Esther Dorado Suela

The connection of the emotions
An inside look at the orchestral interpretation

Written reflection within independent project
The sounding part of this thesis includes the following recordings:
Esther Dorado Suela, flute – master examkonsert.mp4
ABSTRACT
As musicians, our main goal when we perform a piece is to transmit something to the audience: emotion. And to get this emotion also while performing. It is our way to communicate. When we are soloists, we make our own interpretation of the piece to perform, and the cycle that the music does is from the composer, thorough us, and then the audience. But what happens when we are in the orchestra?
In an orchestra, we are 100 musicians, each one a very different type of performer, each one with their own mentality, ideas, minds, etc. And also, we have to add a very important level in the music cycle here: the conductor. When we perform a piece with the orchestra, we do not play our own interpretation, but the one of the conductor. So, what happens when you play an interpretation that is not yours among so many other musicians? How do we achieve and transmit this emotion? How can we work this out? Does the relationship between the musicians affects the result?
To answer all these questions, I have based my thesis work in two basic pillars: first, literature and documentaries about the emotion in the music and its relation to the orchestral world; and second, a series of interviews with different professional orchestra musicians who have helped me to clarify all these interrogations and which have led me into a conclusion about how the view about these topics is from inside the orchestra.
I have preferred to develop my thesis more like an essay to also express my opinion about these subjects we are talking about.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the interviews</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewees</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Taube Sundén - Piccolo</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto Bodí López - Trumpet</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josep Castanyer Alonso – Cello</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won-Hee Lee – Violin</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mónica Raga Piqueras - Flute</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The discussion topics</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusions from the interviews</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Importance of an open-mind</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Importance of hierarchy</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Importance of listening</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Importance of relationships and experience</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista con Mónica Raga Piqueras – 26.01.2021 (Spanish)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Mónica Raga Piqueras – 26.01.2021 (English)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Josep Castanyer Alonso – 07.12.2020</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Linda Taube Sundén - 24.11.2020</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista con Roberto Bodí López – 29.11.2020 (Spanish)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Roberto Bodí López – 29.11.2021 (English)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Won-Hee Lee - 17.01.2021</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

When you ask someone what is music?, the general answer is usually something like: it is a way of transmitting emotions and feelings, it is art, it is a way of expression and communication…

For me, the key word here would be emotion. The emotion for me is one of the goals we want to achieve as musicians. We want to move the audience with our performances, make them feel what we are feeling while we play a piece, make them part of it.

After this reflection, I started to think on whom does the emotion depends? The audience, the performer, the composer…? This is the key of interpretation.

The composer writes a piece, with all the notes and indications to try to capture exactly what he or she wanted to pursue with his/her music, his/her idea. Then, we as performers, have to take this piece and do our own interpretation of it (of course, based in the style of the composer, his/her epoch, etc.). But this interpretation is never going to be completely objective.

And then, it comes to the audience, and each person is going to receive this music and this emotion in their own way.

When you are a soloist, this part is easy since you are the only one who must take all the decisions regarding the interpretation and what you want to transmit to the audience. But when you have an orchestra, this gets complicated.

Which is our expectation when we perform music? Is it the emotion? Perfection? The “perfect” interpretation?

The main goal as a musician for me has always been to become an orchestral musician. When I play in the orchestra, it is magical, something amazing happens. For me it has always been a miracle that 100 musicians, each with a different mind and soul, each being a totally different kind of performer, come together and create those immense works of art. All the orchestral musicians have to follow one interpretation: the one of the conductor. Is it possible to transmit any kind of emotion with an interpretation that is not yours?
Development

In this project I want to delve into orchestral music, specifically in the subject of interpretation and emotion. In orchestral music many different parts come into play: from the composer, the musicians, the conductor and of course the audience.

Each of these parts contributes a different but essential part in what makes one performance so different from another, and that in a certain way excites both the audience and the musicians. I find it exciting to inquire about how a group of so many musicians with such different ideas and such different experiences, different mentalities, etc. they unite in a single interpretation that is not even their own, but is what the conductor imposes. Can you perform an interpretation that may or may not coincide with your own interpretation? How does this influence the musicians and the audience? How do musicians work to achieve such a wonderful result and excite the audience when there are so many minds and so many different souls playing?

I think that this discussion can be a very interesting topic to deal with between orchestral musicians and conductors.

As performers, we have to have our own criteria when we choose how to perform a piece. But what happen when you have 100 musicians with their own performance and their own ways to see the pièce? You have to have a conductor who “imposes” his/her way of seeing the music. Is it possible to transmit something that you do not feel and create such a wonderful reaction in the audience?

I have decided to carry out this work because we think that the purpose of music is to transmit, move and communicate. In the different music schools they always teach us the technical part, how to read the notes, how to make a certain sound on the instrument, the whole theory… But there is rarely talk about the emotional part and how to work on this part.

“Emotion in music can be studied in many different views: philosophical, musicological, psychological, neurobiological, anthropological and sociological. In the history of the music psychology, when we talk about the emotional aspect, we can find 3 mistakes: hedonism (we confuse the aesthetic experience with the sensually pleasing); atomism (separate and differentiated sounds); and universalism (valid answers for all times and places)” (Meyer, 2016). This paragraph of the book “La emoción y el significado en la música” can be understood like: these “mistakes” we find in the way of receiving and conceiving this emotional aspect in music are some ways we can distort the objective emotion when we perform or listen a musical piece. But the emotional answer is never going to be objective in my opinion.

Then, what happens with the orchestral music? The emotional responses are not universal. Is it
a good interpretation when it does not provoke an emotional answer in you?

The musical experience is based in answers that are acquired through the learning. That leads us to the musical education. There is a common part, historical, but there is also a cultural part particular of each country. How do we see these differences when we are playing?

Because music is often regarded as the “language of emotions” it makes sense to explore emotion in live performers, that is, in ways that bring to life an aural experience that can be deeply emotive for themselves and for those who are the recipients of their effort. (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010)

In literature we can find a lot of references to the emotional character of the music. Innumerable works are cited as emotionally moving, exciting… simply labeling a passage as endowed with an emotional quality tells us nothing about the rationale for such a response. What is affective in this passage? The majority of these references allude to the mood and associative responses. The same stimulation conditions can give rise to different types of affective or intellectual response.

Is impossible to have a common answer, common reaction to the music we listen to.

That is why I have to limit our research in the music field. I mean, we are only taking in consideration occidental music and the European culture.

**Musicians**

The capacity of music to evoke emotions is no doubt a primary reason – perhaps the main reason – which people listen to music. Because listening to music always precedes performing it in a musician’s development, it is likely the two activities share underlying motives. Musicians pursue performance primarily for a hedonic motive that is to generate positive emotional experiences mostly for one’s own satisfaction. If hearing a beautiful melody is pleasing, it seems that being able to perform it oneself can be even more powerful experience.

Music making, whether alone or with others, has the potential to be an absorbing experience. The act of group music making may be unique in its opportunity for introspection and catharsis, perhaps adding to the emotional connection members feels with one another. Of course, relationships between co-performers take time to develop. The social processes of a group are largely determined by the roles assumed by members. Larger ensembles with assigned leader (conductor), may not face as many interpersonal challenges during rehearsals. Also, the moods of individual musicians do affect a group’s overall dynamic and the musical progress it will make. Even in a large ensemble led by a conductor, a positive group mood can be a prerequisite to enhancing ensemble performance quality.
To summarize, musicians develop very close relationships with others as members of a group. The personal connections they feel with each other can add to the music induced emotions experienced in their group activities. Group emotional experiences can be most intense during moments of performance.

It is also noteworthy that musicians’ chief mechanisms for communicating with each other during performance, eye contact and bodily gesture, are primary and natural ways that human beings express emotion. Nowhere are these attributes more evident than in the role of a conductor. For example, Wilhelm Furtwängler has been described as a formidable magician, a man capable of setting an entire ensemble of musicians on fire, sending them into a state of ecstasy (Lebrecht, 1991). Such reflections highlight the level of emotional engagement demanded during rehearsals and performances of high-quality music, plus also the intense relationships that develop between the members of professional orchestras whose careers depend on achieving a consistent level of excellence of a type and intensity that are rare in other disciplines (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010).

**Summary of the interviews**

As the main part of this project, I have done 5 interviews with different professional orchestra musicians: a flute player, a trumpet player, a piccolo player, a violin player and a cello player. I wanted them to play different instruments to get different versions and perspectives since the woodwinds and brass are always soloists and strings are always part of a bigger section. I believe that the topic of this investigation is really important in the development of the orchestras and is a very seldom discussed topic. Most of the times that we approach this point of view in a conversation, we usually do it with the conductor or the composer, but never or almost never with the musicians. So that is why I decided to know the point of view of the musicians this time. And also because my goal as a flutist is to become an orchestral musician, so I think this will help me in my journey and will give me important guidelines to face this job in the future.
**Interviewees**

First of all, I will introduce the people I have interviewed:

**Linda Taube Sundén - Piccolo**

The first person I interviewed was Linda Taube Sundén. She plays principal piccolo in the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. She has done that for 12 years and before that she played in the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra as a second flute with piccolo, and she also had long term contracts in the opera in Stockholm and Gothenburg, and in the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra.

**Roberto Bodí López - Trumpet**

The second person I interviewed was Roberto Bodí López. He is principal trumpet of Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León (OSCYL) in Spain. He also has played with professional orchestras like: ONE (Orquesta Nacional de España), OBC (Orquesta Sinfónica de Barcelona y Nacional de Cataluña), Orquesta de Valencia and Orquesta Sinfónica de La Coruña.

**Josep Castanyer Alonso – Cello**

The third person I interviewed was Josep Castanyer Alonso. He plays cello in the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. He also has played with some orchestras in Germany.

**Won-Hee Lee – Violin**

The fourth person I interviewed was Won-Hee Lee. She plays violin in the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. She has also worked with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin, Weinberger Kammerorchester, the Aurora Chamber Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada, and Kammerakademie Potsdam.

**Mónica Raga Piqueras - Flute**

The last person I interviewed was Mónica Raga Piqueras. She is the principal flute of Orquesta Sinfónica de Radio Televisión Española. She also was a member of the OBC (Orquesta Sinfónica de Barcelona y Nacional de Cataluña).
The discussion topics

The first question I asked them was: Do you always agree with the interpretation that the conductor makes of the piece? All of them say no. But they also talked about that this is a job. As in an every other job, you have to try to do it the best possible. “I think is a challenge to play what someone else wants, to play against your own will somehow. It is a challenge to try to do something different. It depends on what the conductor wants of course, I mean, it can be just some details that you don’t really care about, that you don’t agree, but doesn’t really matter. It can also be something that you really don’t agree with, that it feels weird to play like that, but it’s a… I just think it’s a challenge. That’s the job I would say. You just have to try to make it as close to the conductor’s opinion as possible.” (Interview with Linda Taube Sundén)

You can always disagree on some things with the conductor, but they said that the majority of conductors are very good and that they know what they are doing, so you have to try to conform to their ideas and play the best possible. Also, they agreed that you have to be open minded. If some conductor suggest something that maybe you never have thought about it, you have to try it and maybe you will like it and your conception will change. You can always learn something. Roberto and Mónica also talked about the difference between being young when you are starting in an orchestra, and being experienced, when you have been playing in the same orchestra for 20 years. When you are young, you have a lot of energy, and a lot of ideas, and you always will try to get the best result ever. When you are experienced, you are less rigid.

Related to this, I talked with them about how they work inside the section when this happens. How is the dynamic of the section? Here we must bear in mind that is not the same to have a woodwind section or brass section as being in a violin section. This was a common point that all of them agreed about: the importance of the hierarchy in the section. You always have to respect the decisions of the principal of the section. And if you have to talk about something related to the interpretation, you will talk about it with the principal, and he or she will talk with the conductor. But it is very important to respect the hierarchy and be good in your job, even if you are a tutti player or a second flute or trumpet. Because, if everyone performed as a soloist, there would be no balance and the orchestra would not work. We also talked about the sectionals, if they are important or not, and the conclusion was that yes, they are important but not always, it is not a necessary thing.
The second topic I discussed with them was how so many different people, with their own souls, their own minds and their own emotional baggage can unite in only one interpretation. The answers were kind of similar to the previous question. They talked about the importance to do your job no matter what, be professional and try to do your best as in any other job; respect the hierarchy. Also, the difference of age is an important fact here. When you are young, you have a lot of energy, a lot of ideas, and you feel so powerful, but with the time you learn that it is okay also to chill, and that is good to have energy, but disciplined energy and controlled emotions. You are playing with so many other people, so you have to row in the same direction as them and unify criteria.

After this, we talked about the importance of chamber music in the orchestra: do you think it is important and a positive thing to perform chamber music inside the orchestra? All of them agreed that it is a positive thing to do. Especially for the string players. Why is that? Because in chamber music you usually play your own part, and it is a different role of what they do in the orchestra. In the orchestra, they are part of a bigger section, all playing the same part, and you can get used to it and relax. So, sometimes it is good to get out of your comfort zone and be heard, take more responsibility and work on your own part. It is a good thing also because you can hear what the others are doing and react to that, and this is a very good training for the orchestra work. The other advantage of chamber music is that you get to know the other players better, in a musical way, and also, learn more about how their instrument works, so you can later get a better reaction when you are in the orchestra. And also in the personal way. This thought leads us to the next question of the interview: how important is for you the relationship between the musicians and the conductor? Do you think it affects the musical and emotional result? About the relationship with the conductor everyone agreed that is good to have a chief conductor who knows the orchestra and who can build and add something every week that makes the result very good. But also they said that it is really good to have occasional conductors that may come only for one week because it brings new inspiration and new challenges, and it makes you be more alert. Change is also good.

About the relationship between the musicians in the orchestra, there were different opinions. Mónica said that for her it is something basic that she has had always in the band and the orchestra, it is a very good part of the job get to know your colleagues and realize they are wonderful and amazing people. That makes you respect them even more and leads to a better result when you play in the orchestra. Josep said that for him it is a good thing to create good relationships in the orchestra because it creates good mood, so everyone feels better and get
more relaxed, so the sound is better. And also, that the audience notices that. But in the other hand, Roberto said that he prefers to keep the relationships strictly professional because he thinks it gives better results.

The last part of the interviews was focused on the question: what is your goal as an orchestra musician? I think it is just very enlightening to write some of their reflections:

“My objective is to enjoy myself and have a good time. That's my goal when I go to the orchestra every day”

“In fact, they are small goals that are good to set, so as not to get comfortable more than anything else. Those small goals, let's say, purely work-related, right? […] Well, that's all very well, setting those little goals. But the primary goal for me, which if it's not, I want it to become, and I want it to be that, is to have a good time. Otherwise, what's the point?”

“To make music as beautiful as possible, and to really express something I would say, so that it actually means something to the audience”.

“Something I got from my teachers was that, everything I do is for me, and then the rest. But I always think it's very pretentious, but I think whenever I play, I play for me. And that assumes that whatever I do is high level, right?”

Conclusions from the interviews

After I did these interviews, two questions came to my mind: how can I apply this to my work? And how this affects my judgement and my playing when I play in orchestra?

First of all, hearing all this wonderful people talk about their profession and their passion has been really inspiring. As a student, you are always looking for good references to base yourself upon and to inspire you. And these people have been absolutely enriching. It makes me want to continue working on what I like and it encourages me to push myself in the right direction. Also, when we are studying, we have a distorted idea about what is going to be to play in a professional orchestra. These musicians have given me an actual and real professional life perspective that have helped me to realize the big difference we have between the school orchestra and a professional orchestra, and how it changes when it becomes your everyday work. “Then, you know, the point is not to get into a place, is it? So you audition and you're already the principal flute of the Vienna Philharmonic. That's not, man, it's great, but the great
thing is to be there for a day and another day, and a week, and a week, and a year, and ten years, and that's hard, and either you have your self... self energy, or it's a rhythm that absorbs you, eh?” (Interview with Roberto Bodi López)

After having done the interviews, I have come up with four fundamental ideas that have helped me a lot when it comes to playing in an orchestra:

1. Importance of an open-mind
The first is that every orchestral musician has to be open-minded. This is a reality. There are people who are born to be soloists and people who are born to be orchestral musicians. I think that orchestral musicians have a very different profile. When you play in an orchestra with other musicians, you stop being important and become a fundamental piece of the puzzle. It's like a colony of ants. They all work in perfect harmony to bring food to their anthill. The moment one of them reveals itself and leaves its role, the work chain stops working. It is the same in the orchestra.

