Electroacoustic Music Laboratory  
Jesús Guridi Conservatoire of Music  
Studio Report  

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ABSTRACT
The "Jesús Guridi" Conservatoire of Music, Vitoria (Spain) is a centre committed to creating and spreading contemporary music via its educational activities and an ongoing offering of concerts, festivals, meetings, conferences, seminars and master classes. Since its beginnings it has organised numerous activities dedicated to the creation of contemporary music, enjoying the participation of composers and performers from all over the world. It is because of this that the Conservatoire has even been able to organise its own festivals, such as the Contemporary Music festival or the Electroacoustic Music Festival, projecting an image of dynamism to the city and its surroundings that displays the work being done in the classroom. A true reflection of the centre’s commitment toward incorporating new technologies into musical education is the annually held Electroacoustic Music Festival, coordinated from the Electroacoustic Music Laboratory (located inside the Conservatoire and representing a first for the country by introducing computers and electronic music into the syllabus), the purpose of these festival is to show the work being done within the various fields of electroacoustic composition and to act as a meeting place for various studios and laboratories by performing concerts of pieces that have been created within them.

2. COMPOSITION DEPARTMENT
To understand the recent history of the Conservatoire it is necessary to start with the composer Carmelo A. Bernaola (1929-2002), who, from 1980, was the driving force behind a new and brilliant era for the centre. He was a great composer and teacher who had a keen interest in bringing modern music to the public, especially within the world of education. As director as well as a teacher of Harmony, Composition and Instrumentation, he taught a whole generation of young composers and performers. It was also under his directorship that numerous activities aimed at stimulating the city’s cultural life were introduced, giving the local population the opportunity to develop a fuller appreciation of music from the 20th Century: Concerts featuring renowned soloists and instrumental groups, conferences, composition seminars, the formation of instrumental groups, etc.

Undoubtedly it was a daring idea that owed its success to his enthusiasm and interest in modern music. Nowadays this work is still being developed by those students who studied under him. The Composition room is the birthplace of many projects which will later go on to become an identifying feature of a centre that is devoted to providing music from the end and the beginning of a new century. Projects that retain their relevance with the passage of time and that serve as an example of an enriched creative education.

3. ELECTROACOUSTIC MUSIC LAB
The Conservatoire’s Electroacoustical Music Laboratory was created in 1985. It was designed by the composer Eduardo Bautista and is located in the “Luis de Pablo” lecture hall. It represented the first step toward incorporating Electroacoustic Music into Composition and Instrumentation classes, making it one of the first conservatories in the country to have its own laboratory and introduce electronic and computer generated music into the syllabus.

1. INTRODUCTION
The present Conservatoire was built in 1984 and was specially designed to be a music school. Its installations include 34 classrooms prepared for both individual and group tuition, 13 booths for individual study and a main lecture hall with a seating capacity for 650 people, being an auditorium with excellent acoustics and a large stage. It is also fully equipped for sound and projection suitable for holding all type of concerts and activities.

There is also an Electroacoustic Music Laboratory (thoroughly equipped with the latest advances in computer music and electronics) to cover events that require music technology. The installations are completed by a Library-Record library which has always offered a wealth of books, recordings and musical scores, providing reference, listening and lending services.
The laboratory is currently used for the following functions: a) Producing electroacoustic compositions; b) complementing academic training in acoustic and new technologies; c) providing technical support at concerts organised by the “Jesús Guridi” Conservatoire of Music; d) offering a sound and videographic archive for activities carried out throughout the course; e) collaborating with various soloists and instrumental groups to enable them to incorporate electroacoustics into their performances; f) organising the Vitoria Electroacoustic Music Festival; g) organising concerts for children based on music technology.

4. ELECTROACOUSTICS IN COMPOSITION

Having an electroacoustic production laboratory allows the students to become familiar with electronic composition tools: synthesers, computers, processors, microphones, mixing tables, etc. The aim is not only to learn how to handle and operate this equipment but also to experiment with it to produce compositions that can be shared with the class.

Within Composition course work the students are instructed on how to use the laboratory in order to create a set of musical pieces. After an introduction to new technologies as applied to music, they do practical composition work using electronic and computer-related means. The work done in the laboratory means having to compose pieces of an electro-acoustic nature and which fall into various categories: Pre-recorded tape/CD work (electronic, concrete, acousmatic, etc.), mixed (electronic and acoustic instruments), live electronic performance and other derivations (sound installations, etc.). The students can make full use of the laboratory’s resources in order to present their compositions and to go on to perform them publicly.

