

ANA CERVANTES

THOUGHTS ON TOUR, 25 SEPT – 11 OCT 2009

A more complete version will soon appear at:

www.cervantespiano.com/blog-page/index.html

for video clips of REDCAT (Los Angeles) concert please go to the Cervantes channel on Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/cervantespianista>

... y con suerte, la versión en español, si me da tiempo de traducir ...

Ana Cervantes gratefully acknowledges the support of ...

- The Consulate-General of México in Los Ángeles, California
- The Consulate of México in Fresno, CA
- The Consulate of México in Albuquerque, New Mexico
- ... and, as always, Sra Clara Aparicio de Rulfo for her heart and for her permission to use the name and the writing of Juan Rulfo



First stop: CalArts, Friday 25 September. Dehydrated, groggy from dawn-patrol flight; but full of adrenaline and anticipation! Much-needed time with extraordinary composer Anne LeBaron before my two-day teaching residency. Classes marvelous, students' interest and enthusiasm palpable. Amazing to realize that with *Rumor de Páramo* I've done something really inspiring. Some 130 students attend, between Composers Colloquium led by LeBaron and Piano Forum led by wonderful pianist Vicky Ray of California E.A.R. Unit.

Wednesday 30 September, concert in the REDCAT. Deservedly one of the most renowned small black-box theaters on the West Coast. Iron and ironing board in dressing room, yoga mat also produced on request! Concert wonderful, warmth of audience response comparable only to world premiere of the first 18 pieces in Cervantino Festival in Guanajuato October 2006 and to Brazil March'09. Wonderful also that Anne is there, first time she's heard her riveting *Los Murmullos* live since its WP almost three years ago. First half closes with Silvia Berg's splendid *Dobles del Páramo*, and I play it from memory now. That resonating E-flat at the end, fundamental of the entire piece, rings out like redemption.



Post-REDCAT, Anne LeBaron and Cervantes ...

To top it all off Anne treats me to amazing post-concert Chinese food -- scallops in black-bean sauce: YUMM! Frosting on cake is that I've been reviewed in LA Times and in LA Opus, both beautiful reviews of considerable understanding:

Joseph Mailander, LAOpus:

<http://laopus.blogspot.com/2009/10/quixotic-reverence.html>

Mark Swed, LA TIMES:

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2009/10/ana-cervantes-honors-juan-rulfo-at-recat.html>

Lauren Pratt, Associate Producer at REDCAT, is one of the two or three best of her tribe that I've ever encountered, an extraordinary producer: amazing attention to detail, total calm, imagination, class, everything. My profound thanks to the Consulate-General of México in Los Angeles --from whence there were some ten people attending the concert!-- for making possible my travel. Also find out next day that advance ticket sales were \$700 and \$600 day of concert ... so REDCAT management happy with me: Cervantes is a DRAW!

CSU-FRESNO:

Day after REDCAT head north to Fresno for master class and concert, invited by CSU-Fresno Composers' Guild. Mexican Consulate in Fresno contributes plane ticket L.A.-Fresno.

Fresno may not have stellar reputation of CalArts, nevertheless extraordinary process underway there. With tutelage of composers Jack Fortner, Bill Boone, and Ken Froelich, two young composers there --David van Gilluwe and Bryce Cannell-- in 2007 established Composers' Guild of Fresno State, to support efforts of student composers.

Van Gilluwe and Cannell both impressive young men, deeply proud to be composers and musicians. They converse cogently with me about music and process of composing -- over morning coffee, since they put me up in their bachelor pad for three of my four nights in Fresno! Solidarity and constructive criticism: two essentials for any young musician.

Friday, master class with composers. As at CalArts, we talk about **Rumor** music and commissioning process: less-glamorous nuts and bolts as well as exhilarating moments. I play, we talk: Márquez' lovely *Solo Rumores (Solo Murmurs)*; Derbez' *Del viento, la esperanza (From the Wind, Hope)*, which has so much to say about persistence; Lavista's

formidable and enchanting *Páramos de Rulfo* (*Wastelands of Rulfo*). Jack Fortner indeed an emeritus, elder statesman: how much these young composers respect and love him!



WATER INTERLUDE 1: *Tho' two of the three places where I go are desert, water is a thread connecting all of them. In hotel near CalArts, there is a swimming pool, o bliss: so every one of my six mornings there I swim laps before delicious complimentary breakfast. In Fresno, only place which is not naturally desert, great fast 2K walk before pre-concert yoga, along what used to be railroad tracks and is now canal made by town. Starving for exercise after half-day at CalArts before bus to LAX, flight to Fresno and master-class next day, so I walk hard and with great joy.*

Saturday concert in Fresno. Newly-arrived Mexican Consul makes opening remarks. Wonderful that Fortner is there, like Anne LeBaron at CalArts first time he's heard his *Vine a Comala* live in almost three years. Another lovely connection: it was Jack who first introduced me to music of Silvia Berg.