Of course, every musician has his own musical ideas and his own way of playing, but when you come to an orchestra and maybe have to play something that at first you don't like very much, it opens your mind. You may find that what you didn't like at first, you like later on. “Part of the game is that you do, like as a job as a tutti player, you do what the conductor is showing as convincingly as possible and then you try to internalize it even if you disagree with it because a lot of the time I found it like, if you kind of actively fight against it, of course you are never gonna see their side, but if you actually really try to internalize it maybe at the end of the week, you are like: you know, that works! I didn’t like it but actually that was kind of interesting and then suddenly you have a whole new perspective and a whole new viewpoint and how it could have gone.” (Interview with Won-Hee Lee)

Adaptation is another key word for me in the orchestra. Adaptation and reaction. “But this thing with the conductor, if you don’t like what he says and … I mean, it is happening all the time so… just, I think you need to be very flexible. It is like a combination of being very strong, sensitive and flexible.” (Interview with Linda Taube Sundén).

I think the most important thing when it comes to getting a good orchestra performance is to keep in mind that you are not alone, and you have to adapt and react to what you hear your colleagues do and what the conductor tells you. It's like a game of balance and equilibrium. Of course, to achieve this you have to be an excellent musician, and know how to react to any suggestion. In fact, I would go so far as to say that orchestral musicians should be the most
technically prepared. “I think for the best result in an orchestra is very good musicians who practice and who are able to play together and listen, and who wants to play together, like, because if you play in an orchestra and you are only just willing to play solos and only interested in your own playing, it is impossible to play with you. So, big ears and patience.” (Interview with Linda Taube Sundén)

2. Importance of hierarchy
The second fundamental idea that I have learned from the interviews is the importance of hierarchy in the orchestra. It is fundamental to know what role you occupy within the orchestra and to respect these roles at all times. If not, it can become chaos. Therefore, you must do your job to the best of your ability, whether you are a soloist or a tutti. As in any natural organization, hierarchy in the orchestra is basic to its functioning.

In the larger sections such as violins or cellos, it is imperative that the hierarchy is respected. In the wind sections, it is a little different since each person has a different role. But the principal always has the last word. “That's why the people with more responsibility are there, to indicate guidelines, because otherwise it would be chaos, in an orchestra, the idea is to unify criteria, and so you have a person who is the concertmaster, for example. There cannot be 14 concertmasters, then, what the concertmaster says has to be done by the rest of the violin string, no matter how many they are. […]That's what an orchestra is all about, unifying criteria, so that everyone does the same thing and thinks and rows in the same direction. Otherwise, it would be chaos. It would be to raise the baton and everyone would do their own interpretation, that can't be.” (Interview with Mónica Raga Piqueras)

That's why it's very important to work in sectionals. For me it is a fundamental idea to have sectionals in the orchestra because in them you can solve many doubts regarding the interpretation and you can have the opportunity to expose your ideas to the soloist or the section leader. Feeling listened to is very important in the orchestra.

3. Importance of listening
The third fundamental idea is that listening to each other is basic. Listening to your colleagues while you are playing and having all 5 senses in the moment of the performance is the most important thing to guarantee a union that leads to the great work of art that we want to transmit, and as a consequence, to move the audience.

“But paradoxically, playing as a soloist in the orchestra demands much more from me; it demands much more from me. Not only do I have to know the whole piece, but also the
entrances of each instrument if possible, and everything in general, and my role must be fully integrated into it, and be prepared for the right moment where I have to start a solo, where I pass the phrase to this or that partner, listen to the harmonies of the whole ensemble, from the basses, the violins, everything... for me it is much more demanding than playing a flute-piano recital for example, because of course, there are all kinds of recitals.” (Interview with Mónica Raga Piqueras) This words of Mónica reflect perfectly this dynamic that is basic in the orchestra and that sometimes we take it for granted, but, as she said, it is one of the most difficult things when we are on stage and demands a lot.

To work this, chamber music is very important within the orchestra. Playing chamber music is for me like a miniature orchestra work but much more intense. Everything is looked at in more detail, you have the opportunity to play a leading role and be more exposed, you can listen better to your colleagues and yourself... it is also a very good practice to put interpretative ideas in common and get to know how your fellow orchestra members play, both technically and interpretatively. “You learn to listen to yourself and to the others, and for a string player it’s quite important because you play with others but you have the privilege to hear yourself, which you don’t have in the orchestra. As a wind player, you hear yourself in the orchestra; as a string player, you shouldn’t here yourself most of the time, so it teaches you a lot about listening to harmonies and adapting intonation for example, or timing things, like learning how to read, how a violinist reads with their bow and reacting to the body language but it is in a smaller setting so it is, in a sense it is easier, but then it is also more difficult than orchestra because it is more exposed, but it is a beautiful way to, well, it is too different things but they have a lot in common.” (Interview with Josep Castanyer Alonso)

4. Importance of relationships and experience

The last fundamental idea encompasses two smaller ones. The first is the importance of personal relationships within the orchestra. For me it is very important to be able to go to work every day with people with whom you have a good relationship and where there is a good working environment. I think this fosters creativity and makes the music flow better when interpreting a piece. Regarding the relationship with the conductor, I think it is good to have a conductor who knows the orchestra and can work week after week with it, but I think it is also good when new conductors come to conduct. When a new conductor leads an orchestra, the attitude of the musicians is different and it is a challenge for them, which makes them more alert and therefore they can respond better to the conductor's demands. This will result in a better performance.
The second idea is experience. I am still very young and have very little experience, but nevertheless I have a lot of energy and a lot of desire to do my job well in the orchestra. “As a young man, you have your ideas. You, as you have your idea, you have taken it to the limit. And not now. Now, about 10 years ago or so, the role is different” (Interview with Roberto Bodí López). I think that the balance between people who have been in the orchestra for a long time and have a lot of experience and new and young people who enter with renewed energy is very important in the dynamics of the orchestra, and this makes the interpretation better.
References


Appendixes

Entrevista con Mónica Raga Piqueras – 26.01.2021 (Spanish)

Esther – Pues nada, primero me gustaría que te presentases, me contases un poco en qué orquesta estás ahora, cuál ha sido tu experiencia previa en orquesta, y bueno, un poco tu carrera.

Mónica – Vale, pues bueno, mi nombre es Mónica Raga Piqueras y ocupo la plaza de flauta solista en la Orquesta Sinfónica de Radio Televisión Española desde el 2000. Y anteriormente a eso, mi trayectoria en orquesta fueron, pues desde 1993 hasta el momento en que vine a la RTVE pues estuve en la Orquesta Ciudad de Barcelona o Sinfónica de Barcelona y Nacional de Cataluña, como después se llegó a llamar. Entonces fueron esos años digamos de bastante tute tocando todo, porque lo tocaba todo, ocupando la plaza de flauta segunda con piccolo, entonces ahí ya hice muchísimo repertorio, y después ya vine aquí a Madrid, y en fin, ya son pues 20 años, desde el 2000 aquí al pie del cañón.

E- Jolín, estupendo. Bueno, pues me gustaría comenzar hablando de lo que te comenté: la diferencia entre interpretar cuando eres solista e interpretar cuando estás en orquesta. Y en el sentido de la emoción, ¿no?, de cómo transmitir en base a la interpretación que haces de la obra. Para ti, ¿tú sientes lo mismo cuando estás tocando como solista o en orquesta? ¿Cuál es la diferencia? ¿Cuál es tu impresión?

M- Tú te refieres a tocar de concertista o qué? Porque de solista toco todos los días.

E- No, me refiero cuando tocas tú sola con el piano, o tú sola con la orquesta, cuando no estás en tu plaza de flauta solista.

M- Si, bueno, la verdad que son cosas muy diferentes, claro. En mi trabajo en la orquesta hay obras que tienen un papel muy solista y hay obras en las que me tengo que integrar muchísimo en el grupo y casi pasar desapercibida y sólo proporcionar un color digamos, no? Y después en la música de cámara, claro, es totalmente diferente, marcase un recital para flauta y piano en el que estás al 100%. Pero paradójicamente, a mí me exige mucho más tocar de solista dentro de la orquesta; me exige mucho más. No solo me tengo que conocer toda la obra, sino que también las entradas de cada instrumento a ser posible, y todo en general, y mi papel que se integre plenamente en ello, y estar preparada para el momento justo donde tengo que empezar
un solo, donde le paso la frase al compañero este o aquel, escuchar las armonías de todo el conjunto, desde los bajos, de los violines, de todo… para mi es mucho más exigente eso que tocar un recital de flauta-piano por ejemplo, porque vamos, después hay de toda índole, claro. Tú sabrás, en música de cámara hay innumerables combinaciones.

Y también como concertista tengo esa experiencia, y es mucho más libre, ¿no? Me siento más libre cuando yo tengo que tocar delante de la orquesta. Es verdad que tienes más responsabilidad sobre tus hombros, pero eres más libre a la hora de elegir tempos, a la hora de hacer tu propia interpretación, ¿no? Porque cuando tú estás dentro de la orquesta, hay directores que te dejan tocar muchísimo, pero hay directores que te marcan todo, hasta las respiraciones.

E- Mmmmmm. Esto es muy interesante. Claro, tú me imagino… bueno, ¿estás de acuerdo siempre con la interpretación que hace el director de una obra cuando tocas en orquesta?

M- No. Mi respuesta en no, no siempre estoy de acuerdo. Si tengo que decirte un porcentaje, posiblemente diría… no sé… un 65%, como ¾ partes de mi trabajo global. Pero es que aquí vienen muy diferentes directores. Cada semana prácticamente viene uno, menos el titular que tiene contratadas como unas 6 u 8 semanas, no me acuerdo, incluso pueden ser más, no lo sé. Pero aparte del que tengamos de titular en este momento, porque también hemos cambiado de titular varias veces; aparte de él, aquí viene gente variopinta. Entonces, no. No estoy de acuerdo siempre con la interpretación. Intento adecuarme lo máximo pero también intento no hacer nada que contradiga mis instintos, sabes?

E- Claro, eso te iba a preguntar. ¿Cómo gestionas tú cuando a lo mejor tienes que tocar algo que no sientes como tuyo? ¿Cómo interpretas algo que a lo mejor no te llega a convencer?

M- A ver, la respuesta políticamente correcta sería: pues le hago caso, claro que sí. Toco como él quiere. En todo caso es verdad que con la experiencia me puedo dar bastantes libertades hasta con los más exigentes, no? En todo caso, yo puedo acercarme a ellos y llegar a un acuerdo. Porque si yo no quiero respirar en algún sitio, oye pues él tiene que comprender que es mi frase, no?

Eso ya casi nunca sucede. Pero es verdad que sí que hay alguno, de los más viejos, los más antiguos… ellos tienen una idea muy fija de su música; que normalmente son los mejores directores, eh?, y los que más me exigen, o nos exigen.

Pero, eh, pues como el músico siempre está evolucionando quizá en ese momento yo no lo veo
así y pues se trata un poquito de ajustarme a lo que él quiere sin dejar de expresar como soy yo, no?

E- entiendo.

M- Pero hay directores que me han obligado a tocar... no me han “obligado” de esa manera, pero me han sugerido tocar sin vibrato..., yo que sé, sabes? Y, de todas maneras, a mí me gusta siempre probarlo primero, no? Aunque igual me gusta. Osea, nunca se sabe y a lo mejor descubro algo nuevo que me gusta. No sé si quieres que te de ejemplos. Yo recuerdo hace muchos años con el maestro Ros-Marbá, estaba muy al principio de estar en la orquesta, y tocábamos Mozart, y entonces él me dijo: sin vibrato, nada de vibrato. Y yo pues en ese momento, a ver, no sabía si tocábamos con vibrato, pero me encantó, descubrí que me encantaba tocar sin vibrato, por lo menos en esa tesitura del Mozart, todo muy clásico. Él quería algo muy puro e hizo una súper versión, y le adoro porque es un magnífico director que me ha enseñado mucho, nos ha enseñado mucho a los músicos de orquesta. Pero es verdad que en ese momento pensé: jo, sin vibrato... no? Qué hace una flauta tocando sin vibrato? Pues puede ser también.................. Y puedes sacarle también su jugo. De hecho, descubrí un mundo. En fin, eso es una anécdota, pero también hay muchas en las que to lo intento primero, a no ser que sea una cosa descabellada, pero no suele serlo, eh? Suele más ser pues la visión del director, y si es un buenísimo director, yo lo hago al pie de la letra y acato su visión musical.

E- Entiendo. Y ¿cómo es esto para trabajar con la sección? Porque por ejemplo, he hecho entrevistas con violinistas y cellistas que claro, ellos lo tienen más complicado a mi parecer, porque son diez personas en la sección que tienen que tocar el mismo papel; pero claro, en nuestro caso, somos solistas porque tenemos nuestro propio papel, y al fin y al cabo, es más fácil. Pero, ¿cómo trabajas esto con la sección al ser flauta principal?

M- Bueno, mira, con la sección la verdad es que tengo muchísima suerte: lo que hago yo hacen ellas. Y ya está, sabes? Y ellas, pues es una manera... es como tiene que ser, sabes? No puede haber tres opiniones diferentes, en el caso de que seamos una cuerda de tres o cuatro. Eso es lo que marca la solista. Yo digo: aquí, pues vamos a turnarnos las respiraciones o cualquier cosa, no? Pero evidentemente, aquí el que marca las directrices es el director, entonces yo, dependiendo de lo que nos haya pedido, pues digo vamos a hacerlo así o así, pero vamos, que casi nunca hace falta hablar, eh? Porque llevamos muchos años juntas y tocan como yo. Yo considero que la verdad que se adaptan perfectamente, no hace falta decir nada en este caso.
Supongo que cuando uno llega a una orquesta necesita esos años de (todos los necesitamos) esos años de adaptación a: primero, al persona que tienes al lado, después a tu cuerda, después al viento, y después a toda la orquesta. Es un proceso, y es largo y no siempre fácil, pero después es muy satisfactorio. Y en ese sentido, ese recorrido ya lo hemos hecho.

E- Claro, es muy interesante, porque también he entrevistado a gente muy joven que acaba de entrar en la orquesta, por ejemplo, un chico que está aquí en la filarmónica de cello que lleva nada, 2 – 3 años, súper joven y claro, la opinión varía mucho de gente como vosotros que lleváis toda la vida tocando en la orquesta 20 años, y gente que acaba de empezar; entonces es súper interesante ver el proceso de cómo va cambiando eso.

M- Sí, cambia todo. De hecho, a lo mejor tú me haces la entrevista el año que viene y te digo otras cosas.

E- Por supuesto. Hablando de la sección y de tocar con más gente, porque claro, en la orquesta somos un montón. En el trabajo hablo también de cómo nos afecta nuestro bagaje personal, nuestras experiencias, cómo aplicar eso a nuestra interpretación… entonces, claro, cada persona es un mundo y cada persona tiene su mente, su alma y su manera de tocar, no? ¿Cómo crees que afecta esto en la interpretación de orquesta?

M- bueno, yo creo que sí, que cada uno somos diferentes pero para eso están digamos las personas de más responsabilidad, para indicar unas directrices, porque si no, eso sería un caos, en una orquesta, de lo que se trata es de que se unifiquen criterios, entonces tú tienes una persona que por ejemplo es el concertino. No pueden haber 14 concertinos, entonces, lo que dice el concertino tienen que hacerlo el resto de la cuerda de violines, sean cuantos sean. Después, lo que dice el cabeza de segundos violines, lo suyo. Ellos quedan de acuerdo, concertino con primero de segundos violines, viola, cello y contrabajo. El quinteto de cuerdas. De todas maneras, los arcos los pone el concertino para su cuerda, viola para la suya… y eso es lo que tiene que ser. De eso se trata una orquesta, de unificar criterios, de que todos hagan lo mismo y piensen y remen en la misma dirección. Si no, eso sería un caos. Sería levantar la batuta y que cada uno hiciese su propia interpretación, eso no puede ser.

Aunque después son cosas muy estándares. Quiero decir que hay cosas, leyes no escritas, no sé si yo alguna vez te he hablado de esto, que musicalmente son cosas que es A y B y chimpún, no hay otra interpretación posible. El que haga algo diferente, está errando, no? Y después hay cosas más libres que tienes, aspectos donde yo digo que tiene que haber una persona que tienen
que seguir. El chico joven que llega y, pues digamos, no intenta integrarse, pues ese se le nota como fuera del grupo, no? Para mí es un trabajo muy interesante, quiero decir, no ganas nada tocando tu propio solo sin pensar en los demás, eso no es interesante para mí. Y yo no sé si el aspecto psicológico que decías era de que tu piensas eso musicalmente o también tu estado de ánimo. No sé si te refieres a eso también, porque la gente cada día estamos diferentes. Pero tú vas a un trabajo y tú tienes que hacer tu trabajo independientemente de tu estado de ánimo. El que va a hacer coches, ese tiene que poner el tornillito como lo tienen que poner. “Es que hoy estoy débil, no lo aprieto”. No, porque si no lo aprietas puede haber un accidente. En fin, una mera comparación. Tú te puedes estar más así o más así pero tú tienes que integrarte y ser un profesional, que es de lo que se trata. Y eso se coge con el tiempo. Primero está muy bien tener mucha energía y todo eso, que eso también pues digamos que también se lo transmiten a los compañeros, tener mucha energía, eso está genial. Pero energía controlada y disciplinada, sería.

