

DK<qumran>: Between The East and The West

Interview with Ángel Arranz

Pablo Sanz – music critic of El Mundo [national Spanish journal]

[Complete interview on Ángel Arranz, September 26th 2011]

PS: What is DK<qumran> about?

AA: DK <qumran>: *entre Oriente y Occidente* is a series of three compositions with electronics composed by me between 2010 and 2011, based on Bodegas Qumrán building. This is a work by the architect studio Konkrit Blu from Barcelona. We chose the auditorium of the Cultural Center of Peñafiel for the preview concert, because this project was conceived for a company located in that area, Bodegas Qumrán, and well, this circumstance made many production aspects easier too, included the filmmaking of a documentary. Therefore, it is a fantastic place to present the project, but also to obtain film material *ad hoc*. We calculated carefully the moment and the season of the year as well, inasmuch the project makes even more sense by the fact that it was filmed during the grape harvest, in the middle of one of the most renowned areas of the Ribera del Duero. So, it has turned out perfectly well. The concert will be celebrated monday, 26th September 20.30h at the Cultural Center of Peñafiel.



The composer Ángel Arranz. Photo: Beatriz del Saz

PS: How was the project originated? Was it a commission, a personal proposal...?

AA: The project started from a personal proposal to Jesús Solís, who is the owner of Bodegas Qumrán. Mid October 2010, I spoke to him about a bunch of aesthetical ideas that I had been developing in previous compositions since quite a long time, which basically revolved around the relationship between architecture and music. I am a wine world enthusiast; it is one of my secret passions, besides architecture. So, from the very beginning this project was planned for the sake of it. To have at your complete disposal such as magnificent building as Bodegas Qumrán, is a true privilege. I visited the winery very often to have chats with Jesús and enjoy in turn the vast poetry of the construction. This is all I needed to keep on feeding this project. Later on, while the composition of the pieces was progressing, Jesús and me began to think about how to expand our views, but all of this was done very calmly, until the moment we decided that perhaps it could be interesting to extend it and to make it known. And from there on, you know the story: we decided to show it on stage and, since it was a multimedia concert, to extend it as a film documentary as well.

PS: How did you select the artists involved in this project?

AA: It was relatively simple; we could say that we all have chosen each other. Perhaps it has been a meeting, more than a choice. In the case of Beatriz, the video artist of this team, she is also my partner since ten years. On the other hand, the starting point of this project happened to coincide with the first time I met my friend Josetxo Silguero –due to personal as well as professional reasons-, which was really meaningful. Josetxo represented for me a kind of first stone for this project, since the first piece of the series was commissioned by him to me. In the case of Raphaël Simon, we knew each other via Facebook during the spring of 2010, and met the following June in Paris. Raphaël is a very interesting guy; he comes from the Strasbourg percussion school, so beloved by Xenakis. He is an artist with a sensitive attitude towards the relationship between architecture and music. One of his last projects was developed inside the Couvent de La Tourette in France with a program on Xenakis, inside a Xenakis's construction. Our meeting was quite unavoidable.

PS: I believe that there will be documentary regarding this subject. Who is going to make it, and what is its goal?

AA: Yes, actually it is happening right now; it started the last 20th September and will take place until the 27th, just at the same time as the preview of DK <quman>. The documentary film will be post-produced by The DK projection in our studios in The Hague, since we are an artistic platform, and also a production studio. Séventhe, a Spanish company, tackles the task of co-producing various aspects. The goal of the documentary is to extend the musical event self to the audiovisual media domain in all its range, but it also will be focused on the divulgation from a very particular, *sui generis* artistic prism. The concert is actually a very small part of the documentary, since the documentary will speak about how a multidisciplinary work of art of such characteristics is created. I must say that it is turning out to be a fascinating and highly stimulating experience, since everything has been planned above all as an understanding between a group of very qualified professionals who give their best in their different disciplines: musicians, architects, an expert in old books and incunabula, a visual artist, an enologist... my work is to conduct all this mess and finish it with success.

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PS: Image, music, wine, architecture... what connections do you find among these disciplines? Did you ever think about all this before?

