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## All Things Strings



# The Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival 2014: Fictionalized Schubert and a Classical Music Newspaper Written Entirely by Young People

by [Laurence Vittes](#)

on Saturday

**"It was the best, most inspiring Lockenhaus Festival so far!"**



That is the totally biased report from cellist Nicolas Altstaedt, 32-year old director of the 2014 Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival which ran July 5-11. Titled "Fiction," with various deep philosophical implications, the Festival focused on the nuances of Franz Schubert's pain, longing, sadness and fulfillment.

The Festival opened with Juha Siltanen's *Octet*, a full-length play *slash* musical performance in which Schubert cannot decide whether to attend a performance of his *Octet*. The concert hall in 13th-century Lockenhaus Castle, Altstaedt told me, "was completely dark, with only a few spots on the actors playing Schubert and the woman representing his inner voice. The musicians, who played with reduced stand lights, were inspired by violinist Pekka Kuusisto, Altstaedt said, "to go for something special!"

#### **It wasn't all Schubert.**

Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale* led by Ilya Gringolts, the Ravel Trio, Purcell, Britten, Satie and other composers also figured into the blend. There were lots of video installations and composer-in-residence Helena Winkelman's grand finale was played by a string orchestra made up of the likes of Vilde Frang, Quatuor Ébène, Liza Ferschtman, Nils Mönkemeyer and Esther Hoppe. To make programming more interesting and keep spectators and players alike on their toes, with the exception of the first night, each concert's program was announced only the 24 hours before.

#### **Altstaedt himself stood in as the narrator in Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* when the scheduled speaker cancelled at the last minute.**

Everything went smoothly until, according to Altstaedt, Kuusisto realized that the egg he wanted to "lay" after the "Chickens" movement was not boiled as the people from the kitchen had told him, but raw--and the shell had broken.

"In fact," Altstaedt continued, "the egg was running all over the place, especially on his suit and his hands; luckily we had some music collage running on screen and I was speaking, so he was just able to make it off stage, take off his jacket, wash his hands and get back in time for "Wild Asses."

#### **Altstaedt singled out the *Lockenhaus Reporter*, a new Festival workshop program in which teenagers learn how to write a**



newspaper.

The *Lockenhaus Reporter* workshop is offered to anyone between 10 and 19 "who might not want to make music themselves, but who are good observers and good at asking questions." Participants attend rehearsals, conduct interviews and write features about the artists and review the concerts. Participants learn the journalistic skills to do this in a hands-on workshop at the end of which a magazine is printed.

*Lockenhaus Reporter* is the brainchild of journalist and educator Julia Kaiser who, with the enthusiastic support of Altstaedt, serves as the project's one person crew. "The most important ingredients for becoming a good cultural journalist?" I ask her, "Enthusiasm, organizing ability and hard work. And one can never start too early," she says.

**Participants, she told me, "like the opportunity to get to know music and musicians, and to look 'behind the curtains.' They come away with a new love of writing, and they like the whole Festival experience more because the workshop makes them feel like they are part of the Festival."**

Kaiser added that the professional musicians who subjected themselves to being interviewed and reviewed by the teenagers "loved to talk about their passion for music and even being asked basic questions like 'Why was the violin the instrument for you?' or 'How do you know where to put your fingers?'"

You can check out video on Lockenhaus Festival [here](#) and [here](#). A pdf of last year's Lockenhaus Report is available on request from [presse@kammermusikfest.at](mailto:presse@kammermusikfest.at). Photo above of Nicolas Altstaedt and Pekka Kuusisto is by Balazs Borocz.

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