

German composer Helmut Lachenmann wins the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in Contemporary Music for “enlarging the world of sounds”

- “I hope to respond to this prize with creativity”, were the laureate’s first words on hearing of the award
- “For me music is an art that stands on its own. We need it because otherwise we would go mad. So in this respect we composers are not entirely useless”
- The breadth of disciplines addressed and their monetary amount – a combined total of 3.2 million euros, with 400,000 euros in each category – place the Frontiers of Knowledge among the world’s foremost award schemes

Madrid, February 15, 2011.- The BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in the Contemporary Music category goes in this edition to German composer Helmut Lachenmann. The jury deciding the award stressed the importance of his creative works, which “based on an intimate knowledge of the musical past, have enlarged the world of sounds during the last fifty years in a way unmatched by any other contemporary composer”. Lachenmann “was and is”, the jury continues, “the creator of new forms of musical expression that have profoundly influenced our understanding and way of listening to music throughout the world. He has led his audiences into unknown territories of musical experience”.

In the words of the citation, “his long and arduous path as a composer has been informed from the start by a critical stance regarding both music and the society in which and for which it was created”.

The award took Lachenmann completely by surprise. "I could never have imagined this" he remarked on receiving the news. "I can only say that this is a totally undeserved as well as unexpected honor that also brings with it certain obligations". Obligations which he describes as "firstly, to go on writing music to the standards expected of me. And that is not always easy, because I'm now 75 years old and pursued from time to time by the specter of composer's block. I hope to be able to respond to this prize with creativity".

Lachenmann feels quite at ease in the company of other laureates in terrains distant from his own: "I belong to the Berlin Wissenschaftskolleg, which is a meeting place for legal scholars, sociologists, mathematicians, biologists... I am not a scientist, but we musicians too have a lot to study, starting with our own history. We also have to find a definition that encapsulates what art is, in contrast to what is commonly referred to as entertainment. Today's politicians are apparently unable to tell the difference. When filling in the official visa form for entry to the United States, I am given the choice of placing an 'x' in the boxes marked business or entertainer. And I opt for the latter, although I do not feel by any means an entertainer. This problem arises because politicians have not taken the time to reflect on the meaning of Art with capital letters".

He has no doubt about the role of music in our times: "An eternally new idea that allows us to leap beyond the boundaries of our own thought, and affords us a unique opportunity to explore other cultures and to fraternize with people who have grown up in other civilizations. For me music is an art that stands on its own. We need it because otherwise we would go mad. In this respect I believe that we composers are not entirely useless".

The Frontiers of Knowledge Awards honor world-class research and artistic creation. The breadth of disciplines addressed and their monetary amount, an annual 3.2 million euros, place them among the foremost international award families. Their uniqueness lies in their close alignment with the scientific, technological, social and economic challenges of the present century. In this respect, they are the first to reserve dedicated categories for Climate Change; Development Cooperation; Information and Communication Technologies, and Ecology and Conservation Biology, alongside the awards going to outstanding contributions in Economics, Finance and Management; Basic Sciences; Biomedicine, and Contemporary Music.

The awardee in this latest edition believes firmly that "music reminds us that we have a creative spirit, constantly seeking out new horizons to conquer. Life is not about sticking with what we know, it's about being able to reach beyond our everyday experience. For me the idea of music has to do with adventure; the adventure of the spirit, but also fantasy and conscience".

Biographical notes

Born in Stuttgart in 1935, he studied piano and composition at the Stuttgarter Musikhochschule where he would later hold the post of Professor of Composition, between 1981 and 1999.

From 1958 to 1960, he was a pupil of Luigi Nono in Venice, and in 1965 started work at the University of Ghent's electronic music studio before centering his attention on purely instrumental music.

He has taught regularly on the Darmstadt summer courses and in 2008 was appointed Visiting Professor in the Music Department of Harvard University. During his time there, he also held the position of composer-in-residence at Oberlin College.

The name Helmut Friedrich Lachenmann is closely associated with "concrete instrumental music", a step beyond the "musique concrète" developed by Pierre Schaeffer in 1948. Lachenmann, who had his start in music singing in the local church choir, wrote his first compositions while still an adolescent.

In 2008, he received the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in honor of his life's work: an output that runs from operas like *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (The Little Matchgirl) through to orchestral works in diverse formats. Article writer, essayist and speaker, he is also author of the book *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung*.

The jury was chaired by **Prof. Dr. Jürg Stenzl**, Professor of Musicology at the University of Salzburg (Austria), with Spanish composer and conductor **Cristóbal Halffter**, 2009 Frontiers of Knowledge laureate in the Contemporary Music category, acting as secretary. Remaining members were **Hugues Dufourt**, composer and Emeritus Research Director at France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS); **Ranko Markovic**, Artistic Director of the Konservatorium Wien University (Austria); **Siegfried Mauser**, President at Munich University of Music and Performing Arts (Germany), and **Dieter Torkewitz**, composer and Professor of Music Theory at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna (Austria).

UPCOMING AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

CATEGORY	DATE
Economics, Finance and Management	Wednesday, February 16, 2011
Development Cooperation	Friday, February 25, 2011

A video recording of the new laureate's first impressions on receiving news of the award is available from the Atlas FTP with the following coordinates:

Server: **213.0.38.61**

Username: **agenciaatlas1**

Password: **amapola**

The name of the video is:

Premio Fronteras Música Contemporánea

Fundación **BBVA**

For more information, contact the BBVA Foundation Communication Department (+34 91 374 5210/comunicacion@fbbva.es) or visit the Foundation website www.fbbva.es

