

Saskatoon

Montreal artist puts on unique show inside Sask. water tower



Sound performance collects, mixes sounds from inside the century-old building



Jason Warick · CBC News ·

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The former water tower in Humboldt, Sask., served as the venue for a recent series of concerts using sounds generated at the site and mixed by a Montreal artist. (Trevor Bothrel/CBC)

Humboldt, Sask., residents were recently treated to a concert inside an unusual venue — their decommissioned water tower.

Jen Reimer, who received a Canada Council grant to produce a show, recorded sounds inside the tower during her first visit to central Saskatchewan last year.

"I was going to different spaces across the country and when I came here, the wind was so present. It activated the resonant frequencies of the tower. I could learn a lot about the architecture just listening," Reimer said.



Audience members listen to the audio performance inside the former water tower in Humboldt, Sask. by Montreal artist Jen Reimer. (Trevor Botherel/ CBC)

Reimer created a "site-specific composition."

She set up multiple speakers and monitors at different heights inside the 25-metre high tower using hundreds of metres of cable. Reimer then mixed the sounds and played them back during a series of concerts inside the tower last week.

She hosted multiple concerts throughout the day last Thursday for small groups to accommodate the small space. The audience could even listen from different points.

"I'm encouraging people to go up the stairs and hear it from different perspectives, because I think it is a moving, a walking composition where it changes depending on where you are in the space," she said.



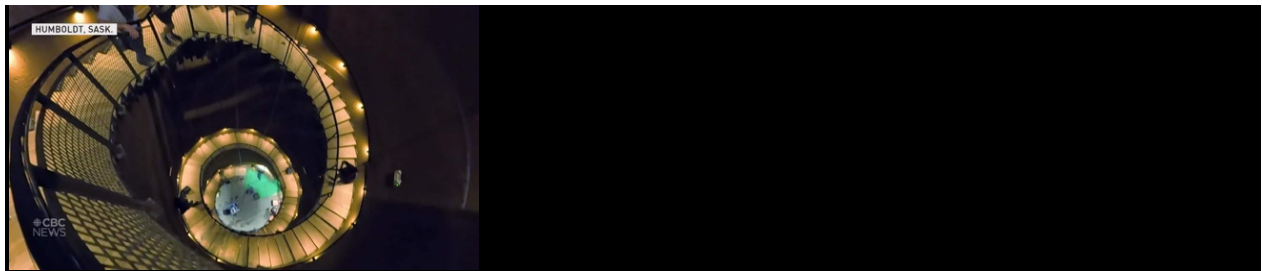
Montreal artist Jen Reimer put on a series of recent concerts inside the old Humboldt, Sask. water tower using sounds she collected there a year earlier. (Trevor Botherel/CBC)

Reimer said the metal tower produced a wide variety of sound, with the wind and passing trains adding even more.

Audience member Ivan Buehler said he loved it.

"I thought it was a wonderful opportunity. I'm very thankful for the vision of the artist who recognized what could be done in there and went ahead and played around and created a great show," Buehler said.

WATCH | Montreal artist produces concert series inside Humboldt's historic water tower:



<http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2261160515875> The City of Humboldt's historic water tower is making music with the help of a Montreal sound artist.

Jen Reimer received a national grant to record sounds inside the tower and then mix them and play them back inside the space. Reimer says the 25-metre high, metal tower produced a wide variety of sound with the wind and passing trains adding even more.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



[Jason Warick](#)

Jason Warick is a reporter with CBC Saskatoon.

With files from Trevor Botherel

I suppose I shouldn't be such a flatlander crank, and be more open to new experiences, but I have trouble getting my mind around this. But I'm not a complete old Philistine grouch: I always thought Glen Campbell's "Wichita Lineman" ("I hear you singing in the wires ... I need you more than want you, and I want you for all time") was corny, campy, and silly. (But maybe this actually reveals my contrariness? Tanya Tucker fell for it, at least for a while.)

When I told a farmer here about this, he replied "I bet she got a grant for it!"

Open-minded family of a 93 year-old friend of mine in Humboldt—an old farmer I cleaned seed with here in the winter, now widowed in Assisted Living—bought him a ticket to this. Roy cannot remember anything from 30 seconds ago, or the last decades; his memory impairment may not fit neatly within the "dementia" category, but it is profound. (I am one of the few people he remembers; imagine that bad luck, being only able to remember—other than immediate family members—me.) He copes admirably well; a lifetime of sincere humble Christian practice has paid off for him. I rolled my eyes imagining Roy being hauled to the water tower, asking "Why am I here?" only to be told it was to listen to the "concert" the wind makes in the tower.

"Nonsense" I can hear him cry. But he would be brought inside only to ask again and be given the same explanation producing even more bafflement. Fortunately, his minders decided to leave him behind to go to bed instead.

Ivan Buehler is a good (nearby) Moosomin boy, so at least someone in this neck of the woods acquired some "culture" along the way. Maybe he had to go to Humboldt to get it. Or maybe there isn't a lot to do for such higher-sensibilities "entertainment" in Humboldt.

I think the artist cheated, playing recorded "music" in the tower.

I love wind, in trees, in grass on prairie, though the wild unrelenting winds we regularly get now wear us out. (Grass/prairie is an acquitted taste, but once you live immersed in it, you come to love it and breathe easy on it. I have to be able to "see" wherever I live, even if it is to see my dog running away for days.) "Spirit" comes from the ancient Greek *pneuma* which has roots in "wind."

All in all, an OK idea good for "something to do" and maybe a chuckle. TJB