

MY ERASMUS IN ZÜRICH

After spending 2 wonderful years in Barcelona, I decided that I needed to move on and discover a bit more. The Erasmus program is one of the best options when you are at university. Musicology is not a big field in Spain (most of the people don't really know what I'm studying there) but it has a very important tradition in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. After talking with my coordinator and checking all the programs that the different universities offered, I decided to apply to the Universität Zürich (UZH) even if they just had one place. The Musikwissenschaftliches Institut has a very interesting program about modern music theater and music from 19th century and on, so it made it perfect for me because I'm more interested in contemporary music and opera.

When you say "I'm doing my Erasmus in Zürich, Switzerland" the first answer you get is something like "Really? Why there? Swiss people don't know how to party and it's cold! Better you go to Italy". Well they don't know how it really is... I remember the first weeks before the classes started, the UZH had intensive German courses for exchange students (8h/day during two weeks) and also offered a really funny conference that was called "Switzerland, more than chocolate and watches" where they asked us the stereotypes we had about Swiss people (the most popular ones: super rich, chocolate, always on time, cold people, really polite, clean cities, fondue, watches...) and explained some useful things about university, life and official stuff such as the health insurance system. The ESN organized every Wednesday a drink in different bars and pubs of the city to get to know other students and it was really funny, because I don't know why, everyone loved Spanish people so it was really easy to get to know people and have new friends.

During the first semester I attended 5 different lectures. The examination system is different in Switzerland, you pass with 4 and the highest grade is 6, and you have different kind of lectures like *Vorlesons*, *Referat*, and the "master class". The first and second type you had to do your *Referat* (exposition) during 45 minutes in front of bachelor, master and PhD students plus the professor and sometimes a short exam; the other one was about 10/15 minutes oral exam in front of the professor and his/her assistant.

I have to confess that at the beginning it was really hard, I had 6 hour class in German with 30 minutes break and I remember I went home crying and asking myself "What are you doing here?" because I understood almost nothing. During the first two months almost nobody talked with me in class, but it suddenly changed and I had the opportunity of getting to know such a great people. It's true that they are cold at the beginning but when they like you, they are able of everything for you (some of them helped me to translate the lectures or books for my exams even if they were not in that lecture).

One thing that was really funny when you tried to speak German in shops or restaurants and people switch into English because they knew you were not Swiss. Also in class, everyone was talking in English with me and in Swiss-German with the others. So actually I didn't have the opportunity of speaking so much German during 9 months there even if I was hanging up with Swiss people.

About the city, Zürich is just so beautiful. The public transport is always on time, streets are clean even after the Street Parade (free electronic music festival around the lake and the main streets) everything is perfect in less than 3h. The night life has nothing to envy to Barcelona, it's just different and when it's sunny you go you're your friends to the river Limmat or to the lake for a picnic, riding your bikes or for some drinks.

I was really lucky with all the people I get to know there, they didn't make me feel as a foreigner (some of the told me I could be perfectly Swiss) and encouraged me to learn more German and come back soon for my master. In Zürich I had the huge opportunity

of going to Opera premiers, getting to know great opera singers, ballet dancers and conductors from all over the world. I keep really good memories and friends from my Erasmus and now I'm sure it was the perfect place for me.