

THE MEXICAN CENTRE FOR MUSIC AND SONIC ARTS STUDIO REPORT

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ABSTRACT

This text presents the newly formed Mexican Centre for Music and Sonic Arts (CMMAS). A new initiative by different local and federal governments in Mexico to create the first ever specialized music technology research centre in the country. It presents the overall projects and activities that the CMMAS has done in the past year together with the possibilities and available facilities and programs in order to establish links with other institutions. CMMAS is also prepared to receive resident composers, researchers and performers working with technology.¹

1. ORIGIN

CMMAS was created to address the problem of a lack of music technology programs in Mexico but also in order to establish an institution that fosters the creation of new work and research related to music, sound art and technology.

After nine years of fundraising and unending meetings to convince different bureaucrats a joint venture was designed where the federal government contributed with half of the needed investment and the local government of the state of Michoacan contributed with the other half. This meant on one side a strong beginning for the project and on the other many different cultural bodies that expect reports that increased the required paperwork. The CMMAS finally opened its doors in late 2006 as the only centre of its kind in the region.

2. AIMS

CMMAS aims to be a option for local, Mexican and Latin-American composers and artists to have access to the required infrastructure and personnel to develop and finish their projects. However, it is also planed as a research facility where technical and theoretical research can be carried out.

Many institutions in Mexico teach music composition and contemporary performance and some of them have been trying to start music technology programs for some time. Results have been different but in general it has been almost impossible to keep up with the transformation of technology. CMMAS aims to help with this by establishing programs that can provide

specific institutions with programs and infrastructure to achieve their goals. In other words various institutions can use CMMAS as an “outsourcing” option that provides them with equipment but also the required human resources.

3. ARTISTIC AND PEDAGOCIAL ACTIVITIES

CMMAS Works in five different areas. This will enable a broader approach to activities related with sound art and music in general:

- a. Education. Educate professionals specialized in sound arts and contemporary music through courses and seminars and from September 2008 a permanent program of graduate and post-graduate studies in music technology. Our aim is to become the main alternative of education within the country, designing strategies that will convert the centre into a supplier of students for institutions abroad who are interested in receiving artists for post-graduate courses.
- b. Creation. Through its residence program, CMMAS is the only permanent residency space in Mexico specialized in music and music technology. Artists and researchers will find the ideal place to develop and finish their works and projects.
- c. Experimentation and development of projects. CMMAS aspires to support new projects at their initial stages and to offer the facilities and means for exploring and developing high-quality creative projects. It aims to be a place in which non-conventional projects find the adequate infrastructure to grow.
- d. Production and promotion. To finish and offer different products with the work realized and funded by CMMAS. The promotion of music, sound arts, research projects, texts or any product related to the CMMAS.
- e. Research: To generate an appropriate environment for theoretical projects related with sound and music in general. Permanent research activities focused on performance, creation, and analysis among others will be linked to the center.

¹ Pictures, detailed equipment lists, description of projects and a complete searchable archive are available at www.cmmas.org

4. THE STUDIOS

Installed at the city's "House of Culture" CMMAS has found at the same time a perfect environment to attract new audiences who are enthusiastic about music and learning. This is one of the first goals of a "House of Culture" in Mexico. The building belonged to a XVII Century Convent and since then has seen many different uses. However, the ideal characteristics of the thick walls and isolated doors make these spaces ideal for composers, performers and researchers to work. The Centre is located in downtown Morelia that is a world heritage area and has a thriving music scene. Thus the city has plenty of interesting attractions but is hosts the main music campus of the state university and the music and fine arts schools together with the local conservatoire. All this makes CMMAS a ideal place for activities and projects that require good quality performers but also secures audiences and students.

Two composition studios are available for resident composers. Both with an 8-channel setup based on state of the art Macintosh computers with many applications and hardware options available. One of them has a 52inch plasma screen with state-of-the-art video capabilities and 5.1 sound system with a full Genelec DSP audio system. The main auditorium seats 120 and is based on a Mackie DX8 Bus digital mixer with the needed expansions to control up to 32 channels of playback for spatialization and can also be configured for recording projects due to the Focusrite preamp and Newman microphones among other hardware.

The Centre also has a computer room with new Intel IMac computers for classes and seminars that have all the audio and music software required, an electroacoustic and computer music book, DVD and CD collection and offices for the permanent staff. A flexible system allows any of the two studios to be used together with the other one or both can be linked to the auditorium for recording sessions or specific projects that require more space (dance or large ensembles for example).

5. RESEARCH PROJECTS

Different projects are developed simultaneously at CMMAS. We are editing a MaxMSP tutorial book for Latin-American composers that will help promote such software among sound artists that speak Spanish. The Centre has also signed agreements with international institutions in order to have staff and student exchange projects.

Full time staff at CMMAS is also expected to teach, compose and publish every year as part of their duties. CMMAS also hosts the Latin American Sonic Arts Network (www.redasla.org) archive and created "Sonic Ideas" is the first Latin-American music technology journal and will be published two times a year from July 2008

6. CONCLUSION

CMMAS has been exploring many different options to establish agreements with other international institutions to expand the possibility for our students to attend courses abroad and also to offer staff and students from other institutions a place where they can compose and work on their research projects with the required technical support, the necessary equipment and an unique environment.

Residencies are also welcome and a new online submission system is already working in order to receive proposals.

CMMAS is looking forward to become the main contemporary music centre in Mexico and Latin America in order to provide the latinamerican community with options to work and generate links with artists from other countries.