E- Por supuesto, por supuesto. No sé si en la RTVE hacéis música de cámara también entre vosotros, pero ¿qué opinas tú de hacer música de cámara en la orquesta? ¿Crees que beneficia? ¿Crees que no? ¿Crees que es bueno?

M- Sí, nosotros lo hacemos. Se viene realizando, desde que yo entré en las orquesta por lo menos, osea que supongo que desde muchos años antes, un ciclo de cámara que bueno, se hace los sábados por la mañana, se retransmite en directo por la radio. Hace unos 10 o 12 años hacia aquí también se graba en video, no solo en audio. Y este ciclo de cámara a mí me parece muy interesante. Es complementario al trabajo en orquesta. Yo creo que una cosa complementa a la otra. Te ayuda a conocer a los músicos con los que estás trabajando más a fondo; también pues vas conociendo y aprendiendo otras formas de tocar más al detalle, que eso solo se puede ver en música de cámara. Un trabajo detallista, al mínimo detalle, en fin, fraseando diferente a como se hace en la orquesta… a mí me parece muy interesante y totalmente necesario, es complementario y además es que lo tengo comprobado después de todos los años. La verdad es que yo soy muy de, en fin, con mi trabajo de orquesta me siento más que satisfecha pero sí que acepto cámara cuando me proponen porque veo que es una manera de avanzar pues en la comprensión y además, de conocer repertorio, porque hay músicos que no han escrito para orquesta, entonces claro, ves música buenísima que está ahí esperando a ser tocada no? Y eso solo se puede hacer con música de cámara. Así es que me parece que eso tiene que seguir por los siglos de los siglos, porque es el complemento ideal para que también un músico de orquesta de cuerda por ejemplo no esté siempre ahí dentro del grupo se sienta un poco más solista y sepan todos lo difícil que es estar ahí, difícil o responsabilidad no? Que exige responsabilidad.
Y eso a ellos les ayuda mucho también, muchísimo. Y me parece además muy divertido, en fin, muy divertido. A mí me gusta mucho la música de cámara, he hecho muchísima. Claro, después siempre vas variando grupos: ahora con arpa, ahora con viola, ahora con no sé qué, con percusión, con canto, sabes? Y también te ayuda a conocer otras formas de pensar la música. Es que los de canto piensan diferente a los músicos de orquesta y entonces, esto es como todo, si no le conoces no puedes juzgarle. Necesitas conocer, ver cómo piensan, cómo todo, entonces piensas: ostras, pues eso no lo había pensado, no? Asique me parece necesaria la música de cámara.

E- Estoy muy de acuerdo con todo lo que has dicho, y me parece súper interesante, y ha habido una cosa que has dicho de conocer más a los compañeros y tal. ¿Cómo crees que afectan las relaciones con los compañeros y con el director? ¿Crees que conocerlos más personalmente ayuda o no, muchas veces es mejor simplemente ser profesional y punto?

M- Hombre, eh, a ver. Fíjate que to vengo de la banda del pueblo, entonces yo necesitaba… no es que necesitaba, es que yo nací conociendo a todos con los que yo he tocado y a mí me parecía que tocar en grupo no solo era ir y tocar, era pasármelo bien con mis compañeros, por supuesto conocerles, ayudarles en tal caso y después celebrarlo juntos, no? Es algo que parece que aquí en esta orquesta se ha hecho siempre, porque en Barcelona era un poquito diferente. Pero aquí ayuda al buen rollo del que se habla muchas veces no? Eso ayuda mucho, estar, pues eso, en un ambiente más distendido, que no sea tan hermético… que a veces es mucha tensión acumulada, no? Después necesitas un poco pues destensarte con los mismos compañeros con los que has estado ahí súper concentrada, no? A mí me parece que eso es muy buena cosa, sabes? Lo que pasa es que bueno, de toda la vida te puede facilitar o no te puede facilitar, y hay edades para todo, pero en mi opinión yo diría que sí que es bueno, es bueno para el grupo conocerse, y conocerse en diferentes ámbitos. A mí me ayuda mucho a estrechar relaciones y a valorarlos más si cabe no? Aunque ya los respeto de entrada porque son mis compañeros, pero a lo mejor no les conozco, y cuando les he conocido digo: ostras, que persona más espectacular, y es mi compañero y estaba ahí y no le conocía. Pues me parece que eso, pues está muy bien, lo que pasa es que eso no se puede forzar, eso tiene que salirte natural y ya está. Yo no sé lo que será en otras orquestas, por ejemplo, las orquestas del este, así como creemos que son un poco más cerrados todos, pues quizás no es tan así, pero aquí en España, además te diría que más de la mitad de la orquesta de la RTVE son valencianos, y entonces estamos ahí todos un poquito que nos cuesta casi estar en silencio en los ensayos.
E- Ya imagino, qué maravilla. Es que es muy curioso porque aquí, cuando les hago esa pregunta a gente que está tocando en orquestas suecas y que son suecos es como todo muy correcto, todo muy bien. “Sí, sí, yo respeto mucho a mis compañeros y tal, pero…” entonces es una visión muy curiosa y muy distinta.

M- Dicho así de cualquier manera, irte de juerga con tus compañeros me parece lo mejor del mundo. Sin ser políticamente correcta, lo he dicho así como me ha venido.

E- No, sisi, pero me parece, vamos…, estoy completamente de acuerdo, claro que sí. Que más. Ahora una pregunta un poco abstracta y un poco más profunda: ¿cuál es tu objetivo como músico de orquesta? ¿Qué pretendes conseguir cuando tocas en orquesta?

M- Buah, objetivo? Mmmmm, bueno, a ver ¿tendría que tener un objetivo?

E- No, por supuesto que no. Osea, bueno, ¿Qué es lo que buscas?

M- Sí, quiero decir, objetivo material no tengo, no tengo objetivo material. Quizá en su día cuando empecé, porque lo necesitaba no? A lo mejor porque necesitaba tener un sitio donde vivir, pero hoy en día mi objetivo, no sé si es el que todavía tengo, pero el que quiero que sea mi objetivo es disfrutar y pasármelo bien. Ese es mi objetivo cuando voy a la orquesta cada día. Hombre, con lo que me cuesta ir a Madrid cada día, que como conforme está el tráfico, ese es un hándicap para mí. Ojalá viniera la orquesta a mi casa. Pero, evidentemente, es pasármelo bien. Si sí si. Y es verdad que sí, antes puedes tener objetivos jo pues me acuerdo: necesito que esa frase llegue hasta ahí, no quiero respirar antes. Si te refieres a eso, pues sí, siempre hay objetivos de esos. De hecho, son pequeñas metas que está bien marcarse, para no acomodarse más que nada. Esas pequeñas metas, digamos, puramente laborales no? De tener tus…, de decir, pues sí, necesito que el re ese, afinarlo, y que ya esté afinado para toda la vida. Y de este año no pasa que me adapte al re del oboe, al del clarinete, el fagot y el de la trompeta. Vale? Bueno, eso está muy bien, marcarse esos pequeños objetivos. Pero el objetivo primordial para mí, que si no lo es, quiero que llegue a serlo, y quiero que sea ese, es pasármelo bien. Si no, ¿para qué?

E- Por supuesto, totalmente de acuerdo. Pues sí. Y, nada, en realidad creo que, de las preguntas que te quería hacer, ya están todas básicamente.

M- Pregunta, pregunta cualquier cosa, que vamos, que estoy aquí para lo que me quieras preguntar.
E- Genial. Nada, ¿algo que quieras comentar a parte de lo que te he preguntado o…?

M- bueno, y tenía unos compañeros que decían: la profesión es muy larga y la vela muy corta. ¿Ves? Si yo recuerdo cosas, yo recuerdo anécdotas, siempre recuerdo las graciosas, las de mis compañeros… Estoy haciendo referencia a un compañero que se jubiló y pues que, si voy a decir algo es un recuerdo para los compañeros con los que yo estuve al principio de la orquesta y me sigo emocionando, porque ellos sí me demostraron lo que era el compañerismo, el ir a trabajar para pasártelo bien, y el ser honesto contigo, con la música y con el trabajo que haces, no? Porque después sí que he visto cosas muy feas que digamos que afean esta profesión. Que hay gente que tiene mucha ambición y codea mucho, quiere apartarse y hacerse camino a base de dar codazos y eso me parece muy feo, y entonces bueno, pues yo cuando recuerdo a estas personas que estaban ahí por amor al arte, claro, evidentemente es tu tiempo, tu energía, tu disposición, y tú tienes que, en fin… está claro, porque si no, no podría existir el mundo, y la gente va a escuchar los conciertos porque algunas personas se han tomado la gran faena, el gran trabajo de bueno, perfeccionarse en un instrumento y hacer su tarea durante años y años y años. Y entonces, en ese sentido, creo que tendríamos que relajarnos todos los músicos. La profesión es muy larga, la vela muy corta, hay que relajarse, disfrutar del día a día, no intentar pisar a nadie, que eso también, los flautistas… ay los flautistas. Te puedes encontrar un grupito muy majo que la verdad que nos ayudamos y se nota que todas las cosas que se hacen son altruistas, no? Pero he visto tantas cosas en mi vida… en fin. Y yo recuerdo a estas personas pues que era todo altruismo, todo: ¿qué necesitas? Y me ayudaron mucho cuando yo entré en la orquesta y eso es lo que tenemos que hacer con los jóvenes. Cuando entren en una orquesta, ayudarles y no complicárselo más no? Que no fueron mis principios, pero logré superarlo y ahora creo que voy a, en fin… estoy tan convencida de ello que es por lo que me voy a volcar. Primero en disfrutar y también quizá hacer disfrutar.

E- Jo, qué bonito Mónica. Que guay, jo. Qué bonito lo que has dicho, me ha gustado mucho.

M- lo siento así, y he tenido que hacer un esfuerzo para no emocionarme.

E- Te agradecero tu sinceridad y que te hayas abierto así. Y nada, por mí ya estaría. Muchísimas gracias por tu tiempo, por tu honestidad, ha sido un verdadero placer escucharte. Así que muchas gracias.

M- Para mí ha sido también un placer y me lo he pasado muy bien, Esther. Gracias por esta iniciativa, me gusta mucho. Y adelante. Es una buenísima idea, te quería decir, como trabajo
Interview with Mónica Raga Piqueras – 26.01.2021 (English)

Esther - Well, first I would like you to introduce yourself, tell me a little bit about the orchestra you are in now, what has been your previous experience in orchestra, and well, a little bit about your career.

Mónica - Okay, well, my name is Mónica Raga Piqueras and I have been principal flute in the Orquesta Sinfónica de Radio Televisión Española since 2000. And before that, my career in orchestra was, well, from 1993 until the moment I came to RTVE, I was in the Orquesta Ciudad de Barcelona or Orquesta Sinfónica de Barcelona y Nacional de Cataluña, as it later came to be called. I played everything, because I was occupying the position of second flute with piccolo, so there I did a lot of repertoire, and then I came here to Madrid, and it's been 20 years, since 2000 here at the foot of the cannon.

E- Wow, great. Well, I would like to start talking about what I told you: the difference between playing when you are a soloist and playing when you are in an orchestra. And in the sense of emotion, isn't it, how to transmit based on your interpretation of the work? For you, do you feel the same when you are playing as a soloist or in an orchestra? What is the difference? What is your impression?

M- You mean playing a concert as a soloist or what? Because as a soloist I play every day.

E- No, I mean when you play by yourself with the piano, or by yourself with the orchestra, when you are not in your principal flute position.

M- Yes, well, the truth is that they are very different things, of course. In my work in the orchestra there are pieces that have a very soloist role and there are pieces in which I have to integrate myself very much in the group and almost go unnoticed and just provide a color, let's say, no? And then in chamber music, of course, it's totally different, a recital for flute and piano in which you are 100%. But paradoxically, playing as a soloist in the orchestra demands much more from me; it demands much more from me. Not only do I have to know the whole piece, but also the entrances of each instrument if possible, and everything in general, and my role
must be fully integrated into it, and be prepared for the right moment where I have to start a solo, where I pass the phrase to this or that partner, listen to the harmonies of the whole ensemble, from the basses, the violins, everything... for me it is much more demanding than playing a flute-piano recital for example, because of course, there are all kinds of recitals. You know, in chamber music there are innumerable combinations.

And also as a soloist with the orchestra, I have that experience, and it's much freer, isn't it? I feel freer when I have to play in front of the orchestra. It's true that you have more responsibility on your shoulders, but you are freer when it comes to choosing tempos, when it comes to making your own interpretation, right? Because when you are in the orchestra, there are conductors who let you play a lot, but there are conductors who mark everything, even your breathing.

E- Mmmmm. This is very interesting. Sure, you... well, do you always agree with the conductor's interpretation of a piece when you play in orchestra?

M- No. My answer is no, I do not always agree. If I have to tell you a percentage, I would possibly say... I don't know... 65%, like ¾ parts of my overall work. But it's just that very different directors come here. Practically one comes every week, except for the chief conductor, who is contracted for about 6 or 8 weeks, I don't remember, maybe even more, I don't know. But apart from the chief conductor at the moment, because we have also changed the chief several times; apart from him, we have a variety of people coming here, so, no. I do not agree. So, no. I do not always agree with the interpretation. I try to adapt as much as possible, but I also try not to do anything that contradicts my instincts, you know?

E- Of course, that's what I was going to ask you, how do you manage when you have to play something that you don't feel as yours? How do you interpret something that maybe doesn't convince you?

M- Let's see, the politically correct answer would be: I listen to him, of course I do. I play the way he wants me to. In any case, it's true that with experience I can give myself a lot of liberties, even with the most demanding ones, right? In any case, I can approach them and reach an agreement. Because if I don't want to breathe somewhere, hey, he has to understand that it's my phrase, right?

That hardly ever happens anymore. But it is true that there are some of them, the older ones,
the oldest ones... they have a very fixed idea of their music; they are usually the best conductors, eh, and the ones who demand the most from me, or demand the most from us.

But, eh, since the musician is always evolving, maybe at that moment I don't see it that way and it's a little bit about adjusting myself to what he wants while still expressing myself as I am, no?

E- I understand.

M- But there are conductors who have forced me to play... they haven't "forced" me in that way, but they have suggested me to play without vibrato..., I don't know, you know? And, anyway, I always like to try it first, no? Although I still like it. I mean, you never know and maybe I'll discover something new that I like. I don't know if you want me to give you examples. I remember many years ago with maestro Ros-Marbá, I was at the beginning of being in the orchestra, and we were playing Mozart, and then he told me: no vibrato, no vibrato. And I, at that time, let's see, I didn't know if we played with vibrato, but I loved it, I discovered that I loved playing without vibrato, at least in that Mozart tessitura, all very classical. He wanted something very pure and he did a super version, and I adore him because he is a magnificent conductor who has taught me a lot, he has taught us, orchestra musicians, a lot. But it is true that at that moment I thought: oh, no vibrato... no? What is a flute doing playing without vibrato? And you can also get its juice out of it. In fact, I discovered a world.

Anyway, that's an anecdote, but there are also many in which I try it first, unless it's something crazy, but it's not usually, eh? It's usually more the director's vision, and if he is a very good director, I do it exactly by his musical vision.

E- I understand. And how is this for working with the section? Because for example, I have done interviews with violinists and cellists that of course, they have it more complicated in my opinion, because there are ten people in the section who have to play the same role; but of course, in our case, we are soloists because we have our own role, and at the end of the day, it is easier. But, how do you work this with the section being principal flute?

M- Well, look, with the section, the truth is that I am very lucky: what I do, they do. And that's it, you know? And they, well, it's a way... it's the way it has to be, you know? There can't be three different opinions, in the case that we are a section of three or four. That's what the soloist does. I say: here, let's take turns with the breaths or whatever, right? But obviously, here the
conductor is the one who sets the guidelines, so I, depending on what he has asked us, I say we are going to do it this way or that way, but we almost never need to talk, eh? Because we have been together for many years and they play like me. I consider that the truth is that they adapt perfectly, there is no need to say anything in this case. I guess when you get to an orchestra you need those years of (we all need) those years of adaptation to: first, to the person next to you, then to your section, then to the whole wind, and then to the whole orchestra. It is a process, and it is long and not always easy, but afterwards it is very satisfying. And in that sense, we have already made that journey.

