

Interview with **Juan María Solare**
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first published in <http://bensmusic.org/composerinterviews.html#JuanMariaSolare>

Interview with composer Juan María Solare

Website: <http://www.JuanMariaSolare.com>

Answers: Bremen (Germany) 12 February 2011

Q) How long have you composed, and what made you decide to become a composer?

A) If one considers as 'composing' those little self-invented pieces that I repeated over and over again at the piano when I was three or four years old, since then. The first notated piece, my 'Opus Zero', came in May 1977 (10 years old); I still keep that manuscript. I didn't actually 'decide' to become a composer, but I 'discovered' that I was a composer, in the same sense that you discover that your eyes and hair have a certain colour. And I accepted and assumed my condition --my fate-- of being a composer at some point between my last school year (when everybody else choose their career, at 17) and my piece "Trenodia" for viola, composed at 22. Besides, as in other important things, one confirms this initial decision several times in one's lifetime, with different degrees of maturity: i.e. I do not reconsider *whether* I still want to be a composer, but *how*.

Q) What inspires you?

A)

- Inspiration is everywhere -- if you are aware. And if you are not aware, inspiration is elsewhere.
- Inspiration is intransitive: one is not inspired for this or that, but one is inspired 'in itself', as a state of being. A state not far from high receptiveness (minus the tension).
- I don't any longer get much inspiration from other people's music, but from everywhere else, say, from paintings, conversations, abstract forms, concrete objects, numbers & proportions, faces, books (literature or dictionaries), animal behaviour, maps, being inlove, being abandoned, buildings, an unprejudiced performer, red cars with the wheel on the right side, snow, tears (both own and other's), explanations of historical processes, thin air, interviews...

Q) Of all you have done, what do you consider your best work, and why?

A) I intentionally try to avoid judging among my pieces or thinking of them in terms of 'better' or 'worse', because extreme self-criticism kills spontaneity and creativity (particularly in the moment of composition). More than once while composing I have said to myself, 'this idea is of no value'. I wrote it down nevertheless, and in some cases it turned out to be one of my most performed pieces (I think concretely of my work "Nomade"). It feels to me like asking Nature which is her best tree, or asking a body which is its best organ: all of them fulfil some function in and for the whole system. Having said that, what I expect from a work of mine is that it represents some aspect of my person, *any* aspect; and that this aspect be rendered with absolute clarity (to achieve

this, the craftsmanship must be bombproof). The factors "sincerity" or "artistic honesty" appear thus on stage, supported by a refined and pragmatic compositive technique. But I am not running away from the question. If you want me to mention a single title anyway, I would say my "Kammerkonzert" satisfies both mentioned requisites, i.e. it is "typical Solare" and technically well composed. This is just a suggestion to help others approach to my music -- but deep inside I don't feel that piece is really 'better' than, say, my "Tengo un tango". Let's call a musicologist!

Q) What is your 'typical day' like?

A) You pose the most difficult question. 'Struggle against chaos' is the constant. There is not such thing as a 'typical day' in my life, albeit there are some monthly constants: correspondence and organising take a lot of time, too much time. I play one to five recitals (as a pianist) in a month, sometimes abroad, which often implies trains and airports (plus rehearsals if it's chamber music, and practising alone). Two or three days in a week I teach (piano or composition). I listen to the concerts of my colleagues or go to interesting festivals. Friends (and not just "networks") deserve time, since we are not only machines. Partnership is like a second job. And did I tell you I play chess online? Concerning composition, there are two main routines: (a) commissions or requests, which come from other people, from outside, and (b) pieces from within. For (a) I work as an employee, with a deadline, a work-schedule and organised steps. I *construct* (which doesn't imply that the piece will be boring!). As for (b), the first idea, the 'spark', comes often unexpected, somehow and somewhere: in the bus or in the shower or during a dream. So I take quick notes in a sort of shorthand. Sometimes I discuss these embryonic ideas with certain inspiring friends whose words trigger fecundating ideas. Out of these single and uncoordinated ideas a suitable plan, a structure for the whole piece, will develop: a context. From that moment on, the rest is technique and the same disciplined procedure as in (a). As an afterthought: at certain points in the inspiration process (I mean, when the fundamental ideas are being generated, when they are born) I need absolute isolation. Maybe not a long time (some minutes, one hour), but without anybody in the same room. It is a dialog with my instinct. After I discover or decide what is to be done, I can usually do it anywhere, even in overcrowded places.

Q) Do you have any words of wisdom to offer to aspiring composers and musicians?

A) Lack of concentration poisons talent.