

INTERVIEW: Clara MAÏDA and *Mixtur* festival

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Mixtur: How do you prepare for Mixtur 2015? How do you think your interaction with the young composers?

Clara Maïda: It is a bit early to prepare for *Mixtur* since I am currently working on a composition project, but usually, when I work with students or young composers, I always think these interactions as a human adventure, i.e., first of all, with rich verbal exchanges. I first listen to their artistic preoccupations and questions without trying to impose my views. They arrive with their inner world and it is important to respect that. But they are not always aware of their sound imaginary or they don't have the musical tools to express it. Therefore, my approach is to bring them my artistic experience, how I work on different musical parameters (texture, timbre, harmonic field, sound surfaces or volumes, for instance), what kind of writing I develop, the kind of sound world I look for and which musical solutions I favour to get it, which eventual extra-musical fields nourish my work, or eventual philosophical, existential, scientific, ethical questions underlie my activity as a composer. And I combine these various personal views with a presentation of other ways of thinking music and composition by analysing other composers' works. It is a good way to help the students to discover a wide range of possible directions and choices, and find their own language at some point.

Mixtur: What do you expect of a project like this? What reward does teaching provide you?

C. M.: Teaching brings two important things. On the one hand, as I mentioned above, the communication, the exchanges are really interesting because there is a mutual gift. It is always enriching to encounter other ways of feeling and thinking. Since each life and artistic experience is unique, everyone learns from the others, whether they have a long experience or not. On the other hand, presenting my own work in detail is always a good opportunity to plunge again into works I composed in the past and to consider them with another perspective since I have changed meanwhile. The same thing happens if I give an introduction to other composers. I can notice how my way of apprehending them has been modified with the development of my own composition work. It is a kind of feedback, of resonance between my past and my present and it

very often sets something into motion for future works, with the wish to develop further some directions presented during the courses.

It is also a wonderful feeling to see students gradually finding their own way, getting more confident in what they wish to do. I try to encourage them to trust their musical instinct, to take on their choices even if they are criticized, to hang on when it becomes difficult, to define what function they give to art, why they want to be a composer, being aware at the same time that artistic conceptions and choices are also likely to change. Art can (must) bring an inner mutation. And a lesson of art is also a lesson of life.

Mixtur: *Is there a sustainable difference between discussing and teaching composition and performing your pieces?*

C.M.: Teaching and working with performers are two very different experiences. The work with performers is a confrontation to the incarnation of music. The body is involved in the performance and solutions have to be found in order to get a satisfying sound result. There is a great pleasure to discover the first appearance of external sound from what was only internal sound until then. This passage from inside to outside is possible thanks to the medium of the performer's body. But there is always a work on the limits of the body and of the instruments on the one hand, and on the limits of musical writing on the other hand. It is always finally surprising to see that after different adjustments, music can emerge and find its way beyond these limits.

Teaching does not involve this body dimension. Sound and music, as they are discussed during courses, are entities in themselves, detached from the performance, even if technical details of the different ways of playing can be apprehended, of course. But the important questions are more: which sound world do the composers wish? How must they write in order to get this sound? What kind of musical time, what kind of texture (dense, smooth, etc.), do they want to develop? Do they wish a single- or multi-layered sound object, a steady or an evolving object? Therefore, a kind of pure sound matter is considered, apart from the case of performative or theatrical music, of course.

Mixtur: *How do you value the commission of new works in our country?*

C.M.: I never had any commission from Catalonia or Spain and as far as I know, this festival will include one piece already performed in the past. But of course, I would be delighted to get some day the opportunity of a commission from an ensemble based in Barcelona or from any institution.

I recently heard, for instance, CrossingLines ensemble in Huddersfield festival since I was giving a seminar at Huddersfield University two days earlier and I found the performers very good.

Clara Maïda, December 2014