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## 1§ INTRODUCTION

Benny Sluchin

Giacinto Scelsi's music attracted me as soon as I started exploring unaccompanied trombone works. The *Tre Pezzi* for trombone (1956) naturally found their place in my concerts. Only once did I interpret them in his presence. Without knowing well this composer, my approach has been to read a traditionally noted score. I then sought to bring out the sonic qualities of the trombone, the varied articulations and multiple nuances. The preparation task was turned towards an increase in my instrumental capacities. It was only years later that I began to explore the poetic qualities involved, the meditative side and the knowledge of the compositional world of Scelsi.

The *Tre Pezzi* as well as other works of the same type from this period require special listening. To make it easier to listen, I found that playing them separately was a step in that direction. In concert in October 2009, an experiment consisted of intercalating movements of various Scelsi pieces with readings of his poems.

Hence the decision to alternate various movements from Scelsi's works for brass with pieces for prepared piano by John Cage is a direct consequence. The Scelsi / Cage CD herewith presented, is the result of this process. Some pieces for brass are to discover:

- The *Tre Pezzi* for bass trumpet have not been engraved until now.
- The *Un Pezzo* for trombone is unpublished. It is an adaptation of a vocal work, a common process in Scelsi's compositions. (cf. 3§)

• *Maknongan* composed for “a low instrument (tuba, contrabassoon, bass or contrabass saxophone, octobass flute, double bass, etc.) or bass voice”<sup>1</sup> finds here a performance on the Euphonium. A duplex Euphonium lends itself especially well to this exercise (cf. 5§).

John Cage’s pieces for prepared piano are taken from the *Sonatas and Interludes*, as well as from the *Prepared Piano Music* volume 2.

This combination of brass with various pieces for prepared piano is very successful.

## 2§ SCELSI AND CAGE

From a presentation by Sharon Kanack<sup>2</sup>

Giacinto Scelsi (1908–1988) and John Cage (1912–1992) are two twentieth century composers who have markedly influenced music. Each, in their own way, serves as a model for us, because they have traced a new route inspired by the past and opening up unsuspected horizons. They have marked our general conception of art, since their contribution concerns various fields, such as painting, poetry, graphic arts ...

Scelsi is an Italian count with a classical upbringing and leading a reclusive life. He is a student of Walter Klein, himself a student of Webern. A nervous disease leads him to treat himself with sound, repeating a note. Thus, he discovers “the interior life of sound”. From 1959, he began a series

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1 Edition Salabert, 1986, score p.1.

2 *Cage, Xenakis, Scelsi: Three sides of the same coin?* Presentation, 2013



of compositions on one note. Influenced by oriental theories his music follows a unique path not adhering to any current of Western music. The spectral school in France is based on the music of Scelsi.

Cage was born in Los Angeles. He studies with Henri Cowell and Arnold Schönberg, he traces his particular path by collaborating with various artists: especially dancers for whom he realizes his prepared piano. Thus appeared his *Sonatas and Interludes*. Around 1953 he took

a course in Zen Buddhism given by master D.T. Suzuki at Columbia University in New York City. Cage participated in the *Fluxus* movement which posits art as a process, and art and life as a single notion.

Relations and meetings between the two men are attested. In November 1949 Boulez wrote to Cage: “Do you remember Scelsi, the Italian composer, with whom we ate on the first evening of July, {...} and of whom we heard the stringquartet? {...} Désormière plays a cantata by him; the title is *La*

