New Ways of Making Music and Being a Musician in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The existence of the Internet has revolutionized the music industry, forever changing its forms of participation and promotion. As a result, the space of execution-promotion of music is expanded to include the virtual world, being able to reach com-munities that share similar interests or common identity traits at a global level. This situation is presented as an opportunity for little known repertoire, such as the Latin American and Iberian art song. Based on the experiences with Internet2, which occurred at the Barcelona Festival of Song, the article explores concepts such as the real, the virtual, and the interspace. It analyzes how the interactions produced in these spaces affect our identity, either as musicians or as consumers of music. This new scenario demands that educational institutions train musicians to develop new ways of being a musician and of making music, mediated by technology.

Keywords: Internet2, Latin American art song, Barcelona Festival of Song, music education, online education

Resumen

La existencia de Internet ha revolucionado la industria de la música, cambiando para siempre sus formas de participación y promoción. Como resultado, el espacio de ejecución-promoción se amplía para incluir al mundo virtual, pudiendo llegar a comunidades que comparten intereses similares o rasgos identitarios comunes a nivel global. Esta situación se presenta como una oportunidad para repertorios poco conocidos, como la canción artística latinoamericana e ibérica. Basado en las experiencias con Internet2, que tuvieron lugar en el Barcelona Festival of Song, el artículo explora conceptos como lo real, lo virtual y el interespacio. Analiza cómo las interacciones producidas en estos espacios afectan nuestra identidad, ya sea como músicos o consumidores de música. Este nuevo escenario exige que las instituciones que forman a los músicos los preparen para afrontar nuevas formas de ser músico y de hacer música, mediadas por la tecnología.

Palabras claves: Internet2, canción artística latinoamericana, Barcelona Festival of Song, educación musical, educación digital

One of the greatest challenges facing classical music in the 21st century is undoubtedly linked with its diffusion and the development and maintenance of new audiences. The origins of this situation go back to the 20th century, when under the influence of artists such as Marcel Duchamp, we began to rethink the concept of what constitutes a work of art, the audience and the creator, resulting in the end of the hegemony of the creator and the start of an increasingly active participation of the audience.

From Duchamp on was also inaugurated a reflection on the differences between high culture and crafts that is expressed in the dilution of the borders between the classical and the folkloric,

dilution that is revealed not only in the visual arts but also in the music and in different expressive languages. These changes began to speed up in the last decades of the 20th century, when the advent of the Internet forever changed the paradigm of the relationship between the artist-creator and their public-audience. An ever more present and active audience transitioned, in a very short time, from the passive observation, to participation, interaction, and finally to co-creation. At the same time, and also thanks to the influence of the Internet, creation and creativity are not limited to traditional artistic expressions, but embrace and integrate all areas of knowledge. The space of creation is them an interdisciplinary one, where traditional arts communicate and nurture of the social, biological sciences, technology and crafts.

In this context the role of the museums, the cultural and educational institutions, necessarily changes, imposing a generation of interdisciplinary and open spaces where the above-mentioned expressions come together and interact. Also changes dramatically the role of the creator, who is then expected to have the ability to integrate languages, techniques and tools, new and diverse (Tepper and Bill, 2008).

At the same time, in the world of classical music, we are witnessing a decline in audiences, the closure of numerous orchestras and the difficulty of connecting with an increasingly technified audience, accustomed to the consumption of easy, fast and pre-disgested musical products. Most of the institutions of musical education, especially the ones dedicated to train classical musicians, have lagged behind this technified audience, and the curricula of universities and conservatories—which, as the word suggests, are dedicated to preserve the relics of the past—do not respond to the reality of the digital age (Wakin, 1984).

