

Manuela Bertoli

AUGENMUSIK

Curated by **Susanna Vallebona**

It all starts from Mallarmè's *Un coup de dés*, both as regards the artistic avant-gardes of the early twentieth century, which among the many revolutions (Dadaism, visual poetry, fluxus and conceptual art) will lead in 1952 to the first performance of John's 4'33" Cage, both in terms of the poetics on which Manuela Bertoli's artistic research focuses.

Cage is a fundamental. He performs sound collages, to give value to silence and shape noises transforming them into music. He introduces chance into artistic creation through the adoption of a method for creating the work of art, similar to a culinary recipe. In his scores he doesn't have notes, but rather actions to carry out to distance himself emotionally from his work and leave room for the unexpected.

For Cage and Fluxus, chance is Zen openness to the unexpected events of life. It contrasts with the scientific case, linked above all to Heisenberg's discoveries which influenced twentieth century thought, helping to definitively transform the piece of art from "object" to "process".

The uncertainty principle in fact influenced much of the experimental electromagnetic and electronic music of the 1950s/60s.

The four authors to whom the works in the exhibition refer are Olivier Messiaen, Iannis Xenakis, Gyorgy Ligeti and Edgar Varèse, (whose musical work like that of Xenakis, is often connected to the spatiality of architecture); adopting the practice of collage and of the assembly, they overcame the distinction between sound and noise and introduced elaborations of "other" sound elements into their compositions, such as the singing of birds in Olivier Messiaen's work.

A method that marked much of the artistic research of the twentieth century, not only in the musical field.

Witness of the same historical moment Enrico Castellani stated "The need for the absolute that animates us, in proposing new themes, prohibits us from the means considered proper to pictorial language"¹. The work is the result of a process that doesn't design a product but a presence, into which the artist introduces his own experience and artisticity.

An investigation, but also a source of inspiration for Manuela Bertoli from a linguistic, semantic, and structural point of view, between music and visual art, which leads her to explore the different possibilities of hybridization linked to the desire to overcome the divisions between the tools of expression.

Any material that lends itself to storytelling is worthy of being chosen.

Manuela Bertoli uses those that she judges most suitable to enhance the structural similarity with the chosen piece of music and which allows her to make the music visible through light.

A dynamic and vibrant light for the sound waves of the Ionisation, Poème électronique, Atmosphère and Mylar ebony spectrograms, aggressive when reflected from the plastic surface of the Ensemble Pleiades drums, soft and light like Touche's imprint.

A light that is tactile matter, necessary for the definition of a synesthetic and interactive work, as in the monochrome Ciels Magnetiques and even more so in the artist's books, real pentagrams of light, whose specific space, with its rhythmic sequence, ignites the desire to touch and the desire to caress becomes overbearing.

Works which, as Flaminio Gualdoni observes, Manuela Bertoli creates with "fierce meticulousness".

According to Italo Calvino, a 21st century work should have at least five requirements: lightness, multiplicity, speed, visibility and accuracy. The last certainly belongs to the compositions of Manuela Bertoli, which are the result of a patient, reiterated and precise assembly aimed at creating a uniform surface, an only apparently homogeneous texture. But as we now well know, even in the most accurate planning, randomness cannot be avoided and the light vibrates and ignites, with the surface, the emotion.

Translated by Daniel Unni

¹ Enrico Castellani, Continuity and the new, Azimuth n.2 - 1960