

Children's America

by Alessandro Bosetti

This piece is dedicated to Iven Chen Van Dyk and to myself.

A WDR / Studio Akustische Kunst production, 2009.

In february 2009 I got an e-mail from Studio Akustische Kunst producer Markus Heuger. He asked for a a piece about the change happening in the USA. He knew I had been living there for the two previous years. In that days, just a month later the spectacular and supposedly history-changing Obama inauguration - seemed that everybody in the german media landscape was looking for a US feature. To be honest I wasn't sure about what to say about the big change. I saw a change happening during the presidential campaign. I had a chance to travel extensively across the country twice in 2008 and, yes, i saw something changing. Nevertheless I wasn't sure about how much of this change was in my perception and feelings towards the "half continent" as i started to call it as in the reality of things. The half continent i was experiencing was very different from the one pictured in the european imaginary. After that Obama made it. Change was his mantra. The word got repeated so often to loose any signification and potential for the next twenty years.

That said , I accepted. At one condition : the USA I was about to talk about - or to let talk by itself - should have been completely run by children, inhabited by children, no adults at sight. If I am to talk of something I have no idea about lets just make the lie bigger - I told to myself. This is how this fictional place germinated in the voices of those little people. What I didn't calculate correctly was how real the whole thing could grow. A dream, a nightmare of childhood run amock. What is with american childhood ? What is with american innocence ? What is with this Half Continent that repeatedly tries to clean itself from sin without knowing to well what is the sin it has to atone from ? Either guantanamo, the corruption of costumes, slavery, the civil war, the rotting of ghettos or simply a uncomprehesible bad

reputation among european older brothers weight there, the guilt is the motor towards purity.

Once accepted the task I had to move go quite fast, recordings in the spring, composing in the summer and here we are, in september, obama facing his first serious difficulties with the health reform and me delivering my piece that has in fact so little and so much to say about this country.

Children speak for themselves. I just had to give the frame, see the explosion happen and then collect the pieces.

Kids can be seen as blank canvases where we can project our theories upon (and this would be one way to read the piece) or as already formed personalities, strong characters, already charged with apocalyptic visions, idyllic nostalgia, surreal humor and ordering obsessions (and you can read the piece this way too, seeing the author as a caretaker and collector of scattered dispatches with some special musical touch for spoken language).

Most apparent to me as the main attribute of infancy was its ephemerality. The main characteristic of infancy is that you lose it. Those kids, as you hear them in the piece, are gone. Kids get lost all the time. Possible formulations are diverse: We lose them. We lost us as kids and we keep losing, or have the impression of losing those remains of childhood that somehow we still have in us. Children change fast, they run towards being us, being grownups, a condition of relative stability compared to the crazily fast evolution of the growth years. Children of 6, 7 or even 10 years of age are not two days the same person, they are skyrocketing towards adulthood being dead and reborn every single morning.

This gives an even deeper meaning to a piece of sound that is by its nature *time based*. Time here is running faster and there is a feeling of loss and evolution and nostalgia that is somehow inevitable for the listener. Thus kids in my piece, even if a few months have passed from the field recordings, don't exist anymore. They fall or vanish as part of a joyful army fighting for the atonement of the half Continent, they fall just because time runs out, they never meet the enemy.

The civil war, the turning of a war into a violent and terrible bad

scene somehow reminiscent (and definitely inspired by) Henry Darger epic narrations or the battle the christian army of hermaphrodite children guided by the Vivian Girls fought against the murderous Glandelinian army of grown ups that wants to conquer and enslave them. You could say i didnt miss an occasion or depicting the USA as a belligerant country. A country that never loses it's attachment for all thigs military. That would be a way to see that. But arent we all europeans at war too right now ? Hasnt the Bush - Obama turnaround made things less clear cut and exposed some of the hipocrisy hidden in our self image of peaceful nations ? Isnt europe history so soaked in war and blood that is not so easy anymore to depict war and imperialism as the american national sport ? At least not as easy as it has been in the past 8 years ?

In any case in this piece a war breaks out and the kids fight it and run it. Maybe they are at war because they are americans. Maybe because just because war is what we all do sooner or later. Maybe just because its the most natural way to loose innocence (and thats the main job if you are a kid). They fight and die. Maybe my war, the war i described is simply a battle against time. But this can somehow remain open for the listener to decide.

That last section of the piece, that is a rearrangement of the jazz standard "God Bless the Child" is intended as a blessing (i bless you , whatever you have done a stoned or drunk god seems to say to us all). *He just worry bout nothin / Cause hes got his own.* This is were Half Continental kids find themselves at last. Are they dead ? Are they adult ? Did they become "people" ? There is something definitely strange in looking at the inanimate puppet when Pinocchio wakes up as a kid at the end of Carlo Collodi's book and some of that inesplicable mood is in the last section of the piece. A conclusion that infact is not a conclusion. A farewell, maybe.

Collodi is so determined into pushing the positive aspects of Pinocchio becoming a real kid that completely oversees the overwhelming uncanniness of that moment.

How much about the new US did i mange to say ? There is a bunch of lies, a bunch of fantasies, that may just seem useless. But, rather than ~~By this said, the the piece is said and by the way, it is not, it may be~~

to you. No judgment implied.

what is said, the way it is said may be revealing. It is to me. It may be