

An ecosystem for contemporary music

Building an audience for contemporary music has always been a critical issue because composers have rarely considered their dependence to an audience. The issue of how to build an audience for contemporary music for the city of Milan is today a crucial need. The presentation will focus on the role played by an ecosystem for contemporary music in which different experiences together may all contribute to creating a fertile breeding ground to develop creativity and to spread new music.

Building an audience for contemporary music has always been a critical issue: composers have always believed that their music success would not depend on an audience. However the economic value of music affects significantly its production. Contemporary music has always been detached from any market logic, This trend has favored a shift away from its audience, and the establishment of fixed, self-sustained and self-referential music niches only for insiders, hence creating a paradox that much contemporary music has been and continues to be written to answer to the expectations of those who in the end are the authors themselves.

It must be said, however, that public interest around contemporary music and contemporary music audience has been recently growing. This happens mainly due to hybridization of languages and styles that generates hybridization of audiences.

For this whenever contemporary music languages and styles has been merged with visual art, media art, dance and theatrical experiences, this hybridization has generated a positive effect in developing a new audience made up by the younger generations who are usually much more open to experimental musical languages.

However the hybridization of languages needs to be accompanied by the hybridization of places. Because concert halls and opera houses are home to an audience who wants to meet there the tradition, the heritage and who is therefore resistant to new musical and art languages. Hence it is wrong that contemporary music looks for its audience only in these venues, while it is much easier to get in touch with a new audience in those spaces which are traditionally not meant to host music such as experimental theaters, museums and art galleries, universities, alternative public spaces, and even shopping centers, as in the case of *Bang on a Can* in New York.

This is a path I've been followed for 15 years as founder and director of *Sentieri Selvaggi*, an ensemble which is aimed to promote and to spread contemporary music, an hub which has always been open to poets, directors, choreographers, architects and musicians from the worlds of jazz and pop and which has always performed in alternative venues to the traditional ones. *Sentieri Selvaggi* has been until now Ensemble-in-Residence of a strongly experimental theater such as Elfo Puccini.

Today, having a political and administrative responsibility as Councilor for Culture of the City of Milan, I'm actually addressing the issue of how to build an audience for contemporary music for the whole city. And I believe that the goal should be to create an ecosystem for contemporary music in which different

experiences together may all contribute to creating a fertile breeding ground to develop creativity and spread new music.

This impulse is positively generating good and concrete practices: a stable and permanent network of music ensembles in the city, shared calendars and initiatives, a major festival such as *Milano Musica*, the increasing number of new music scores commissioned not only occasionally by major orchestras of the city.

The network of relations that this ecosystem enables is achieving a great result in view of Expo 2015: all contemporary music institutions, from the smallest association to the larger theater have commissioned works related to the issues of Expo, hence allowing all visitors but also all citizens to have the chance to listen to contemporary music. A key element in the public debate that will accompany the 6-month of Expo.

I will now mention what will happen during Expo 2015 and that will enrich *Expo in città*, a project by the City of Milan and the Milan Chamber of Commerce gathering an integrated program of cultural, tourist and commercial events to be held in strong relationship to the Universal Exposition and to its issues.

I want to line up some of the most important highlights happening during Expo 2015: First of all “Co2” a new work commissioned by Teatro alla Scala to Giorgio Battistelli dedicated to the issue of water; secondly “The food for love” another work commissioned by Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala to Carlo Galante; thirdly the works commissioned by Orchestra Verdi to Fabio Vacchi e Nicola Campogrande; the work commissioned by Pomeriggi Musicali to Giovanni Sollima and finally the opera by Matteo Franceschini aimed for children regarding the issue of Expo “Feed the Planet, Energy for Life”.

And I could go on and on but I don't want to forget to mention the international competition “Nutrire Musica” (Feeding Music) by Divertimento Ensemble and Sentieri Selvaggi in the Italian Expo Pavillion that will bring in Milan over 40 scores of young authors from around the world.

2015 is definitely a special year but the trend that we are seeing in recent years is that of a strong audience growth for contemporary music in our city. This growth is also seen positively seen by major performers and composers from around the world who participate to the musical life of Milan. This is because the ecosystem is beginning to work thanks to four key elements: firstly the productive element, which means the fact that Ensembles are settled in Milan and are able to guarantee a continuous and constant stimulus for those creative people living in Milan. Secondly what I would define the international element which means that a great Festival such as Milano Musica and a section of Mito Settembre Musica Festival guarantee through their programming that the most important figures in the contemporary music pass by Milan allowing our city to be at the center of a network of relationships opened to the world. The third element is the institutional one, hence the main institutions of the city, such as theatre, orchestras, having public funding increasingly feel the responsibility to deal with the contemporary musical creativity and to overcome those rituals of more conservative music traditions opening up to new languages. Finally the education because the presence of two important institutions such as the Conservatory Giuseppe Verdi and the Scuola Civica Claudio Abbado and consequently of recognized and well-known Maestri, able to teach to younger generations of composers allow the city to be inhabited by the creativity of the younger generations.

But the most important element for the good health of this ecosystem is the pluralism and multiplicity of languages of those living in Milan which, although being sometimes too fragmented and lacking of a focus on a common goal, is able to guarantee a great variety of choices that live in total autonomy and independence, allowing the audience in Milan to get in touch with very different languages, with authors having different sometimes opposed choices, origins, styles and schools and to compare very diverse music experiences.

This pluralism is the key element of the ecosystem of contemporary music in our city and is what leads to numerically record audience growth for most of the events dedicated to contemporary music, because in the end it is the variety that can generate curiosity and curiosity is the first engine of quantitative and qualitative audience growth.