

MÚSICA VIVA
FESTIVAL
CELEBRATES
FOURTEEN
SEASONS

Música Viva 2008
convergência de expressões e estéticas musicais múltiplas
19 a 27 Set.

JERÓNIMOS 19 set.
GULBENKIAN 20 set.

CCB 20 a 27 set.

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Pedro Junqueira Maia

Composer. Born in Porto, 1971, he graduated in composition in the Superior Schools of Music of Porto and Lisbon.

He works regularly in music for theatre and his Works were performed all over Portugal as well as South Africa, Italy, México and United Kingdom.

He was the founder of Atelier de composição and publishing director of the editions of the same company. Atelier de Composição has published books about the Portuguese composers Cândido Lima, João Pedro Oliveira, Álvaro Salazar, Fernando Lopes Graça and Filipe Pires.

He was also musical editor of *Águas Furtadas*, a magazine of Literature, Music and Visual Arts of the Nucleus of Academic Journalism of Porto University.

As the artistic director of Memorando Lopes-Graça festival he was awarded the 1st prize ex-aequo on the competition organized by the Portuguese Institute of Arts/Ministry of Culture 2006.

He teaches composition both at the Silva Monteiro Secondary Music School of Porto and at the Superior Institute of Intercultural and Transdisciplinary Studies at Portuguese Piaget Institute.

Miso Music is a force to be reckoned with in the contemporary Portuguese music scene. From 19th to 27th September last, they offered us another sumptuous edition of *Música Viva -International Festival of Electro-acoustic Music*. Now proud to be in its fourteenth year, and has now taken root at the Belém Cultural Centre (CCB), it was under the auspices of *Convergence of Multiple Musical Expressions and Aesthetics* that we were able to enjoy, once again, contact with what's going on in contemporary music, in Portugal and abroad.

Since the disappearance of the sorely missed Gulbenkian Foundation's programme of Contemporary Music Encounters, Miso Music has, in a way, taken on accrued responsibility for what is now the only annual event in this area. The responsibility has been undertaken by the directors of the organisation, headed by Miguel Azguime, its artistic director, who has guided it on the best course to achieve its objectives, confirming the festival as a place of excellence in promoting contemporary music in Portugal.

Taking up the title provided by its organisers, the culture of a country can only be made up of converging multiple musical expressions and aesthetics. It is necessary (one might even say imperative), to have access, to see, to hear, to feel and to experiment as much as possible, art or not art, at least to have the opportunity to choose whatever pleases one most from everything on offer. Only like this can we acquire the tools that provide us with new ways of thinking, which will give us new ideas and therefore have different and more chances of living a better and happier life. And, as one public figure in our society, the neurologist João Lobo Antunes, says, 'we live to be happy'. Hence the fundamental importance of contemporary art and of events of the nature and magnitude that we are dealing with here, because it is precisely in this that lies its tenacious effectiveness, its indomi-

table strength – getting those tools that make such new forms of reflection possible. As far as contemporary music is concerned, the *Música Viva* Festival has filled this vacuum, contributing decisively to breaching the serious gaps that should be top of the cultural policy agenda of governments, slowly making its name as *The contemporary music festival in Portugal*.

All this is also underpinned by the prestige that has been spreading abroad, where the event has gained a great many admirers and collaborators. The number of works submitted to its competitions, year after year, is a measure of its success, now not only in the already internationally recognised award for a purely electronic work, but also for the newly created prize for a so-called mixed music work, the joining of acoustic instruments and electronic media. In an interview with the arts magazine of the city of Coimbra, Jaime Reis, one of the most promising young composers for the continuation of contemporary Portuguese music, said that whenever he goes abroad there are always three things that crop up about Portugal in conversations between musicians: Emmanuel Nunes, the most international of our composers, the impeccable Remix Ensemble, from Oporto, and this *Música Viva*.

So, after this preamble, it is only fair that we extol here the spirit and energy of all those who make Miso Music happen. Let us then go on to the most recent Festival.