AA: Yes, I have reflected a lot on it, and I still do. I began to think, if not in architectural terms, in architecture, during my study years. Since 2006 I have realized different projects related to the core architecture-music. As a matter of fact, prior to DK <qumran> there has been a DK <protos>, a winery again. That project finally could not be executed because fate, life or unknown matters, who knows. Anyway, I consider DK <qumran> as my first fully developed project in a major cycle of architectures. I can advance that it will not be the only project, and that there will not be less than three, either.

As for the connections, there are so many of them that you could not describe them as a conglomerate, but rather as an organism. First of all, you have the digital means, which if you reduce them to smallest expression, zeros and ones, and handled by expert hands, form a communication channel for an architect, a composer and a visual artist to understand each other during a creative lapse of several months. In the digital domain there exists an implicit layer of abstraction, time handling and structures. Secondly, you have the merely aesthetical connections, which create a bridge with the digital domain. The latter are based on

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sensitive elements, such as form, gesture, agogics, behavior and color. Here digital and sensitive criteria interweave with each other. Finally you have the accidents between all these; they are not less important, in the sense that they solve the two previous creative layers. The project is structured in such a way that everything is related to everything, and in many occasions, tries to avoid the unidirectional point of view. This all will be revealed in the premiere of the whole series and, above all in the documentary film.

PS: As far as you know, what precedents do exist around this sort of multidisciplinary creative experience?

AA: Naturally we have not invented anything; we owe everything to a tradition that started in Florence in the fifteenth century with Brunelleschi and Dufay. Later on, in the modernity, we could find many other examples; many of them were created in Europe, as for instance the Philips Pavilion in 1958. Le Corbusier directed the project with the collaboration of Xenakis, in both the construction and the music, and the invaluable contribution of Varèse with his *Poème électronique*. You find creative tandems in many places: Luigi Nono & Renzo Piano and the construction of *Prometheus' Ark* for the work of the Italian composer in 1984; the collaboration between the architect Spyrook and the sound artist van der Heide in 2004; not to mention the different individual -herculean- projects by Xenakis: his polytope-like installations. Our projects are rooted in that odd European tradition that became international during the second half of twentieth century. I think this have been odd for many reasons, but basically I believe that the principal one was economical: it is not so common that composers have at their disposal the opportunity of working on a contemporary architecture a few millions of euros worth.

PS: Are you working on other projects currently? How would you define The DK Projection?

AA: Yes, I practice the very noble art of multi-tasking, but I try to take a Zen attitude about everything. Currently I am involved in a Ph. D thesis between the University of Salamanca and the Institute of Sonology in The Hague, much related to the discourse in which I am working and experimenting. Therefore, I could say that the thesis is a sort of complementary activity. I also try to get involved in a scenic side, participating as a musician, playing the electronics of my own works, but also those created by friends. I have to say that going into someone else's pieces is always a very intimate act. At the very least, you must know very well the other's way of thinking. We also develop minor multidisciplinary projects related to museums and artistic management.

I could not really define our collective, but I am sure about what it is not: it is not an ensemble, nor a group of engineers; it is not a collective polarized around music *in stricto sensu*, although music is an important core. We are not performers, nor a theatrical group or a film production studio. As well, it could not serve us the reductionism of the 'in between'. The term *pairing* causes us urticaria.

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PS: Lastly, working in The Hague and according to your own insight over the European panorama, how do you feel about the Spanish situation regarding these multidisciplinary avant-garde, experimental works? Are we or are we not up-to-date in Spain?

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AA: I believe that Spain has used a rather narrow peephole to observe the panorama in terms of electronic classical music, besides few exceptions. On the other hand, this has been an absolutely circumstantial historical situation, impossible to understand nowadays. I do not understand the disappearance of entire institutions... but well, I do not understand much about socio-economical politics, either.

In order to analyze this situation, I think that you have two points of view: on one hand, the composer generally associated to written music, which behaves in the conventional parameters of the premiere, and so on. On the other hand, you have the

changeable point of view, the tectonic dynamics of society and big post-capitalist masses, that is, the pseudo-organic cybernetic society, in which the artist is, in the best case possible, a sort of residue that comes off more or less good –as always has been. What I really want is to be a particle detached of this second option, with its contamination, its divergences, its frictions and its fissures.