

## **Remembrances of a premonition, 23'52 "**

I met Brian Anson at the Architecture biennial of Venice in 2000, when he came to give a conference about his work as an architect and teacher. I was the sound engineer for the event. I was particularly affected by his political and artistic engagement and seduced by his wonderful voice. He belongs to a rare group of people who are able to combine art, militancy and professional involvement with integrity and talent.

I wished to get to know this lovely man more intimately. We've shared a correspondence and met each other several times during 3 years. Initially, he wanted me to read a manuscript he wrote in 1967 that only 3 people had so far read. The piece is about "St Clair". A poetic and furious work that bears all the intuitive core of his own work, embodied in a half real, half imaginary ghost, a dark-skinned gypsie native from Sicily, in Brian's words. St Clair is probably his alter ego romantically epitomised, and predicting a kind of end of the world through the crazy course of the cities, foreshadowing the atmosphere of "Blade Runner" by Ridley Scott or similar to "La Jetée" by Chris Marker. Through a cyberpunk style vision, Brian Anson the poet, had a strong intuition of a probable future: the dehumanisation of the cities. If the architects themselves don't fulfil their commitment towards building for the common good, instead submitting to political and financial interests.

When I commenced reading this poetical and political work that is St Clair, I was stunned by the furious tone of the writing, its imagination, the musicality of the language and the sensitive poetry that was drawing from it.

So I made a proposal to Brian that we work together on this text. Initially he was reluctant about this idea. He really had a passionate relationship to this work, on the one hand a pure truthfulness and on the other, a cynical fatalism, so much so that at the end of his life, he disowned it. But so, why did he want me first to read St Clair? I never knew it, but I think I guessed it. One thing is sure, St Clair, who Brian met several times in his life, was his muse, his guardrail, his guide. He probably feared its judgment and preferred to reveal it to other people.

We've recorded several takes of the reading of St Clair, now incorporated in the piece, but we have not done anything further at this time, except an ill prepared presentation at the "Maison des Architectes" at Marseille in 2002.

At that time, I met Luc Ferrari at a workshop he did at "Euphonia" an "Radio Grenouille" during the course of one year throughout 2002/2003. He created a piece called "Archives saved from the water", after the flooding of his own studio. I've learnt a lot from him about the ability to merge sound documents and musical gesture. It's a skill to be able to make life speak and transform it into a work of art. In the same way, Joseph Beuys pretended to transform life into an art work as a liberating act against any submission to political need. In the same sense, Luc Ferrari is a perfect example of somebody who has searched to remain free and alive, under the guise of frivolity, as he used to say about himself, with teasing. Here there is a key to understand the work of Luc; knowing how to be amused with things of life, and transforming them into musical composition, without attaching a sacralised importance to the sound material. It's a way to open our own minds to the interpretation of sounds beyond academic considerations, because it doesn't disavow the theory, but it relativises it.

I've recently redigitized my personal archives which were originally saved on DAT, CD, DVD and Hard Disk that represent almost 15 years of my work. So many hours of various material available must have been usefull one time more! So I decided to work on a piece with what I had. I stumbled upon the recordings of Brian Anson. They turned out to be some of the strongest material there, but I had never done anything with it! I had to absorb myself again in the meaning of this text, and it appeared to me as a premonition of the way that the cities and actual civilisation is going.

Today I propose a Horspiel around the recording of some passages from the manuscript of St Clair read by Brian himself. On one hand I wanted to let listen the text and on the other hand, use his voice as a sound material. As I said before, St Clair is an expiatory and seminal text depicting his reflections on the existance of human beings within cities. I decided to use personal sound takes of cities like Marseille, Venice, Bamako, Casablanca, Berlin. All of these cities are large, violent, chaotic, historic, contradictory and poetic cities. St Clair, the sicilian ghost from Liverpool would certainly have hated them, but all he would have done there would be to ramble with no aim.

I also had the possibililty to use Luc ferrari's sound archives - with the permission of "L'association Presque Rien" - in order to compose a personal project. This opportunity turned out to be very interesting because most of the sounds were quite ancient. We can hear the "time" in them. Cities and men don't sound today as they once did. Therefore, this Horspiel is a kind of trip into time, space and the memory of Brian Anson and Luc Ferrari, through a brief and modest memory which is mine.

To compose the piece, I tried to create a chaotic and continual flux going from mutations to mutations as dirty and beautiful cities are. This flux is also an allegory of the litany, indeed the text and its own reading trance, of the pleasure in the words and sounds. I would like to make clear that this manuscript was "vomited" in one night and without punctuation, which allowed the reading to be really free and musical.

Then I also remembered to myself the Horspiel "Finnegan's wake" from James Joyce by John Cage, where quite a large number of sounds, representing Ireland in Cage's words, make up a continual and independant flux to the narration, gambling with the text meaning as well not punctuated, all that has guided myself to make up the composition.

At last, this Horspiel contains 15 years of personal archives trace, basically mixed and recycled sounds materials, as a dough that we would never cease to knead through time and space.

I suggest listening to this work on quite a loud volume in order to immerse yourself in the multiple cities and text sound layers.

Virgile Abela - 2011