

UNIT 8 – MUSIC FOR CHILLING OUT - READING

Winters in Norway can be long and dark, with very little sunlight. But winter can be one of the most exciting times to visit, especially for music lovers. The annual Ice Music Festival celebrates the sounds of winter. At the festival, held in the small mountain town of Geilo, world-class musicians play frozen instruments in an orchestra unlike any other.

The first Ice Music Festival took place in 2006, but its director, Terje Isungset, had been making instruments from ice since 1999. An innovative musician known for using natural elements in his instruments, Terje described discovering the capability to create sound with ice as “art by accident.” Once he learnt of the different sounds produced with ice, he began experimenting with a variety of instruments, including harps, horns and xylophones. In 2005, he launched All Ice Records, a record label for ice-only music.

It’s the instruments that make the Ice Music Festival unique. The process of creating them begins at a lake about 40 km. (25 mi.) from Geilo. Here the ice is clean and pure, perfect for making music. The ice must be natural. Man-made ice does not produce the same sound. Workers cut 272 kg. (600 lb.) blocks of ice from the lake and transport them back to town on snowmobiles. Next, ice sculptor Bill Covitz works alongside the musicians for hours to create instruments. Bill carves individual parts of each instrument, then uses water as glue to hold the parts together.

Working with ice creates new challenges for the musicians. The ice instruments are much more fragile than regular instruments. And performers can’t play familiar songs because they don’t know what sounds the ice instruments will make. “You cannot go on stage and expect a certain sound. You have to play with the sound that instrument actually can make. And then try to create good music out of this,” says Terje. Perhaps the biggest challenge, though, is being sure that the instruments don’t melt! The musicians’ body heat is a threat to the instruments, especially for horn players who are blowing warm air right into the ice!

Despite the challenges, the festival brings people from around the world to hear this incredible tribute to winter, nature and music.

Exercise 2: Answer the questions.

1. Who is Terje Isungset?
2. What does Terje refer to as “art by accident”?
3. Who works together to make the instruments?
4. How are the instruments created?
5. What are three challenges facing musicians who perform at the festival?