The actual festival is defined as "an international, broad, recognised space for renovation and encounter of the sound metamorphoses of music today", and some important institutions in Portuguese culture were involved in this year's edition. CCB, as mentioned before, was joined by the Gulbenkian orchestras and, for the first time, the Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra, which was entrusted with the most enticing event of the programme, the open-

ing concert.

In a first glance at the programme provided by the organisation, we came across figures which are, at the very least, impressive: 82 composers represented, of whom 42 are Portuguese; 124 pieces to be performed, 53 of them having their world premiere and 15 being commissioned by Miso Music Portugal itself. These are, in fact, striking numbers, that indicate an event that is not to be taken at all lightly.

Let us talk about the concerts. First concert. The emblematic Jerónimos Monastery was chosen as the venue to present two monumental works by Karlheinz Stockhausen, the composer of transition pieces in contemporary music, particularly those using electro-acoustic media. In a short introduction, Miguel Azguime began by explaining that this concert had originally been prepared together with the composer himself, but eventually became a tribute following his recent death. The programme comprised the Portuguese premiere of *Mixtur*, rendered in its two versions, as planned, the original and the retrograde. In between, at Stockhausen's express wish, we had the opportunity to hear the dazzling *Canto dos Adolescentes*, a pioneering work in the history of electronic music, using the human voice and its transformations. It is indeed a monument as programming goes. The success of the concert could not have been greater, whether for the works, for the performance, for the venue, for the audience or even for the rather remarkable atmosphere created. In a full-to-capacity Monastery, the concert became a delirious event, with teeming pews, standing public everywhere, and even people sitting on the floor of this centuries-old landmark. If we add to this the hearing of works which, despite their fifty years of existence, are still utterly contemporary, seemingly impervious to time (incredibly more contemporary than most modern music that one hears about, if we were frank), the whole

event was even more remarkable and noteworthy. (But is timelessness not precisely one of the conditions for the work of art to be exactly that: a “work of art”?)

The musical direction of *Mixtur* was entrusted to Pedro Amaral, an already acknowledged composer in the national and international musical arenas, who has devoted himself (extremely confidently, we should add) to conducting. In a notoriously difficult piece to control, he exercised blameless rigour throughout. The no less famous *Canto dos Adolescentes* came across as ecstatic. The speakers, scattered around in every corner, worked in the most amazingly beautiful way. It is terribly exciting to realise, once again, and specially in these particular conditions provided by a wide space, the incredible production of this work 52 years ago, bearing in mind the means available at the time, i.e. the non-existence of computers. It is rare for a concert to be so outstanding.

On the second day of the festival, different proposals were presented, all of them with their electronic component brought powerfully to the fore. The Interactive Lounge space provided us with contact with a series of installations created by various artists, including students from sound and image schools, such as ETIC (Image and Communication Technical School).

Among the projects on show in this Interactive Lounge, a special mention should be made of *TT_Ano[4x]*, by Simão Costa, for digital piano, Disklavier and computer, in which, based on the combined work of the famous Yamaha pianos known for “playing by themselves” with specific software (like the no less famous Max/MSP), the construction of a new instrument was somehow attempted (and was indeed successful). The result was rather interesting and has the potential, if properly exploited, to yield powerful and important fruit. One of this year’s interesting ideas was the so-called Sound Walk, an audio corridor of electronic works,

