

GUIMARÃES JAZZ - THE CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM

IVO MARTINS

ne. My relationship with the city has a more institutional nature. If the city has five or six resident theatre companies, that must be conveyed that way. You don't have to be here the whole time. In that respect, there's a communication deficit in Guimarães. A good example is the Centquatre, which has fifty associated or resident artists. I'm pretty sure they're not in Paris all the time. I go to Lisbon, and everybody says: Guimarães? What's the trademark? The trademark is: "We're from Guimarães".

Now, in 2015, is Guimarães the city you imagined back in 2012, when you thought about what the future would be like?

MM: We knew all that money wouldn't be available forever, there had to be some sort of financial handover. But Guimarães kept its identity, and that's a very good thing. My experience with O Bando at the Expo98 taught me that, after a big event that consumes a lot of emotional energy, there's always a breakdown. We can't dwell on the past, but there's a trademark that will be forever associated with Guimarães. The general public knows that.

MB: In 2012, in spite of all the difficulties, I was very optimistic, and my work has all been done with 2020 in mind. We aren't there yet. These last few years in Portugal have been very difficult for everyone. Besides that, what I really want is to see this city full of artists, with several resident theatre companies.



After twenty-three installments, Guimarães Jazz has a long history in the diffusion of jazz among the Portuguese public, which confirms it as a standout case of longevity, perseverance and steadfastness in the often fickle and precarious cultural environment of Portugal, and asserts its ability to build temporal, aesthetic and geographical bridges. In an age when such words as "innovation" and "change" seem to be firmly implanted in the lexicon of contemporary discourse, Guimarães Jazz, somewhat against the general trend, affirms itself as an aggregating pole of stability, high regard for musical history and tradition and faithfulness to the core values that have guided us since the beginning of

this venture. Nevertheless, in a cultural milieu where responses to uncertainty and the unknown often result in individual isolation and entrenchment in dogmatic and inflexible stances, the Guimarães Jazz festival is also a platform for the celebration of freedom, and does not shy away from taking risks and facing the multiplicity of paths and possibilities that define contemporary art.

Embracing all types of jazz, from the most radical and extreme to the most traditional and early styles, Guimarães Jazz may very well be the ideal model of affirmation and popularity, in a time when specialization seems to be a prerequisite for integration. Considering the public's response, we do believe this to be the best method of promoting jazz. The festival is an event open to diversity and the diffusion of music, and fundamentally averse to prejudice of any kind. In our day and age, the concept of jazz became too narrow to account for all its manifestations; as it often happens with many other complex realities, its wide scope eludes our efforts to define it, and whenever we try to, we find ourselves confronted with countless exceptions and single cases that do not meet all the necessary criteria for a categorical classification. As a result, in order to make any judgments on jazz, we're bound to establish a minimal threshold of identification that is necessarily arbitrary.

Since its first installment, the festival has been featuring all kinds and forms of music, and thus cannot be deemed a thematic event, confined to a single typology, style, genre or cate-

gory, and aimed at a particular group of followers. In spite of the passing of time, of changing conditions and contextual shifts, of communication developments that resulted in an easier access to music, Guimarães Jazz has been able to maintain the inaugural traits and purposes that set it apart. Facing the deep changes in contemporary societies' social and consumption habits, as a block of moments concentrated in ten days of intensely experienced jazz music, the platform has been able to meet the public's expectations, whose attendance is a confirmation of its accomplishments. A festival such as ours needs time to consolidate. In a society where everything must be kept at a fast pace and immediately obtainable, success is as quick as it is fickle and fleeting, compelling us to a continuous effort of adaptation and adjustment. In our world of communication and image, anything that lacks media impact is non-existent. Time confers stability; nonetheless, people often reject the consistency derived from regular and slowly assimilated experiences in favour of hasty, deceptive and volatile choices.

A jazz festival is always a thematic event, circumscribed by its necessary cultural boundaries. Given its bonding element – jazz music –, it is impossible to organize such an event without consideration for the past, which is a necessary requirement for its projection into the future. The past plays an important role as a source of legitimacy. There persists a deep ambivalence in the act of refusing tradition, because to deny it is also to consider it an essen-

tial element of reference in the structuring and historical interpretation of the genre. The future does not have an objective existence, and any prevision of it is always an open hypothesis. In cosmopolitan societies and informed organizations, solutions to problems are no longer deemed certain or obvious: they are the object of continuous reassessments and revisions. Keeping some distance from tradition is useful, for it implies a pondered questioning and a critical revalidation of any well-established and accepted form. However, it's not possible to relinquish memory, for it is memory that allows us to piece together our diverse and fragmented world, thus conferring it a coherent form. A retrospective outlook helps us to develop new methods of action. In contrast, if our goal is simply to obtain an easy and immediate following and to promote an uncritical encounter between music and the public, the task of devising an interesting future for Guimarães Jazz may become rather difficult.