E- Of course, it is very interesting, because I have also interviewed very young people who have just joined the orchestra, for example, a cellist who is here in the philharmonic who has been here for nothing, 2 - 3 years, super young and of course, the opinion varies a lot from people like you who have been playing in the orchestra for 20 years, and people who have just started; so it is very interesting to see the process of how it changes.

M- Yes, everything changes. In fact, maybe you will interview me next year and I will tell you other things.

E- Of course. Talking about the section and playing with more people, because of course, in the orchestra there are a lot of us. In my thesis I also talk about how our personal baggage affects us, our experiences, how to apply that to our interpretation... then, of course, each person is a world and each person has his mind, his soul and his way of playing, right? How do you think this affects the orchestral interpretation?

M- Well, I think so, I think yes, we are all different, but that's why the people with more responsibility are there, to indicate guidelines, because otherwise it would be chaos, in an orchestra, the idea is to unify criteria, and so you have a person who is the concertmaster, for example. There cannot be 14 concertmasters, then, what the concertmaster says has to be done by the rest of the violin string, no matter how many they are. Then, what the head of the second violins says, his own. They agree, concertmaster with first of second violins, viola, cello and double bass. The string quintet. Anyway, the bows are put by the concertmaster for his string, viola for his... and that's what it has to be. That's what an orchestra is all about, unifying criteria, so that everyone does the same thing and thinks and rows in the same direction. Otherwise, it would be chaos. It would be to raise the baton and everyone would do their own interpretation, that can't be.
But then there are very standard things. I mean, that there are things, unwritten laws, I don't know if I have ever talked to you about this, that musically are things that are A and B and that's it, there is no other possible interpretation. Whoever does something different is making a mistake, right? And then there are more free things that you have, aspects where I say that there has to be a person who has to follow. The young boy who arrives and, well, let's say, does not try to integrate, well, he is seen as outside the group, no? For me it's a very interesting work, I mean, you don't gain anything by playing your own solo without thinking about the others, that's not interesting for me. And I don't know if the psychological aspect you were saying was that you think that musically or also your state of mind. I don't know if you mean that too, because people are different every day. But you go to a job and you have to do your job regardless of your mood. The one who is going to make cars, that one has to put the little screw the way they have to put it. "I'm weak today, so I don't tighten it". No, because if you don't tighten it, there could be an accident. Anyway, a mere comparison. You can be more like this or more like that, but you have to integrate and be a professional, which is what it's all about. And you get that over time. First of all, it's great to have a lot of energy and all that, and let's say that this is also transmitted to the colleagues, to have a lot of energy, that's great. But controlled and disciplined energy, that would be.

E- Of course, of course. I don't know if you do chamber music among yourselves at RTVE, but what do you think about doing chamber music in the orchestra? Do you think it benefits? Do you think it doesn't? Do you think it's good?

M- Yes, we do it. Since I joined the orchestra at least, so I guess since many years before, we have been doing a chamber cycle that, well, it is done on Saturday mornings, and it is broadcasted live on the radio. About 10 or 12 years ago it was also recorded on video, not only on audio. And I find this chamber cycle very interesting. It is complementary to the orchestra work. I believe that one thing complements the other. It helps you to get to know the musicians you are working with in more depth; you also get to know and learn other ways of playing more in detail, which can only be seen in chamber music. A detailed work, to the smallest detail, in short, phrasing different from how it is done in the orchestra ... to me it seems very interesting and totally necessary, it is complementary and also I have proven it after all these years. The truth is that I am very, well, I am more than satisfied with my orchestra work, but I do accept chamber music when it is proposed to me because I see that it is a way to advance in understanding and also to get to know the repertoire, because there are musicians who have not written for orchestra, so of course, you see great music that is there waiting to be played, right?
And that can only be done with chamber music. So it seems to me that this has to continue for ever and ever, because it is the ideal complement so that a string orchestra musician, for example, is not always there in the group and feels a little more like a soloist and everyone knows how difficult it is to be there, difficult or responsibility, right? It demands responsibility. And that helps them a lot too, a lot. And I think it's also very funny. I like chamber music very much, I've done a lot of it. Of course, afterwards you are always changing groups: now with harp, now with viola, now with I don't know what, with percussion, with singers, you know? And it also helps you to get to know other ways of thinking about music. The thing is that singers think differently from orchestra musicians and so, this is like everything else, if you don't know them you can't judge them. You need to know, to see how they think, how everything, then you think: oh, well, I hadn't thought about that, had I? So I think that chamber music is necessary.

E- I agree with everything you said, and I find it very interesting, and there was something you said about getting to know your colleagues and so on. How do you think it affects the relationships with your colleagues and with the conductor? Do you think that getting to know them personally helps or not, many times it is better to just be professional and that's it?

M- Well, let's see. I come from my village band, so I needed... it's not that I needed, it's that I was born knowing everyone I played with and it seemed to me that playing in a group was not only about going and playing, it was about having fun with my colleagues, of course getting to know them, helping them in that case and then celebrating together, no? It's something that seems to have always been done here in this orchestra, because in Barcelona it was a little bit different. But here it helps the good vibes that we often talk about, no? That helps a lot, to be, well, in a more relaxed atmosphere, not so hermetic... sometimes there is a lot of accumulated tension, isn't it? Then you need to relax a little bit with the same colleagues with whom you have been there super concentrated, right? I think that is a very good thing, you know? What happens is that it may or may not make your life easier, and there are ages for everything, but in my opinion I would say that it is good, it is good for the group to get to know each other, and to get to know each other in different areas. To me it helps me a lot to strengthen relationships and to value them more if possible, isn't it? Although I respect them from the beginning because they are my colleagues, but maybe I don't know them, and when I have met them I say: wow, what a spectacular person, and he is my colleague and he was there and I didn't know him. Well, I think that's very good, what happens is that you can't force it, it has to come naturally and that's it. I do not know what it will be in other orchestras, for example, the orchestras of the
East, as we believe that they are all a little more closed, well maybe it is not so, but here in Spain, I would also say that more than half of the RTVE orchestra are Valencian, and then we are all there a little bit that we cannot be in silence in rehearsals hahaha.

E- I can imagine, how wonderful. It's very curious because here, when I ask that question to people who are playing in Swedish orchestras and who are Swedish, it's like everything is very correct, everything is very good. "Yes, yes, I respect my colleagues a lot and so on, but..." so it's a very curious and very different vision.

M- To put it this way, going on a party with your colleagues seems to me the best thing in the world. Without being politically correct, I just said it the way it came to me.

E- No, yes, but it seems to me, come on..., I completely agree, of course. What else. Now a question a little abstract and a little deeper: what is your goal as an orchestral musician? What do you intend to achieve when you play in an orchestra?

M- Buah, objective? Mmmmm, well, let's see, should I have a goal?

E- No, of course not. I mean, well, what are you looking for?

M- Yes, I mean, I don't have a material objective, I don't have a material objective. Maybe back in the day when I started, because I needed it, no? Maybe because I needed to have a place to live, but nowadays my objective, I don't know if it's the one I still have, but the one I want to be my objective is to enjoy myself and have a good time. That's my goal when I go to the orchestra every day. Man, with what it costs me to go to Madrid every day, with the way the traffic is, that's a handicap for me. I wish the orchestra would come to my house. But, obviously, it is to have a good time. Yes yes yes yes yes yes. And it's true that yes, you can have goals before, but I remember: I need that phrase to get there, I don't want to breathe before... If that's what you mean, yes, there are always those goals. In fact, they are small goals that are good to set, so as not to get comfortable more than anything else. Those small goals, let's say, purely work-related, right? To have your..., to say, well, yes, I need that D, to tune it, and that it is already tuned for life. And this year I'll have to adapt to the D of the oboe, the clarinet, the bassoon and the trumpet. Right? Well, that's all very well, setting those little goals. But the primary goal for me, which if it's not, I want it to become, and I want it to be that, is to have a good time. Otherwise, what's the point?

E- Of course, I totally agree. And, nothing, actually, I think that, of the questions I wanted to
M- Ask, ask anything, I'm here for whatever you want to ask me.

E- Great. Well, anything you want to comment on besides what I asked you or...?

M- Well, I had some colleagues who used to say: the profession is very long and the candle is very short. See? I remember things, I remember anecdotes, and I always remember the funny ones, those of my colleagues... I am referring to a colleague who retired and, if I am going to say something, it is a memory for the colleagues with whom I was at the beginning of the orchestra and I am still moved, because they showed me what companionship was, to go to work to have fun, and to be honest with you, with the music and with the work you do, no? Because afterwards I have seen some very ugly things that, let's say, spoil this profession. That there are people who have a lot of ambition and elbow a lot, they want to get out of the way and make their way by elbowing and that seems to me very ugly, and then, well, when I remember these people who were there for the love of art, of course, obviously it's your time, your energy, your disposition, and you have to, well... it's clear, because if not, the world could not exist, and people go to listen to concerts because some people have taken the great trouble, the great work of well, perfecting themselves on an instrument and doing their homework for years and years and years. And so, in that sense, I think all of us musicians should relax. The profession is very long, the candle is very short, you have to relax, enjoy the day to day, don't try to step on anybody's toes, that too, the flutists... oh, the flutists. You can find a very nice little group that really helps each other and you can see that all the things that are done are altruistic, right? But I have seen so many things in my life... in fact. And I remember these people because it was all altruism, everything: what do you need? And they helped me a lot when I joined the orchestra and that's what we have to do with young people. When they join an orchestra, help them and don't make it more complicated for them, right? That was not my starting, but I managed to overcome it and now I think I'm going to, well... I'm so convinced of that that's what I'm going to do. First of all to enjoy and also maybe to make people enjoy.

E- Jo, how nice Monica. How cool, ho. How nice what you said, I really liked it.

M- I feel that way, and I had to make an effort not to get emotional.

E- I thank you for your sincerity and for opening up like this. And that's all, that would be fine with me. Thank you very much for your time, for your honesty, it has been a real pleasure to
listen to you. So thank you very much.

M- It was also a pleasure for me and I had a great time, Esther. Thank you for this initiative, I like it very much. And go ahead. It's a very good idea, I wanted to tell you, as a master's thesis, so cheer up, and it’s going to be really cool. Congratulations.

E- Thank you very much.
Interview with Josep Castanyer Alonso – 07.12.2020

Esther - So, first of all, I want you to present yourself, like your experiences in orchestra, like where have you been playing?, for how long? And that kind of stuff.

Josep – Okay, so my name is Josep Castanyer Alonso and I am 23 years old, and I have been in the orchestra business for some time now, since I finished my studies in Germany, where I began to substitute in some orchestras in Germany, in Dusseldorf and in the whole region. And after that I spent one year in the academy and then, I have been playing as a permanent member of the orchestra (Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra) since 2019… no wait. This is my third year as a member in the orchestra, so since 2018.

E – After you did your trial.

J – Yes, I had a shorter trial because they knew me from before from the academy, where I had been playing there for one year, but I had a six month trial after my audition.

E – Okay. As I told you before, I was investigating about the role of the conductor, and how he or she makes an interpretation of the piece. How do you feel when you…? Well, do you always agree with the conductor and the interpretation he or she does of the piece you are playing?

J – No. I mean, it’s very unlikely to do agree 100% with, well… with someone at all, but especially with conductors because, and especially with someone who is telling you how to stuff. It might be that you agree of most of what they say but it is a personal thing. So it is very difficult to agree 100%, everything.

E – And how do you feel when you have to play something that you don’t feel like yours or that maybe you don’t like? How do you handle it?

J – Well, unless is something which I find really gross or disgusting musically, usually you have to be quite generous and maybe you try new things and you discover that actually, that you may be like that. And also, when the conductor says stuff, they have a very clear idea in their minds, but this idea has to go through the filter of the musicians, and it always turns a bit different, and most conductors also accept little, like, little bot of personality from the musicians on their own ideas. So it’s not… at the end it’s not just an order which they give you and you have to comply, but just something that goes through your eyes as well and your musicality and it becomes a bit personal, even if it is a bit different from what you had in mind before. Is it
E – Yes! Super clear. I absolutely agree with you in this because, I have watched a lot of documentaries of conductors and there was this documentary about Claudio Abbado, and well… right after he started conducting the Berliner, after Karajan, the musicians were saying like: “yeah, Karajan was a bit of a dictator because he was always telling us what to do and we wanted it to be more like a democracy and stuff…”. So yeah, I think it’s what you meant.

And how do you work as a section? You are a tutti cellist, and how do you work…? For example, you said that you have your own ideas, and you have the principal of the section, so how does this work?

J – With the conductor or like, form the section to the conductor or…?

E – Yes, for example, like, when sometimes maybe the conductor ask you like: what do you think about this? Or you have your own ideas or something to contribute with.

J – As a section?

E – Yes.

J – So, as you said, we have, in our cello section, we are 12 members but we usually play… like, the maximum we usually play is 10, so it is 5 stands of 2 people, and now with corona times we only play 2 stands, so 4 celli, or 3 stands, 6 celli, and… yeah… so as you said, we have 2 principals and we have also a co-principal cellist, so we have 3 people who are hierarchically higher that the tutti. I have a tutti position here but I have work, during corona I have worked as a co-principal and I have done a couple of weeks as principal, and it’s indeed a very clear hierarchical difference and it can… so you, as a tutti player, you don’t really talk with the conductor if there is some question, that it’s always in the hands of the principal or the co-principal, so there’s usually 2 people on the first stand. And we, in this orchestra, at least before corona, we had, every second day of rehearsal, we have one hour of sectional and there, you, as a tutti player, you get to discuss a bit, but still it’s mostly in the hands… like, there is a very clear hierarchy, and it is not very good to break it, like, it is not very well seen from the others, so the principal is always on charge and it is the person who communicates with the conductor, and it is not very common that you as a tutti player get to say something, at least in the general rehearsal, but, when we make sectionals, then you got to say some stuff, but yeah, it’s… as a tutti player, you usually just do what people, either the principal or the conductor tell
E – Okay. And… each musician is like a kind of different person and performer. Each one has their own experience, their own mind and soul…. When we play as soloists, we use this experience, at least in my case, to do an interpretation that we feel comfortable with and to transmit something to the audience. How do you feel with this when you are like ten people for example, or the full orchestra, each one with different ideas and with different minds and souls? Playing together like… is it difficult for you or you just get used to it?

J – Yeah, that is a very good question and it is really… a very difficult issue, and it’s an issue in most orchestras, because… so the thing is, you have really… even if you have like very solid section which plays very well together, you have a…. you can also have very strong individual personalities in the section. Sometimes it works better, sometimes not, like, in most orchestras every section have some kind of personal problems going on inside of them cause maybe someone really enjoys adapting and doing what he is told to or following, or someone is really flexible for example… I think that is like my kind of personality, I enjoy that a lot. And some people that are actually in a tutti position and are supposed to be flexible, they want to be strict and to lead, even if they are not in the position to lead or to tell the others what to do, so sometimes it is a kind of, you know, push and pull between… yeah, so, I think that is one of the reasons, well, that is one of the points that has to be solved on order for a section to be really stable. You have to, kind of even out all the differences in the personality, individual personalities, and some people who really like to be… to give orders to others and to lead, they have to calm down a little bit and maybe some people who just only follow and have no initiative, you have to push them a bit. And that’s… usually that takes some time and it goes… some concerts go better than others, some weeks, some rehearsal weeks go better than others, but,, for a good orchestra, it even become balanced, but it is a constant work because usually people who like to give orders are not easy to calm down, so… yeah.

E – Okay. Do you think it is important the relationship between the musicians in the orchestra and with the conductor? Do you think it affects how you play?

J – Yes, I mean, certain conductors work better for some orchestras that others and, at the end, when we get guests conductors, which are not our chief conductor or formal chief conductors, like… our chief conductor now is Sakari Oramo and the formal one was Alan Gilbert, and he has been here this year for like 8 weeks or something, so you notice that you are very familiar
with the body language of the conductor and then, yeah, so… some conductors really are familiar with the orchestras and get better results, and some others are a bit more unfamiliar and maybe there is a bit of personal tension because of the way of communicating, so it doesn’t work as well, but sometimes a completely unknown person comes to the orchestra and conducts and it suddenly works very well, so it is really difficult to tell why, but I guess it has to do with how they communicate with the orchestra and the body language and what they expect from the orchestra because, this orchestra for example adapts very well to conductors, but there are orchestras which have very strong opinions already before the conductor comes on how to play stuff, so it can be harder, so it might be that, I don’t know, Gilbert for example work very well for this orchestra, well I mean, he is great so he works for every orchestra, but he might get a different result from this orchestra than another one, even if he does maybe the same stuff. So it is two ways: conductors give something to the orchestra but orchestras also translate it in different ways.

