

LUMENS PRESS KIT



VIDEO PHASE: SOUND MEETS LIGHT

Published July 13, 2018 by Luc Gagnon in Le Radar

The surprising group Video Phase presented an unusual show on the Vieux Treuil stage on last Friday, July 6. With two musicians only, originally materialized music through images, in Lumens, a playful, interactive creation. Julien Robert and Julien Compagne, two specimens, who compose a kind of hybrid music combining virtual imagery with electroacoustics, have set themselves the goal of materializing sounds through visual creations that respond to rhythms and various sonorities. « The first is a piece we created with a material that is just the voice, the other pieces also use a main material that we expand. Each of the pieces is a different exploration of the link between music and light », explains Julien Compagne.

Using a video game program to illustrate their compositions, images are projected onto semi-transparent screens that come to life with every movement of the musicians, whether by drums or luminous wands.

But it is in the piece Cube It that the full expression of their singularity becomes apparent, as the two Julien are arranged on either side of the screen and strike several electronic drums, which emit cubes that change sound as they encounter obstacles. Eventually, this very authentic way of making music ends up generating an actual melody and soaring, which acquires intensity as it progresses in time.

In another piece, the two comparses come to life behind screens squared by lasers, and each time they place their hand on one of nine junctions, they create as many rhythms and cadences with variable geometry: dynamic creations where the musicians are instruments.

On the morning of the show, the Centre d'artistes AdMare invited children to take part in a workshop offered by two founding members who could experience the multimedia screen by banging on the drums. It was a much-appreciated moment for the youngsters present, who clearly showed a great deal of interest in this creative and unique technology.

With image and sound as their means of expression, these two musicians, who have been editing Lumens for three years, are definitely not at the end of their journey, considering the multiplicity of possibilities for exploration and research they are already exploiting in unusual and performative ways. A surprising and captivating audiovisual style...

MUTANT MUSICIANS

Published December 13, 2017 by Mario Cloutier in La Presse

Nominated for the Opus prize in modern and electroacoustic music, the duo Video Phase presents its show, Lumens, Thursday in Montreal.

They are musicians and compose from images. But their hybrid art remains accessible. The duo Video Phase, formed by Julien-Robert and Julien Compagne, are committed to creating art that is interactive and fun. The opposite of cold and abstract.

"It's important that the public experiences something that they really love with us," says Julien Compagne. We are organic and performative. Nothing replaces a human being on a stage. What we do is like an extension of ourselves. We are mutant musicians."

Their second show, Lumens, took three years of research-development-creation. Presented at the SAT in the spring, they are currently touring in neighbourhood music halls and will travel to the United States at the end of the year.

On stage: screens, keyboards, percussion and a large bowl of water. Cubes are launched on the screen by the musicians using their chopsticks. Lumens seems to have variable geometry, but everything is skillfully calculated. To create their images, musicians use a video game software.

"The video game controllers are our instruments. The goal of our work is to stay as free as possible, creatively and musically."
— Julien Compagne

"In our creative process, adds Julien-Robert, the visual is taken into account from the start. We develop our interfaces first, based on the possibilities they give us. After, we compose. "

SEE THE MUSIC

The duo has existed for five years. The two Juliens met at the Faculty of Music at the University of Montreal.

"It clicked between us and we had this idea to create shows where the visual would be a representation of the music, where we could hear and see the music. Minimalist music, including that of Steve Reich, inspired us a lot," explains Julien Compagne

"The name of the group Video Phase comes directly from Reich's Marimba Phase. It's our homage to this great musician," adds Julien-Robert.

Stimulated by the idea of revitalizing the performance of digital art, the two have sought from the beginning to "theatricize" the music. In their first show, the duo used a bicycle. In Lumens, they work with water.

"We don't forget our roots. We come from music, but with the visual we look to create interactions, to develop our language."
— Julien-Robert

"I discovered video-music at university," he adds, "but I wanted to bring it elsewhere. At the time, it was electroacoustic music accompanied by visuals, in a seated context and unperformed. I'm interested in the relationship between the musician and an image that is no longer just an accompaniment. "

INNOVATE

Integrate, merge, hybridize. They innovate constantly in their workshop. With hybrid creations, one needs new ways of working. Even if digital art can be restrictive sometimes.

