

Enrico Chapela



Photo: Enrico Chapela, © Bernd Uhlig

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Irrational Music

2009

8 min

for chamber orchestra

1.1.1.1.bcl.1-1.1.1.1.0-perc(2):l=vib/2wdbl/2jam bl/4tom-t/crash.cym;
ll=marimba/tamb/cowbell/2cans/2bongo/2conga/crash.cym-pft-strings

"Enrico Chapela's Irrational Music was a perfect curtain-raiser. The piece is based on Chapela's explorations of irrational numbers; but this was in no way indicative of a dry or cerebral surface. On the contrary, Irrational Music pulsates with vibrant energy. Its frequent time changes and energetic tutti pileups were deftly negotiated by New Paths. What's more, Chapela's music set the stage for the rest of the concert; serving as a foreshadowing of elements grappled with throughout the concert. The evening was often about music of deft negotiations – balancing massed orchestration versus delicate linear writing and intricate metric shifts with visceral 'dancing' rhythms." (Christian Carey, Sequenza21.com, 09 Jun 2009)

World Premiere: 05 Jun 2009

City University, Graduate Center, Elebash Recital Hall, New York, NY, USA
The New Paths Chamber Ensemble
Conductor: David Alan Miller

Li Po

2008/09

10 min

for chamber orchestra

1.1.1.1-1.1.1.1-perc(2)-strings(2.0.2.2.2)

"You could listen to this work without knowing anything of its origins and still be swept along by the wash of colors, the sputtering mechanistic energy and the riot of instrumental and amplified sounds. For a while it seemed that "Li Po" was going to be an environmental piece, with sounds coming from speakers all over the hall. But then it broke into a raw, swinging triple-meter episode and started to sound like a spectral-electronic riff on West Side Story." (Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 09 Apr 2009)

"Chapela's Li Po, in many ways the most interesting work, is for large ensemble and is very much all over the map. Chapela uses sophisticated computer programming of French spectral school to fool around with phonic syllables, Spanish- and Chinese-based. But the electronics are only one layer. There are all kinds of compelling instrumental effects, exciting visceral rhythms, and tons on tones sliding around." (Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times, 09 Apr 2009)

"Chapela's Li Po gets the award for most energetic [of the programme]. The work was composed through an involved process that included the composer reading a Spanish poem into a tape recorder and translating the reading's pitches and notes into a musical score. A computer program or two got involved along the way; at any rate, there was little resemblance between spoken word and the resulting piece that I could discern.

What emerged was a barrage of tightly intertwined instrumental and taped sounds, all over the place but tumbling over each other and closely related in timbre. It was difficult at times to tell where the tape sounds – wind, rain, buzz saws, frogs, whistles – stopped and in the instrumental sounds began. Ethereal and whomping episodes intervened, and then big slow waves. It was ten minutes of controlled mayhem, but that control was key – it gave the work shape and personality." (Timothy Mangan, Orange County Register, 09 Apr 2009)

"Chapela's Li Po makes virtuosic use of unconventional instrumental sounds – multiphonics, bowed percussion, glissando everywhere – and envelops them in voluptuous electronic textures. Yet the work is more than an onslaught of effects: tendrils of melody curl around the ear, harmonic colors glow eerily bright, rhythms have a folkish, danceable thrust." (Alex Ross, The New Yorker, Apr 2009)

World Premiere: 07 Apr 2009

Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Los Angeles Philharmonic
Conductor: Esa-Pekka Salonen