E – Okay. And between the musicians? Lie, for example: do you know all the people in the orchestra? Or…

J – If I know the members or…?

E – Yes.

J – I know everyone but I am not friends with everyone. Maybe, I think, this is my third year and there is people I haven’t really talked to more than saying hello to them. And even people who were in my audition, so… but it is not that there is a bad relationship, it is just that it is 105 people so…

E – Of course. But do you think knowing these people would result in something different when you…?

J – If I know them?

E – Yes, like… kind of…

J – Well, there is people who I haven’t talked very much to but I know their way of playing, especially like solo players, solo wind players, like flute player, I know how our two principal flutists play and I can tell the difference even without looking, I know who is playing. And there is a… I mean, I don’t know if it really makes a difference, but it feels different when you
are playing with people you have some complicity with you know, like… I don’t know if the… well, I do think that the audience notices the difference. If you are really cold to your colleagues or there is, you know, some looks, when you are playing on… you look at someone, someone looks at you back, maybe smiles or something… maybe it doesn’t affect very much the music but, if it is a constant thing, it keeps adding up and then it is a good mood, then everyone feels better, then people… everyone relax, it sounds better…

E – Okay! As I told you before, this guy I was interviewing, the trumpet player, he talked about the differences between being young in an orchestra and being, not old but experienced. How do you feel like a young player?

J – So the thing is…

E – Do you feel the difference with…?

J – Yes. I mean, maybe 30 – 40 years ago it was very common that people just, maybe with 19 or 20 years old they got positions but, as you know, the competition now is very high, so… and for some reason people also study for longer, so it is not very common that people under 27 get positions, so then, when I came here, and this is also that the age average in this orchestra is slightly higher that others because they have so good conditions that people stay for their whole life, but… so when I came here… I am still the youngest in the orchestra and I… well, you know, when you come in and you are so young, you have a lot of expectations and you have… you are also very ambitious, you have also a lot of time, maybe you don’t have a family yet or you don’t have other obligations so, for example, I kept and I do still practice a lot and I study a lot and … maybe not this week because it was a surprising, but usually prepare everything very well, I look at the score and I, yeah… I know there are colleagues who don’t do this who are in my age but I do that and I enjoy that. Maybe sometimes you inspire other people, sometimes there are older people who are annoyed by this, because they have like a bunch of young people who are really ambitious and trying to do their best and they are just: “leave me alone” or like… they do their job perfectly but, yeah… But at the same time the older you get, more experienced you get and you noticed this in this orchestra, there is like a common language of, like, body language or timing, so it is very impressive to see because they are just professionals and they have been doing this for so long that it just flows, it is very nice and yeah… so I think it takes some years to , even when you got the position, it takes some years like, I would say from 5 to 10, to really be a part of… especially when people here have been
playing in average for 20 or 25 years which is before I was born, so hahah

E – Yeah hahah cool, interesting. And just to finish, why are you an orchestra player?

J – Yeah, that’s a good question. I don’t know. I mean, I don’t… well I considered doing other stuff as well. I considered going into conducting for example. Well, I mean, the first reason is because I like to play music and the second reason is obviously because it is the safest option.

E – You think so?

J – In orchestra?

E – Yeah.

J – Like financially safe.

E – Oh yeah, when you get the position, of course.

J – Yeah. So, well for me it was a bit of… I had two reasons: one reason, it was a personal ambition that I had to proof to myself that I could be an orchestra player, it was like a personal ambition; and secondly, because I wanted to get to know the symphonic repertoire. For example, I played very long in a string quartet, professional string quartet, and I felt this was very enriching but I needed more symphonic stuff as well; and third, I wanted to have some stability just to have the, you know, financial independence, and then maybe deciding to study, to continue studying later but to have a stability first, so like to have a, how do you call it, a backup. Like having something I can fall into if things go wrong, like this corona thing. I mean, it has been completely random, but it would have been much worse if I didn’t have the… well, it would have been another world for me, at least, because I got the position just before the pandemic, meaning that everything got canceled suddenly and now I have a job, I have a steady income and I don’t have to worry about it so, it proofs the fact that it gives you some backup or some stability as well, even if you of course enjoy the artistic part, which is the main part, but of course it’s also a reason you need some stability.

E – Of course. I said it was the last question but I just want to ask you: did your experience with the quartet help you with the orchestra?

J – Yeah, definitely. I mean, the thing with the quartet is, well I a great way to learn chamber music playing, because, actually is very seldom that you have more than four lines or four
elements of music going on at the same time and that’s what you get in a quartet, I mean, you
learn to listen to yourself and to the others, and for a string player it’s quite important because
you play with others but you have the privilege to hear yourself, which you don’t have in the
orchestra. As a wind player, you hear yourself in the orchestra; as a string player, you shouldn’t
here yourself most of the time, so it teaches you a lot about listening to harmonies and adapting
intonation for example, or timing things, like learning how to read, how a violinist reads with
their bow and reacting to the body language but it is in a smaller setting so it is, in a sense it is
easier, but then it is also more difficult than orchestra because it is more exposed, but it is a
beautiful way to, well, it is too different things but they have a lot in common.

E – Yeah, I definitely thing that chamber music is the basic of the orchestra.

J – Yeah, definitely.

E – Okay! I think I have everything I need, so thank you so much.

J – Great!
Interview with Linda Taube Sundén - 24.11.2020

E – So, yeah, now you know what is my project about so, first of all, I want you to present yourself like, which position are you holding in the orchestra, in which orchestra, and your experience, like have you played in some other orchestras before the radio?

L – Yes, I have. Well, my name is Linda Taube Sundén. I play principal piccolo in the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. I have done that for 12 years and before that I played in the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra as a second flute with piccolo, and I also had like long term contracts in the opera in Stockholm and Gothenburg, and in the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. And, yeah, that’s it.

E – Wow, so impressive. So, the first question I want to ask you is what is your goal as an orchestra musician?

L – My goal?

E – Yeah.

L – To… well, to make music as beautiful as possible, and to really express something I would say, so that it actually means something to the audience.

E – Yeah, I think the point of that it has to mean something to the audience is really important. And is it different the emotion you feel when you play as a soloist or in the orchestra? Like this feeling you have making something beautiful to the audience, is different when you play as a soloist or in the orchestra?

L – Well, I think the task is very different. I mean, playing as a soloist and playing in the orchestra… of course, you always want to make the best of it, whatever you play. I mean, if you are a soloist or if you play together with lots of other people. No, I don’t know. Maybe I think it gets… when you play in the orchestra, you also want to play very good o help your colleagues to play good together, and you want to be like a link in a long chain, somehow. You want to fit in more maybe and help people around you, so that the total experience is good. When you play as a soloist, maybe you don’t care so much about it. You can be more focused in yourself, I think. So I would say it is a combination. When you play in the orchestra, you have a very big focus on what you are playing yourself, but you also are very aware of what everybody else is doing, and what you do is affecting the others, and the opposite. Was it answering your question? I already forgot the question, I just kept talking hahah

E - Yes, yes! It is very abstract all the things that I am asking you, so no worries. I just want to… yeah. Okay. Now I think we are going to focus a little bit more on the conductor figure. So I want you to ask you: do you always agree with the conductor’s interpretation that he or
she does of the piece you are playing?
L – No.
E – Okay. In that case, is it harder for you to play in this way? Or how do you manage to…?
L – I think is a challenge to play what someone else wants, to play against your own will somehow. It is a challenge to try to do something different. It depends on what the conductor wants of course, I mean, it can be just some details that you don’t really care about, that you don’t agree, but doesn’t really matter. It can also be something that you really don’t agree with, that it feels weird to play like that, but it’s a… I just think it’s a challenge. That’s the job I would say. You just have to try to make it as close to the conductor’s opinion as possible. Maybe, I don’t always succeed but I always want to try at least.
E – In this way, how do you work with your colleagues? Like, for example, if you have this moment you don’t know how to really play because the conductor is asking something you don’t really feel like … mmmm, I don’t like it, how do you work it with the section?
L – Well, first of all, if there’s some like, insecurity, someone will ask the conductor: do you want it? Do you mean like this? With a very skeptical look hahah no, but this was that you meant? And then we try to find some kind of common way of playing it and maybe sometimes we can, if we have like a sectional, we can discuss: well, he wanted it like this but maybe we can do it a little bit more like this. Depends on what the conductor is asking for, of course, but it’s a… yeah, the easiest way is just to try to do as the conductor wants, because if everybody would do as they think is the right, it could be totally… it wouldn’t work, so yeah, I think we try to adjust, try to play in the same way.
E – Do you have one chief conductor in the radio?
L – Yes.
E – And, how do you think it affects the relationship you have with the conductor and the other musicians in the orchestra? Does it really matter or is just work colleagues or …? How do you see it can affects to the performance you do?
L – The chief conductor, he knows the orchestra very well. Our chief conductor has been with us for 14 years. It is a long time. And it is both ways: we know him very well and of course, like in every relationship, you can be very tired of each other, so I think is a good thing to have a chief conductor who is kind of building the orchestra sound. Every week, he or she comes, really have a vision for the orchestra, and really work in a long term vision, and long term relationship. That’s something a conductor who comes only one week can’t do because there is no time to change things in one week only. So I think is a good thing to have a chief conductor because is… it kind of sets the image for the orchestra. Now we have this sound when we play
with this chief conductor, but maybe if we change, in the future, the sound will be different, who knows. And I think is good combination to have a chief conductor and others coming in, for like fresh blood too. I would not like to have only one chief conductor the whole time, no. You need change, definitely, because after many years with one conductor you also know what he or she is going to say, because you begin to recognize everything, so I think we all need new inspiration, and the conductors need new orchestras as well.

E – Is the same when someone new comes to the orchestra? Like, a musician.

L – Yeah, exactly. A new musician comes and maybe comes with some new inspiration to a section and lifts the whole section somehow. That’s the dream at least. So, yeah. I think it is good with the chief conductor, but maybe for me personally I think 13 years is a very long time. I think it will be nice with a change after maybe 10 years, could be… but it depends on the orchestra and depends on the conductor.

E – Do you think that the emotional baggage of each musician affects the musical result? Because, when you play…, well, we said that is different when we play as soloists and in the orchestra, but, when you play, you use your own experience to try to do the best interpretation, I think, and in the orchestra you are a lot of people with total different experiences, totally different kind of performer, so… yeah, do you think it affects or you are just like changing the chip and just being an instrument player without putting personal baggage behind? I don’t know, it is a really abstract question, but what do you think about it?

L – I think it… yeah, I think it affects your playing a lot, depending on who you are and what temper you have, and what emotional luggage you have. I think if you don’t have any, like, emotional experiences in life, like you are just: yay, okay, everything is fine, then you are not very interesting as a person or as a musician I would say. And I think the music needs some kind of emotion and expression, you have to be able to show something and there are lot of musicians who can play really good, and perfect, and everything, but it is so boring. Everything is perfect and in tune and the sound is nice but it so boring because they only do the right thing and I think is more interesting in that case to listen to someone who actually shows something and maybe misses one note sometime. I mean, just someone who dare us to make a mistake, really going for it, like safe playing very boring. So I would say to have like a bad temper is not a bad thing.

E – Okay! Even in the orchestra?

L – It can be in the orchestra if you, as a person, have problems with controlling your bad temper; but in the music I think is good when it’s like, arrrgh. I think is good. But you have to be very smooth as a person in the orchestra, because you can’t… if your personality takes too...
much space, I think is hard to work together, maybe people are frightened of someone who is very aaarrgh but I think lot of musicians have lot of things going on inside, I am sure, and I think is a good thing. It adds some extra nerve to the music.

E – Definitely. How would you improve, like, if you could do some changes, like in the development of the orchestra, like when you go to rehearse and then you have a concert, like, to reach your ideal of performance?

L – Well, if I speak for my section, like, the woodwinds, I think maybe it is good to have sectionals, not every week maybe but when the program is demanding it could be really useful to have more sectionals and really play together as a group. I would say. And I think also the thing that improves every orchestra is that everybody listen to each other, that really play together, even if you sit in the flute section, you can play with… you can a melody with the second violins or someone, like, just have very big ears I would say. And, so, but… yeah it is hard. I think for the best result in an orchestra is very good musicians who practice and who are able to play together and listen, and who wants to play together, like, because if you play in an orchestra and you are only just willing to play solos and only interested in your own playing, it is impossible to play with you. So, big ears and patience.

E – I agree. And do you thing chamber music is important inside the orchestra? Like to have chamber music groups inside.

L – Yes. It is very important. Well, it is important because, as we just said, that the playing together and listen a lot, you can hear lot better when you play in smaller groups but, also, having another maybe some other role than the role you have in the orchestra… for example, if I am playing a lot of piccolo in the orchestra, it would be really nice for me to play a little bit more flute parts or if you play, I don’t know, second violin, it is nice to play solo now and then with the chamber group. I think everybody it is growing a lot when they play chamber music. It is very very good, and it is so fun. And I feel that, after having done that, play something more exposed, it is so much easier to go back and play in the orchestra, everything feels so easy, really that… maybe it is because you are having more exposed but maybe also because you have been training to listen more and playing together. I think chamber music is great, for everybody. Everybody should play more. It is so easy to hide. If you want to hide in the orchestra, it is very easy I think, especially as a string player or second wind players, just relax and… I think everybody needs to be pushed sometimes to play more.

E – Yes, one thing that you said, that is not the same to be a flute player or a violin player in the orchestra… that’s also… I would like to talk with, not only woodwind players, but string players, because I think it is really different the point of view, because, for a woodwind player,
you are always like a kind of soloist.

L – Yeah, you have your own part. Always, you have your own part, nobody else is playing the same thing. But it is not the same job, really.

E – Yeah, this thing we were talking about before about this way of working all together the section and this personal ideas you have about the interpretation and stuff, for violins must be difficult because you are not only you, because you are like 20 people in the same section, so it must be hard.

L – Yeah it is a different kind of making music I’d say. I am sure it is super hard too, but it is different. I think I prefer the flute section hahah

E – Me too hahah. Definitely, but yeah, would be really interesting to talk with violin players, string players. And the last, well, last question or last thought: how would be your perfect interpretation? Like, it is very abstract and a very big question. Like, what has to happen to have a great interpretation?

L – Well, first of all I think… I really need to be in extremely good shape to be able to relax. I have to be in very good shape and extremely well prepared because then I can, somehow, let it go and relax while I am performing and have fun because if I am not very well prepared, I feel anxious and kind of worried: oh my god, what if I play wrong or what if I don’t come in well or, like if I am not in a good shape, the lips are stiff and that feels like: I am not going to get that note or … so if I am in good shape and feeling very well prepared, and of course, if I like the music hahah it is a very good thing, and I feel that I kind of connect to the people in the orchestra, that I play… yeah, some kind of communication, and also reach out to the people who are listening, that’s the perfect. When everybody is focused at the same time, you can always feel in the room, like everybody is really focused in the same thing, that’s magic.

E – Yes, you can feel like the power going on…

L – Yeah. That’s the thing I would say. It doesn’t happen very often but when it happens, it’s… that is why you do this, I would say.

E – Yes. And you said, when you like the piece. And, what happens if you don’t like the piece? How do you manage to transmit something like maybe you don’t like?

L – I don’t know. I guess … if I don’t like the piece, maybe I can focus on playing with a nice sound and phrasing and just try to make the best of it. But maybe I don’t enjoy it as much as I do when I actually like the music. Because I think all of us, we are trying to do our best the whole time. Also in front of the colleagues, you always want to play good. Even if it is only like a rehearsal, you always want to play good, so… that’s kind of the pride in the job, that you always want to do your very best and I think all of us are so extremely self-critical, really really,
so… it is not very often that I am happy with the… hahaha but I think the hardest judge is myself and I think my colleagues feel the same in the same way because you are always the hardest one on yourself. And that’s not very… it is not good. You just have to try to be nice to yourself sometimes, even though you know you can do it better but… yeah, sometimes you just have to let go all the criticism. And just have fun.

E – Of course. Okay, I think that’s it.

L – Okay!

E – So thank you so much.

L – Well, I am not sure if you are any wiser after this…

E – I mean, it is super interesting to hear you and your ideas, yes, definitely. So thank you so much.

L – It is a very interesting, topic, I would say. It is…

E – Yeah, it is really difficult and kind of abstract, but yeah… I really…

L – But this thing with the conductor, if you don’t like what he says and … I mean, it is happening all the time so… just, I think you need to be very flexible. It is like a combination of being very strong, sensitive and flexible. I think all of us are very sensible, very sensitive, very like… but also very… when we have to, very strong. But also very flexible.

E – That has happen to you that you have to say your own ideas to the conductor, like: maybe we could try like this or I think it would be better like this or this, and the conductor says: yeah you are right?