L-R: Bryce Cannell, Bill Boone, Ken Froelich, David van Gilluwe, Jack Fortner, Cervantes, Mexican Consul, Helen Ladrón de Guevara (Cultural Attaché, Mexican Consulate), other attendees from the Consulate.

Monday David comes at 8:30 to drive me to LAX. Eight hours R/T out of his life but a blessing for me; and we had excellent, thoughtful conversation about music, about commitment, about each of our roots and convictions.



L-R: Composer David van Gillswe, Brazilian painter and beautiful woman Christina Motta, Jack Fortner

ALBUQUERQUE/University of New Mexico:

Next and final stop: Albuquerque, New Mexico, where I am received by Fred Sturm –fine pianist who’s really a Villa-Lobos expert, with recently-discovered passion for Federico Ibarra– also superb piano technician. Concert will be second on new series at Outpost Performance Space, focusing on music of México and Latin America and curated by Fred.

The Outpost: effectively one of the few independent concert spaces left, ANYWHERE, goodness me; right there in Albuquerque, NM, offering varied & high-quality programming from jazz to contemporary concert music to renowned singer-songwriters like Chris Smither (the night after me!), exuding a loving spirit to all musicians whatever label one might put on the music they interpret. When I told Tom Guralnick, valiant and ever-enthusiastic guiding spirit behind Outpost, that I’d given classes at UNM, he offered a special price for students. And YES! a number of them came to my concert.

In Albuquerque I reconnect with Patrice Repar and with Antoinette Sedillo López. Repar: gifted composer who feels her true calling lies outside the academic model, who has constructed splendid program shared between medicine and music composition, surely one of the few in the US. Sedillo López: eminent member of UNM Law School faculty, committed to justice for all without dumbing down the system or the people. Incredible to share energy with these splendid women whose work makes a genuine difference in the world; and to meet yet another: Dawn Chambers, Englishwoman who’s lived for years in New Mexico and surely one of the most committed teachers I’ve had the pleasure to meet.

As in classes in California, exchanges with students fascinating and moving; here particularly because I interact with non-music students. Wednesday 7 October, with fourth-year Spanish class of Dr Miguel López. I begin as I have begun practically every concert of this **Rumor** music: I say that I believe the act of listening to music, like that of reading, or experiencing any work of art, is not a passive act. Each and every one of us has an absolutely singular response to that work of art, and thus in a sense, the work is incomplete without that response. It was with this idea in mind, I go on to say, that I asked each of these 23

composers for his or her unique response to the creation of Juan Rulfo. So when I finish playing the first piece, I ask the students for THEIR responses to the music.



With fourth-year Spanish students of Dr Miguel López at UNM on 7 October

Could sense students feeling their way towards how to talk about these issues, which even for music students are not easy subjects for discourse. I'd challenged them to respond, and some of them accepted the challenge even when they might not always have felt completely ready for it. I encouraged them to let their own responses help them find the language with which to express that response, so that it be authentic and not collection of academic buzzwords. Brave of them to try to meet this challenge, I felt, and certainly moving for me.

A particularly stimulating exchange in the class with first-year Composition kids, as well as Form and Analysis students – they were out in the hall as we began and, urged on by their teacher, composer Paul Lombardi, just came on in! A much-pierced young man –student, I believe, of Dawn Chambers– asked me whether the Mexican composers' music was more consonant with Rulfo than that of the non-Mexican composers. He said (I paraphrase), "Well, I grew up here in New Mexico, so if someone asked me to write about what it's like here I believe I would have a very defined and rooted sense of place. I'd have a better idea about it than someone who hadn't grown up here or ever been here".

Here there are no easy answers. I had the sense that, in a very metaphorical way, he was asking me how valid his own voice might be. I thought about it and finally talked about Stephen McNeff and my response to his piece when it came in via email in Spring of 2006. It was the *Pavane*, of course –the by-now famous "*Pavane (in the old way) for doña Susanita*". I told the young man and the class, that in the moment I saw the title, and the first page of the piece coming off the printer early that April morning, I cried. Stephen had connected, I feel, with one of the most profound themes in *Pedro Páramo* –that of Eros, the life force, love, stifled and denied– and he responded to it not only as Stephen McNeff, British composer of right now, but also with one of the noblest parts of his heritage as a British composer: a dance form used extensively by his forebears Dowland, Morley, Byrd and others. Not only that, but the *pavane*, as a dance form, is an ancient link between the Iberian and the Anglo world, and arguably even between the New World and the Old.

