

DINO'S OWN NOTES

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About myself and today's music

DBvdN

I have not composed anything for more than three years. There are many reasons for this to happen, but perhaps the most important one is given by my doubts about the way I could tell the stories that are stored inside me. The result of this block situation is not only a sort of frustration, provided by the unsatisfied need of communicating my experiences and my emotions in a musical form. But it means too a critical review of my anomalous position on the musical scene, and in-deep search about the triple composer-composition-audience relationship.

It seems to me that during the last forty years there was often too much attention towards a music based upon ideology; something going much beyond great abstract truths, just to express dogmatic convictions or conventions. This approach, of course, was able to give us greatly expressive pages, but actually brought a distortion into the fruition moment: Listeners tended to applaud – or to reject – more the *ideas* behind the score than the pure musical expression. In short, there was a weakness of the concept of beauty intended as something to be enjoyed in a psycho-physical way – giving space to a kind of communication that is more meditated, but less purely musical too.

At the same time, the exponential development of commercial music production and its diffusion created the premises for a further fracture of the *consumers'* listening abilities, to the prejudice of poetry, of metaphysics, of the possibility to convey abstract feelings. Rituality became a clever treatment of ordinary emotions and frustrations, based upon effects that are more circus-like than theatrical.

But some extremely positive facts happened too. First of all, a bit of knowledge and acceptance of different musical cultures; although their fruition is so far often superficial – as the most subtle and extraneous elements are not understood. In fact, people listen to the *form*, but the most poetical or esoteric side is not enjoyed.

The latest international political changes, finally, gave the final shot to populist music, often accepted just to respect an ideology but separated from the listener by a curtain made of aesthetical incomprehension. On the other side, the audience now got used to follow the perverse logics of musical *categories* (here's where I consider myself as anomalous, sort of a *maverick*) to prepare themselves, with more or less discipline, to listen in *different ways*.

Personally, I trust the individual, his ability – and his personal choice – to express himself out of schemes and systems. To know perfection and to understand that it cannot be reached: And that nearly everything sold as perfection is definitely not such. I trust the individual's ability to make a synthesis of many different signals in order to create a new and original signal. Evolution is based upon knowledge, experience; upon the excitement and the pain that these can give. I think it possible to express – in continuously different but not transient ways – all thoughts, all emotions that continue to be today not so far from the ones felt in Socrates' days.

Then, perhaps we should put together all we know in order to succeed in telling in a new way what we love, and to make it loved by the others. Knowing that one must not impose, but instead speak an immediately understandable language and give something more to the one who receives it. Sharing emotions, new consciousness, that bit of transcendence making metaphysical the reality.

My path has been so far a winding one: I started from classical music to land on jazz shores. Perhaps, without knowing why – in the beginning. Only later on I realized that what fascinates me in jazz is the mixture of cultures and styles. Its improbability,

instability, vulnerability that consume themselves in the span of few minutes but leave us a number out-of-time masterpieces too. The deep collaboration, the continuous confrontation between composer and players or improvisers – who complete each other and make every performance nearly unrepeatable.

And then from jazz, in a strict sense, I departed perhaps in a definitive way with my *Space Blossoms* album: A purist will tell immediately that some formal solutions it shows may be similar to jazz, but that jazz is another affair.

Did I come back to classical music? I don't know, and maybe I don't want to know – not to fall back myself in the auto-categorizing trap. I only can say that in this music my emotions are told in a language where – filtered through my convictions and my sensitiveness – many cultural and aesthetical experiences are merged: From the first Chopin listened at home to the long throaty note of the old female singer in a Japanese garden.

It could have been a horrible *pastiche*. I hope it is not, but that on the contrary it could contribute to widen the listeners' horizon. Nevertheless, for me it became sort of a drama, as its composition and recording left me, in a way, empty – like I had concluded with it my whole story telling.

Perhaps it may be this way, but of course I hope not – because, like every person who can use an abstract communication tool – I need to use it to communicate the others my hidden reality. Perhaps it is simply fear to face a new experience, that will be certainly more difficult than the previous ones, and possibly not to be at my own expectations level. Perhaps it is the knowledge to pursue – lonesome – a path that is uncomfortable because it is far away from what people are generally expecting from a contemporary composer's new work.

Then I firmly believe that, at the side of the artist who just deny everything that existed before – in order to start again from the scratch – there is some place also for the one who reaffirms everything: From Gregorian hymns of the eleven a.m. Mass to the Miles Davis trumpet – weeping while flying in the emptiness. Without regrets and with a lot of gratitude to everything and everybody.

I believe it is not important how you communicate, in which stylistic (or mannerist) stream you find yourself – but on the contrary it is fundamental how you leave yourself free to convey your subjective truths in a way coherent with them – and intelligible – in a harmonic balance between content and its form.

It is my idea of Ithaca, remembering Kavafis, that pushes me to find without searching, hoping to find as late as possible what I tried long-time to find.

BEHIND THE MUSIC

Jazz composers should know exactly how much has to be written and how much, instead, must be just suggested to the musicians.

In fact, the large orchestra jazz grows out of the ability to write in order to fully express the composer's own musical thought but, at the same time, to make it in the way that certain special sidemen could actively intervene: Thus not only players but close to be co-authors.

The great master, the perfect exemple, is Duke Ellington, who had the advantage of an extraordinary permanent orchestral organism, made of personalities that completed and stimulated each other, in a quasi-automatonic interplay.

Perhaps this way of composing, today, should be applied to all contemporary music: In a way to get back to an approach that has been erased by the great music of the last two and a half centuries.

Perhaps we should get back in making a ritual ceremony out of music, with a more active participation by the audience, but mainly a more personal participation by players, able to complete with their inspiration what it will be never possible to write on staves.

Perhaps we should go beyond *genres* and classifications, just trying to convey emotions and poeties able to make spirits to fly a bit higher than everyday's business.

Perhaps we should embrace every possible language, trying any way to be kind – not to push away the listener – to offer him occasions for positive thoughts, stories where he may freely wander.

Using existing techniques too – but in order to communicate in a new, different way: It doesn't matter **which** technique but the communication global content instead.

And then: What would life be without poetry and beauty?

DBvdN – 2004