I have personally had the opportunity to observe and analyze the mechanisms of music promotion in my role as director of the Barcelona Festival of Song,[1] an annual Summer course, which, since 2005, is dedicated to the study and promotion of the of Iberian and Latin American vocal repertoire, a unique space in the world that is now consolidated as a reference place for the study of the history and interpretation of art song in Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan.
Attempting to disseminate a repertoire, as previously mentioned, is a particularly difficult task for many reasons, which include the lack of appreciation of the repertoire in the countries of origin, lack of research, publications, recordings and performances. These many reasons create a vicious circle that is complete when the repertoire does not form part of the curricula of universities and conservatories that remain anchored in Eurocentric pedagogical models.

Our obstacles are promoting a genre that is virtually unknown and belonging to the world of "classical" music, which determines that our audience is reduced and of an average of 45 years old or more. We them face the challenge of creating new audiences for a genre that appears as "outdated" (Zahler, 2011).

The same performance practice of the art song, framed within the 19th century Western classical music, appears obsolete in a world in which the cultural revolutions of postmodernism and

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[1] The Barcelona Festival of Song is a summer program for classical singers, teachers, and students interested in the study of Latin American and Iberian art song repertory in Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan. See www.barcelonafestivalofsong.com.

poststructuralism—which emphasize the decline of metanarratives (Docherty, 1993) and argue that the meaning of the work of art is produced at the time of consumption—has led us to develop audiences who interact and participate as opposed to the traditional passive audiences of classical music. It seems as if classical music remains anchored in the past, perpetuating a model that encourages the division between high culture and popular culture in which more value is assigned to the first.

This division may be one of the reasons causing the difficulty to reach larger audiences, rather than the rapidly reducing audiences observed in recent years a decrease that has been quantified by the surveys made by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which show that between the years 1982 and 2008 the audiences for the classical music dropped a dramatic 30% (Tepper and Bill, 2008). Simultaneously we are witnessing the closure of numerous symphony orchestras due to the lack of budget, which is directly related to the reduction of audiences.

This situation is no doubt linked to the striking changes that have occurred in society and to society's modes of participation. With the advent of the Internet and mobile devices, audiences that may be dispersed in space and time begin to interact in the real and virtual worlds at the same time.

This notion of dispersion has given way to a paradigm in which the individual can respond and contribute with his/her ideas and participate in a fully interactive way (Jenkins, 2006). This phenomenon, which occurs at various levels in popular culture, is a phenomenon that has not reached "classical" music, which remains stuck in an old model.

The fact that in the world of "classical" music this type of interaction is not possible or that we have not yet thought about ways to make it possible may be a factor contributing to the decline in audiences. Another factor may be related to the fact that classical music has been in some way "anchored" by repeating the same works over and over again, in the manner of a museum that preserves the collections of artists of the past, leaving very little space for the performance of new works and for the emergence of new artists and the performance of new works (Rothstein, 1986).
Is in this context an opportunity for visibility arises for a "new" repertoire, as it may be the case of the Latin American and Iberian art song repertoire. Besides that, in addition to the obvious need to find or create new repertoire it becomes necessary to rethink the performance practice of the traditional ones.

Internet as a Key Piece of Dissemination

Although the Barcelona Festival of Song (BFOS) is mostly an academic event and throughout its history has devoted most of its efforts to establish itself as a reference space in the area of creation and research, it has not been oblivious to the difficulties involved in developing an audience, and in its early days had great difficulty filling the venues of its nine concerts. However, from 2010 onwards we have had full houses thanks to the use of more means of promotion, the majority provided by Internet. We make use of social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Meetup) and publish events on different blogs and web pages that announce events in the city. Our increase in audiences following use of social networks confirms that the use of the Internet improves connections between artists, communities, and their audiences (Bawa and Williams, 2010).

Part of the mission of the BFOS has been the international promotion of the Ibero-American vocal repertoire and their composers, an ambitious goal that intends to have global impact. This objective, which a few years ago might have sounded utopian, is now possible thanks to the Internet. Its existence and the many possibilities it offers for people of all social levels and nationalities has been a determinant factor so that the festival has survived for fifteen years having international impact.

