

EXCELSIOR

Sounds of Chromatic Mutation; Enrico Chapela Prepares Premiere

Composer Enrico Chapela (Mexico City, 1974) wrote the piece "Tetracrómatas", a concerto for amplified flutes and orchestra, inspired by women who have the ability or "superpower" to perceive colors outside the normal human spectrum. This piece, which will have its absolute premiere of the definitive version on Friday, May 31, in the Main Hall of the Palacio de Bellas Artes, will feature flautist Evangelina Reyes – who collaborated with Chapela on the revision of the solo part – and the National Symphony Orchestra (OSN), under the artistic direction of Enrique Arturo Diemecke.

Until recently ignored by science, tetrachromats have been among us forever, insisting that the color of the bucket is different from the wall, objecting to the impeccable white of wedding gloves, refusing to concede that a shadow turns cats brown, Chapela explains in an interview with Excelsior, as part of what originated this piece that explores the links between music and colors.

This piece had a first version in 2015, within the framework of the International Cervantino Festival (2015) with Alejandro Escuer's interpretation as a soloist, and the Guanajuato University Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Roberto Beltrán Zavala. However, the composer was not satisfied. "I wasn't fully satisfied with my own score, because I felt that there were some things that needed improvement," he acknowledges. So, some time later, when artistic director Luis Gorelik asked him for a piece for flute, he decided to recover that work and premiere it in Argentina. However, it didn't happen. "The problem was that Gorelik commissioned the work, but there were changes in the government, and, similar to what later happened in Mexico, a new head of Culture arrived and fired him from the orchestra that had commissioned the piece. Unfortunately, I hadn't signed a contract, and the new director didn't respect the verbal agreement. And so, I learned that I should never again compose a commissioned work without a contract," he assures.

Finally, a few months ago, Evangelina Reyes, principal flautist of the OSN, asked him to recover the piece. "I told her yes, but when I saw the score, it didn't cause me full satisfaction. I decided that it was time to push the project to the goal, and a few months ago, I finished the improvements that the score needed, and now it causes me full satisfaction," he says. Why create a piece inspired by tetrachromats? "Firstly, because it's a little-known anomaly, and because it's like a superpower to see uncommon tonalities, which sounds like something characteristic of an X-Men mutant, and that seemed funny to me.

And finally, because the flute is a very beautiful instrument, which has a characteristic that makes it difficult as a soloist, and that is that in the low part of the flutes, they have little volume, that is, if you want to blow hard in the low part, you end up jumping to a higher octave. Besides, I found the association of tetrachromats with the four flutes interesting: the low C, the alto G, the soprano C – which is the normal one –, and the piccolo," describes the composer, who will present his work "Rotor" with the OFCM in July. What would be the tetrachromatic register on the flute? "The piccolo!" What will be the demand on the soloist? "Evangelina is very capable, and I know that because I've also heard her; I sent her the score, and she sent me some comments.

We made the final adjustments a week ago. How difficult is it? The concerto form is one of the most interesting in orchestral tradition, because the soloist needs to have a certain degree of challenge. That's what it's about, seeing the soloist get on the tightrope, on a unicycle, and seeing how they get away with it. And, on the other hand, the individual parts of each orchestra member must be sight-readable," he comments.

However, he clarifies that it's not about making a complex score just for the sake of it. "Making things difficult is easy, and that's what I've told my students: one can write something impossible in five minutes. Here, the challenge is not that it's difficult, but rather virtuosic and dazzling, so that one can appreciate how (the soloist) manages to juggle the torches on the unicycle," he concludes.

Juan Carlos Talavera 22/05/2024

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