Scientific advances of the 20th Century have provided musicians with technology that gives them a fuller understanding of the elements with which they work: The emission, transmission, reception and perception of sound. It is therefore essential to possess some basic knowledge about acoustics in order to apply it to professional work. The basic theories of physical and physiological acoustics, psychoacoustics and musical acoustics can be complemented through the use of the technological means available at the laboratory and without which it would be impossible to learn or put into practice.

Understanding the acoustic characteristics of a particular instrument can be a good way of awakening a student’s interest. It is a very broad subject but useful if it takes in five essential points: Historical introduction and classification of the instrument, physical description, the acoustic process through which sound is obtained, the instrument’s response to fundamental factors of sound (amplitude, intensity and tone), and to its acoustic environment (sound radiation, concert halls, etc.) Nowadays the study of acoustics is compulsory for the musician.

5. ACTIVITIES

To speak of the Conservatoire is to speak of formal education, preparation squarely geared toward music as a professional activity. In order to achieve this objective, the school organises many activities throughout the year in which students can take part. It also organises numerous concerts and supplementary activities in which distinguished figures from the world of present day performance and musical and instrumental education participate. Most noteworthy is the high level of involvement shown by the teaching staff, who actively participate in ensuring that the students are brought into closer contact with the latest music.

5.1. Contemporary Music Festival

The Conservatoire is a centre with a special interest in the public performance of modern creations and this is achieved by organising an international festival of contemporary music. This year was the festival’s eighth year, having already established itself as yet another important cultural event offered by the city. The Festival came about with the intention of bringing the latest in music to a wider audience, rarely heard because of its scant presence within normal concert programs.

The concerts and activities are programmed in collaboration with other institutions, with the cooperation of distinguished composers and performers from all over the world. As a result of this the Festival has built itself a reputation and after just a few years it has become a reference point within the local music scene. By way of completing the student’s education, there is also a whole series of parallel activities arranged during the period that the festival is held, the goal being to encourage meetings between composers, performers and students of various subjects.

5.2. Electroacoustic Music Festival

The Electroacoustic Music Festival of Vitoria-Gasteiz was first held in 1987, the initiative of composer Carmelo Bernaola, then director of the Jesús Guridi Music Conservatory. With a combination of several concerts and conferences it offered us an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with one of the most important aspects to revolutionise the music of the 20th century. At the same time it created the base upon which the Electroacoustic Music Laboratory would begin its work, this being a pioneering experience in the whole country by facilitating new resources for academic training to students of Music Composition.
During the years that have passed since, the “Jesús Guridi” Music Conservatory of Vitoria-Gasteiz has been a centre that has focussed especially on the diffusion of modern music. It has organised numerous concerts and activities devoted to the latest in musical creation, enjoying the participation of composers and performers from around the world. Thus, the Electroacoustic Music Festival gradually saw its consolidation and became an important cultural event for the city. The Festival were coordinated from the Electroacoustic Music Laboratory and have tried over their history to showcase the work carried out in different fields of composition with electronic and computer media. They have also aimed to be a meeting point for different studios and laboratories, with the presentation of works produced there through their concerts.

One of the festival’s identifying features is the presence of young composers whose work has already been heard within the major circles for new musical creativity.

The Festival celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2004 in a very special way, establishing as priority objectives its opening up towards the city and collaboration with other institutions, education centres and cultural organisations: Caja Vital Foundation, Montethermos Cultural Centre, Artium-Museum of Contemporary Art, University of the Basque Country, Eusko Ikaskuntza (Basque Studies Society), Basque Government – Department of Culture, School of Art of Vitoria, etc. For this, again, an entire series of parallel activities was organised with the aim of bringing to the public’s attention new works and technological breakthroughs applied to music: concerts, demos, conferences, sound installations, video projections, workshops, open days, etc.

The ten festivals held to date have included numerous premieres and different institutions, laboratories, groups, artists, etc. have taken part. Furthermore the technological infrastructures introduced by the Laboratory over successive editions of the Festivals have allowed electroacoustic support to be given to numerous concerts and activities.

