

JUDITH WRIGHT CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Artist Interview
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JUDITH WRIGHT CENTRE IN CONVERSATION WITH NANO STERN

JWC's Senior Marketing Coordinator Dorothy Farrell caught up with Nano Stern, and here's what Nano had to say.

I am very sorry about the current situation in Chile and I do hope your family is ok. Your manager tells me you are helping out. Can you tell me about the physical work that you have been doing and the benefit concerts at which you will perform?

Well, I have been involved in two different ways. During the days that followed the earthquake, my brother and I coordinated a fleet of trucks that have since been delivering help to the south of the country, where the damage was the biggest. That meant organizing funding, collecting aid, coordinating teams of volunteers, and finally loading and delivering the aid. It is very reassuring to realize that help may and must come from everyday people, especially when you consider the amount of bureaucracy and hassle that is involved when trying to help through bigger and more established aid organizations such as the Red Cross and others which inevitably take longer to react efficiently.

Parallel to our work with the trucks, I have been very intensively involved in benefit concerts. Last weekend, I played five concerts in three days, and this weekend is again looking very busy. I consider myself one of the lucky ones; my house is still standing and my family are all alive and well. So the least I can do is to help as much as possible in rebuilding our country. Having said that, I consider that we musicians have two main ways of helping. On the one hand, we can help by gathering large amounts of people who in turn donate large amounts of aid. But, more importantly, we can put a smile on the faces and warmth on the hearts of people who are suffering deeply, either from material or human loss. All of us, whether badly affected or not, have been deeply changed by this catastrophe and more than ever, music, sweet music, is needed.

Obviously it will take a lot of resources and time to rebuild your country. Do you have any ideas for how you can continue to assist?

It is inevitable that mainstream media will leave this earthquake behind, the minute that it is no longer breaking news. But we people must not pretend that simply because the media isn't talking about the people who have been left without homes or families, the situation is fine. It will take years of work just to rebuild, and I hope to be able to continue helping, both through music and direct, physical aid.

I have read that you have a great interest in Indigenous music - does this include the music of Indigenous Chileans? How does your own music reflect this interest?

Chile is a very large country, spanning over 5,000kms. Its nature is incredibly varied and so are the native people who lived here before European colonization. I have been lucky enough to travel extensively through the country and get in touch with many different traditions, which I inevitably incorporate into my music. It is not so much of a conscious process, but rather an inevitable influence that I happily allow to inhabit my creative space.

I am interested and inspired by your efforts to perform for people who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford to go to a concert. Can you tell me a little more about your commitment to taking music to the poorer areas of your country?

I have been lucky to be able to collaborate with the Chilean government in musical projects which have a clear social purpose. I am very frustrated when I start seeing the same kind of people over and over again in "cultural" spots, because I think that "culture" easily gets used by elites in a very snobbish way. I am convinced that a true artist must be able to perform both for demanding, pseudo-intellectual audiences (such as those of cosmopolitan cities) and for marginal people of the slums. I think it's not only necessary, but also very enriching. I learn more about music when performing in a dirt field in a slum in Valparaíso as I do performing in big international festivals. And my soul smiles by knowing that we are giving something to people who are not able to afford it otherwise. And it is always so that people who have less, give more in return.

Your music is beautiful. Do you think your music reflects, in some ways, the passion and resilience of the Chilean people? If so, how?

Thank you! I think music is a reflection of who you are, and to a big extent you are a reflection of the world that surrounds you. As simple as that!

Nano, thank you very much for your time. I hope that your aid work in Chile goes as best it can and I really look forward to seeing you in Brisbane.