

My Erasmus+ experience

When late December 2022 I was asked by the Academy of Bornem to take part in the auditions to represent them in Osuna, Spain, for this project, it was a no-brainer and I didn't hesitate for one minute. First question that rose was 'what is Alchemia'?

Alchemia is the name of an Erasmus+ program with 5 different countries: Italy, Spain, Latvia, Finland and Belgium. A chance to interact musically on a cultural level. I was honored to represent Belgium as the only saxophone player.

I was assigned to study the 1st alto sax scores of 4 great orchestral pieces:

- Margot by Joaquin Turina (an opera);
- La Boda de Luis Alonso by Jeronimo Gimenez (a Zarzuela, dramatic, lyrical) ;
- El Balle de Luis Alonso by Jeronimo Gimenez (a classic piece) ;
- La Giralda y Eduardo Lopez Juarranz (a Paso Doble)

After slaving away for a week and a half I managed to play a basic version of the 4 pieces and was ready to fine tune my efforts on location. Every piece had its own specific feel to it but what struck me most was their overwhelming character. Especially 'Margot' appealed to me.

Immediately after arriving in Osuna, rehearsals started; the very demanding Spanish conductor didn't waste any time. We rehearsed 5 to 6 hours a day, aiming for perfection! My biggest challenge were extremely fast parts, especially the long sets of staccato.

For the concert there were a grand total of 80 musicians; woodwinds, brass and percussionists. The end result sounded like what I experienced: mighty, broad, overwhelming,...

I learned a lot, not only from the conductor, but also from my fellow musicians with different nationalities, young and old, but all people with one common interest: playing together and the challenge to make the most of it in Osuna.

The main lessons that I learned from this experience are: "Music is a language that expresses your emotions". And mainly: "Talent alone is not enough, you have to develop and perfection it with 100% of effort, practice, practice, practice, practice,...."

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