in which twenty miniature electronic musical pieces from all over the world were heard. The space chosen was perfect (the public entrance lobby at CCB) because it allowed anyone visiting CCB or even just passing by to have sound contact with the works, whether or not they attended the festival or had any knowledge that an event devoted precisely to this theme was taking place there. Besides so many and such prolific activities, Miso Music also found the time to create and promote a contemporary musical group, called Sond’Ar-te, which filled the space for mixed music. Another concert was presented here, this time with a predominantly Portuguese programme. It drew attention to the work of João Pedro Oliveira, the Portuguese composer who has been amassing an impressive array of national and international awards, with *Timshel* (commissioned by Miso Music), as well as *Itinerário de Luz*, by Enrique X. Macias (whose double CD with the same title was launched during the festival). The programme also included younger composers, among them Duarte Dinis Silva, who won an honourable mention in the competition promoted by the group. Entitled *Paralelus II*, the piece, tainted with some pop nuances, as I would call them (which is not meant to be in any way deprecating) is a lovely work although, in my frank opinion, with not enough electronics. To complete the programme, the powerful *Mimesis II*, by the Polish Ryszard Osada (powerful perhaps as a result, according the programme notes, of this young man’s extensive work in the field of rock music) and by Patrícia Sucena de Almeida’s *Arena, Insidiis Noctis Serenae...*, a piece filled with musical lyricism in which music combines with a video presentation, in a joint work with Daniel Antero. Sond’Ar-te is a very incisive group, naturally owing to the excellent quality of the musicians but also undoubtedly and particularly to the musical direction of Pedro Amaral (he of the monumental Stockhausen

at Jerónimos).

The evening included a concert in the Gulbenkian Foundation auditorium by the Gulbenkian Orchestra. Alongside composers who are already classics in contemporary music, the programme offered the premiere of a work by a young Portuguese composer, Bruno Gabirro, commissioned by Miso Music.

The emblematic *Calling Across Time*, by the British composer, Jonathan Harvey, was followed by a very beautiful piece by Philippe Hurel in tribute to Claude Debussy’s *Prelude à l’après Midi d’un faune*. My preference, however, was for *Requies*, by Luciano Berio, a composition with a charming orchestral refinement typical of Berio.

Worthy of special mention is the premiere of the work by Bruno Gabirro, for violin and orchestra which, despite certain unsure moments, which are to be expected from a young man just out of college, showed great potential. After all, it is an orchestral piece, not an easy thing to perform alongside the magnificence of a Berio, for example. I shall look out keenly for further work by him. Another aspect the festival has been promoting is drama. Here was included *Contos contados... Contados com Som*, a piece defined as electro-acoustic theatre for children. As its title suggests, it consists of the narration of tales by several authors, and different composers were invited to compose music for each of the stories. The stylistic diversity chosen by each (no doubt according to their own creative characteristics) was very interesting, from a simple guitar accompaniment to purely descriptive electronic music and some more abstract compositions. I would single out *A Menina dos Olhos de Chuva*, a story by Anne Lauricella, with music by Ângela Lopes, a composer emerging as one of the most interesting voices to keep an eye on in Portuguese electro-acoustic music. The following event in the festival brought us a solo violin recital by

José Machado. An instrumentalist who collaborated with Jorge Peixinho of whose Contemporary Music group Group of Lisbon he was (and still is) a member, he presented four world premieres of exclusively Portuguese works. So many premieres in a concert is something worth noting, and the works and their composers deserve a mention: *De Profundis* by Paulo Ferreira Lopes, *Cadenza* by Nuno Miguel Henriques, *X/Hailes* by Pedro Rebelo and lastly *Densidades* by Clotilde Rosa. A harpist by profession, who ventured into composing at Jorge Peixinho's behest, Clotilde Rosa presented the most interesting premiere (once again older musicians showing younger music), in an electronic work which relied on the collaboration of João Pedro Oliveira who, according to the programme notes, "found" the sounds that Rosa wanted.

The intense *The Missing Miss*, by the much-missed Jorge Peixinho, completed the programme. This work, dedicated to José Machado, who premiered it, starts from the famous loose strings of the instrument in a clear allusion to Alban Berg's *To the Memory of an Angel*.

One of the festival's highlights was undoubtedly the famous loudspeaker orchestra, a unique model in Portugal for properly enjoying electro-acoustic music pieces. The next concert presented, in this delicious sound complex, works composed in the creative electro-acoustic laboratory of Miso Music and in the studio of the Technische Universität Berlin. From the former studios, we heard Ricardo Guerreiro (another upcoming Portuguese young musicians) and Manuella Blackburn, the winner of last year's Musica Viva competition; from the latter had pieces by Unshuk Chin (which turned out to be the evening's most interesting piece), Werner Cee, Clemenes Nachtmann, Mário Verandi, Vladimir Djambazov and Clara Maída, in an array of young people's work, alongside established names.

