Meet Ethnomusicologist and Rennes 2 Teacher: Yves Defrance



Ethnomusicologist and Rennes 2 teacher, Yves Defrance, co-directed the Rennes 2 University Training Centre for Musicians - Centre de formation des musiciens intervenants (CFMI) - for over 12 years. For the past sixteen years, he has also been guiding second-year students on journeys throughout the world to enrich their vision of music and cultural exchange. His latest trip with students is also the subject of a observational-styled film he recently produced. Shot in Colombia, "Sol de lluvia" is a melody-inspiring glance into these exchanges.

In a recent interview, Yves Defrance discusses some of the aims of the program, how it is organized, the kinds of experiences encountered, and the reactions of students once back at home. The group has been to Spain, Mali, Morocco, a number of countries in Asia and South America, and the United States. A few excerpts of the interview are provided below. The full interview is also available in French.

Yves Defrance:

“Our aim is to discover music within its context and, through it, to participate in a real exchange. These trips allow us to put our ethnomusicology courses into practice. To give meaning to our more formal training. Over the past 20 years, I have been working to develop applied ethnomusicology. It is through this context that I approach the organization of these trips. It’s not about stealing the other's culture and using it to profit for one’s own purposes at home. It is about exchanging, discussing, giving.”

“We meet students, teachers and masters of oral transmission with whom we work on their music. Students are in direct contact with the populations. They don't just go to do their internship. Whenever possible, they are housed by host families.”

"They are confronted with other kinds of living conditions... The differences can be felt like a shockwave, everything from food to cultural differences. It's a drop in the ocean, but they see the world differently when they get back. They feel more intimately involved in events happening elsewhere on the planet. They also discover other ways of conceiving music. Thanks to their voice, their instrument, they gain enough self-confidence to go out and meet indigenous peoples. When they return, they carry the music of the country from which they return and their students see that country through them ...You have to know how to listen, observe and be bold to play at the drop of a hat and overcome the apprehension of the absence of a score. Students develop these skills during this trip and thus take ownership of artistic practice in the moment."

Sol de lluvia from Yves Defrance on Vimeo.

16 November 2018