
Young and artist: Harold Merino, dreamed music and vice versa

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The youngest musician awarded at the recent edition of the “Cubadisco 2018” International Fair, Harold Merino, arrived at the editorial staff of CubaSí with the naturalness that almost always accompanies talent.

His first phonogram “Un Time” won three nominations at the prestigious Cuban record contest and, barely aged 23, it earned Harold Merino the award in the Electronic and Electroacoustic Music category. What do you feel?

“A huge satisfaction. Not only for having been awarded, but also for having been nominated in three categories, and in one of them with music greats like Lezcay. I think that Casabe was nominated too, so it is a huge satisfaction”.

“Un Time” also garnered the award in the Discography Note category, with texts by Alberto Garrandés, which complement the musical proposal. How is that relationship established?

“It’s a compilation of all the dreams I’ve had throughout my career, which I’ve decided to make the music for, anyway, as I am not very good at talking, I decided to go to maestro Garrandés, because we have a long friendship, and asked him to transcribe these dreams, so it could not only be an audible work, but visible as well, and he told me: perfect, you tell me the characters you want. I explained my idea to him and well, it ended up to be this work, which has made me very happy”.

Harold studied piano from the elementary level and entered the Higher Institute of Art in this specialty; he’s grateful to the contributions of his teachers Hernán Lopez-Nussa and Ulises Hernández, and Juan Piñera’s workshops, indispensable in the new interests that led him to a career change to musical sound direction. Why?

“It’s a very interesting branch that all musicians should know, because it deals with issues of musical production, sound engineering and analysis. It’s something very complete for a musician, and gives you the chance to be a musical producer, a sound engineer, to work on records. I had a special interest with composition since my childhood and I was always in this musical environment, in the studios with jazz players, and thus I started my compositions from jazz, I am a great jazz enthusiast. Electronic music did not come until third or fourth year of middle level, when I started to take an interest in the music by Juan Blanco, Fariñas and Juan Piñera, being this latter the one who just enabled me to know these Cuban composers, because Piñera delivers a workshop on composition in which you take your works and he says what he thinks, makes suggestions, and he told me: listen to these compositions and then we discuss in class”.

“Later, I started to take an interest in the electronic music by national and international DJs, I mean, dance music, IDN, house music; then, as I have a level of academic training, I said: I am going to make an electronic music that links everything I’ve made, as much composition or jazz, began to work with electronic pianos and some seven or eight years ago I started to make my first things”.

And there lies the genesis of “Un Time”, but how long did you have to travel until reaching the album?

“It was difficult at the beginning, because you must handle the software first; you can have the ideas in your head, but you cannot do anything until you learn to handle the software, and that was a task of five years or so... I said since: well, I am going to begin a project so I can summarize this time, and then, I started to gather themes to build something apparently coherent, and made this album, in which I just try to summarize that experience throughout all my few years of experience in the world of music, I tried to put them there and say: this is my work; tell me what you think about it; give a piece of advice, because actually, this is a beautiful world. In the world of electronic music you are always innovating, you’re always looking for new sonorities, and you never know how far you are going to go”.

“When I decided to begin the project, I’ve already had five themes. They were all dreams; generally the composer writes his experiences about what he dreams of, and I said: well, I hope to dream more... That’s why, it was also a very laborious album, because you do not remember everything you dream, then, whenever I recalled something I tried to get up in the early hours and begin a melodic line, something that would give me the point of that story”.

Translated by Jorge Mesa Benjamin / CubaSi Translation Staff