"These are beautiful constraints that help us to create, notes Julien-Robert. For example, the trajectories of the cubes that are launched in the screen, it's difficult because we have the choice of six different models. It's mathematical. At the same time, it's very stimulating for our creativity. "

Both Juliens are also open to collaborations with other artists, in dance or in theater, for example.

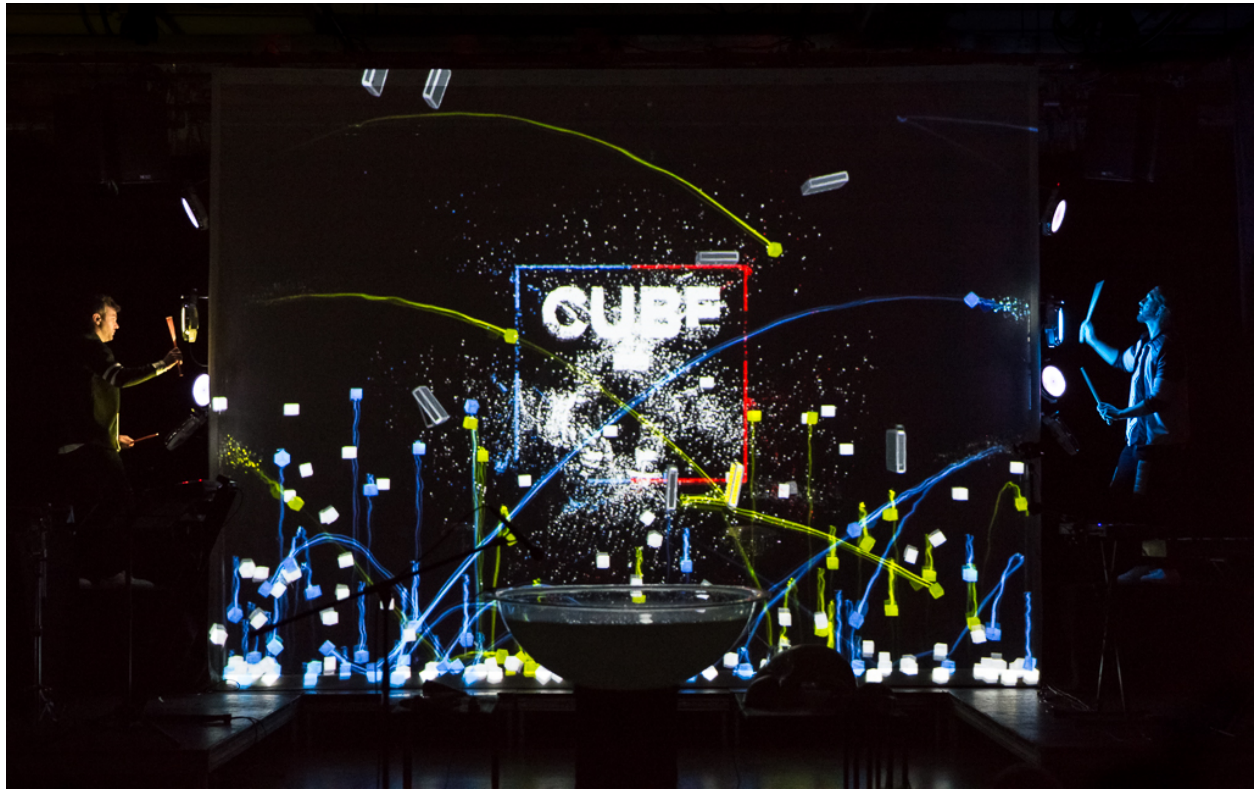
"The advantage of percussion, compared to other instruments, is the physicality of the discipline, believes Julien Compagne. It looks like dancing. In a show where we wanted to put the performance in the center, the percussion allows a link between the performer and the visual result. "

In Lumens, there is no hierarchy between music and images. The duo tries to blend the two into one expression, to the point where it becomes difficult to explain the music without the images.

"It is obvious that we are not at the end of our research. It's almost unlimited as a means of expression," concludes Julien Compagne.

Video Phase presents Lumens, December 14 at 7:30 pm at la maison de la culture Mont-Royal and December 17 at Émile-Legault Hall in Saint-Laurent.

THE SECOND MULTISENSORY EXPERIENCE OF VIDEO PHASE



Published August 2017 by Justine Baillargeon in Convergence

The collective Video Phase, of which Julien Compagne and Julien-Robert are the founders, offers a meticulous mix of music, video, and technology. Their second creation, entitled "Lumens", marries the organic instrumental with the modernism of the new technologies, and constitutes an impressive interplay between live and preconceived performance. We met the duo at the show's premiere in June at the Society for Arts and Technology (SAT), launching its tour.

