Music of Expos

World Expos have left universal legacies in many fields, including music. Expo has always provided the stage for the meeting of people and nations and for cultural and artistic exchanges. Different musical traditions have always been represented within Expo. At the time when traveling was less frequent than today, Expo visitors could take a true musical world tour in a few hours.

Expo has been sources of inspiration, for instance, the influence of Javanese music on Debussy. The great symphonies performed for Expo not only provided a musical rhythm for the event, but also enhanced the spirit of the theme, as is the case with the Symphony of the New World composed by Dvorak and performed during the 1893 Chicago Exhibition “World’s Columbian Expansion.”

Music has accompanied all of the moments of an Expo. The grand opening and closing ceremonies, the visit of a pavilion or the official dinners were opportunities for encounters between new music and a public open to innovation. With the discovery of music came the discovery of new opportunities for encounters between new music and a public open to discovery. Vico, for instance, described the “music of the clanging of metal bells that the carillon player would make echo in the air.”

The music of Expo has always been a bridge of understanding and a Medium of communication.

To revive this important tradition of Expo, for its 75th anniversary, the BIE invited to bring together once again a new public with a sample of the musical heritage of Expo. I would like to express my gratitude to the Polish Minister of Culture and the National Opera of Warsaw, which made it possible to enjoy an outstanding orchestra musette, which anticipated the technologies for taking music everywhere, device which anticipated the technologies for taking music everywhere, of the Gamelan music of Java and the dramatic action of the Balinese dancers, gracious and very young, were adored by the public. The reactions of the French audience were divided. While the Balinese dancers, gracious and very young, were adored (sometimes even too much), non-European music was generally rejected with disgust: “Meowing and clucking, without neither measure nor tonality, rising in sharp notes until the very limits of perception of auditory sense!” exclaimed Jules Verne, speaking of traditional Chinese music.

The musicians at the time, however, were able to take advantage of these encounters. This was the case of Julien Tenart, the father of the French ethnology, who feverishly worked to transcript all the foreign melodies and rhythms in order to analyze them. And Claude Debussy enthused over the soft resonance of the gamelan music of Java and the dramatic action of the Balinese theater. He was going to transform, some years later, the experiences of the World Exhibition in his magnificent Annamite Theater. He was going to transform, some years later, the experiences of the World Exhibition in his magnificent Annamite Theater. He was going to transform, some years later, the experiences of the World Exhibition in his magnificent Annamite Theater. He was going to transform, some years later, the experiences of the World Exhibition in his magnificent Annamite Theater.

Vicente González Loscertales
Secretary General of the BIE

Musical Exotism at World Exhibitions of Paris

At 1889 and 1900 World Exhibitions, visitors, while promenading through the Pavilion of Colonies, were able to hear all types of music. To amplify the exotic feel of the showcased colonial or European architecture, the organizers had called on musicians of all backgrounds: a Moroccon naïbou in the rue du Caire, Madagascar singers animating a living painting, a real eclair player from Valais in Switzerland, a musician calling to prayer from the top of a minaret, an Annamite orchestra, or Hindi priests playing temple gongs. The reactions of the French audience were divided. While the Balinese dancers, gracious and very young, were adored, the Japanese musicians, gracious and very young, were adored, the Japanese musicians, gracious and very young, were adored, the Japanese musicians, gracious and very young, were adored, the Japanese musicians, gracious and very young, were adored, and the musical traditions of Java, of the gamelan music of Java, and the dramatic action of the Balinese dancers, gracious and very young, were adored (sometimes even too much), non-European music was generally rejected with disgust: “Meowing and clucking, without neither measure nor tonality, rising in sharp notes until the very limits of perception of auditory sense!” exclaimed Jules Verne, speaking of traditional Chinese music.

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EDITORIAL
Expos, a cultural platform

Since the creation of “Progression” we have dealt with a number of essential aspects concerning Expos such as cooperation, communication and the legacy of Expos. Yet we have still not touched upon the principal element of Expos, that is culture.

This issue of “Progression” will be dedicated to showcasing the central role which culture plays on Expos in all its forms. This role which can be found since the very beginning of the history of Expos has evolved during these 150 years and will surely constitute one of the biggest challenges for the Expo organisers and for the BIE in the first decades of the 21st century. The cultural element, which has always included the fine arts and music, has been an important factor of the expos since 1851, but the way of considering culture has changed during this period.

During the period of 1851-1940, Expos were strongly influenced by the idea of material progress based on technological innovation. Yet even in the so-called “age of progress”, the expos were not only - as the great German philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin said - “the sites of the plagiarism to the commodity fetish” but probably the most important events of cultural exchange of this period.

Following World War II and with the progress of decolonisation, an increasing number of participating countries reflects not only a larger cultural diversity within Expos, but also shows that for the new sovereign states, culture and national identity are fundamental for the planet’s future.

The exhibition of their culture constitutes the affirmation of their national identity. With the emphasis put on the human factor, the value of expos as a showcase for cultural diversity is increased and the need for cultural coexistence has evolved to become based on the concept of equality and respect for all the cultures.

Today Expos have evolved even further to include all the key pillars of our world - from nations, to cities, international organisations and NGOs as well as civil society. This has ensured that Expos, even in the 21st century, still constitute the best stage for a truly global cross-cultural exchange and understanding of where culture and science have brought us, and of where our planet is headed.

