the twentieth-century musical melting pot?' and 'What is the present or past role and influence of religion in music from the Heartland?'

Searchin' for the heart of the Heartland

The premiere of a documentary by Ad van Meurs, Ankie Keultjes and filmer Dré Didderiëns will take place on the evening of 8 January 2009. The film documents their 10 day journey through the Heartland, and includes contributions by the well-known producer Jack Clement, the drummer of J.J. Cale, members of the Osage Tribe and other Native Americans. This documentary film gives a poetic and musical impression of the culture of the Heartland, ranging from the one-horse towns of the endless prairies to the cities. This is against a backdrop of the world's shifting cultural and social paradigms. Ad van Meurs has been travelling to the USA as an artist since 1991, has issued five CDs and has built up a network, mainly in the Heartland, which gives him a backdoor entrance to various niches of American society. He asked Dré Didderiëns to make this film after seeing earlier works by this filmmaker including the impressive documentary 'Met de trein door de straat' (By Train Through the Streets). Didderiëns' filmic style with its lovely, slow feel is exceptionally well suited to a road movie. Both artists are real 'Southern boys' with a love for roots music. As children, they saw De Peel, the heartlands near Eindhoven, as their prairie. Besides the musical passages in the film itself, it will be screened to a live soundtrack by The Watchman.

Photo exhibition Ernest C. Withers

4/10/08 until 14/11/08

Beale Street, Memphis. An ordinary store with 'Ernest C. Withers, Photographers' inscribed on the window. The owner is a passionate camera artist who photographed baseball teams and matches, as well as everyday life around him. But that 'everyday life' in Beale Street consisted of musicians like B.B. King and the young Elvis; not to mention segregation. Withers took photos of the notorious trial for the murder of

Emmett Till, a grisly racist killing which shocked America.

Some months later, Withers began photographing the young Martin Luther King and other members of the civil rights movement. These were to prove his most renowned photographs, and included his shots of the 1968 strike in Memphis. The assassination of Martin Luther King took place on 4 April that year, during the strike; Withers was present, but took few photos out of consideration. Ernest C. Withers, who died in 2007, is regarded as one of America's most important photographers. The Muziekcentrum will exhibit 22 photographs of his, concentrating on music and the civil rights movement. The portraits include Martin Luther King, Sam Cooke, Otis Redding and Elvis Presley. This is the first solo exhibition in the Netherlands of the photography of Ernest C. Withers.

Final concert in Catharina Church; Low

Thu 22/01/09

As a platform for 'musical religious' America, we have chosen the magnificent Eindhoven Katharina Church as the concert venue for its visual presence which influences the thoughts and lives of people, and the cultural life of the city in general. The American band Low has devised a unique programme in which 8 choral members of Vocaal Lab play their part. Dominic Bloem, organ player and conductor of Steamboat Switzerland and two percussionists further enhance the programme. American-Dutch composer David Damm is the artistic leader of the project.

Low holds a significant position in the last 15 years of guitar music history. No one else makes such slow and stayed songs, also known as "slowcore". The heart of the band are Alan Sparhawk and his wife Mimi Parker, and after having played with many bassists, Steve Garrington is now the longterm third band member. The American guitar trio has received substantial international acclaim for their CDs. In their last album Drums and Guns the band presents new songs in which they explore new forms of drum machines, looped vocals etc. Low has toured the globe and been in the privileged company of artists such as: Radiohead, the Dirty Three and Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.

Partners Heartland

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