L – It can happen if it doesn’t really work what he or she is trying to do. “I think we can try legato instead of …” Yeah, you could suggest something but, it is not very often that you suggest, it feels a bit rude to… “Maybe you haven’t thought of the…” Depends on what it is of course.

E – Yeah. I have seen some documentaries about the greatest conductors ever and yeah they talk about it, about how they prepare the pieces and how they conduct the orchestra but in a personal way, like, how they treat the orchestra and it was super fun because I watched this documentary about Claudio Abbado and just when he started to conduct the Berliner; and before him it was Karajan and in the documentary you can see the musicians saying like: “no, Karajan was a dictator because he was such a hard conductor, like, with very fixed ideas and we want democracy and want to exchange ideas and stuff and…”. You could see Abbado like: “yeah, let’s listen to the musicians” hahah and it is super funny. So, yeah I think you have to find a middle point.

L – Yeah. I think you just have to be like: okay, sure! And then you say: oh f****** a****!
But poker face is very good hahah
It is kind of weird though that we still live in this… I mean it is 2020 and we still live in this world that, with one person who is like a dictator somehow. The conductor is always right, a little bit like that. It is like the authority you can’t really…

E – Yeah, sometimes I think they can be the authority and sometimes not, like…

L – Yeah, I think that a really good conductor is someone who has like a natural authority but still has a lot of respect for the musicians, like he really trust that everybody is doing their absolute best and is very demanding but still know where the limit is, like, “I can push the orchestra more and more and… okay now it is fine”.

E – Actually, it is super hard because they have to be respectful with the piece, and the composer, and the musicians, and their own ideas… and it is like: what am I doing!? So, yeah, I really would like to talk with conductors also. I actually studied conducting for 3 years and it was interesting. I think it helped me a lot with my future in orchestra, to know how it works and stuff.

So, yeah, thank you so much, it was really really helpful. Thank you.

L – I am happy to help. It was very interesting, very. Would be nice to read your work when you finish.
Entrevista con Roberto Bodí López – 29.11.2020 (Spanish)

Esther – Empecemos con las preguntas. Vale, bueno, primero me gustaría que te presentases, tu nombre, tu instrumento, tu carrera de orquesta, dónde estás tocando ahora, dónde has estado tocando antes, y bueno, un poco sobre ti.

Roberto – Señor Roberto Bodí López. Soy trompetista y nada, como solista son ya 20 años y en enero haré ya 21 de solista en la OSCYL, la Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León. Y nada, si que he tenido la opción de tocar con varios grupos de cámara de España y también otras orquestas como Cadaqués, la ONE, Barcelona, Valencia, Coruña… en fin, son ya años, y eso da para hacer cosas. Y ahora no, es mi principal trabajo, así eu,, doy una serie de horas de clases también en el superior de salamanca, que ahora es el superior de la región.

E- Vale, mmmm. Vale. Voy a empezar a saco. ¿Siempre estás de acuerdo con la interpretación que hace el director o directora, sea o no el chief conductor, el director de la OSCYL o algún director invitado, siempre estás de acuerdo con la interpretación que hace de la obra o no?

R – A ver, esto… se suele asociar, yo creo que no solo hablo por mí sino también por el resto; si el director es de renombre y es un tío que funciona se suele dar la razón en todo, y esto creo que es así no? Según quien sea, el músico ya tiene cierta predisposición a ello no? Y si, esto si quieres alguien que sea solvente enseguida aparecen errores, lees fallos, etc. Solo en general.

En cuanto a mí, yo creo que siempre que hay ahí alguien ahí arriba, mi role es el de hacer la faena bien hecha; y si hay que hacer algo más rápido, más lento, o así o así, yo se reaccionar a lo que él hace. Luego, sí que uno tiene sus ideas. Claro que yo creo que yo siempre me han inspirado esas orquestas como Chicago, Boston, Nueva York, por el role del brass. El brass allí es una seña de esas orquestas. Y claro, yo simplemente oigo eso y para mi es una referencia. Si es cierto que con los años me he ido relajando más. De joven, tienes tus ideas. Tú, como tienes tu idea, la has llevado a saco. Y ahora no. Ahora, hará unos 10 años o así, el role es otro. Tengo un ejemplo. Hace años hicimos, con un ruso que vino aquí, ya hace años, e hicimos Petrushka y me acuerdo del solo, el de tirooo (canta) y yo siempre lo he visto legato, bonito, afinado, los ataques suaves… y este ruso estaba en el ensayo, y yo tocando bonito. Para el ensayo y me dice: “please, this is a folk song, popular music”, y yo dije: ¿cómo?; “like you play in the Street”. Él dijo que era música de la calle, y yo dije: “ostras, este quiere qué…?” Claro, y yo me cerré, mi reacción fue: cómo, si este solo lo he visto con 100000 solistas de orquesta y todos lo hacen igual, el ataque, el fraseo, bonito, tal y cual. Ostras, pero claro, pensé y dije: igual este tiene
razón. Y el segundo ensayo cedí no? Y es cuando empecé a hacer el solo, no algo rural Street song… no no no no, a saco. Y él dijo: “trumpet! I love you! This is the sound!”

E - Wow!

R – Y yo ahí ya creo que fue esa situación que me hizo relajarme no? Con el tiempo.

E – Ajam, entiendo. Bueno, me parecen muy interesantes muchas cosas que has dicho. Por ejemplo, relacionado con este ejemplo y lo que has dicho antes de “yo voy allí y hago la faena y está”. ¿Cómo te sientes tú, en plan, con el tema de la emoción y de transmitir y todo eso…? ¿Crees que no lo haces tan bien cuando simplemente haces la faena o cuando es algo que realmente sientes como tuyo? Por ejemplo, en el caso del solo. ¿Te sentiste bien o pensaste que de verdad habías hecho una buena performance al tocarlo de esa manera que a lo mejor tú decías: buah, es una locura, yo nunca lo habría pensado así?

R – Eh, sí. Algo que recibí de mis profesores fue que, yo todo lo que hago es para mí, y luego el resto. Pero siempre creo que es muy pretencioso, pero creo que siempre que toco, toco para mí. Y eso me supone que lo que haga sea high level no?

Osea, si hay un director que me hace hacer un solo al revés, está claro que, aunque sea al revés, yo haré el solo mío también. Si es cierto que de joven, esto es así, pero yo con 16 años, 17, todo era nuevo y había conciertos que sentías esa emoción, no? Esto con los años yo creo que no es igual que cuando eres joven. Cuando eres joven hay retos nuevos, obras que no has hecho nunca… con los años, si van a hacer un Mahler o un Bruckner, ya es la 6ª vez que lo haces no? Y ya sabes cómo suena, qué hacer… es todo más simple. Eso sí, cuando viene es final de la “resurrección” es, es… es que no creo que haya opción a no sentir esa emoción. Si es cierto que antes, cuando eres joven, suele ser casi siempre, porque claro, son obras nuevas, son solos nuevos, tal y cual, y luego se hace una selección ahí no? No es la “resurrección” o el solo de la quinta de Mahler. Y ojo, si sigues en forma eh? Porque creo que si uno está bien, en forma, no hay rollos raros…. Ir a ensayar… yo aún hoy siento ese sentimiento de ¡ostia tengo ensayo hoy! No? Hay gente que ir a ensayar es encerrarle ahí no? Y ahí ya entra el ser de cada uno, su relación con su faena no? Si le va, si no le va, la relación con el resto de la gente, si hay un director que te jode la vida o no…

E – Aham. Esto me interesa mucho. De hecho, lo tenía apuntado como una pregunta. ¿Cómo crees que afecta, eso, la relación entre los músicos y la relación con el director? ¿Crees que es
importante o...?

R – Si si si si si. Pero es un arma de doble filo. Hace un año ahora, fui a Hong Kong con la Hong Kong Phil y hacíamos Shoshtakovich 8... no, 9. Y allí es donde más he sufrido, cierta presión en el directo. Incluso, ir a ensayar, y decir: buff, ostia, hoy tengo ensayo... y ojo, yo iba de solista, fui tres semanas allí, oye tengo mi faena pero surgió y dije ostras que guay, voy a Hong Kong, veo Hong Kong, esto... se hizo una gira, fuimos a Shangai... ostia ideal, no? Pero ese rollo que yo pensé relajado no?, voy a Hong Kong allí, cuatro ensayos, y el resto, a ver Hong Kong, a hacer cosas... ostras, coincidi con su director, el que es jefe allí, Jaap Van Zweden, él es holandés, y es jefe allí y es jefe en Nueva York. Un fenómeno, un espectacular....

Yo flipaba, pero de oído, de claridad, de... ostras, espectacular. Sabe cómo hacer que todo suene mejor, espectacular. Eso sí, un role de jefe total que uffff. Yo vi allí a gente sufriendo. Yo sufrí cierta presión eh? Y eso, claro, eso hablas con gente allí te dicen que cuando él está es cuando duermen mal, se toman pastillas, alguno igual está en el alcohol... mirá, fijate, el tuba que había allí era su décimo año allí, y un día le dijo... esto fue antes de que yo fuese allí: Un ensayo paró y le dijo: usted tiene un año. Un año de trial otra vez. Claro, para él fue de decir: ostia. Pero sin rollos de: yo le entiendo, está bien, está mal, como estás... oye mira que creo que no rindes... nanai. Vamos, eso en un ensayo. Pero es un role muy de Asia eh? En Asia hay un director que es el top high level tal y el resto que son gente que va allí a trabajar.

E – Pero, ¿crees que esto funciona? Porque me ha recordado a Karajan con la Berliner, no? Que luego llegó Abbado, en plan como bálsamo reparador después de que los músicos dijeran: si es que esto es como una dictadura y queremos democracia. O sea, no sé, que Karajan, uno de los más grandes, evidentemente, pero...

R – Yo creo que funciona eh? Pero si Hong Kong Phil era una orquesta de segunda fila, hoy está muy alto eh? Yo allí flipé. Sin ser gente de referencia, aquello suena muy bien. Eso sí, cuando él está. Yo seguro que voy allí cuando él no está ya se relaja el asunto. También piensa que este director actúa porque se dejan ellos. Claro, tú te vas a una Boston, Chicago o así y arrancas echar a gente y dices, eh relájate. Sí, es eso.

E – Vale, más cosas. Estoy entrevistando a gente de todo tipo de instrumentos: viento madera, viento metal y cuerda porque es muy diferente tocar viento metal o viento madera, que somos como solistas al fin y al cabo, porque tenemos nuestro papel, nosotros tocamos nuestro papel y tal, y en cuerda es distinto. Hay 20 personas tocando el mismo papel. Entonces, ¿cómo trabajas
tú con la sección el tema interpretativo? Por ejemplo, lo que hemos hablado antes de: no estoy de acuerdo con el director o sí, pero tenemos que buscar una unión… ¿cómo trabajas eso en el nivel musical? No tanto en el técnico.

R – Bufff, ahí ya entran los egos, las envidias de la gente y tal. Mira, yo en mi sección sí que no suelo hablar, y esto no es ideal, pero eso cierto día que hablar será reñir, y ahí ya, cuando te ves solo, tú tienes que seguir conviviendo cada día que eso creo que es real, pasa no? Y eso afecta a tu salud, a tus relaciones, a tu familia. O vas ensayas y haces lo que tú crees que hay que hacer, y el resto como sordos no son, pues harán lo que quieran hacer. A veces. A veces, se hacen los sordos. Yo, rara vez, si no es algo muy de decir: oye tíos, no veis que no es así, yo sugiero muy así: mira, es que creo que esto es así, si os apetece… y eso viene de cuando no hay un buen director que ejerza de director. Yo lo de Hong Kong creo que es excesivo, es un tío que ostras, yo fui tres semanas y sufrí eso, fíjate con 10 años. Pero creo que hay ahora un afán que es lo que hay hoy: viene, es simpático, suenan fantástico, gracias a todos, sonríen mucho. Incluso cuando son directores jefes no? Titulares también. Que no quieren saraos. Vienen aquí, dirigen, wonderful… y eso creo que como todo, hay que ajustarse no? Y si hay algo que hay que establecer son los roles. Los roles que en Europa, porque esto no es Europa… tú que estás allí pensará así también.

E – Si. Tal cual.

R – Es que cuando tú entras en Francia ya es Europa. Aquí no es Europa. Entonces, mientras haya esa tensión de no poner los roles de la gente, siempre seremos así. Tú vas a Europa y el solista es el solista. Y hace esto, pam pam pam pam. El segundo es el segundo y hace esto, pum pum pum pum. Y hay gente que no, en sus años de tal, no quieren ser solista, y su faena es ser segundo y su equipamiento, su cabeza, su estudio es para hacer esa faena. Aquí, todo son unos solistas. Y ojo, hay alguien que si está de segundo ahí y hay que está diciendo: ya ves, si eso lo hiciese yo… el rollo está cuando hay alguna razón de enfermedad o algo que el solista no está y le dicen: ahora tú. Y ahí ya empiezan: es que no estoy acostumbrado, es que… pero vamos, ahí hay un tema que da… vamos.

E – Ya ves. Bueno, relacionado con esto, es una pregunta un poco abstracta, pero cuando nos preparamos para tocar una obra como solistas usamos nuestra propia experiencia al fin y al cabo pues para hacer una buena interpretación, pues yo que sé: aquí me imagino tal o aquí quiero transmitir tal porque lo siento así. En orquesta, tienes 100 músicos cada uno con sus ideas, con
su bagaje emocional, con su propia mente, su propia alma, etc. ¿Cómo crees que influye esto en el resultado general? ¿Cuál es tu opinión al respecto?

R – Yo creo que hay ciertas referencias. Cómo decirlo... hay solistas: el de violín, el de violoncelo, el de viola, el de contrabajo, el de flauta, el de oboe, tal y cual. Que hay 16 solistas no? Eso es algo que creo que ellos son la referencia para el resto de gente no? Y creo que por intuición, a veces, si yo oigo el solo de oboe no? Yo lo recibo no? Esa energía. Luego, en cuanto a mí, creo que la trompa es el instrumento expresivo de mi sección, los solos guays los hace la trompa, y es así, tienen solos que flipas. Mi role, hay solos, pero por A o B son o jodidos de rollo técnico o son jodidos porque te traen a un extremo. La trompa tiene un sinfín de solos líricos, melódicos... Se te arranca él y ya expresa, se recrea, va viene, y tal... y dices olé, no? Los nuestros o son rítmicos o son rotos o agudos o es algo que exige que no puedes relajarte y hacerlo, y los hay que creo que ni el instrumento da para desatar esa energía extra que requiere un final grandioso, o algo ritmo que empiezas tú pim pum pam y el resto, si... sí que siento que cuando yo quiero hacer algo, hago que el resto reaccione. Siempre he tenido conciertos de oír que viene el final y decir que solos tiene este no? Se acerca el final y arranca el final, si tú tienes ese extra de, no sé, de energía, y arranco ahí pu pu pu pu, y el resto me sigue no?

E – Que guay no?

R – Son años ya.

E – Ojalá yo algún día.

R – si si sí, ostras, pero creo que ahí ya influye todo un tema, yo no soy director, pero sé qué hacer cuando soy director, y si algo os hice hacer es que ese rato que hacíamos con la banda fuese, ostras, que os diese ese emoción, esa energía, con el fin de que lo que se oye o lo que la gente reciba sea eso, sean esas ganas de hacer, aunque hay veces que hay en exceso, sí. Si algo hay de la gente joven, es eso. Aunque yo si he hecho cosas con la OSCYL pero yo soy uno que estoy un rato ahí arriba y al siguiente día estaré en mi silla seguramente. Entonces el rollo es ir allí, ensayar, sonriendo, que rule bien, todo clarito, si hay algún rollito se arregla, gracias a todos... aunque hay gente que te toca los.... Ojos jaja aunque sean tus compañeros y luego es muy bien Roberto, pero yo sé que ya han estado rascando, y yo para eso tengo ese.... De decir: ostras es que esto no sale. Si a mí hay veces que querría ser director, sí, pero de gente joven. De gente receptiva, gente que, no sé, que crea en mí aunque sea un ratito.
E – Jo, me encanta lo que has dicho de la banda, es que justo por eso quería entrevistarte a ti porque me acordaba de eso, de las cosas que nos decías, y de todo eso: las ganas que nos hacías tener y todo. Me ha gustado mucho.

