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'CONCERT IN THE DARK'

German violinist Mirijam Contzen to perform in Manila

Imagine yourself in utter darkness, listening to the sweet, magical and haunting strains of beautiful violin music wafting in the air. The experience, to say the least, will be memorable.

Thanks to the Goethe-Institut, concertgoers will have this one-of-a-kind experience when renowned German violinist and chamber musician Mirijam Contzen comes to Manila on September 26 to perform classical pieces – in complete darkness – at the historic Fort Santiago Theater in Intramuros, Manila.

Dubbed as “Concert in the Dark,” the Goethe-Institut has pulled out all stops to make this one-time event truly unforgettable, starting with a troupe of blind ushers (courtesy of the non-government organization Resources for the Blind) who will lead audience members inside the dark chambers to their seats.

A child prodigy, Contzen has become one of the most outstanding violinists today, described as a “multifaceted artist whose versatility and curiosity express themselves in her concerto work.” It was legendary

Hungarian violinist Tibor Varga who discovered the young violinist’s prodigious talent when he heard her perform a Mozart violin concerto for her orchestral debut – at the very tender age of seven. Varga would become one of the most important influences in the young violinist’s life – acting as her teacher and mentor, eventually preparing her for an international professional career that began when she was 16.

In the hands of a master, the violin – described by American novelist Louisa May Alcott as “that most human of all instruments” – can transport listeners to a magical world where a swirl of emotions – poignant, joyful, moving – are experienced.

Contzen is acknowledged as one such artist, but then again, it should come as no surprise if one were to recall the awards, the accolade and the praises that have been heaped on her.

In 2001, Contzen won the ECHO Klassik Prize in the category “Rising Stars” and has since performed with leading orchestras worldwide, including the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Konzerthaus Orchestra Berlin, Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, Radio Symphony Orchestra Frankfurt, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Orchestra de la Suisse Romande, Sydney Symphony, Melbourne Symphony

and the Munich Chamber Orchestra. She has collaborated with conductors Gerd Albrecht, Dennis Russell Davies, Raphael Frühbeck de Burgos, Christopher Hogwood, Eliahu Inbal, Bobby McFerrin, Tomas Netopil, Michael Sanderling, Leif Segerstam and Lothar Zagrosek.

She founded the chamber music festival Schloss Cappenberg in 2005, with the festival taking place annually in northwest Germany in late May or early June and where a broad range of chamber music repertoire performed by leading European musicians and soloists are presented.

For Mirijam Contzen, chamber music plays an important role in her life outside of Schloss Cappenberg. In 2011, she founded the Serafino Quartet and has performed in various formations with Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Emmanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Natalia Gutman, Clemens Hagen, Janine Jansen, Leonidas Kavakos, Stephen Kovacevich, Mischa Maisky and Herbert Schuch, among others.

A frequent guest at festivals around the globe including the Salzburg Festival, the Rheingau Music Festival, the Athens Festival, the Pianofestival Ruhr (with pianist Adrian Brendel), the Taipei Festival and the Verbier Festival, Contzen is touring the region with her 1733 Carlo Bergonzi violin (Bergonzi was an Italian luthier or maker of string instruments

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and was the most noted among the Bergonzi family of luthiers from Cremona, Italy). She will be making stops in Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Hanoi and Yangon.

Concert in the Dark is the first of a series of musical events that the Goethe-Institut in Southeast Asia is

starting this year. The series is called "Listen differently" (or Anders hören in German) and aims to expose Filipinos to unconventional ways of experiencing music.

The concert with Mirijam Contzen will be held on September 26 and the program will start at

7:30 p.m. Admission is free and open to all on a first-come, first-served basis. For inquiries, please visit the Goethe-Institut website: www.goethe.de/manila or send an e-mail to program@manila.goethe.org. For more on Mirijam Contzen, check out her website: mirijamcontzen.com

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German musician Mirijam Contzen and her 1733 Carlo Bergonzi violin.