

VISIONS ABOUT THE VALKYRIE

I have never been an opera lover. Neither our generation nor that of our parents received any musical education. Dictatorship was a triumphal military march that detested lyrical emotion –individual-, art sensitivity –effeminate-, and collective gathering –wasn't that opera, but arts complementation?– Maybe this is the reason why I have never understood why some left winged intellectuals, anti-middle class, phylocommunists and, above all, prone to defend the aesthetics of socialist realism, drove us apart from Wagner while they related him with Nazism. I keep some libretto's editions by Wagner from before the beginning of the war. They are translated into Catalan in verse, adapted for music by Jeroni Zanné and Joaquim Pena, and belonged to the library of an anarchist relative who disappeared into exile. The pieces of work, hidden for fear that the fascists would burn them, were rescued together with volumes by Trotsky and Nietzsche.

As far as music is concerned, I can be considered to be self-taught by obligation, and I have educated myself more under the avant-garde's trace than that of indigenous folk or Anglo-Saxon pop –I have always connected Wagner with the name of the street where Joan Brossa, the experimental poet, was born in Barcelona. This is the reason why I didn't make a mistake the day in which the poet drew with his hands, properly united, the shadow play of a man with sharp features and asked me: "Who is it?". "Wagner!" I said, relating the icon with the name of the street. "No!", he said quick and mocking, "It's Volkswagner!". Next, he told me that, poor as he was, he used to listen to Wagner in Tapiés' record player. Both of them would publish, years later, an extraordinary artist's book, *Carrer de Wagner*, with poems and etchings wrapped with red velvet. It was Brossa who told me that I should meet a young artist from my own generation, Perejaume, a man who brought together the ancient world and avant-garde's language.

By that time, in the late sixties, I used to run a magazine, *Èczema*, with object metaphors, that I thought it was debtor of the spirit of *Dau al Set*. Along the time, it has been the Post-modern inaugurator. I went with Lena to meet Perejaume and invite him to collaborate in the magazine. The result would be a poem printed on a paper bomb, an aerostatic poem. It was summer time, and the metaphor champion's studio was in a Venetian eighth century house in the middle of the forest: *Dones d'Aigua*. I was astonished to see how an artist could work in such an isolated place when art was breaking out in the big capitals. Eager for reading and following the newest art, I thought that mountains belonged to Romanticism and to landscapes. I asked him how had he found that house, and he answered that the owner was a lyceist and the nephew of a bourgeois who lived in the capital city and had built that house in order to meet his lover, an opera singer. Unwilling to rent the house, the owner tested Perejaume with three difficult questions: He installed a gramophone in the patch, played a stone record and, all of a sudden, he lifted the needle and asked him whether he could go on with the lied. Perejaume went on with the song; guessed its name and, moreover, told him who the composer was. It was Wagner.

During another summer, when an exact copy of the Barcelona Opera House was being built after it had burnt down, I visited Joan Brossa for the last time, shortly before he died. He was waiting for me dressed with short pants by some palm trees, under his studio. During our conversation he asked me time and again, to tell Perejaume not to forget Wagner, even when nobody knew whether he would win the contest to paint the Opera House's oculus. Shortly before, Perejaume had made a silkscreen printing of Catalonia using the ashes of the Opera House, as if it had burnt by extension the other way around.

The Opera House has not forgotten Wagner, yet it has forgotten Brossa, through whom I got to know him, as the name of a street and as a shadow play. Opera has lost flexibility, with very few exceptions, and the repertoire is often consigned to ostracism and turns its back –as Foix used to say-, to avant-garde. With the passing of years, I have taken a liking for a certain type of opera which is parallel to literary and artistic contemporary research. Thus, I have been following, outside the Opera House, Bob Wilson's multilingual and visual operas, Bob Ashley's textual ones, Michael Nyman and Philip Glass minimalist ones and Carlos Santos corporal ones. With little faith, I am willing to see *Cap de Mirar*, an opera composed by Mestres Quadreny with words by Brossa. A job ordered by the Barcelona Opera House's board to be played on December, 1991, before it burnt down.

I have recently met a man possessed by Wagner's art. Shortly before knowing that the Barcelona Opera House was to program *The Valkyrie*, he had already begun to devote his time and funds to

share his passion with music and art lovers. Enterprising engineer and learned bourgeois, he considers aesthetics to be utopia, as old aristocrats and cultivated anarchists. Manuel Bertrán Mariné, Industrial Engineer, is the one who has made me listen to Wagner's music, far beyond the name of a street, a shadow play and three questions to rent a painter's studio; just like avant-garde had shown me, knowing the past far more than the consumers and the people that describe customs of urban present.

Bertrán Mariné has asked nine painters, as if they were the nine Valkyries, plus Perejaume's collaboration, to visually reinterpret the dramatic complexity of power when it drowns into passion. He has left aside the deconstructive Darwinist tendency in favour of reunifying narrative and mythical vision's art:

Pat Andrea's Valkyrie expresses the doubt of eternal youth, isolated in its flight under the winged presence of a god's strength, divided in modern condition.

Juri Rodkin's Valkyrie subdues reason's strength and strength's arms, far from the weight of a thinking father, in order to make us face the strength of a possible sensuality.

Montserrat Clausells's Valkyrie retreats to let demiurgic strength gravitate in love vapours that surround the immemorial landscape after the fight and the offering.

Jorge Zambrano's Valkyrie arrives as a winged prosthesis of humankind war games, still childish in his ascent towards total love, with no barriers.

Jordi Gisbert's Valkyrie emerges from the strength of a symbolic universe written in Nature, and takes Nature from humankind written in him.

Vaccaro's Valkyrie disappears as a result of the death of misfortune laws. It is the voice and the singing, the mourning and lyrical joy what lasts, inspired, eternal.

Marcos Palazzi's Valkyrie reappears, from the great beyond, from that time, in perpetuity of human dramatic tensions in silent and mutant scenarios.

Maria Gibert's Valkyrie sleeps, secluded, subjective, primitive, on the highest peak of the earth, inside a communion dream between universe harmony and youth's ideal, encircled by a ring and a fire crown under the wing of tender passion.

Albert Gonzalo's Valkyrie, latent in a landscape of symbols which can be deciphered by painting's nature, translates death, fate and love into a garden.

And, apart from this, on the top of a pedestal, instead of the valkyries' singings, we hear Perejaume's undressed narration, the essential and original sound that composes the name of things. As if the art of representing, emptying from its shape, would permit us to be the bareness that shapes, the painting that turns into music, the music that turns into pre-formal object to inaugurate the sense of words.

Allow yourself to read the educated, varied and evocative comments made by the painters, all of them motivated by our passionate propagator, as an envoy emerging from the heart of Wagner's opera. You will then understand how, as an assignment of free interpretation, on the line of the script and the score, he bangs on the final sense of the work that never ends, always work in progress, inexhaustible.

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