The process of creating "Lumens", from conception to the very first official presentation, took place over three years. Video Phase's first show, sharing the title of the duo, retained the intention to merge music and visual into one and the same object. "What has remained in common from one show to another is our guiding idea of giving a visual representation to music, sometimes concrete and sometimes more abstract," explains Julien Compagne.

With "Lumens", the two visionary artists imagined and set up their own multi-screen 3D environment. Equipped with electronic instruments for the creation of certain digital sounds, or simply a huge bowl of water that acts as a receptacle for its aquatic percussions, the duo seeks to transport its audience in a new kind of multimedia performance.

A noteworthy aspect of Video Phase's signature comes from its intention to make its creations accessible through visual processing, offsetting the slightly more specialized music. "Music is one of the most abstract arts because there is no narrative and nothing to see," says Julien-Robert. The addition of a visual really supports the show and allows people to find a point of attachment."

Through the same piece for example, the two creators offer several types of elements that can capture the attention of the viewer, either with the musical processes used or with colourful and futuristic visuals. "This was our intention, because we imagine our shows in a contemplative way. There are several levels of understanding, and that's why it's so inclusive," adds Julien Compagne.

Some will denote the technology and sharp musical processes used on stage while others will simply be carried by the playful aspect of the show that is presented to them. Thus, there is something for publics of any ages and all tastes.

The creators work together and form a complementary duo. Just as conception and overall design are written in four hands, everyone plays a role in the team. Through his training in the programming sector, Julien-Robert mainly develops the technical underpinnings of their show. As for Julien Compagne, multi-instrumentalist percussionist, he focuses on the performative and melodic aspect of "Lumens".

To magnify their project, they rely on a talented core. In particular, they have collaborated with Michel G. Barette for stage production, Nathanaël Lécaudé for electronic design, and Béatrice Ortiz Descloquemant for 3D design.

The importance of live

Video Phase places a lot of importance on the performative aspect of their projects, seeking to maximize the responsiveness of their audience. By pushing their freedom of movement once on stage, the two artists want to display the values of the unpredictable and instantaneous side of the show. "We always assumed that we wanted to do everything in real time, and then we made compromises," says Julien Compagne. Depending on the technical feasibility, some musical transitions or sound clips are pre-recorded. Once on stage, they are lost in performance.

Their music is coloured with the strong influence of American musician and composer Steve Reich, who is considered one of the pioneers of the minimalist musical movement. Among their influences, there are also several artists of electronic music, popular or contemporary. "We do not put barriers on what influences us; above all, we want our influences to serve the concept," says Julien Compagne.

Virtual reality as a guarantee of accessibility

Both Juliens are very open to the concept of variations in their shows, something they consider an excellent way to increase the visibility of their work. In collaboration with the Montreal-based Imagine 360, they offer a virtual reality experience featuring one of their tracks called "Cube it", a hybrid between the genre of video games and minimalist music.

L'application «Lumens VR» est disponible dans l'App Store et sur Google Play. Selon le collectif, la réalité virtuelle était le meilleur moyen de rendre justice à son travail puisque des dispositifs tels que les CD ou les DVD font perdre le dynamisme et l'aspect immersif du projet. Cette nouvelle formule de consommation d'oeuvres fait d'ailleurs partie des avenues qu'ils désirent entreprendre dans le futur.

The "Lumens VR" app is available in the App Store and on Google Play. According to the group, virtual reality was the best way to do justice to their work since devices such as CDs or DVDs lose the dynamism and immersiveness of the project. This new form of dissemination of works is a direction in which they'd like to continue in the future.

Several dates are currently on the agenda for Video Phase, who will present "Lumens" from November to February on the island of Montreal and in April in Longueuil. The duo will soon begin the development of a third joint project while continuing to add performances to their current tour.

«LUMENS», AN INTERACTIVE SHOW COMING TO GESÙ ON MAY 6



Interview with the show's creators

Published May 2, 2016 by Alice Côté Dupuis in La Bible Urbaine

Musicians and composers by training, the founding members of Video Phase, Julien Compagne and Julien-Robert, have joined forces to create an artistic form in which music and images are both interconnected and inseparable. In creating their second show, Lumens, they now wonder if they have in fact invented a genre ... In an interview, the two accomplices explain what is so amazing about this unique show found in a category of its own, a show you can attend this Friday, May 6 at the Gesù in Montreal.