So, I summed up, it's not that one response is more valid than another, it's that each one be **authentic**, that it come from that place of truth within each composer. Just as the response of each of them, the students, must come from that place of truth within each. That's how compelling music gets made, no matter its vocabulary. The young man seemed to get that, when I asked him if I'd answered his question, and from the small almost secret smile he gave I felt that he'd gleaned something important from this idea.

Hope I sowed some seeds here and/or helped to nourish something already in process.



With UNM Composition and Form & Analysis students on 8 October

WATER INTERLUDE 2: *In Albuquerque an asequia –an irrigation canal– which runs for several km right behind the house of my hosts. Three wonderful fast one-hour 2K walks there, one of them with Repar. Curiously, this place much greener and wilder than well-tended canal in Fresno; although more water in Fresno than in Albuquerque. The afternoon after my class with the Composition and Theory / Form and Analysis students I walked about halfway up and then cut back to meet Patrice Repar; the two of us then walked the full 2 km, talking enthusiastically the entire way.*

Other connecting thread: the various spaces in which I did yoga, a little most every day but a good 40 minutes before every concert. At CalArts, space in living room area of hotel suite if I moved coffee table. Evening of concert, in the commodious dressing room at the REDCAT, sticky mat provided by that wonderful tech staff. In Fresno, in cozy little bedroom loaned to me by van Gilluwe's brother, out of town that weekend. Just room enough, length and breadth, for sun salutations – what more do I need? And in Albuquerque, in equally cozy room, using mat lent to me by my hosts, thickest yoga mat I've ever used. Thus do I measure spaces where I'm housed on tour!

Ridiculous to feel that this was anything but a little tour, especially by comparison with the brutal schedule I saw on Chris Smithers' poster. At the same time, I have to recognize that I did a lot of teaching along with these three concerts. In any case it feels complete by the time I am done.

The two remaining **Rumor de Páramo** CDs sell out at the Outpost concert. Young composer from class comes backstage afterwards, asking for autograph on CD **Rumor de**

Páramo that he's bought. Says to me, with an unerasable gentle smile, *I've never heard so many colors come out of a piano ever before.*



Post-Outpost concert, L-R: *Tom Guralnick, guiding spirit of the Outpost; Emy Kameta, Cultural Attaché, Mexican Consulate in Albuquerque; Fred Sturm; Antoinette Sedillo López; Cervantes*

Next morning get most of the sleep I need and –bonus!– some lovely time conversing with my hosts in the sun before customary last-minute dash to Post Office. Even time to visit Boca Negra part of Petroglyph National Monument on way to airport! By 6:30pm winging my way to Phoenix and thence to Los Ángeles; surreal 4-hour interlude in LAX before 1am departure for México. Home with my piano and my dogs some 12 hours after leaving Albuquerque.

THE PROGRAM FOR THIS TOUR:

Arturo Márquez
(México, 1950)

Marcela Rodríguez
(México, 1951)

Jack Fortner
(USA, 1938)

Ramón Montes de Oca
(México, 1953-2006)

Zulema de la Cruz
(Spain, 1964)

Alex Shapiro
(USA, 1962)

Solo Rumores
(Solo Murmurs)

Entre las ramas rotas
(Among the Broken Branches)

Vine a Comala
(I came to Comala)

Ecos del llano
(Echoes of the Plain)

Arenoso
(Having to do with Sand)

Luvina

Silvia Berg
(Brazil-Denmark, 1958)

Dobles del Páramo
(*Reverberations of the Wasteland*)

INTERMISSION

Georgina Derbez
(México, 1968)

Del viento, la esperanza
(*From the Wind, Hope*)

Mario Lavista
(México, 1944)

Páramos de Rulfo
(*Wastelands of Rulfo*)

Carlos Cruz de Castro
(España, 1941)

Vértigo en Comala
(*Vertigo in Comala*)

Paul Barker
(UK, 1956)

El Progreso de Pedro
(*Pedro's Progress*)

Anne LeBaron
(EUA, 1953)

Los murmullos
(*The Murmurs*)

COMPOSER LINKS:

Arturo Márquez:

es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arturo_Márquez - (Español)

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arturo_Márquez - (English)

www.arturomarquez.org/ además de numerosos tracs en Youtube, in addition to many tracks on Youtube

Alex Shapiro:

www.alexshapiro.org

Mario Lavista

es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Lavista

www.latinoamerica-musica.net/bio/lavista.html

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Lavista

Carlos Cruz de Castro

www.carloscruzdecastro.com/

Paul Barker:

www.paulbarker.net/

Anne LeBaron

www.annelebaron.com/

OFFICIAL JUAN RULFO WEBSITE:

www.clubcultura.com/clubliteratura/clubescritores/juanrulfo/