



LABYRINTHS IN THE KOLLEG ALBERTO POSADAS

Alberto Posadas' work explores the relationships between nature, mathematics, and music, as well as other artistic disciplines. For years, he has developed what he calls "micro-instrumentation", a concept based on the idea of researching the instruments on a micro-level. He was selected by the IRCAM reading panel, Paris (edition 2003/04), at which institution he has regularly been a composer in residence. In 2011, the Spanish Ministry of Culture awarded him the National Music Prize. In 2014, the Freistaat Bayern (Germany) also awarded him a stipend as artist in residence at the Internationales Künstlerhaus Villa Concordia in Bamberg. Festivals and concert series such as the Musica Strasbourg, Ultraschall Berlin, the Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik, the ManiFeste Paris, the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, and the Tage für Neue Musik Zürich have devoted monographic concerts to his music. He has also participated in festivals such as the Donaueschinger Musiktage, the Agora Festival (IRCAM, Paris), the Festival d'Automne à Paris, the ECLAT Festival Neue Musik Stuttgart, the Warszawskie Jesien Warsaw, the Ultima Oslo Contemporary Music Festival, and the Klangspuren Schwaz. – Address: Conservatorio Profesional de Música de Majadahonda, Pza Colón s/n, Majadahonda Madrid, Spain. E-mail: albertoposadas@gmail.com.

I came to the Wissenschaftskolleg with the idea of composing several works. Two of them related to the concept of nomadism and to the metaphor of the labyrinth, respectively. What I was not expecting was that my stay at the Kolleg would itself become an experience of inner nomadism and a journey into multiple labyrinths.

Nomadism, because it moved me into unexplored worlds that have reshaped my perception of life. Even if it is too early to have enough perspective to realize how deep this change has been, the feeling that it is significant is clear.

My stay at the Wissenschaftskolleg has been labyrinthine. A real interior travel among unexpected and unforeseeable ideas that constantly opened up new paths and new doors in terms of thinking and perception. Maybe it is also too early to have any intuition about the location of the exit from this labyrinth (if there is any exit); but simply walking through it is probably enough.

Ritual is something musicians are used to. The concert and its liturgy are the most public moment in which this ritual is performed. Facing a blank page every time we start a new work is the most private ritual. Maybe this is why the private and public rituals, so present in the daily life of the Kolleg, seemed so natural to me.

The daily lunch and the Colloquia performed the public side of the ritual at the Kolleg, while the numerous one-to-one discussions with some of the Fellows performed the private side.

These rituals brought an overdose of information, ideas, and transmission of experiences, knowledge, and feelings. Sometimes this overdose was so powerful that it became mentally exhausting. But at the same time, my fear of missing these thrilling experiences of intellectual and personal exchange made me feel a need to attend as many events as possible. There was an atmosphere in which every colloquium, lecture, film screening, or workshop created the expectation of living a unique and essential moment of our lives.

Ants, bees, birds, frogs, fishes, and lemurs became not only topics addressed in several colloquia, but also regular guests in my conversations with some Fellows. The animals' behavior, relationship with the environment, and division of labor made me realize that my own work as a composer is even more closely related to nature than I had always supposed. Even if I have a long history of using models taken from nature in my compositional practice, the discovery of many aspects explained by other Fellows confirmed that the way to organize sound and musical material has a strong link with how our natural environment is formed and organized. The cell research I have discovered, thanks to some Fellows, suggests ways for me to delve deeper into the relationship between nature and music.

Close contact with biologists has reassured me that creativity is related not only to art, but also to science.

Another project, already started before my stay at the Wissenschaftskolleg but continued during this time, is a cycle of piano pieces entitled “Erinnerungsspuren”. In this project, rereading the music of former periods is the basis for the composition of my new works. Establishing a relationship between the current work of a composer and the finished and validated work of former composers addresses the issue of establishing a relationship between present and past, between art and patrimony, between certitude and uncertainty. Maybe because of this reflection on the past, I was fully seduced by the historians and their approach. Even more interesting to me than their researched subject or their conclusions was their epistemology and methodology and the multiple relationships between history as a chronological framework and every aspect shaping it. History became the analysis of a façade, of the relation between economy and religion, or of the environment. But in all these cases, the analysis was combined with creativity, which is not the same as inventiveness. This combination of analysis as a tool for understanding and creativity is also the key to my project “Erinnerungsspuren”, in which the traces of the memory become a source of redefinition.

But when speaking about history, it is not possible to forget the city in which the Wissenschaftskolleg is located. Berlin, where the scars of the major conflicts of the 20th century are present everywhere, is a city for many questions and for trying to satiate the need to understand. I can't say that I succeeded in this goal, but some echoes of these conflicts that seemed to have been overcome have started to resurface in our societies. Sometimes they wear different faces, but with the common underlying lack of respect for difference and the attack against freedom.

On the other hand, it is obvious that Berlin has another dimension for a musician. If the paradise of music exists, then in this city. From the beginning, it was very clear to me that I preferred to establish a closer relationship with the city as a listener than as a composer. Composing is easy to do at any other moment, living in any other place. But I wanted to experience the city mainly by listening. The countless extraordinary moments lived as a listener are one of the treasures I will keep forever in my ears and mind. Also the smell and the sensation of humidity that I could feel when returning to my flat in the Villa Walther from my studio in Villa Jaffé. The lakes and the peaceful atmosphere of the Grunewald became inseparable friends that I wanted to meet every day after composing.

It would be unfair not to mention that nothing of this unique experience would have been possible without the kindness and good work of the staff of the Wissenschaftskolleg.

But it would also be unfair to mention the names I have in mind, thereby taking the risk of forgetting others.

If the Wissenschaftskolleg became an amazing and thrilling intellectual and emotional labyrinth for me, now the question is: what is the path to take after Berlin?

Maybe Wilhelm Müller has the answer:

Eine Straße muß ich gehen,
Die noch keener ging zurück.