The following participants and collaborations are worthy of highlight: Gabriel Brnic (Barcelona); McGill University - Alcedes Lanza and Meg Sheppard (Montreal); Institut International de Musique Electroacoustique (Bourges); DeGeM-Deutsche Gesellschaft für Elektroakustische Musik (Germany); SARC- School of Music-Queen's University (Belfast); EMS-Electronic Music Studio-McGill University Music (Montreal); AMEE-Asociacion de Música Electroacústica de España; Fundacion Phonos (Barcelona); Francisco Ruiz de Infante-Ermeline Le Mézo (Paris); CICV-Centre de Recherche Pierre Schaeffer (Belfort, France); NoTAM-Norsk nettverk for Teknologi, Akustikk og Musikk. Universitetet I Oslo (Norway); Tarima Danza (Vitoria); Institut Universitari de l’Audiovisual-Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona); LIEM-CDMC Laboratorio de Informática y Electrónica Musical of the CDMC (Madrid); LEA-Laboratorio de Electroacústica (Valencia); GME-Gabinete de Música Electroacústica (Cuenca); Ensemble Proxima Centauri (Bordeaux); Ensemble Pythagore (Toulouse); Amsterdam Percussion Group (Holland); Ensemble Oiasso Novis (Irun); META DUO (Daniel Kientzy- Reina Portuondo) (Paris); Ensemble ARCEMA (Paris); Julio Sanz-Fernando Buenache (Cuenca); Jean-Marc Chouvel (University of Reims, France); Juan Antonio Lleg-Javier Bedrina (Madrid); David Alarçon-Manuel Maciá (Valencia); Grupo Instrumental “Jesús Guridi” (Vitoria-Gasteiz); Het Trio (Amsterdam); Miquel Bernat (Valencia); Ensemble Laboratorio Novamusica (Venice); Drumming Grupo de Percussao (Oporto); 2 q 2 (Bilbao); Michelle Man & Friends (Madrid); Ricardo Climent (Belfast); Eduardo Polonio (Huelva); KLEM (Bilbao); Ateloi (Bordeaux); etc.

5.3. Concerts for children

This is a series of concerts aimed at all of the schools in Vitoria, organized in collaboration with the City Council’s Municipal Department of Education. Each year around 4,000 children and young adults come to the main lecture theatre to experience various aspects of music in concert form: The orchestra, Chamber music, string instruments, new technologies applied to music, etc. It is an excellent opportunity for the younger audiences of the city to participate in the centre’s musical activities.

The Electroacoustic Music Laboratory organises various concerts that are specifically aimed at students in secondary education (aged between 14 to 16). These concerts are designed to fulfill several objectives: a) Make young people aware of the soundscape that surrounds them and to help encourage active listening; b) Introduce them to the possibilities that new technologies can offer along with their direct application to sound (generation, recording, reproduction, spatial processing and diffusion); c) Show the work that is done with sound in various fields of artistic creation (e.g. production techniques for electroacoustic material and production techniques for sound effects in the cinema); d) An introduction to current electroacoustic compositions.

5.4. Courses and seminars

The standard education that the centre gives to the students is often strengthened by organising specialised courses and seminars at which distinguished figures from the world of present day performance and musical and instrumental education participate. One of the identifying features of all the programmed activities is the presence of young composers and performers that have studied at the centre. This is the result of a philosophy designed to provide the student with a sound
education geared towards music as a professional pursuit. The end result of the work developed at the Conservatoire, backed by the impetus of the past few years, is now being recognised through the regular participation of teachers and students in the musical life of the country.

6. JESÚS GURIDI INSTRUMENTAL GROUP

It order to execute these numerous initiatives it is essential to have musicians who are committed to performing new works created by composers that have been trained at the Conservatoire. It was for this reason that in 1988 the Jesús Guridi Instrumental Group was set up at the conservatoire. It is a variable formation comprising of acclaimed instrumentalists linked to the centre and who come together in order to perform works from their repertoire of contemporary music. The group’s speciality is backed by the concert work that its members do either as soloists or as part of other chamber or symphonic orchestras. Ever since its founding the group has been directed by celebrated conductors such as Juan José Mena and Maite Aurrekoetxea.

Most noteworthy of all is the fact that it is one of the first musical societies to incorporate new technologies into its performances, thanks to its close and prolific association with the Conservatoire’s Electro-acoustic Music Laboratory. Over the years its main aim has been to premiere the works of modern-day composers and to perform such at numerous concerts, cycles and music festivals. The artistic work done at the Conservatoire, headed by the Jesús Guridi Instrumental Group and the Electro-acoustic Music Laboratory, can therefore be presented on other stages of modern creativity.

7. THE FUTURE

The future plans revolve around the establishment of the SINKRO GROUP, integrated in the Electroacoustic Music Laboratory. It will carry out projects in the field of applying new technologies to modern-day musical creation.

The SINKRO web site is at:
http://www.sinkrofestival.com