Formerly, human beings structured their lives within the framework of great narratives, projecting their hopes of change and their utopias on different levels (religious, sociological, political, and economical). Any planning presupposes the belief in the future. Today there are no conditions of permanence and regularity in social relationships, and, consequently, there isn't a steady and healthy environment for the development of a solid collective project. We live so much in the present that we have lost one of time's structuring dimensions, and the past became much more obscure. We have

to put these questions into perspective and in a more general way. When it comes to restructuring itself in terms of a future, society itself is having trouble, because there is neither time nor space to envision, with any modicum of certainty, a stable and expectable horizon able to provide us with a regular platform for intervention. The uncertainty that comes with modernity can no longer be managed in accordance with institutional and conventional standards that treat it as something quantifiable and measurable.

[Popular] music and jazz often overlap and influence each other, although they concern different realities. Obviously, when you listen to jazz, you are listening to music, and when you hold a jazz festival, you're also supporting a general appreciation for the art of music. In this sense, Guimarães Jazz meets its double task: to promote jazz and to stimulate the public's interest in music. In the first years, it was not easy to draw the dividing line between the two spheres, and jazz and popular music often got mingled in rather original and risky fusions of different styles and languages. Today, the diversification and dispersion of styles made all classifications and identifications redundant; most people move freely through the world of music with no stated preference for any particular genre or style. Fully aware that the best way to program the festival is to understand and decipher the ambiguities of the issue and the flighty nature of the public's tastes and sensibilities, we decided to avoid any specific style orientation. Otherwise, we would be restricting accessibility and

hindering our main objective: to arouse curiosity and interest for music as a sphere to be explored both at a personal and transpersonal level. Hence, our programming aims to transform each concert in a process of learning and intellectual development accessible to anyone at different levels of exigency, and to bring forth new ways of commitment and cooperation. All choices arouse doubts concerning the success of the event and elicit a succession of dilemmas relating to the variability of results attained throughout the years.

Therefore, in order to reach any reliable conclusion, we must be certain that the public is thinking and acting autonomously; the authenticity of their response is inversely proportional to their susceptibility to external influences. To be in the festival's management means that we're not part of the audience; our programming responsibilities keep us from enjoying the moment as a regular spectator, and we experience each moment in a different way, even when we're sitting among the audience. We trade off the spectator status for the possibility of enjoying the public's presence.

CIAJG: MULTIDISCIPLINARY STRATEGY



To be contemporary is also to recuperate certain things which have disappeared
MASSIMO BOTTURA

(chef of the Osteria Francescana,
Emilia-Romagna, Italy)

Time is a spiral. Beauty in itself doesn't exist. It exists during a historic period, then the taste changes, then it becomes beautiful again. In the São Paulo Museum I only tried to reassume certain positions. I didn't look for beauty, I looked for freedom.

LINA BO BARDI

The CIAJG (José de Guimarães International Arts Centre) has brought together works from different times, places and contexts in articulation with works by contemporary artists, proposing a re(assembly) of art history, as a succession of echoes, and a new purpose for the museum – as a place for wonder and reflection.

It is a structure focused on contemporary art and the relationships it establishes with arts from other eras and different cultures and subjects. Based

NUNO FARIA

on a conception of art as a space of experience and freedom, not subjected to the categorisation of history, form or style, it has special interest in issues which have become important operative concepts in contemporary art and the present-day world, such as: energy vs. form, circular vs. linear conception of time, archaeology of knowledge, nomadism, migration – of forms, motives, ideas, people, goods –, individual and collective memory, hospitality, community, exchange, miscegenation, cultural anthropophagy, and utopia, among others.

At the CIAJG, we combine objects and images from very distant times and places, sometimes without any apparent connection, as if they came to us brought by the wind, as if they were flying seeds. We want to refound the museum as a place of wonder and reflection, as an air stream and mirror, as an infinite horizon. For this reason, we intermingle different languages and methodologies, from archaeology to ethnology, passing through the history of art. We try to blend dimensions that are often irreconcilable, such as the popular, ancestral, artisanal, vernacular, and knowledge that is transmitted orally or by gestures. We propose to cast a gaze from the time and place in which we find ourselves, regarding the wide array of tangible and intangible manifestations and vestiges of our culture. To return to visitors the space between objects, the pauses in which they can breathe. To show the air.

In fact, the CIAJG brings together pieces from the three collections which José de Guimarães has been amassing over the last five decades ã African