Thanks to the internet, information about the course, its resources, videos and audios have global distribution. People who would otherwise never have known of the existence of the repertoire and of the course have been able to learn about it. Students send their registration materials and even audition online. The internet has been critical to the progress of the project, facilitating us access to our target groups. As a result the space of promotion-performance broadens to include the virtual world, allowing us to reach communities who share similar interests and identity traits, in order to integrate them in the promotion project (Watson, 2002).

Thus the networks of exchange extend, expanding the borders of the national and building new spaces of interaction that allow the creation of communities whose links are mediated by their interests, tastes and abilities, rather than their nationality or geography.

From the point of view of the event organizers, the Internet is a powerful tool that facilitates the identification of the target audience, an audience that will be the "consumer" of our "products", may they be songs, books, concerts, classes, etc. With no doubt Internet becomes a key element that facilitates access to resources and contributes to the identification of new meaning-producing agents in the world of song. Mechanisms for the promotion of music are transformed, and we can safely say that there is a "before" and "after" the emergence of the Internet.

We now face the challenge of creating on-line communities to attract people who can potentially be part of the group of meaning-producing agents: proactive agents. Our challenge is to, in a pragmatic manner, develop effective online marketing campaigns, similar to those utilized in the world of popular music, to capture potential meaning-producing agents that contribute to the preservation and dissemination of the repertoire. This required extensive research into technology and marketing, including the SEO (Search Engine Optimization), SNO (Social Network Optimization) and online marketing, in general (Schultz, 2009).

The creation of communities and the consequent access to potential meaning-producing agents provides us with the opportunity to build a narrative in which the Latin American and Iberian Art song become part of the mainstream repertoire of classical singers. The construction of this narrative allows us to consciously make visible the repertoire, its creators and performers, integrating them into the existing narratives, which were generated from the centers of power, as one more narrative. Is it a utopian hope to think we can change the narrative? Perhaps this utopia is attainable if the tools provided by the digital era are used intelligently.

Internet2 and the Performance Practice of Song

Technological innovation has reached the world of classical music, where, for the last several years, we can watch real-time performances of Metropolitan Opera in New York (Zahler, 2011), events that include backstage images of the singers, interviews and different angles of the shows. This initiative has achieved a great expansion of audiences, generating a juicy market at the same time. The Teatro El Liceu in Barcelona, the Teatro Real of Madrid and the National Opera of England, which transmits its shows in 3D (Hemley, 2012), have all led similar efforts. However, although these interesting proposals make use of new technologies, essentially streaming, they do not propose any change in the paradigm of relationship between performers and audience, if we consider that they don't incorporate any form of interactivity or proactive participation of the audience.

Figure 1: Group photograph following a masterclass, São Paulo, Brazil, July 4th, 2012.
Students in Barcelona are on the screen. Both groups share a common space, an intersectional space between the real and the virtual.

Taking an interest in contributing to the development of a new paradigm in which audience and performers interact in real time and from different geographical places, the Barcelona Festival of Song has since 2012 used Internet2 infrastructures for its classes and concerts.[2] These have been provided in Barcelona by the Department of Culture of the Generalitat de Catalunya and in São Paulo, Brazil, by the city government, through the Anella Cultural.

These interactive classes and concerts take place simultaneously in São Paulo Brazil and Barcelona, with artists and audience in both places. They are also streamed on the website of the festival, reaching a global audience connected to Internet on computers or mobile devices.

[2] For a representative excerpt from the intercontinental masterclasses held at the Barcelona Festival of Song in 2014, see https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJbbtGDqM-To& ab_channel=BarcelonaFestivalofSong.