The following day, we had, from

Catalonia, José Iges, Concha Jerez and Pedro López, with another event combining theatrical and sound elements, more linked here to the word and its transformations. Vox Vocis, a so-called "intermedia" show, gives a clear importance to voice, going on to add sparsely gathered recordings, in a continual dialogue with a video and real-time electronics, also transformed into an instrument invented for the performance – a sort of metallophone, with amplified bars and sensors adjusted to them.

In the evening, there was a concert by a group of recent graduates from Slovakia, who not only showed that they could play but also that they were keen on what they were doing. I should particularly mention the musicians' attention to their director/conductor. Alongside renowned names, such as the Italian, Luigi Nono, and the Frenchmen, Tristan Murail and Michael Jarrell, there were works by Vladimir Bokes, Roman Berger, António Ferreira, Ivan Buffa (the group's director), Petra Oliveira Bachratá, Salvatore Sciarrino and Viera Janárceková, alternating instrumental and pure electronics work. At the peril of being accused of bias, I am partial to the French. Murail is absolutely brilliant and Jarrell extremely accomplished. I must, however, also mention Sciarrino, and his miniature for clarinet and string quartet.

The following afternoon brought us a concert in two distinct parts: the first was by the clarinetist Nuno Pinto, who has released a CD of contemporary Portuguese music for clarinet, and the second devoted to musical theatre and video, created by the Duo Confusion.

Nuno Pinto gave us two works for clarinet and electronics. The first, *Upon a Ground II*, by Virgílio Melo, is based on the work of the same name for solo clarinet, here with a very interesting counterpoint between the instrument and the electronics that consisted in transformations of the clarinet itself.

The second, *Ncaãncoa*, by Cândido Lima, is a personal interpretation by

the composer of the twenty thousand years of the prehistoric cave drawings in the Côa valley. The instrumentalist creates a dialogue with the electronics, which is his particular domain. The work can be presented in different versions, for solo instrument or with a varying number of clarinets or even with electronic spatialisations of the same, and it was the latter that we heard in this instance. We were only sorry not to have had the opportunity to hear these works through the loudspeaker orchestra, rather than being limited to four channels as they were, since they are works that lend themselves to this sound complex, and it would only have enriched them.

The Duo Confusion, comprising the composer and electronics operator Sascha Lino Lemke and the actress Marcia Lemke-Kern, performed two works, *Museum* and *#Un4Scene#*, a performance combining music, theatre and video, using real-time technology as their main interconnecting axis.

One of Musica Viva's most important initiatives is definitely the Electro-acoustic Composition Competition. For this edition, the jury included, besides the director of Música Viva, Robert Normandeau, from Canada, and Folkmar Hein, from Berlin's Technische Universität, who voted for the works *Jeu Fabrique*, by the Australian Daniel Blinkhorn, *Electric Sheep*, by George Dennis, from the United Kingdom, and *And Death...* by the American Jason L. Bolte. There was also an honourable mention for *The Maelstrom Method*, by the German Volker Hennes. Under the heading "Best Portuguese Piece", *Metamorfose* by Sérgio Félix Mota was selected. The concert where these prize-winning works were presented also included several Canadian pieces for pure electronics, presented by one of the judges, Robert Normandeau, some of whose works were also heard. I would single out the winning compositions in particular, since I thought some of the others were more typical of

pop music than anything else (the reader can take this as he likes). I would, however, offer a note of criticism of the volume used to present works in the loudspeaker orchestra. Occasionally, I felt that the potential power was overexploited. It was too loud for me. Maybe not everyone would agree, but I do think it is uncalled for, and hinders the enjoyment of the music somewhat.