R – si es que creo que es eso lo mejor que puedo ofreceros. Luego, a saber, luego el rollo no es entrar en un sitio, no? O sea que haces una audición y ya eres la flauta solista de la Viena Philharmonic. Eso no es, hombre, es la reostia, pero la reostia es estar un día y otro, y una semana, y un año, y diez años ahí, y eso se hace duro, y o tienes tu auto… auto energía, o es un ritmo que te va absorbieniendo eh? Y ojo, yo te hablo de un sitio que, bueno, pues hay ambiente sano más o menos, es relajado, el ritmo de faena es relajado, no hay rollos de presión, no no no, es… yo creo que una Viena, una Berliner… es otro mundo.

E – Jo, pues creo que ya tengo todo lo que necesito. Me ha encantado, jo, me ha parecido súper interesante todo lo que has dicho, de verdad. Me ha ayudado muchísimo. Es súper curioso de verdad, o sea, cómo cada uno piensa tan distinto y eso, también he entrevistado a gente sueca y a ti y… muy distinto. Es muy curioso.

R – Si, pero creo que si hay aquí un rollo que cuando tú haces esta carrera, te enfocan para hacer el Ibert de flauta. Esto puede ser que tú esto nunca lo tocarás. Es algo que, en tu examen de master, pero yo me vierto más y estudio más, y no he hecho ninguno, solo cuando he sido joven se acabó. Lo que es para ser solista, ser el solista de trompeta, el resto, sí eres segunda, eres una mierda, y si es una ONE, ese va con la ONE, y eso es… es el top mundial, y la referencia es la ONE, por el dinero, por historia, por lo que es la ONE, aun estarás en un rango C, D? si la razón es que en la ONE entran solo figuras, entonces, sí que ojo, que suena guay, pero nunca será una Viena, una Berlín, una Chicago, una Boston, una Nueva York, que este gen sureño que hay aquí, sabes que aquí somos muy envidiosos, y eso nos hunde. Y ahora con todo esto, se está hundiendo, y yo y tal y cual y ese que se joda. Pero en fin, si algo que yo siempre sugiero, es irse un año, dos… pero es irse, sales, y la cabeza te hace crack y dices: dios mío de mi vida. Y hay sol, y se vive de puta madre, pero… y ahora que con este rollo, sabes? Esto será durillo. Asique creo que aun que haga frio y tal, sigue ahí, o en Europa.

E – Lo haré, o al menos lo intentaré.

R – Bueno, quieres algo más? Sigue!

E – No, yo estoy servida jajaja la verdad que todo lo que has dicho ha sido muy interesante y
ya tengo… vamos, todo lo que necesitaba, o sea que jo, muchas gracias de verdad.

R – Okay. Muchísimas gracias a ti!

Interview with Roberto Bodí López – 29.11.2021 (English)

Esther: Let's start with the questions. Okay, well, first I'd like you to introduce yourself, your name, your instrument, your orchestral career, where you're playing now, where you've been playing before, and well, a little bit about yourself.

Roberto - Mr. Roberto Bodí López. I am a trumpet player and, as a soloist, I have been playing for 20 years and in January it will be 21 years as a soloist in the OSCYL, the Symphony Orchestra of Castilla y León. And I have had the opportunity to play with several chamber groups in Spain and also other orchestras such as Cadaqués, the ONE, Barcelona, Valencia, Coruña... it's been years, and that gives to do things. And now it's not, it's my main job, so I give a series of hours of classes also in the conservatory of Salamanca, which is now the superior of the region.

E- Okay, mmmm. Okay. I'm going to start with the questions. Do you always agree with the conductor's interpretation, whether or not it's the chief conductor, the conductor of the OSCYL or a guest conductor, do you always agree with the conductor's interpretation of the piece or not?

R - Let's see, this... it is usually associated, I think I speak not only for myself but also for the rest; if the conductor is renowned and is a guy who works, he is usually right in everything, and I think this is so, isn't it? Depending on who it is, the musician already has a certain predisposition to it, no? And yes, if you want someone who is solvent, mistakes appear immediately, you read faults, etc. Just in general.

As for me, I think that whenever there is someone up there, my role is to do the job well done; and if something has to be done faster, slower, or like this or that, I know how to react to what he does. Then, yes, one has his own ideas. Of course, I think I have always been inspired by orchestras like Chicago, Boston, New York, because of the role of brass. Brass is a hallmark of those orchestras. And of course, I simply hear that and for me it is a reference. It's true that over the years I've become more relaxed. As a young man, you have your ideas. You, as you have
your idea, you have taken it to the limit. And not now. Now, about 10 years ago or so, the role is different. I have an example. Years ago we did, with a Russian conductor who came here, years ago, and we did Petrushka and I remember the solo, the tirooo (sings) and I always saw it legato, beautiful, in tune, the soft attacks... and this Russian was at the rehearsal, and I was playing beautifully. He stops the rehearsal and he says to me: "please, this is a folk song, popular music", and I said: how; "like you play in the Street". He said it was street music, and I said: "oh, this one wants what...? "Of course, and I shut down, my reaction was: how, if I've seen this solo with 100,000 orchestra soloists and they all do it the same, the attack, the phrasing, beautiful, so and so. Of course, but of course, I thought and said: maybe this conductor is right. And the second rehearsal I gave in, didn't I? And that's when I started to do the solo, not something rural Street song... no no no no no no, full on. And he said: "trumpet! I love you! This is the sound! ”

E - Wow!

R - And I think it was that situation that made me relax, right? With time.

E - Aham, I understand. Well, I find a lot of things you said very interesting. For example, related to this example and what you said before "I go there and I do the job and that's it". How do you feel, in terms of emotion and transmitting and all that...? Do you think you don't do it as well when you just do the job or when it's something that you really feel as your own? For example, in the case of the solo, did you feel good or did you think that you had really done a good performance when you played it in that way that maybe you said: wow, that's crazy, I would never have thought of it like that?

R - Uh, yes. Something I got from my teachers was that, everything I do is for me, and then the rest. But I always think it's very pretentious, but I think whenever I play, I play for me. And that assumes that whatever I do is high level, right?

I mean, if there is a conductor who makes me do a solo backwards, it is clear that, even if it is backwards, I will do my solo too. It's true that when I was young, it's like that, but when I was 16, 17, everything was new and there were concerts where you felt that emotion, right? I don't think this is the same as when you are young. When you are young there are new challenges, works that you have never done... with the years, if you are going to do a Mahler or a Bruckner, it is already the 6th time you do it, no? And you know how it sounds, what to do... it's all simpler. Of course, when the end of the "resurrection" comes, it's, it's... I don't think there's any
option not to feel that emotion. If it is true that before, when you are young, it is almost always, because of course, they are new works, they are new solos, and so and so, and then a selection is made there, isn't it? It is not the "Resurrection" or the solo of Mahler's fifth. And watch out, if you are still in good shape, eh? Because I think that if you are well, in good shape, there are no weird stuff... Going to rehearsal... even today I still feel that feeling of "damn, I have a rehearsal today! No? There are people that to go to rehearsal is to lock them in there, right? And that's where each person's being comes in, their relationship with their job, right? If it suits him, if it doesn't suit him, the relationship with the rest of the people, if there is a conductor who fucks up your life or not.

E - Aham. I'm very interested in this. In fact, I had it down as a question. How do you think it affects the relationship between the musicians and the relationship with the conductor? Do you think it's important or...?

R - Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes. But it's a double-edged sword. A year ago now, I went to Hong Kong with the Hong Kong Phil and we did Shoshtakovich 8... no, 9. And that's where I suffered the most, a certain pressure in the live performance. Even, going to rehearsal, and saying: buff, wow, today I have rehearsal... and I was a soloist, I went there for three weeks, hey I have my work to do but it came up and I said wow how cool, I'm going to Hong Kong, I see Hong Kong, this... a tour was made, we went to Shanghai... ideal, right? But that thing that I thought relaxed no? I go to Hong Kong there, four rehearsals, and the rest, to see Hong Kong, to do things... Jesus, I met their director, the one who is the boss there, Jaap Van Zweden, he is Dutch, and he is the boss there and he is the boss in New York. A phenomenon, spectacular.... I freaked out, but his ear, his clarity, and his... spectacular. He knows how to make everything sound better, spectacular. That's right, a total boss role that uffff. I saw people suffering there. And that, of course, you talk to people there and they tell you that when he is there, they sleep badly, they take pills, some of them maybe are into alcohol... look, look, the tuba player who was there was in his tenth year there, and one day he told him... this was before I went there: A rehearsal stopped and he told him: you have one year. One year of trial again. Of course, for him it was like: wow. But without the stuff of: I understand you, it's good, it's bad, how are you... hey look, I think you're not performing well... nanai. Come on, that in a rehearsal. But it is a very Asian role, eh? In Asia there is a conductor who is the top high level and the rest are people who go there to work.
E - But do you think this works? Because it reminded me of Karajan with the Berliner, right? And then Abbado arrived, as a kind of repairing balm after the musicians said: this is like a dictatorship and we want democracy. I mean, I don't know, Karajan, one of the greatest, of course, but...

R - I think it works eh? But if Hong Kong Phil was a second-tier orchestra, today it's very high eh? I was amazed there. Without being people of reference, that sounds very good. Of course, when he is there. I'm sure I go there when he's not there and the whole thing relaxes. I also think that this conductor acts like this because they let them. Sure, you go to Boston, Chicago or so and you start throwing people out and they say: hey relax. Yes, that's it.

E - Okay, more things. I'm interviewing people from all kinds of instruments: woodwind, brass and string because it's very different to play brass or woodwind, which we are like soloists, because we have our part, we play our own part and so, and in string it's different. There are 20 people playing the same part. So, how do you work with the section on the interpretative part? For example, what we talked about before: I don't agree with the conductor or yes, but we have to look for a union... how do you work that on the musical level? Not so much on the technical level.

R - Bufff, that's where egos come in, people's envy and so on. Look, in my section I don't usually talk, and this is not ideal, but one day talking will be a quarrel, and then, when you see yourself alone, you have to continue living every day, which I think is real, it happens, right? And that affects your health, your relationships, and your family. Or you rehearse and do what you think you have to do, and the rest, as they are not deaf, will do what they want to do. Sometimes. Sometimes, they turn a deaf ear. I, rarely, if it is not something very much like saying: hey guys, don't you see that it is not like this, I suggest very much like this: look, I think this is how it is, if you feel like it... and that comes from when there is not a good conductor acting as a conductor. I think the Hong Kong thing is excessive, he's a guy who is such an ****, I went there for three weeks and I suffered that. But I think there is now an eagerness that is what there is today: he comes, he is nice, they sound fantastic, thank you all, they smile a lot. Even when they are chief conductors, right? Headlines too. They don't want to make a fuss. They come here, they conduct, wonderful... and I think that, like everything else, we have to adjust, don't we? And if there is something that has to be established, it is the roles. The roles that in Europe, because this is not Europe... you who are there will think so too.
E - Yes.

R - It is that when you enter France it is already Europe. Here it is not Europe. So, as long as there is that tension of not putting people's roles, we will always be like that. You go to Europe and the soloist is the soloist. And he does this, pam pam pam pam pam pam. The second is the second and he does this, pum pum pum pum pum pum. And there are people who do not, in their years of such, they do not want to be a soloist, and their job is to be second and their equipment, their head, their studio is to do that job. Here, all are soloists. And there is someone who, if he is second in the group and there is someone who is saying: you see, if I did that... the problem is when there is some reason of illness or something that the soloist is not there and they say: now you do it. And then they start saying: I'm not used to it, I'm not used to it... but let's see, let's go.

E - Aham. Well, related to this, it's a bit of an abstract question, but when we prepare to play a piece as soloists, we use our own experience in order to make a good interpretation, so what do I know: here I imagine such and such or here I want to transmit this and that because I feel it that way. In an orchestra, you have 100 musicians, each one with his own ideas, his own emotional baggage, his own mind, his own soul, etc. How do you think this influences the overall result? What is your opinion about this?

R - I think there are certain references. How to say... there are soloists: the violin, the violoncello, the viola, the double bass, the flute, the oboe, and so on. There are 16 soloists, right? It is something that I think they are the reference for the rest of the people, and I think that by intuition sometimes, if I go to the oboe solo, I get it, no? That energy. Then, as for me, I think the horn is the expressive instrument of my section, the cool solos are done by the horn, and that's how it is. They have solos that are so cool. My role, there are solos, but for A or B they are either fucked up technically or they are fucked up because they bring you to an extreme. The horn has an endless number of lyrical, melodic solos..... He pulls you out and he expresses himself, he recreates himself, he comes and goes, and so on... and you say olé, no? Ours are either rhythmic or they are broken or sharp or it's something that demands that you can't relax and do it, and there are some that I don't even think the instrument can unleash that extra energy that requires a grandiose ending, or something rhythmic that you start pum pum pam and the rest, yes... I do feel that when I want to do something, I make the rest react. I've always had concerts of hearing that the end is coming and say what solos does this one have, right? The
end is coming and the end starts, if you have that extra, I don't know, energy, and I start there
pu pu pu pu pu pu, and the rest follows me, no?

E - Cool, isn't it?

R - It has been years of practice.

E - I wish I could do it someday.

R - Yes, yes, yes, yes, but I think there is a whole issue that has an influence, I am not a
conductor, but I know what to do when I am a conductor, and if there is something I made you
do, it is that the time we had with the band was, well, that it gave you that emotion, that energy,
so that what you hear or what people receive is that, is that desire to do, although there are times
when there is too much, yes. If there is something about young people, it is that. Although I
have done things with the OSCYL, but I am one who is up there for a while and the next day I
will probably be in my chair. So the thing is to go there, to rehearse, smiling, that it rules well,
everything clear, if there is something, we fix it, thanks to all ... although there are people who
touches your .... Eyes haha although they are your colleagues and then it is: very well Roberto,
but I know that they have already been scratching, and for that I have that.... To say: oops, this
does not come out. There are times when I would like to be a conductor, yes, but of young
people. Of receptive people, people who, I don't know, who believe in me at least for a little
while.

E - Oh, I love what you said about the band, that's exactly why I wanted to interview you
because I remembered that, the things you told us, and all that: the emotion you made us have
and everything. I really liked it.

R - I think that's the best I can offer you. Then, you know, the point is not to get into a place, is
it? So you audition and you're already the principal flute of the Vienna Philharmonic. That's
not, man, it's great, but the great thing is to be there for a day and another day, and a week, and
a week, and a year, and ten years, and that's hard, and either you have your self... self energy,
or it's a rhythm that absorbs you, eh? And I am talking about a place that, well, there is a more
or less healthy atmosphere, it is relaxed, the work rhythm is relaxed, there is no pressure, no no
no no, it is... I think that a Vienna, a Berliner... it is another world.
E - Oh, I think I have everything I need. I loved it, I found everything you said very interesting, really. It has helped me a lot. It's really curious, I mean, how everyone thinks so differently and that, I have also interviewed Swedish people and you and... Very different. It's very curious.

R - Yes, but I think that if there is a thing that, when you do this career, you are focused to do the flute Ibert concerto. It could be that you will never play it. It's something that, in your master's exam maybe, but I pour myself more and I study more, and I haven't done any of this, only when I've been young, now it's over. What it is to be a soloist, to be the trumpet soloist, the rest, if you are second, you are shit, and if it is as in ONE (Orquesta Nacional de España), that one goes with the ONE, and that is... it is the top world, and the reference is the ONE, for the money, for history, for what is the ONE, you will still be in a C, D rank? if the reason is that in the ONE only figures enter, then, that sounds cool, but it will never be a Vienna, a Berlin, a Chicago, a Boston, a New York, that this southern gene that is here, you know that here we are very envious, and that sinks us. And now with all this, it's sinking us. But anyway, if there is something I always suggest, is to leave for a year, two... but it is to leave, you go out, and your head cracks and you say: OMG. And here it's sunny, and it's a great life, but... and now with this thing, you know? It's going to be tough. So I think that even if it's cold and so on, it's still there, or in Europe.

E - I will do it, or at least I will try.

R - Well, do you want something else? Keep going!

E - No, I'm served hahaha the truth is that everything you have said has been very interesting and I already have... let's go, everything I needed, so thank you very much indeed.