Streaming our content globally, in real time and with great sound and image quality, provides access to the contents to a large number of people, enabling students from both sides of the Atlantic to work with highly specialized teachers. The experience made it possible for students who for economic reasons could not come to Barcelona to take part in the classes and have access to the repertoire. It also made it possible for the students who were in Barcelona to study with native teachers and specialists in the countries of origin of the repertoire. Paradoxically, we promote visibility of the repertoire in the countries of origin when the repertoire is performed and recognized in countries that are considered "central". For participants on both sides of the Atlantic, it was of the utmost importance to establish contacts and be heard on the other side of the ocean.

Figure 2: Vocal masterclass, São Paulo, Brazil, July 4th, 2012.
A student in São Paulo interacts with the teacher in Barcelona on screen.

The internet was an indispensable tool even from the moment of preparation and selection of participants. The singers who participated from Brazil were chosen by a process done entirely online. They complete a form and send video recordings of a recent performance. Participants located in Barcelona came from Russia, Sweden, the Philippines, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Canada, the United States, Australia, Greece, and Korea.

The classes took place at 4:00 p.m. (CEST) in Barcelona and at 8:00 p.m. (BST) in Brazil, with technical teams in both cities and two teachers at each location. Students alternated their participation in the same way as if they were personally in a "conventional" class2. In addition to the classes we presented a simultaneous concert3 with audience and artists in both places.[3]

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[3] Video of the interactive concert between Barcelona and São Paulo, using Internet2 infrastructures: https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=6KngHlc8h8I&ab.

These events generated a cascade of responses from students in both countries. They created a Facebook page on which to exchange information, scores and projects they initiated themselves. This "virtual" event generated a number of responses and initiatives in the "real" world.

The Real, the Virtual, and the Interspatial

One of the questions that arose after these experiences with Internet2 were, where did the events take place? Without a doubt, they took place in Barcelona and São Paulo, but they also took place in the virtual space, a metaphor applied to the various modes of interactivity in online contexts. (Watson, 2002) This virtual world extended its scenarios of interaction to the real world. What happened in an event like the Barcelona Festival of Song can be classified as virtual reality experience, according to the definition of Hill:

> ...an individual experience that occurs in the area of technology and that brings together the world of technology—and its ability to represent nature—to areas of social relations and its meanings, which are spacious and overlap (Hillis, 2004).

In such an experience, the real and the virtual found a point of intersection where culture was created, culture mediated by technology. Events like these invite us to reflect on the identity in the digital age. The digital experience influences the way in which I perceive myself in relationship with others, itself-perception mediated by technology (Caicedo, 2014).

Sundén explains how from the collision between the virtual and the real, the interspace is born. Interspace is defined as "a gap between the body and the text that helps users to constantly cross borders between the material and the textual, in a way that makes them change" (Sundén, 2003).

Figure 3: A performance mediated by Internet2, creating a three-way communication space—the audience in São Paulo; the performer and public in Barcelona; and the one in interspace.

Users represent themselves digitally in a "virtual medium that collapses the distance between the eyes and the screen to its minimum expression" (Hillis, 2012).

The subject that interacts in the interspace is diversifying and amplifying his/her sense of self (Pieterse, 2004), acquiring a sense of globality (Bremmer, 2008), crossing geographic and cultural boundaries and experiencing virtuality in a fluid space.

Performers interact in the interspace and are obliged to develop new communication strategies between themselves and with the audience. New self-perception is discovered in the process. At the same time the piece is performed, musicians develop new aspects of their being. In an experience like the Barcelona Festival of Song, the confines of the space were extended, generating global relationships and creating the perception of the world as a single and elastic space, a global interspace of symbolic exchange, an interspace that continued, at the initiative of the participants, in social networks.

New Ways to Make Music and Being a Musician

The successful experiences using Internet of second generation in the BFOS in 2012, 2013, and 2014 led us to explore more ways of interaction between artists and audiences. In 2012, to inaugurate the first conference of the European project FIBRE, held in Salvador de Bahia, we present an intercontinental concert in which musicians were located in Barcelona and São Paulo and the audience was in Salvador de Bahia.

