

The Barcelona Modern International Composition Course

4th Edition 2017/18

By Dr. HueyChing Chong, Oct 2019

It is a wonderful experience for young composers to take part in the Barcelona Modern International Composition Course because it provides young composers a substantial period of time to work with performer(s) to develop a brand new piece without any fixed theme. Thus, the final concert resulted in brilliant mixed of personal styles from young composers with various backgrounds.

It is a course developed by Spanish composer Demian Luna, in collaboration with the Institut Français-Barcelona. In every editions, a different guest composer is invited to serve as a mentor to the young composers. I was selected as an active participant during the 4th edition, and the guest composer-mentor was renowned Spanish composer, José Manuel López López, a very kind and encouraging mentor.

Fourteen composers were selected as active participants and we were divided into three groups. Each group was assigned separately to work with three different ensemble/soloist. I was honoured to be given a chance to collaborate with guest pianist, Ricardo Descalzo, (a renowned pianist with tremendous experienced and passion for experimental piano) on a new piano solo piece called "*ret(P)rospect [2017/18]*". Besides that, the resident ensemble is Barcelona Modern Ensemble, and the guest ensemble was Bcn216.

During the course, we get to learn about many experimental piano pieces such as *Makrokosmos* by American composer, George Crumb; *Játékok* by Hungarian composer, György Kurtág, *Mobile* by Brazilian composer, Michelle Agnes, and many more. The wonderful part is that we get to learn about these pieces not only from Ricardo himself, also through observing how young pianists study these pieces with Ricardo. These opportunities provided us a chance to learn from both perspectives, the experienced pianist (Ricardo) and the young pianists.

Towards the end of the course, a public concert was presented with world premieres of the participants new compositions. These pieces were wonderful results that build through months of solid collaboration between musicians and composers. Along with that, few more concerts involving the ensembles and guest composer were presented as part of the course concert-series.

The wonderful opportunities to collaborate freely with guest musicians and receiving professional guidance from guest composer not only during individual composition lessons, also during rehearsals were precious for young composers who are at the early stage of our careers.

The Barcelona Modern International Composition Course is still going strong and is now opening for application for their sixth edition featuring guest composer, Alberto Posadas; guest ensembles, Ensemble Sillages and Quatour Aeolina; and resident ensemble, Barcelona Modern Ensemble. Based on my personal experience, I highly recommend young composers to apply!

