

'FRIENDS REENCOUNTER IN A LIVING ROOM' OR 'HOW TO SURRENDER'

An interview with Shantala Shivalingappa and Ferran Savall in Mercat de les Flors, Barcelona

Photos by M. Arralejo



Scottish Symphony, CH, George Balanchine, Foto Ian Whalen

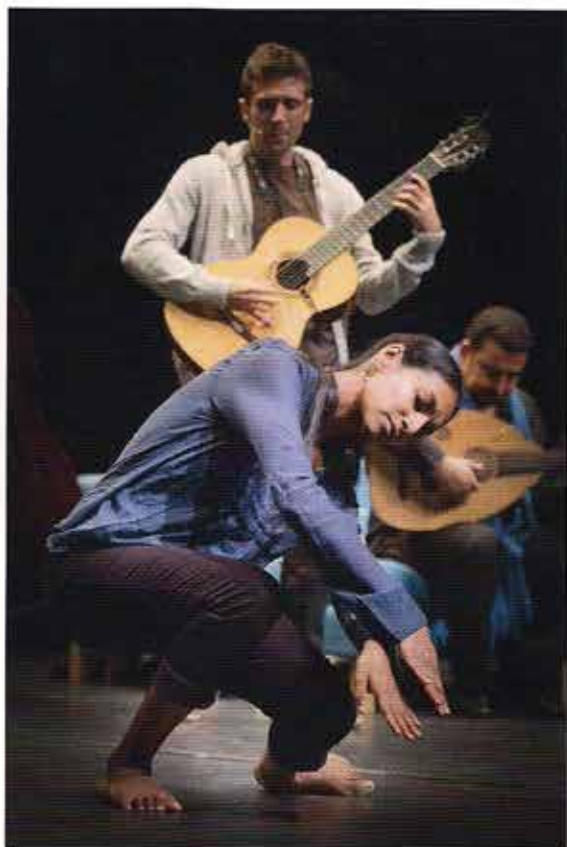
Casually sitting on a corner sofa, Ferran Savall and four talented international musicians —Jordi Gaspar, David Mayoral, Nedyalko Nelyakov and Driss El Maloumi— play and chat for themselves meanwhile the members of the audience find their seats. Once, everyone is seated, Savall reaches the edge of the stage and kindly invites the audience to his reencounter with Shantala Shivalingappa: Impro Sharana. Which is one of the “dialogues” that Mercat de les Flors in Barcelona proposes this season with artists who share a past or who’s work resemble somehow.

Ferran Savall and Shantala Shivalingappa’s friendship, actually goes back to their mothers Montserrat Figueres —a Catalan soprano who specialized in early music, known mainly through the early music ensemble Le Concert des Nations directed by Jordi Savall, Ferran’s father— and Savitry Nair —who is also Shivalingappa’s

artistic advisor, she trained in Kuchipudi style with the Master Vempati Chinna Satyam as her daughter did later—. Being surrounded by music throughout their upbringing, according to Ferran, has shaped his approach to music: “all day it was like a soundtrack, so I guess that is a mix of what I’ve acquired from them and things that I reject.

But the music I try to do stems from my feelings or emotions, but I can’t help being influenced by the people surrounding me and even catching the essence of the place”. To which Shantala adds: “so it’s very natural to share with friends through music and dance. I’ve listened to a very rich variety from a really young age, so it opens your perception a lot, I think. All this background gives you a lot of support and a variety, a rich variety and your senses are used to all this.”

Clàudia Brufau



Impro Sharana, doesn't represent nothing, it is just a friends gathering, but also a cultures gathering. Savall's music has mostly a mediterranean flavour, but the styles the sound flow from the west to the east naturally lead by intuition. Amongst the musicians, Shivalingappa also utters her own sounds. Savall tells: "she speaks through her body, there are no sounds, but I can imagine the sounds. When I see her dancing I try to translate her movement with my voice. But I don't use my mind."

Shivalingappa's stunning dancing has inspired great artists and directors since she was very young, so she has had the privilege to work with Peter Brook, Maurice Béjart and Pina Bausch among others. "Peter Brook chose me because I was a dancer, a classical Indian dancer, because I was used to impersonate characters", she explains. Although she started training in Barata Natyam as her mother, once she started learning Kuchipudi: "I really did nothing else but that, so its in my body, in my mind, in my subconscious. All the things I've always done have movement, singing and acting are different tools to tell stories. Although sometimes it doesn't have to be a story, it can be a feeling, but you still have some emotions and feeling that come across you and that inhabit you and you share them with whom is on stage with you."

"In Impro Sharana, we tried to find a common ground, to share together using whatever we had, and you have four musicians more that they bring a lot to the show" says Shivalingappa. Regarding improvisation, each of them had a different approach to it; while the Indian dancer is used improvise while creating in a studio but

not on the stage, and the Catalan musician has done it all his life. In fact, he has recently released his new album titled Impro, which he describes as "a process of acceptance: I look for simplicity, I like the music that is very simple with ostinatos. These harmonic patterns that repeat bring freedom and then you can fly above that. I call it a process of acceptance because I grew up feeling that improvising, what I like to do, was pointless." Although,



not being so used to it on stage, Shivalingappa points out: "there's so much of practice to build up your capacity and possibilities, so when you're in the moment you want to be free and then things come out." Improvising is actually an experience of artistic growth and she adds: "Sharana means surrender and is linked to Shiva, who's the lord of dance in Indian Mythology, he sustains the universe." Therefore, somehow Ferran Savall's album "Impro" and Impro Sharana are the outgrowth of a long journey, and as Savall depicts it: "you need some confidence, the worst enemy for improvisation is fear, the fear to not be perfect, that's the worst enemy to me, because while improvising you just have to jump off the cliff."

*Choreography: Shantala Shivalingappa
Musical creation: Ferran Savall
Musicians: Ferran Savall, Jordi Gaspar, David Mayoral,
Nedyalko Nelyalkov and Driss El Maloumi*