

THE MUSICIANS' WORKSHOP



CONCERT AT THE JAZZ SI, THE TALLER DE MÚSICS CLUB



CONCERT BY MAYTE MARTÍN AND TETE MONTOLIÚ AT THE JAZZ SI

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FROM THE VERY BEGINNING THE CRITERION LAY IN CALLING THE INSTITUTION THE MUSICIANS' WORKSHOP, THE MOST ALL-EMBRACING NAME POSSIBLE. WHILE JAZZ WAS THE MAIN TRUNK OF THE SCHOOL THROUGHOUT THESE YEARS, IT HAS PUT OUT STOUT BRANCHES DEVOTED TO ROCK, AFRO-CUBAN MUSIC AND, VERY ESPECIALLY, FLAMENCO.

MINGO B. FORMENTOR JOURNALIST

There are very few significant examples of the vigour and capacity of Barcelona's civil society in post-Franco Catalonia like the creation, consolidation and national and international projection of the "Taller de Músics". Looking back on it with the hindsight of the historian, it shows a remarkable concordance with the long and well documented jazz tradition in Barcelona as a city and Catalonia as a country and speaks to us of a logical continuation. But if we look at it on a shorter time-scale, that of the vitality and the structures surrounding popular music in the last twenty years, the considerable contribution and consistency of the work of the Taller de Músics has to be valued for the

daring of the life and soul of this institution, Lluís Cabrera, and of the team who have surrounded him for 16 years of fruitful social and cultural history. When the first stones of the Workshop were laid, some time in the autumn of 1979, the Catalan music industry was going through a considerable upheaval which materialized in the large-scale move of its decision-making and production centres to the capital of Spain. As a logical concomitance, musical creativity suffered, the country's pop and jazz musicians, for whom the seventies had provided a broad and fertile nursery, emigrated, hibernated or succumbed to a forced professional reconversion that

turned a large part of an artistically truncated generation into a generation of teachers. At that moment, there was also a good selection of foreign musicians of varied origin in Barcelona, predominantly South-American. These formed the original teaching nucleus of the Taller de Músics. And it was this geographical eclecticism—the reason why jazz was for all of them a port of arrival after travelling through different national cultures and personal careers—that gave the Workshop two of its most distinctive characteristics: its openness and a natural tendency to libertarianism in the best sense of the word. With barely a year of teaching activities



COMBO CLASS AT THE TALLER DE MÚSICS

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under its belt, the creation of the First Musicians' Workshop Jazz Seminar, held in Banyoles from 26 May to 8 June 1980, made the institution's wish for a permanent international exchange a reality. In January 1983, during a week of excellent weather, when the third edition of the Seminar was held at a hotel in Castelldefels, a seaside town close to Barcelona, the Workshop's educational and philosophical message was already well known to the public. Many young people from Barcelona and the surrounding area, in spite of their adherence to pop or rock, looked in on its courses and jam sessions, knowing full well that the Workshop was the home of the Orphean spirit camphorated by the traditional music schools and that the scene was still 670 kilometres away. The Workshop and its activities and services had found their place in the city and its surroundings and before long would do so in the rest of Catalonia, in Spain and in many places abroad. Today, there are more than twenty schools in Catalonia following the structural model of the Taller de Músics, almost all of them controlled and run by musicians who at some time or another took their seat in its classrooms.

The period between 1979 and 1983 was a tremendously dynamic and changeable phase in the Workshop's inside history. From this moment on a far more complex and regulated teaching structure got under way under the direction of the Portuguese double-bass player Zé Eduardo, and a generation of students took shape who today form the essential nucleus of young Spanish jazz: the Rossy brothers, Sambeat, Reinón, Cardo, Capellas, Gámez. Later came the Weeks, the Shows, the Festivals, the magazine *Jazz Sí*, the management office, the Taller recording label, and after that the classes, the Sem-

inars, integration in prestigious international circuits devoted to teaching jazz and other forms of open music, without this multiple front ever involving the loss of its spirit as a dynamic nucleus of musical activity in the society it formed part of. From the very beginning, the criterion—well chosen—lay in calling the institution the Musicians' Workshop, the most all-embracing name possible, and while jazz formed the main trunk of the school's activities throughout these years, it has put out stout branches devoted to rock, Afro-Cuban music and, very especially, flamenco. In this last field, flamenco, the social presence of the Taller de Músics has become most essential in its mature phase. Once again, the right combination of hard work, intelligent intuition and enlightened common sense have given birth to and nurtured an essential strategic breakthrough in Catalan musical creation, whose scope and repercussions are as important as they are difficult to weigh up exactly. Once again Lluís Cabrera has put into effect his irresistible dynamic force as a social catalyst to return to our society the place it must never lose in such an essential field of Hispanic music as flamenco is.

The link between the Taller de Músics and flamenco was explicitly established as such from the time of the school's first activities. Lessons in Spanish guitar were started as early as 1979. In each and every one of the Seminars that were held flamenco occupied a prominent place, but this immense flood of artistic creation came to the fore towards the end of the eighties, very exceptionally after the creation and organisation of the Carmen Amaya International Flamenco Seminar, held as part of the Cultural Olympiad at Begur, in the summer of 1989. Since then, and through the Vic Live Music

Market or the offices of the COPEC (Catalan Consortium for the Exterior Promotion of Culture), artists such as Mayte Martín, Chano Domínguez, Perico Sambeat, Cambalache and Miguel Poveda have seen their art applauded on stages all over Europe, America and Asia.

Either through its classrooms or through intervention in one of its Seminars, there is no jazz musician in the country between 25 and 35 who has not had links at one time or another with the Taller de Músics. Young Catalan flamenco, one of the liveliest and most interesting of the moment at a time when this genre is flourishing all over Spain, is structured around the Workshop's courses and concert activities. To the names already mentioned, we could add those of Julián "El Califa", Conchi Carmona, Pepe Motos, Chicuelo, Pep Pérez, La Tolea, La Tani, Montse Cortés, Miguel de la Tolea, Miguel de Toleo, etc.

How many centres linked to the popular music of our age can offer a comparable inventory? ■



EXTERIOR OF THE TALLER DE MÚSICS CLUB

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