R - Okay. Thank you so much!
Interview with Won-Hee Lee - 17.01.2021

E – Hello Wonnie! First of all, I would like you to introduce yourself, like, your name, your orchestral experience, like, where have you been playing?, how long have you been playing in the Konserthuset? And yeah…

W – Okay, starting from like a child you mean or…? So, okay, I am Won-Hee Lee, I am a violinist in the Kungliga Philharmonic and this is the beginning of my seventh season in the orchestra. So, my orchestral experience, I was very lucky that I grow up in a town that had…, or a city that had an orchestral program for when you are really young, so I started playing in a string orchestra when I was 6, and then at 12 I was in my first like full youth orchestra with all the instrument and everything, and I spent every summer, except for maybe 3 or something, until I was 25 doing… or 24 maybe, doing orchestral programs and, you know, and the NYOC, the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, these kind of things, you know, we had really intense training, and then summer tours that are a month when the whole orchestra is in a bus for a month. It is really fun! And then I moved to Berlin… I went to the school in the States, in Indiana, they a had a pretty big orchestra program but it wasn’t, I wasn’t that interested in… you know, in university training is not as individual, and my school was so big and, you know, 5 orchestras, 5 choirs… so, yeah, it feels very factory, like… so, I don’t know if I would say I learnt a lot about orchestra there but… just, you know, getting repertoire in. but my favorite thing actually was conductors orchestra. Because there is always the conductor’s fault and not orchestra’s fault hahah when we were working with the teacher, he said: okay, so why didn’t that work? And it is always the conductor saying: I should have shown this clearer hahah it is funny. And then I went to Berlin and there I took the Deutsche Symphony Orchestra Academy and then I was like freelancing in different orchestras around Germany or Mahler Chamber was one of the other orchestras where I played the most and then I had met Johannes Lörstad, who works in the orchestra now, in a festival in England and he had been coaching one of the sessions and then he invited me to audition in Mahler Chamber. And he told me to come to Stockholm, and that is how I ended up in Stockholm, because I met him hahah

E – Wow, impressive career, omg.

W – Basically I would say that I have done almost exclusively orchestra. It has really been my main focus and my teachers in high school and university were really orchestral people, so I spent more time practicing orchestra excerpts that I did pieces.
E – Wow, impressive, thank you. Okay so, let’s go into the deep thing. Do you always agree with the interpretation of the conductor? Like…

W – No.

E – Okay, and how do you deal with it? I mean, imagine that you don’t like the, I don’t know, one passage he or she is telling you: you have to do it like this, as a section, and you don’t feel like it, I mean, how do you manage to perform it well if you don’t feel it?

W – Yes, sometimes that can be tough, definitely depending on the conductor because of course, sometimes, you can really not like someone and it is very hard to do it convincing. I mean, I guess I would say that, you know, especially like in the orchestral world, you tend to play the same things many times so you can’t always like the interpretation and part of the, I don’t know, it seems weird to call it a game, but part of the game is that you do, like as a job as a tutti player, you do what the conductor is showing as convincingly as possible and then you try to internalize it even if you disagree with it because a lot of the time I found it like, if you kind of actively fight against it, of course you are never gonna see their side, but if you actually really try to internalize it maybe at the end of the week, you are like: you know, that works! I didn’t like it but actually that was kind of interesting and then suddenly you have a whole new perspective and a whole new view point and how it could have gone. Yeah, and also, I would say that I think in especially in this orchestra, we are very lucky that we have, our leaders are very enthusiastic people. And so, we have a lot of people in the orchestra who would never show if they disagree and they really just go for it and I think that is really inspiring.

E – Aham, definitely. When I talked with Josep, the cellist, he told me about the leader of the section and for me this is something new because we don’t have like a leader, so just tell me a little bit about it, like, how does the section work? Like, for example if you have any ideas, do you have to talk with the leader, right? And then the leader talks to the conductor or …?

W – I mean… that is an interesting question because it is … I mean, generally when you are sitting in tutti, you don’t really voice your ideas because… I mean, unless you have a sectional, where is just the section, but generally ideas tend to be things like: how do we do this ourselves together, warmer, or … okay, it sounds a little bit messy, everyone is playing in a different part of the bow, and then there will be some kind of discussion, but when it comes to phrasing or things like that, you don’t… it is not very normal, you wouldn’t do that in a full orchestra rehearsal. So I think on an orchestra it is a little bit unique that we do sectionals and not every
orchestra has that. So I think it does create frustration for a lot of people because some people feel like they wanted to be a leader and they never really got that position and it feels quite a lot of anx that they expend their whole careers having to do what other people say and they never get to say what they want. So yeah, I think the leader just have a different thing to do, cause what they do, the section is kind of trying to go with that and, so that you stare there as a group, but I just guess every orchestra has a different thing, like, if you watch the Berlin Phil, I mean, they are all kind of soloists, right? They are all in that level category and they play like it, and, so and it sounds phenomenal because everybody is doing that, but, if you are in another orchestra where there is only three people, four people, that really sticks out, sounds kind of funny.

E – Yeah, is decompensated, definitely.

W – It kind of happens like in a lot of different groups I guess, but in Sweden in particular, I mean, culturally people don’t speak out a lot, even though is not like their blood, like they said like: yeah, but I think…! So…

E – And talking about this, I think that for example working in sectionals and chamber music inside the orchestra is basic for the well-functioning of the section and the orchestra. Do you agree or what is your opinion about this?

W – I mean, I think it is a great thing to have but I don’t think it is necessary all the time. I think it really depends on the program. Also, it depends a lot on who your leaders are, because some, I mean, some leaders have very good sense of how to do that kind of thing and other leaders maybe not so much or you know, some people are enthusiastic about it and some people aren’t, so, it’s very varied in how you would react to it. Cause I support the idea but many weeks that we had it just built in rehearsal time, you kind of feel like: I don’t know if we do really need this. Is nobody’s fault in particular, but there are some weeks where you feel, that we are just in better form and for example, the cello section maybe have a lot of solos as a group and it would be really necessary, but we didn’t have one because we didn’t need one. You know, that was supposed to, sort of, yeah, when the leaders decided it, we don’t need one.

E – And, how do you feel about the…? Because the other people I have interviewed, they were older, a bit older, and for example Josep is really young, so how do you think this affects? Like, you are really young too, so how do you feel about it? Like, do you feel that you …? Well, you have a lot of experience in orchestra, but maybe like, with this orchestra, you have been 7 years
only and maybe there are people that have been there like 20 years, so how do you feel about that?

W – Yeah, I mean, in my section there is some people who’s been there since before I was born.

E – Wow, that’s a lot!

W – Yeah. And I think one person started the year I was born and so, when I got the job I was 25 and the next person like up for me in my section was 10 years older and the next one after that was another 10 years. So, I felt very much like a baby in the section, you know. And since then, we’ve had 2 new members, but they are still older than me, only by a few years but, I still sort of maintain this, and I am in my thirties, I am not a baby, but I do feel sometimes like, just like, you know haha but, I mean, I think that when you come in when you are young, you have so much energy and excitement and it is all new and especially when you are trial you really give a 100% all the time and, I think that can make some funny clashes with the older people because they are quite chill and they are like really, I mean, we used to talk about it in the section, they said like they really love having new people around because they said they are super inspired to practice and they are super inspired because we came in a kind of a higher level than they have been…, you know, when they started in the orchestra, it was kind of easy and of course it pushes every generation. So that has been really fun but I didn’t have to learn… I had to learn but also it was good for me to learn how to just kind of calm down a little bit cause when I felt very powerful and it was very nice and I think it is a good thing that you can bring it sometimes but also to learn… that it is okay just to chill. And there are some weeks that you just say: uff I really don’t like this week because of the conductor, because of the program… whatever it is, and you just say: that’s okay, I’ll not pour myself into this one and it is fine, because at the end of the day, it is still a job, and it is like, you know… but I think that makes it’s a little bit harder when you are moving for a job where you don’t know anyone. For me, for years, my job was my only thing, that was the center of my universe, you know, so it was hard for me to understand when people who tell me like: oh, but it’s okay, next week will be better or, you know… and I was like: yeah, but you go home and you have your kids, your family and blablabla and your life switches when you leave the building, but I hardly leave the building cause that is just what I have going on… you know. So, you learn life lessons here from everyone.

E – Definitely. And related to this, do you think that the relationship with the other musicians
of the orchestra and the conductor affects the music? Like, do you think that if you know the other people or have a close relationship, the music, it will be better? Like, do you understand each other better or it doesn’t affect at all?

W – It is a really good question. I’m not sure, to be honest. Because, just over the years, and I am making a huge generalization, but over the years what I noticed was: the higher the level, when you reach the top of the top, the people tend to not like each other very much. Of course, there are some smalls groups of people that hang out and they are friends, but just from what I have witnessed, people respect each other in a very, on a musician level, like: “you are a phenomenal player, but you are such an asshole. You hear that quite often, especially when I moved to Berlin and there were so many orchestra that have a really high level. Again, there is sort of like a hierarchy and, just the way of some musicians spoke about their colleagues, I was really surprised, and it used to be like the dream of my playing, all of these orchestras, and then after a certain point, I realized that, I don’t know, like, me, personally, I don’t have such an ambition to play there. It’s not worth it for me to be in that environment… so I think, at that point, players are such in a high level, and it sounds phenomenal, even if you don’t necessarily get along, but as you said, I have been to some concerts in Berlin where, for example, like the winds just were really out of tune and that’s because, obviously it is not that they don’t hear or they don’t know how to do it, but really because, like, and this is just knowing from, my people have told me of the dynamic of the people, but when some solo players play together, they refuse to fudge. Like: “I am right” and the other people are like: “I am right”, so they just stay on this horrible, like hahah and it is so strange to hear like: the best orchestra in the world! when you are like: what?? Hahah and it wasn’t just like one time thing, no. And sometimes you just see people fighting with each other.

E – Oh, that is so sad, actually.

W – Right? Yeah, exactly, and so when I saw that, I was really like wow. But then at the same time, when you get a conductor that really inspires everyone, and really kind of make that happen, just makes people to leave their personal feelings, I mean, it is magic. But then I would say, for example, like, here with the phil. The phil isn’t one of the best orchestra in the world, but I think it is a great orchestra, and for me, there is no, there is nothing I would change about playing in this orchestra, because when I am not there, I miss my colleagues, and when I am there, I love seeing them and it makes me so happy to go to work, to see them, I don’t know if it makes the music better but it makes of all out individual lives so much richer that, when you
go to work, you don’t have to shut off and be a different person. And again, that also goes with, like, once you hit a certain level, the mentality is that you have to maintain this prestige, and I think that stress on people like that, changes how you approach things.

But it is kind of hard question. For me, it makes the music great because I can look around and like, love 90 people on the stage, but then again, I haven’t played in orchestras… like one friend, he was in the LA Phil, and he said like the level was so high every single time. Every time you got impressed by the people around you because they are one of the top, you know, I mean, they are one of the highest paid in the country, so they attract also the top, you know. He also, it was a little bit of a shock because he was in another orchestra in Texas, where they were really good but the level wasn’t like that, and you could feel really huge personality difference. Yeah, I don’t know.

E – Really interesting, and really nice what you have said, I liked it, thank you. Okay, do you feel different, of course… I mean, do you feel difference when you play as a soloist than when you play in orchestra? Like, is it a different feeling or how do you think?

W – Yeah. For me, I have had a very clear perspective on that because I hate playing solo.

E – Okay, we agree hahaha

W – For me, it just like my nightmare scenario. We actually had this conversation like some… two nights ago, I think, with the concertmaster, because he was saying like, I mean, he just doesn’t feel that comfortable when he is sitting in the section, just he… for him just leading and so many solos and stuff, for him that is very natural, because he is not nervous or something. But for me, my whole life would stop if I had to do solo. But when I am in the orchestra, it’s so natural and I… for me, like playing less than three or four people is very stressful. 3 or 4, that’s like the limit. But 30, that’s great hahah

E – Omg, I feel it like you, I mean, I totally agree with you. I feel the same way. Yeah, yeah, definitely. Okay, let me see one moment. Yeah, I think we have talked about this but, apart from the relationship between the musicians like, each musician in the orchestra have their own emotional baggage, and personality, and mind, ideas… so, yeah, I mean, we have talked about it a little bit, like how do you think that the emotional baggage of each one affects the general result in the terms of interpretation and musicality?

W – Ammmmm. You know, I think that changes quite a lot. Kind about where you are in the
world? I think it depends a lot culturally.

E – Definitely. I totally agree because one of the musicians I have interviewed is Spanish like me, so yeah, he definitely had totally different perspective for everything.

W – Yeah, exactly. When you come from a culture that is like outgoing and vocal and you know, like I have some friends who worked in Italy for example, and they are very emotive, you know, and I am sure it is the same in Spain as well, or you know, in France. People love to complain, like, I mean, I am not be like stereotype, but I mean, it is part of the culture, everyone it is just like agggg oh that was so shit, or something, and then everyone goes like: yeah, and you do that together like that’s what you do together kind of thing. And I think in Sweden… I really appreciate about being here. People kind of keep their shit to themselves. I mean, I think within the orchestra people they have really close friends, and people’s best friends in life are in the orchestra. And you know, they spend holidays or parties together, and that is really sweet and absolutely lovely. But generally I found when people go into the stage, they leave their stuff. You know, and sometimes, even like in my section, you know that this person is going through this or that, and they don’t show it at all. But of course, that’s personality. There are of course some people in the orchestra who maybe you don’t know what is going on in their lives but they are like having a weird… I mean, you can feel it, like their attitude is so different, or spiky, or they are mad at this, and you are like: what a weird thing to be mad about! You know? And then you can kind of just like realize that they got other kind of stuff going on. But, I would say like here in Sweden I have noticed that those people stick out a lot more because everyone else is more quite, so those people stick out a lot. And in another country I think it would just be normal. So these people are doing that and you know, and it is not a big thing, but here, when people do it, you are like: oh. Hahah like it is so much more obvious somehow. And that can be really tough sometimes. But I mean, at the same time, there is people in the orchestra you know that have gone through really big things like, you know, their parent has passed away or they got really ill or something. And you don’t find out after two months later because they just came to work and they did their thing and, you know, they didn’t chose to share that or only with those people, I mean, of course you are not best friends with everybody, so I think here it is particularly… I would say it is a quite a healthy atmosphere compare to other places that I have played. But of course, everywhere can be better all the time, I am not saying that people don’t have complains here, but… I mean, I am sure you’ve noticed that Swedish… I don’t know how many like really Swedish people you have been with but, you just realize, everyone can complain about something, right? Like… equality or health care is like this, it seems really silly
that they complain, but of course they want this and all you want is like, you know, that kind of thing were you are just like: well, this is pretty great! So eventually, we have meetings about that, health of the orchestra and stuff like this and whatever reason all the Swedish people bend international people, and when they got to us, we were saying: it is so great, we really love it here and we love all these things and we were pointing out some things that we thought were so phenomenal about working in this orchestra, and then some people who’ve spoken in the beginning said: you know it is so great to have you guys here because we don’t see those things anymore and it is really nice that you guys are probably minding that not everyone has this, that this is special and it is a really positive thing, you know. And we were like: ah okay! Great! Hahah

E – Oh that is super nice! Interesting. Okay! Just to finish, a reflection. What would it be the perfect interpretation for you? What does it have to happen or to have?

W – You mean in like a specific piece of music or just playing in orchestra?

E – Just playing in orchestra. Like, yeah, well, symphonic repertoire.

W – So what has to happen? I mean, I guess I would say that everyone is really aware of what the conductor is doing. I mean, if you have the assumption that the conductor really have something to say, because sometimes you get people who don’t, right? And then it is kind of up to the orchestra to come together and make it good just by whatever is happening here and sometimes you just have to look around, you know, but ummm actually last week Alan Gilbert said something that really made me laugh but I thought it was so true. He said: “often, what happens is that the people who are playing paying the least amount of attention are the people who are driven the music, because everyone is paying attention has to go with the person who is not paying attention, all right?” I mean, in the concert we have to go with him because… we have to go with this person, and so, without even realizing it or carrying or noticing that they are not going with the conductor, they are pulling the whole group with them, and I thought that was such a very simply statement but it is truly a true statement. And we he said that you can feel the people going…. Hahaha yeah exactly, like: is it me or…? Hahah in that moment you can of think that: well, probably the person who wasn’t paying attention doesn’t even think that they are talking about him, which is a little unfortunate but, you know, it is what it is. So I guess for me the best thing that can happen is that everyone is locked in, know like you can trust every person around you to watch the conductor or leaders or whatever, and that you don’t
have to stress that maybe I am alone, maybe it is just the two of us… and that, when you have that security, that’s the best feeling in the world. Yeah. So I guess that’s maybe the main thing that I would say. It is paying attention and be here and now and not planning dinner… I mean, I am not saying that I don’t do that but… hahah

E – We all do that sometimes yeah hahah of course.

W – Yeah, I wasn’t sure what the other part of the question was.

E – Yeah, I mean, that was perfect. For me, it is a very important part to just listen to each other and be like, yeah, present in the moment, and focused, and yeah, definitely.

W – And that is more of like a very technical way of looking at orchestral playing I guess. I mean, if you wanna talk about the music or bringing enthusiasm or something, of course there is that element, but I feel like it starts with that basis cause then you have a base line and you can move within that. So people just do whatever they want and then it is a little chaos hahah

E – Okay! So I think that is pretty much it. So thank you so much, it has been a pleasure to talk with you!

W – Yeah, thank you!