

CREDO

Interview with Andrea Molino, director of Fabrica Musica

- 1- *CREDO is a multimedia event about ethnic conflicts, with particular emphasis on the situation of people of mixed races. Can you explain the origins of this project?*

As is often the case, at the base of this project there are a series of small episodes, ideas, considerations that over time have overlapped. I remember, for example, that a Fabrica bursar, Joy Frempong, half Swiss and half Ghanaian, told me about a number of emotions and feelings she had lived through since she was a child, in particular concerning the development of her identity. Her personal stories fascinated me. Later I delved through literary quotations, and fragments from The Bible and other sacred books. Everything started to accumulate and slowly the ideas, even the musical and theatrical ones, began to take shape. Another step was my trip to Karlsruhe and the meeting with Achim Thorwald, the director of the Staatstheater, with whom there was a common interest from the beginning. And so, a year and a half ago, we decided to make a huge project out of these elements. The project would include David Moss and the Fabrica musicians accompanied by the theatre's symphonic orchestra of over 90 musicians, a complex multimedia system and a satellite connection with the partner cities in the project, Istanbul, Jerusalem and Belfast, who have had and still have ethnic and religious conflicts in their own backyards.

- 2- *Was CREDO the initial title for the project?*

Yes, "credo" in the Latin sense: the first word of the apostolic symbol. And "credo" as profession of faith, but also in the more normal sense, in everyday life. In every war, all the sides in conflict pray to their God for victory. But as Mark Twain wrote, praying to God for one's own victory means also praying for the death and destruction of the other side. To explain the concept better we thought of the subtitle **The Innocence of God**, taken from an article by José Saramago, published the day after September 11 2001, on what he defines the "God factor" in current conflicts. In fact, the conclusion of Saramago's essay is that "despite all of this, God is innocent". Because for those who believe, God is innocent because he is absolute good; and for those who don't believe – like Saramago – "He is innocent like something that does not exist". Even from extreme points of view the conclusion is the same: the motivations of war and conflict need to be looked for elsewhere. The absurdity of this situation is at the center of our project, especially through the theme of the so-called "**bastards**", who are the concrete representations of the paradoxical futility of every conflict.

- 3- *What do you mean exactly by bastards?*

This needs a brief explanation. Discrimination against those born "irregularly" is ancient: in Deuteronomy 23,3 it states that "A bastard shall not enter into the assembly of Jehovah; even to the tenth generation shall none of his enter into the assembly of Jehovah." This idea of intolerance, therefore, has existed since the beginning of culture. During our travels in different countries we interviewed the heads of various congregations, of different religious doctrines.

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It was staggering to discover how churches are all obsessed with avoiding that people of their faith mix physically, in a carnal sense, with people of other religions. All of this is irrational. So we are convinced that today, living in complex and dangerous cultural circumstances, “bastards” can become the ideal image of the absurdity of conflict, because they represent the concrete – *carnal* – evidence that races, cultural and religions can coexist. In Belfast, Jerusalem and Istanbul, but also in 15 other cities around the world, we sought out people, children of mixed marriages who had personal, direct experience of the violence of local racial conflict. Our purpose was to focus attention on them and let them talk or just be seen, bearing physical, flesh and blood witness to the fact that we create wars, they don't just happen. Because it is their undeniable physical existence not a theory, a phrase or a good intention, that undermines the psychological cause of the conflict.

4- *Why are war and intolerance in the mind and not in things?*

Listening to the interviews from South Africa, for example, you come across situations which are absolute paradoxes, like that of a South African girl, daughter of a white Christian father and a black Muslim mother. On the first day of school, accompanied by her mother, she was told the class was full: there was no more room for her. The next day, accompanied by her white father, she found a place right away and began lessons. This example, like infinite others, demonstrates that the problems are conceptual, they don't exist in reality: they are indeed in the mind not in things. I am deeply convinced that culture and the arts have the role, I would even say the duty, to try to destroy these prejudices. What I would like to do with the CREDO project is generate some confusion.

5- *Excuse me, did you say confusion?*

That's it, confusion, chaos, disorder. I want to put those who will witness this event in front of people, situations, ideas that break down deeply rooted preconceptions like race, difference, supremacy, violence, conflict. In Brazil, for example, being a “bastard” is a situation of extreme richness and merriment. I would like spectators to leave the event with ideas that are less clear, more confused. There is another aspect that I will try and bring to light, that seemed clear from the interviews that we did in the various cities: the common element that seems to unite all of these conflicts, seemingly so different, is *fear*. The moment in which, for one reason or another, a group of people feels threatened – or, and it happens with chilling frequency, they are made to feel threatened – every rational element in the relations with the antagonist group ceases to be relevant. Fear pushes an entire community “into the corner”, crushes it with a defensive attitude, and opens the door for reactions of unthinkable violence. As a wonderful German fragment that we have included in the text of the event says: *“It is fear that makes people evil, and it is evilness that creates fear. So the circle closes between nothing and destruction, and recreated itself endlessly, as if alone. Death is provoked by fear of death.”*

6- *How, where and when will the event take place?*

CREDO's main event is a multimedia musical theatre, with the participation of the Karlsruhe Staatskapelle, the vocalist David Moss, young musicians from Fabrica Musica and the use of video, literary texts, fragments of interviews, lines of poetry that are integrated in a dramatic and musical sense into the opera. The theatrical direction is by Achim Thorwald, director of the theatre, who with me also

developed the "libretto" of the project. The world premier will be on April 30 2004 at the Staatstheater in Karlsruhe, with a repeat performance on May 2. Three cities, Istanbul, Belfast and Jerusalem, will be connected via satellite, and young musicians from those places, who will have developed their part at Fabrica, will perform live "windows": they will play live during the event from their cities, accompanied by the big German orchestra

7- *So the event also has a strong technological component...*

The most important element for me from this point of view is that technology, which in contemporary events is often reduced to a mere decoration, will become a true linguistic factor, an integral part of the theatrical and musical *mise-en-scène*. Like a microphone, to use a simple example, which if used well turns into a musical instrument, a magnifying glass of sound rather than a simple amplifier. The fact that there are musicians playing together at a distance of 3,000 kilometers becomes a dramatic element: distance becomes imaginary, it is annulled thanks to satellite technology that makes this metaphorical "miracle" possible. In addition to the event there will be other parallel elements that also form an integral part. There will be a book produced by Fabrica that will collect fragments of the interviews, a live recording on Dvd of the event, an internet site. So it is really a global project, with the intention of going beyond the event in a traditional sense.

8- *And after Karlsruhe?*

The program will continue in 2005. In June CREDO will open the International Festival in Istanbul and a month later it will be in the program at the Queensland Music Festival in Brisbane, Australia.