

## ITALIAN REPORT

Caterina Gualco

My first encounter with John Cage was during a concert at the Teatro Margherita in Genova on July 4, 1978. The concert was improperly announced and the hall was full of guys waiting for a rock concert. Grete Sultan performed *Etudes Australes*, Paul Zukofsky did *Freeman Etudes*, and Demetrio Stratos performed *Sixty-Two Mesostics Re Merce Cunningham*. Cage was in the audience listening like any spectator, and finally went onstage without making the slightest gesture. Pandemonium broke out during *Etudes Australes*, which subsided under the calm authority of Stratos and his incredible singing. The evening ended at a restaurant, and Cage was in a horrible mood, not because of how his work had been received, but because his luggage and microbiotic food had been lost!

I met Philip Corner for the first time back in 1986, in the studio of renowned publisher Francesco Conz in Verona, where he was signing editions of *CarrotChewPerformance*, which I edited several times. We were acquaintances who quickly developed a friendship that grew through personal and group exhibitions in galleries and public spaces, performances, concerts, music, and Philip's dance duets with his wife Phoebe Neville. (Above all, I like to remember *The Fluxus Constellation* show at the Museum of Villa Croce in Genova for the 40th anniversary of Fluxus, and his recent retrospective that I curated for La Fondation du doute in Blois, France.) I could also mention travel, participation in festivals, concerts and collaborations for exhibitions and events. I could speak about the many emotions we have shared, some of them dramatic, like when we learned about the tragedy of September 11, and were together in Odense, Denmark, for a performance festival. It would be a very long story, one that would take pages and pages to write down. Instead, I want to conclude with a statement that may seem a bit strong but absolutely matches my feelings: Philip, for me, is all about the music, his music as well as that of the many composers I have discovered through him. Others would agree with me that Philip is one of the best examples of the connection that can exist between music and visual art, something I am still quite passionate about.

During Milan Poetry in 1989, I met Joe Jones, sweet Zen monk, perpetually hung on his cigarette. Joe, with his incredible "music machines" was going to start a fire during his performance and looked very scared. He died shortly thereafter, too soon, and I wasn't able to curate a solo exhibit of his works as I would have liked to do.

In 1996, I met Milan Knížák at the opening of the exhibition *Neo Knížák* at the Mudima Foundation in Milan. I especially remember a wall covered with broken vinyl, burned and arranged in different ways, which featured a large sculpture of Christ painted in red (definitely a political reference to the Eastern and Western worlds). I recently saw this installation again in Blois.

For 10 days in 1997, Dick Higgins was my guest in Genova on the occasion of his exhibition *Buster Keaton Enters into Paradise*, which was shown at my space UnimediaModern. At the opening, Dick presented the performance *Danger Music Number Seventeen* and *Constellation*. Culture, culture and... more culture! Dick knew everything, even the recipe for Pesto Genovese.

Later in the 90s, I met Charlotte Moorman in Reggio Emilia, where she was part of Nam June Paik's exhibition. Despite being quite ill and at the end of her days, Charlotte gathered the strength to fully immerse herself in a transparent cube filled with water and play the cello!

And, finally, Giuseppe Chiari, whose work (*Play What You Like*) provides the title to this exhibition and who was also Italian, like me. He has always been present in my long history as gallery

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owner; paradoxically I have never curated a solo exhibition for him. There was a friendship between us, slightly veiled from my distrust of his Florentine “savagery.” In any case, I have always admired the value of his work, his dialectical play between image and sound in continuous contamination. For Chiari, there were four types of music: for the road, for the fortress, for the church, and for the palace. Anonymous music, made of sounds, of gestures, “spoken” rather than “sung,” and for which there is no need to go to the conservatory. I remember him like this—always smiling and a little aloof, a resident of his own planet in the Fluxus galaxy.

—*Genova, 28 May 2016.*