Interview with... Wangari Maathai, Founder of the Green Belt Movement, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize
You have extensive knowledge, from your responsibility in the African Union and your travels around the African Continent. Drawing on this extensive knowledge, what is the importance of the water issue in achieving social and economic development?

Well, I would say that water is a very important commodity – fresh water. We can’t live without it, but we take it for granted and especially when it is accessible to us, and for many years it has been accessible. But now we know that fresh water is becoming a rare commodity, it is becoming a commodity therefore that some international companies want to privatise.

And as the water gets privatised and the environment gets threatened. These are recent situations in my country Kenya and in fact in many countries, especially in the Middle East. One of the major issues is water-clean drinking water. In many developing countries, companies are coming in and privatising it. They put that water in bottles, and as we speak, in Kenya a bottle of water costs more than a bottle of soda. Now, that should not be so. It should not be easier or cheaper to buy carbonated soda than to buy clean drinking water. And that is the kind of the future we are faced with. This very scarce commodity that many of us take for granted could become inaccessible. And therefore I would say wherever we are, if we are in a place where there is plenty of water, we need to educate ourselves that this is a very rare commodity in many parts of the world, and it can even become more rare in the greater part of the world if we don’t take care of the environment that brings that water to us, especially forest.


Culture is the Soul of the EXPO
The EXPO movement has already been existent in 185 years. It has shown no signs of slowing down and has always preserved its vitality and its dynamism.

What is the secret of the longevity of the EXPO movement? I was wondering about it when I learnt about this movement in 1994, during 4 years when I was the President of the BIE. I learnt a lot about Expos with my friend Vicente González (secretary, General of the BIE and the other people involved in EXPO movement) and I arrived at the conclusion that the secret of the longevity of the EXPO movement lies in its mission to make human civilization progress.

The story of the EXPO shows us that this mission consists of three parts. The first one is to display the latest progress made by humanity. The second is to raise the problems with which the civilization is confronted. And the third is to look for the solution to these problems.

Civilisation is constantly progressing for the well being of all the women and men on the earth. The EXPO movement is itself the result of the progress the human civilization. Once created, this movement contributes in its turn to the progress made by the human civilization. Here is the secret of the longevity of the EXPO movement.

Any EXPO is a demonstration of the cultural diversity. This is my deepest impression acquired by visiting EXPOS. The EXPO brings together all cultures, it is a living dialogue of cultures. This dialogue reflects the fact that culture is a universal language. Culture is what makes different nations and different peoples understand each other. It is the universal language that has proved successful and has attracted the admiration of all the visitors as an expression of the plentitude of the culture of this country.

Wu Jianmin, Former President of the BIE

EdilTorIAl:
Gastronomy in World Exhibitions
Since the second half of the nineteenth century, culinary exhibitions have been organized in Western Europe, quickly spreading to all the other continents. However, even in the framework of World Exhibitions, gastronomy has always played an important role.

The real cities that are the exhibitions sites must provide daily catering for thousands of visitors. Participating countries often build one or several restaurants offering their typical dishes. Indeed, gastronomy is considered as an expression of identity and constitutes, of course, a competitive economic activity as well. In Zaragoza 2008, there were over 100 restaurants. As was the case for Paris 1867, many World Exhibitions, in specialized sections, the know-how of the chefs. Indeed, cooking is not an activity of production but of transformation; it is thus the culinary art and science and all their latest developments that are showcased at the Expos. The exhibitions themselves produce creation: for example, the classification of Merlot wines was realized in view of Paris 1855.

Furthermore, Expos can cause changes in visitors’consumption style, especially those of the host country. For instance, agro-alimentary professionals agree that Montreal 1967 marked a turning point in Canada’s international gastronomy.

Interview with... Wangari Maathai, Founder of the Green Belt Movement, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize

The Theme makes the Expo
It presents, in successive parts, the themes and sub themes of the future Expos. First Expo Shanghai 2010 “Better City, Better Life”, then, Expo Dubai 2020 “The Living Ocean and Coast”, followed by Expo Milano 2015 “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”.

With this new item, the objective of the BIE is to underline, for the first time, the importance of the theme and messages of each future Expo, which represent nowadays a priority for whole international community.

Jorge Sampaio, President of the Portuguese Republic (1996-2006) - UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations

Building bridges between societies: the Alliance of Civilizations
Concerning partnerships, they are the real pillars of the Alliance, both in relation to international organizations and to civil society, be it in regard to the private sector, NGOs or confessional groups. The declared objective is reducing multicultural tensions, and building bridges between communities: the Alliance offers initiatives and helps the enactment of projects in its four particular domains – education, youth, medias and migrations – while trying to provide a concrete answer to the question “How can different people live together by respecting each other?”. Substantial results are at stake. In order to win the bad war we have to go beyond dialectic. Words, of course, are fundamental but they have an enduring impact only when they are underpinned by concrete and durable actions.

For these reasons the Alliance has an obligation to perform.

Jorge Sampaio


Three countries and three Expos to tackle three of the most important themes of our time. At the dawn of the 21st century, the promotion of cultural diversity, the affirmation of their national identity. With this new item, the objective of the BIE is to underline, for the first time, the importance of the theme and messages of each future Expo, which represent nowadays a priority for whole international community.

The Theme makes the Expo, is the new item of the BIE Website

For these reason the Alliance has an obligation to perform.

Jorge Sampaio