

FABIÁN PANISELLO - AN INTERVIEW



Mr Panisello, you are a native of Buenos Aires, studied at the Salzburg Mozarteum and have been living and working in Madrid for some years. What are the advantages of living in this cultural metropolis?

The cultural life of Madrid with its 6 million inhabitants is very diverse. People of different nationalities have settled here in the past years and as a result Madrid has become very cosmopolitan.

In the last few years about 25 new orchestras were formed here and new concert halls opened. In the contemporary music scene there have been many interesting developments: There are concert series, new ensembles and soloists dedicated to the performance of contemporary compositions. Looking at the programmes of many orchestras, solo performers and ensembles it is possible to think that new music has even become somewhat of a fashion. It is most inspiring to live and work in such an atmosphere.

You are both the founder and director of the 'Ensemble Plural' specialising in contemporary music performance. How important is the experience of musicianship for your work as a composer? How important, also, is the necessity of working through in detail the works of other composers?

The experience is indeed very important. Working with musicians lets you in on the many 'secrets' of instruments, their limits and characteristics, which is valuable for my own work as a composer. Being in direct contact with musicians over a long time and being part of the sound they make is greatly enjoyable and always reminds me of the fact that the score is only an interim stage and not an end in itself. It is there to be turned into movement, sound, vibration and in this way communicated to others.

Also, the thorough study of the works of other composers contributes to posing questions on the 'language', 'style' and 'structure' of music, and means that one learns to see oneself as an 'other' at times. In addition there is the study and questioning of the great works of 20th century classical music, something which I consider very important which is why we have such music on our repertoire. Working with 'modern' classical music teaches you to set standards for your own artistic development and indeed sets them very high, a valuation of one's own works as against those of other contemporary composers.

Do you see your professional future continuing in the double-track of composer and conductor?

Yes, for the above-mentioned reasons, and also, because working with musicians lets me recover from the intense work and inner tension connected with composing, and apart from that it is also very enjoyable.



You have studied with Carter, Eötvös and Brian Ferneyhough. How did these three markedly different and very characteristic protagonists of contemporary music influence your own composing?

Even though other compositorial movements had gained in importance in the early Nineties when I was still a student, I thought at the time that what is known as 'new complexity' was a strategy of composing that could be described as very disciplined and future-oriented. Carter and Ferneyhough stand for this compositorial practice. Their music, which, as you were saying yourself, is markedly different – both logical and coherent and also strong and creative.

Through analysis of several of the works of both of them I have learnt a great deal about composition techniques and was eager to meet them both in person. I attended master classes and gave them some of my own works to judge. Years later it began to dawn on me that these great composers were perhaps the last representatives of this particular strand of composition. In other words, that it becomes very difficult – especially after Ferneyhough, who pushed the frontiers as far out as they would go – to continue in this direction without appearing epigonal.

It was this realisation which made me seek my own direction in music. My music attempts to address musicians and listeners directly, and in this to combine immediately recognisable language elements with a complex concept and an overall sound realisation appearing almost holistic.

Peter Eötvös I met during a course at the 'International Eötvös Institute' in Stuttgart. The course entitled 'composer-conductor' was planned very much along the lines that were to define my own composing and directing later. I attended several of his courses afterwards and learned a lot from him. To me he embodies a very complete kind of artist, composer, conductor and teacher, and that I find most appealing.

Álvaro Guibert, when speaking of your music refers to 'naturalness' which reaches the listeners without the need for complex 'explanations'. What is the meaning of the 'old-fashioned' term 'expressivness' for you?

In music, you are working with 'objects' which contain 'moving ideas', tendencies, techniques and emotions while awakening associative responses in the listeners. The 'form' of music, its divisions and structures are also meaningful and important in the rendering. Which of these elements could be called 'natural' I cannot say, but it seems to me, none of them could exist without what is called 'expressivness'.

How important is it to you to work with C.F. Peters publishers?

I am delighted this cooperation has come to pass. To me the name of C.F. Peters has always been synonymous with a respected and important publishing-house. I feel honoured to be part of such a professional team of composers and music-makers.