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John Cage, *Themes @ Variations*

Burroughs in Cage

Vitaliano Trevisan - voice narrator
Daniele Roccato - double bass
Ensemble Ludus Gravis
Michele De Vita Conti - director

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Burroughs in Cage

a project by Vitaliano Trevisan and Daniele Roccato

direction by Michele De Vita Conti

Texts by William S. Burroughs, music by John Cage

William Burroughs and John Cage: two artists who shared a similar experimental language, far from any rhetoric of the politically-correct. A sharp and visceral language, like a punch in the stomach triggering a short-circuit of the mind, soothed only by mantra-like music parenthesis. In this project by Trevisan and Roccato (musically enriched by *Ludus Gravis*, an ensemble of double basses) word and music are two parallel and complementary forms conveying the same message in the name of semantic cohesion. The several texts which, in the first two sections, shape our image of Burroughs the man, are joined, in music, by a composition that is highly representative of Cage's fondness for the open structure: in *Four 6* the four players are summoned to build the composition using chance methods, within a time range of 30 minutes (the only instruction left by the author). Since indeterminacy comes often along with chance, Trevisan's interpretation is at the mercy of alea: both the excerpts and the time set for their reading are established by the cast of two dices. The musicians exploits Cage's allowances to the performer in showing us a wide range of experimental techniques, ranging from the glissati with the fingernail to different types of percussion on the double bass bout. In the third section, it's the Cagean technique of the prepared instrument mastering the scene, through the application of some *clips* to the bass chords, while Trevisan's voice bends to reproduce the distressed vocality of grotesque characters. Finally, the last two sections: in *Naked Lunch*, the seemingly flat rhythm of the music is slowly animated by the sexual metaphor of Mogwamps men and reptile women until it reaches a crescendo where the voice fades out, paving the way for the ensemble's dreamlike finale. As can be inferred from its title, *Dream* has a lyrical melodic line evoking child-like memories and shadows; it's the ideal ground on whose refrain engrafting the last excerpt from *Junky*, where Burroughs loosens his authorial control, giving away a vulnerable image of his adolescence.

Ilaria Lanzarini