With a healthy portion of the programme dedicated to the promotion of Portuguese music, we heard from some young performers who have created one of the latest wind quintets, which has been gradually making a quality mark – Diaphonia. Natália Monteiro on flute, David Costa on oboe, Samuel Pascoal on clarinet, Thomas Gomes on French horn and Tiago Paraíso on bassoon, all recent graduates from Lisbon Music Conservatoire, performed Portuguese works and works by composers living in Portugal, along with the beautiful *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet* by Ligeti. Worthy of note in this concert was the choice to play start or end of career works from the composers in question. By Portuguese authors, we heard the very interesting *Quintet* by Frederico de Freitas, a mature work in which he makes inroads into twelve-tone music; *Wanderung*, by João Madureira, one of the works from his student days; and also *Sete Lembranças para Vieira da Silva*, by Lopes Graça, whose hundredth birthday was recently celebrated all over the country (if only he were alive!).

As for foreign composers, we heard the world premiere of *Zéfiro con Uccelli*, by Ivan Moody, which, inspired by the composer's journey across Italy, refers us immediately, as the name clearly suggests, to Monteverdi. We must not forget, either, the abovementioned *10 Pieces* by Ligeti, exceptionally rendered in a virtuoso performance. The concert was completed with *Três Bagatelas*, by Christopher Bochmann, which, as the composer's own notes indicate, are inspired by the works of Webern

in the style of Harrison Birtwistle (from whom Bochmann learned). Beautiful early works already displaying sharp skills and a very individual sonority, which are hallmarks of this composer.

As the festival drew to a close, there were still two hot tickets: the one ending this evening, by the Crash Ensemble, and the Smith Quartet for the final concert. The former was heralded by the New York Times as "the Irish new-music band that plays with the energy and spirit of a rock group". Without wishing to decry this spirit and the energy that they display on stage, I again felt, however, that there was a touch "too much" amplification. Amongst the works played, we heard compositions by their director, the composer Donnacha Dennehy, by John Godfrey, Evan Ziporyn, Paulo Ferreira Lopes and Philip Glass. I would add a special note for the evening's premiere, *Schlaf der Schatten*, by the (very interesting) Portuguese composer, and for the work chosen to finish the concert, *Music in Similar Motion*, by Philip Glass, which was accompanied by a video spewing out hundreds of images at an fascinating rate (the programme notes say there are 8,400, at eight frames per second) which can actually leave the viewer quite dazed. One almost feels compelled to draw an interesting parallel with modern life and its frenzied pace, perhaps even, as one Portuguese painter said, "too fast, even for me who likes speed".

As for the music, Glass is Glass, minimalism is minimalism. I would like to mention here a remark by another minimalist, Michael Nyman, when he said that minimalist music could either make us mad or take us to unimaginable places. So, it's up to you where it takes you. The work of another minimalist, Steve Reich (he, indeed, can take me to other dimensions), was reserved for the last day, for the final concert of the Festival. Last day, closing concert. The Smith Quartet, a brilliant group playing contemporary music for string

quartet, who also came to Portugal to record a CD. They opened the programme with *Shadow Quartet*, by Pedro Rebelo, in which literally a "shadow quartet" (four violins suspended in mid-air, one right above each real musician) creates an interesting resonance of the group itself. Pedro Amaral, of whom we would have liked to have heard more, presented *Página Postiça*, a work the composer says is the first in which he adopts a theme for creating an instrumental piece. There was also an opportunity to hear *Labirinto*, by João Pedro Oliveira, *Horizon*, by Carlos Caires, and closing the Portuguese contribution, *Paraitre Parmi*, by Miguel Azguime, a curious composition based on the collapse of a single note, which he starts with in clear and distinct intermediate relationships. Steve Reich's minimalism, with *Triple Quartet* was, as mentioned before, the closing work. By way of a final balance, if I wanted to look for black spots in such a magnificent event, the truth is that, amongst so many positive aspects, if by chance there were any negative ones, and there must have been, they were completely overshadowed by the former. Let us simply remember the figures we mentioned at the beginning as we first browsed through the souvenir programme: "82 composers, of whom 42 are Portuguese; 124 pieces to be performed, 53 of them having their world premiere and 15 being commissioned by Miso Music Portugal itself". These were indeed impressive figures. We can only wish for another, and another, and many more editions.