

THE MUSIC FESTIVALS OF CATALONIA



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QUITE APART FROM THE IMPORTANT LOCAL AND FOREIGN MUSICIANS WHO HAVE PERFORMED AT CATALONIA'S MUSIC FESTIVALS, THESE HAVE MADE A DECISIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE *IMPLANTATION* OF CLASSICAL MUSIC IN CATALONIA. THIS IS ESPECIALLY SO OUTSIDE THE CITIES, PREVIOUSLY THE ONLY AREAS WHERE IT COULD BE HEARD.

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Whether local or from abroad, anyone who consults Catalonia's calendar of cultural events can see that the music festivals form a prominent part of it. This first impression is strengthened by looking through the booklet *Música i dansa a Catalunya*, published every year since 1981 by the Department of Culture of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, and full of detailed information about the festivals, concerts, courses and music camps which, with the department's support, take place in our country in summer and autumn. According to last year's edition, 56 festivals were held during the 1987 season.

At first, one might be tempted to believe that the majority of these festivals take place on the coast, where the tourist avalanche is most noticeable, but this is not in fact the case, since no less than 36 of them correspond to Catalan inland towns. The music festivals are scattered across 33 of the 38 regions of Catalonia, some of which have several. The Baix Empordà, for example, can boast seven (Begur, Calonge, Palafrugell, Pals, Palamós, Sant Feliu de Guíxols and Torroella de Montgrí), the Alt Empordà, four (Cadaqués, Llançà, Peralada, and Vilabertran) and others, three and two. The *Terres de Lleida* festival deserves a special mention, since it is the only one that includes concerts in towns in five different regions —Garrigues, Noguera, Pallars Jussà, Segrià and Urgell.

There is a certain predominance of festivals in places where foreign and local tourism is concentrated but they are also held in areas where it is not so important. Another point worth emphasizing is that, in general, the festivals take place in towns which contain important monuments (Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, Tarragona, Cervera, Montblanc, Santes Creus, Ripoll, la Seu d'Urgell, Solsona, Vic, Vilabertran), in old castles (Calonge, el Papiol, Peralada), in Romanesque or Gothic churches (Camprodón, Gerri de la Sal, Guardiola de Berguedà, Llívia, Palau-solità, Pals, Prats de Lluçanès, Sant Feliu de Guíxols, Torroella de Montgrí) or in museums (Granollers). In this way, Catalonia's cultural heritage contributes to the event and can be admired by all present. Another example of this is *Els Orgues de Catalunya*, the only series of concerts organized directly by the Department of Culture of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*. These concerts make use of historic Catalan organs, most of them restored by



the *Generalitat* itself. This job is still going on and is making more and more organs available for use in the concerts. There are also festivals which are held in the open air (Barcelona (Serenates), el Bruc, Igualada, Sant Quintí de Mediona, etc.) or in marquees (Cantonigròs). In an

article titled "Popular baroque", published in the London Guardian of 7th August 1981, the journalist Nicholas de Jong praised the variety and the popular nature of the music festivals of Catalonia and referred to them as an example to be followed in England.

The music festivals of Catalonia are a recent creation, but a few figures will give us an idea of the development and evolution they are likely to undergo in the future. The oldest are the international festival of Barcelona and that of Sant Feliu de Guíxols, which go back twenty-five years. A further fourteen festivals have been in existence for over ten years. The majority, however, (35) have appeared during the last seven years. Three main factors contributed to the emergence of the music festivals in Catalonia: the interest here in the big international festivals (Bayreuth, Salzburg, etc.), the demand amongst the more cultured elements of society and a select tourism, and the organization of concerts on the part of music-lovers or the musically-gifted, taking advantage of the summer and the holidays. Once the example had been set, and especially after the restoration of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, the already existing festivals expanded and new ones were created, leading to their present proliferation and, at the same time, the growing number of courses and summer camps, whose educational value is enormous. Some of these, such as the one in la Seu d'Urgell, devoted to ancient music, and the one in Girona, have already earned international prestige.

Quite apart from the important local and foreign musicians who have performed at Catalonia's music festivals, these have made a decisive contribution to the *implantation* of classical music in Catalonia. This is especially so outside the cities, previously the only areas where it could be heard, and even then only in small, closed circles, generally restricted to a wealthy elite. They have therefore fulfilled both a social and cultural role, have made music available to everybody and have allowed our people to experience the thrill of the most beautiful of sounds. Also, the consolidation of these festivals is creating the need to hear music all year round. As a result, the music scene in Catalonia is improving and, even in this field, we are gaining an equal footing with the most cultivated European nations. We can only hope that this will be backed up in our schools by musical training and education at all levels. ■

