



Podcast and an interview with Michel Levasseur, General & Artistic Director  
of the Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville

June 24<sup>th</sup> – by Eric Hill

This year's FIMAV in Victoriaville, QC, Canada was wonderful as usual -- the 35<sup>th</sup> edition!! As I did last year, I'm presenting an episode showcasing some of the artists who presented stellar shows. As always it is a stylistically mixed bag, but I think it still flows well. Hear for yourselves.

Also, just below the track listing, there is a brief interview with festival founder, general manager, and artistic director Michel Levasseur. Enjoy!

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Tyshawn Sorey - Cascade in Slow Motion [0:00] - Verisimilitude (Pi Recordings)

Tomaga - Bluest [4:25] - Extended Play 1 (Negative Days)

Ingrid Schmoliner + Elena Kakaliagou - Goldgefüllter Lippenrand [12:58] - Nabelöse (Corvo Records)

Peter Brötzmann + Heather Leigh - This Word Love [17:57] - Sparrow Nights (Trost)

John Butcher - Close by, a Waterfall [23:19] - Resonant Spaces (Confront)

Peggy Lee - Hymn [29:37] - Echo Painting (Songlines)

Kim Myhr - You / Me (excerpt) [35:30] - You Me (Hubro)

Senyawa - Menjadi Jadi [39:55] - Menjadi (Morphine)

Lionel Marchetti + Xavier Garcia - Dix-Neuf [45:01] - Machine Lyrique (Signature)

Bang on a Can Allstars - Reeling (Julia Wolfe) [51:35] - Field Recordings (Cantaloupe)

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Eric Hill - Could you compare the planning and execution of the festival at its beginnings to what it is like now, 35 years later?

*Michel Levasseur - I guess the process has evolved and refined itself. This has been a work in progress and learning and being open with humility. There is so much music and we know so little. But the plan has always been to be open, to take risks and to have a program as diversified as possible.*

EH - What has been the biggest challenge to keeping the festival going year after year?

*ML - Not to go bankrupt!*

EH - In your introductions to each show you often mention finding new artists by attending other similar festivals around the world. What festivals are your favourites and do you attend them with recruiting in mind or does that just happen organically?

*ML - My old favourites are Mulhouse and Wells but I like to go to new Festivals, young and old ones, small and big ones, especially to discover new artists in specific genres of music. I usually do one third of the program with attending other Festivals, one third in listening to all proposals received by mail, usually over 200 each year, and another third that I contact myself through contacts of old friends and suggestions.*

EH - This year FIMAV was conducting surveys to determine the make-up of its audience, and you discovered that the festival attracts an older crowd. Is there always a desire to plan shows that might attract younger crowds, and do those have to be considered against what the overall aesthetic of the festival

*ML - I made a joke on that presentation. I teased our audience as we have not heard anything about the survey yet. In the mid-90s we had one of the youngest audience for new music in the world, especially because of musicians like Thurston Moore and Mike Patton. When we stopped for a year and came back in 2010 after the big economic collapse we lost a lot of our audience, especially the younger audience who don't have much money anymore, and they have a lot of shows in big cities like Montreal. But I don't make up a program for young or old people, but for the music!*

EH - During the week of the festival, are you able to occasionally relax and just watch some of the shows, or does your administrative duty keep you too busy?

*ML - I present and listen to all concerts. Usually I miss less than an hour of music per Festival... This year I heard every note!*

EH - If you had to pick three shows that moved you the most over the whole run of the festival what would they be?

*ML - Impossible to answer that one. I would like to mention at least 3 concerts per year so it would be over one hundred concerts to mentioned... I think this year, it is the Barre Phillips Solo with a full house at the Colisée being completely in tune with the musician... a rare moment!*

EH - At one of the shows this past year you, maybe jokingly, mentioned you always dreamed of having Jerry Garcia play. Are there any other artists you haven't had yet that you'd still love to have play?

*ML - Frank Zappa!*

EH - Do you see yourself continuing to plan the festival for an indefinite period of time, and if you decided to retire from it yourself, do you believe the festival would continue in your absence?

*ML - I can't see much in advance. At the moment I am thinking about next year and I have no idea what is going to happen. I think it is a nice idea to have the Festival continue forever but I believe in having an end for everything and everyone!*

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