"It's more than just a concert; It is a multisensory experience. The fact that the show is immersive, the fact that the visual is really linked to music, is like entering an imaginary world where the music and visuals are one," reveals Julien Compagne, describing what we can expect to experience as the audience of Lumens. Of course, the two Juliens are on stage throughout the show and they play different instruments, right before our eyes; it is a musical performance above all, bringing together music that is more experimental with music influenced by pop culture, but the two creators still insist on the importance of the visual aspect, which "takes such an important place that it is an extension, in the end, of our instruments. "

The first visual aspect of importance in Lumens - which is actually the scientific term that describes luminous flux - is light, which is presented in all its forms: projections, of course, but also LED lights placed around, inside, on, and under the musical instruments. It is almost an instrument in its own right, in the same way as electronic drums, keyboards, the xylophone, snare drums, electronic marimba, the voices of the two Juliens and the lasers are used in the show, not to mention a bowl filled with water, 1 meter in diameter, thanks to which the musicians make percussive sounds. "We used a little bit of all the tools available to us as performers," adds Julien Compagne, a pianist and percussionist.

From these tools, they added one after another during the process of creating Lumens. In order to add to the spectacular, the two creators create all the visuals of their live show: "It isn't like 'I must hit here at this time in order to be with the visuals.' We created this show with the engine of a video game, so there are 3D, interactive environments that react to our musical interactions," explains Compagne, adding that they had to create their own codes and program their own visuals, thus learning a whole new language. In a tableau entitled "QBalls", Julien-Robert even confesses to us that "the visual also comes to generate music in itself. There's an aleatoric side that's unpredictable, we don't always know what's going to happen. The balls bounce, and we have to adjust to the results of this, visually and musically," ultimately making them lose some control over the unfolding of the show.

But that's part of the game, and the two Juliens love to play; the world of video games had great influence over the creation of Lumens. "When you play a video game, you can move wherever you like, do whatever you want; you choose your actions. We wanted to be able to do this with the music and the visual," says Julien Compagne, explaining that this is exactly what they have put into practice in this creation, "by reacting to the visual through our instruments, a bit like if we were part of the controller, it's a bit like a musical video game." Thus was born the concept that Julien-Robert considers unique: "we now wonder if we have in fact invented a new genre, which would be called the Performative Musical Video Game. It's like a big video game within which you perform."

With a small team of collaborator-consultants - notably one who specializes in interactive LEDs, and another in 3D graphics and facial recognition - the two Juliens created an explosive show where various video projections - geometric shapes recalling at times a Rubix Cube, bouncing balls, or virtual avatars evoking the faces of the creators - are influenced by the sounds they create in real time. The result is absolutely original, accessible to a wide audience, but also hypnotic and fascinating, because "seeing the performers on stage creating live is exciting; it's a bit like having access to a lab and seeing a scientist create something right in front of you, doing experiments."



LUMENS: A SHOW IN WHICH ONE LISTENS WITH OPEN EYES

Published May 6, 2016 by Fadwa Lapierre in Printemps Numérique

Two men in their thirties had the crazy idea of developing a new form of art: the performative musical video game. Julien-Robert is a musician by training. His journey led him to do video-music, but he wanted to go further by adding a performative aspect. He joined Julien Compagne, a high-level percussionist, to create Video Phase. Lumens is the second original work of the group and explores the relationship between the virtual and reality by creating a 3D multi-screen environment projected in front of and around the audience.

"Our approach is based on an image that is in harmony with music. The two are reflected in a single gesture," explains Julien-Robert. "We want to surpass the borders of the stage with an immersive experience."

Lumens has electroacoustic, pop, and experimental influences. A series of contrasting scenes presents the original compositions of the two artists. For two years the two tested and retested different techniques. They invented physical and virtual instruments that allow them to interact with video and music. The LED lights are central to the performance, hence the name Lumens; a unit of measurement of luminous flux.

"It's intense! Techno has always interested us, but we had to find the tools to achieve our goals," he adds. "We want to bring a unique experience to the viewers, to make them see something that they have not seen before: the performative musical video game."