For this occasion, four musicians performed, a mezzo-soprano and a pianist located in the Centro Cultural São Paulo, in Brazil, and a soprano and a pianist located at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (ESMUC) in Barcelona. The audience members attended the above-mentioned conference who were in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil.

The process of preparation of this transatlantic recital incorporated technical elements that do not normally form part of the preparation of a concert; besides the musicians, there were three *technicas* in Barcelona and two in São Paulo, and complex software and hardware equipment. Microphones were used, which is not usual practice in the context of art song recital. The only test that was carried out, in which the four performers were together, was devoted entirely to solving technical difficulties and to handling the delay in the signal that, although it was small, of milliseconds, had an effect on the music and on the "final product". Our goal, as in any conventional recital, was that the audience would hear music of high quality, without any alteration or change caused by technological factors.

To achieve this goal the musicians had to be flexible and willing to "break" the rules that traditionally govern the world of classical music; for example, in order to ensure that a piece in which the singer acted from Brazil and the pianist from Barcelona, the pianist had to begin the workpiece and play it entirely without listening to the singer, because if the pianist did listen, the signal from Brazil would arrive with delay. The singer in Brazil only would hear the piano in the manner of a music track, like a karaoke track. With this trick, the final result would sound perfectly synchronized. Of course, the public was not aware of what was happening; they listened to the concert in perfect synchrony.

In using this "trick" we were breaking one of the unwritten rules of the genre of art song, the fact that the pianist follows the singer, with the purpose of together enhancing the meaning of poetry. The pianist in a recital of traditional Lied breathes with the singer and adjusts to his/her voice like a glove. The performers in this case had to adapt, be flexible and overcome their resistance to make music in a different way.

Figure 4: Carmen Souza (vocalist), located in São Paulo, performs "Modinha" by Heitor Villa-Lobos, accompanied by José Lezcano (guitar), located in Barcelona. The traditional space of communication between performers is otherwise mediated by technology.

It was interesting to note their reactions: the musicians who had already participated in an Internet2 experience were flexible and willing to experiment. The only performer that had not done anything like that before was extremely rigid and difficult to "convince" concerning the value of experimentation. This situation put into evidence the fact that the traditional musicians, especially the classically trained, have not developed psychological and technical resources to deal with these new scenarios, simply they have not been in contexts that allow them to develop these resources. One question that arises is if we would have found equal reactions when doing such test with popular, jazz or folk musicians. Perhaps belonging to the world of classical music is associated with greater rigidity, not only from the musical point of view but also behavioral rigidity associated with the long training that these performers have undergone, always following the score.

Although it is very early to make statements on the matter, since the described experiences are pioneers in the world, we can anticipate that the musicians who want to use these technologies will have to develop new psychological and technical resources to adapt to the new performance environments. We can also anticipate that technology will improve to the point of having no delay in transmission of the signal, and then the performers would not have to resort to "tricks". When this happens, perhaps the musicians will have already developed resources that allow them to interact with other performers and with an interactive audience.

Without doubt the advent of these technologies opens new ways to make music and being a musician, new types of relations and exchanges, new forms of self-perception and new ways of interacting between the musicians and their audiences.

This situation requires educational institutions to incorporate into their curricula subjects that until now have been left out and that are of paramount importance in the life of professional and creative musicians. They would need to incorporate practical tools that would allow musicians to integrate in society through their art. These tools should include, but are not limited to, the knowledge of the Internet, the creation of personal brands and online presence, strategies of promotion and marketing, interactivity, improvisation, collaborative projects with artists and professionals from other disciplines, the use of music in everyday contexts not limited to concert halls and the preparation of interdisciplinary projects.

Musicians and music education institutions of the twenty-first century are under the obligation to create spaces of interdisciplinary exchange between the arts, science and technology to stay away from the traditional model of the conservatories that even today continue to train musicians as technicians of the instrument.

DIAGONAL

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