The objective of the duo in Video Phase is to communicate its art to as many people as possible. Technological enthusiasts will find what they're looking for as much as curious music lovers. The duo intend to travel with Lumens to different festivals. This is the opportunity to witness multi-sensory spectacle like no other!

Lumens au Gesù | See music and control it like a video game

In an era of hybrid arts, many artists search for the perfect harmony between music and video, creating technological tools that would allow these arts to merge not only on media but also on stage. With Lumens, their interactive performance presented this Friday evening at Gesù, Julien Compagne and Julien-Robert, the duo behind Video Phase, are taking a giant step in this direction.

Early in the week at their rehearsal studio on rue Lajeunesse in Ahuntsic, the two tweaked the final details of their musical and visual show that proves to be outside the norm. Composed of four scenes, coherently and thoughtfully interrelated - they even collaborate with Michel G. Barrette for staging - the 45 minute show relies on electronic tools and instruments and live video manipulation techniques enabling interactive audio-visual performance, even leaving room for improvisation.

"The basic concept that led the whole project was to visually represent what was going on musically," explains Julien-Robert about the duo's first show, which laid the foundation for this second production. If music seems to be the queen and master at the heart of their approach, there is indeed a constant interrelation between it and the visuals. "It's the music that leads the project, but the show has been built with both in mind from the beginning. The visuals end up influencing the process a lot as well. "

See the music

A good example: an adaptation of Steve Reich's work Marimba Phase - which was at the genesis of the entire Video Phase project, hence the nod to the name - with a visual "that shows Reich's musical concept, the concepts of phase shift, seen in video at the same time as it is heard. This allows the audience to better understand the music by seeing it." This can be considered the

leitmotif of the project: propose an engaging visual universe that serves as a gateway to a form of music often perceived as isolated. "It's something to hang on to when you get into more experimental music, in which there is less familiarity for the average listener. It's a very interesting tool for communication."

Apart from Marimba Phase, the other three scenes are based on original compositions. During our visit to the rehearsal space, the two artists presented us with an electronic piece with virtual "rubber balls," rebounding as if by the will of the percussionist as they hit on the sides of the screen, like a video game. The laws of physics clearly influence the sonorities produced by this process:

Another section, with semi-transparent laser frames, once again allows a form of interactive percussion, while the other short piece is designed for a voice duo with "virtual choir". "It's a harmonizer: when we play, it transposes our voice and it makes the chords played on a keyboard, a bit like we've already seen in pop with Imogen Heap, for example. But additionally, each of the voices activates a virtual face on a screen, so we also have the visual aspect in this case.

Performative musical video game

Musicians by training, Julien-Robert and Julien Compagne had to learn the basics of various technologies in order to create the show. "We were rather productive, and it is this knowledge that will help us create our future productions. In particular, we learned a new software for this show called Unity 3D, a software that creates video games. For most of the scenes in the show, the visual is generated in the video game built for the show, essentially."

"We have released the term performative musical video game; we've essentially invented a genre. This is a question that we often ask ourselves: we look for other references, but we haven't found them."

Despite all the equipment necessary for the production of the show, this one was designed and with touring in mind. "This is our intention. We can present the show relatively easily in all kinds of theaters. We made sure that everything could be disassembled, that we could get everything into a van and hit the road."

And their plan is not only to tour. The creation of Lumens could serve as a basis for other projects. "From this point of departure, we could adapt parts of the project to more sophisticated facilities or create more specialized performances, for a variety of locations and durations. Or we could even use the virtual instruments to interpret other music. "

They are planning for a virtual reality project in the near future, by summer, with stereoscopic VR glasses allowing one to be completely immersed in certain parts of the show with the help of a mobile application. "Given the immersive aspect of the show, it didn't seem appropriate to use conventional media. There will be a virtual reality aspect offered to people who wish to experience the show at home." A complete virtual environment will be created in which the two artists will be integrated. The app will be available for download, and it will be possible to purchase Google Cardboard VR glasses for the performance of the show. "I think we're in a fairly unique niche, making art with this technology. It is still something quite rare." Not to miss.

DIGITAL SPRING, ARTISTIC SPRING!

PLAYING WITH SOUND AND LIGHT IN GESÙ

Electronic instruments and laser frames. Here are the toys of Video Phase, the group presenting the immersive and mesmerizing digital performance Lumens (<http://www.quartierdesspectacles.com/en/activite/8662/lumens>). On stage at Gesù, the music and images will come to life as in a musical and interactive video game.