

## **EGP - EXTREME GUITAR PROJECT**

*Music from Down Town New York*

Marco Cappelli - guitars

During May and June 2002, Marco Cappelli spends a time in NYC, in occasion of three solo concerts (New York University, New York and Washington Italian Cultural Institutes) in which he performs the program of his CD "Yun Mu" (TDS 012007 RS).

During his staying he is involved with the NYC avant-garde scene internationally known as Down Town Music, in which composers / improvisers coming from avant-garde jazz and experimental rock as well from academic music work together creating a common music language that is impossible to close into one category.

So is born the idea of a "musical photography" of such musical scene, so influent on many aspects of contemporary music, through the commission of guitar pieces: looking for a concept of "extreme guitar".

Inspired both from the unusual possibilities of the Cappelli's guitar playing (actually he uses an amplified classical guitar modified with the add of 8 sympathetic strings and able to control MIDI devices) as well from the proposal to use a mixture of writing (from rigorous written structures to free improvisation languages) the following composers wrote for him:

- 1) Elliott Sharp
- 2) Otomo Yoshihide
- 3) Ikue Mori
- 4) Marc Ribot
- 5) David Shea
- 6) Anthony Coleman
- 7) Nick Didkovsky
- 8) Mark Stewart
- 9) Erik Friedlander
- 10) Annie Gosfield

*The premiere of EGP (EXTREME GUITAR PROJECT) took place on 2003, November 27th in Napoli, in the Alessandro Scarlatti Society's concert series, who supported the commissions of EGP together with TI CON ZERO Society (Cagliari).*

## Set list

### MARC RIBOT - *And so I went to Pittsburgh*

The Cappelli classical guitar juxtaposes the traditional (six nylon strings) against the possibility of something 'other' (altered tunings, noise, metal strings, etc).

"Pittsburgh" accents this is the most obvious and vulgar way possible, and adds several other juxtapositions: classical guitar content/blues licks, vocal/instrumental, Napoli/Pittsburgh.

### MARC RIBOT - *The Joy of Repetition*

"Repetition" :what one strives to avoid through psychoanalysis. Yet it has its own peculiar joys. "Repetition" seeks the point where the minimal approaches the stupefying in a landscape of limited possibilities.

M.R. [www.marcribot.com](http://www.marcribot.com)

### IKUE MORI - *Bird Chant*

The piece is design to play with 6 sound files triggered with extreme part of the guitar.

There is multi score which include 12 musical scenes and you choose 6 scenes to complete the piece.

Eventually piece grow when player familiar with each scenes and freely jump in and out those scenes.

I.M. [www.ikuemori.com](http://www.ikuemori.com)

### ANNIE GOSFIELD - *Marked by a hat*

I wrote *Marked by a Hat* in the Spring of 2003.

In order to catalogue the many techniques that Marco Cappelli developed for his "extreme guitar", I met with him, discussed possibilities, and recorded him playing this unique instrument . I was intrigued by the extreme guitar's 10 sympathetic strings, and created a microtonal tuning for them that centers on E, D, and C, and the quarter tones that surround these pitches.

Because Marco had commissioned many guitarists to write pieces for for this project, I chose to compose a piece that only used the open strings, thus eliminating the potential for flying fingers on the guitarist's left hand. *Marked by a Hat* is a "right hand only" piece, played solely on the open sympathetic strings, and demonstrates Marco's great right-hand technique, his unusual tremolos, and picking techniques.

The title, "*Marked by a Hat*", is inspired by the name Marco Cappelli (Marco =

marked, Cappelli = hat) and as a former hatmaker, it conjures up a film noir fantasy of a man marked, or identified, by his hatted silhouette.

A.G. [www.anniegosfield.com](http://www.anniegosfield.com)

ELLIOTT SHARP - *Amygdala*

...almond-shaped - signs of anger, avoidance, defensiveness, and fear- small mass of gray matter -freeze reaction, sweaty palms, and the tense-mouth display - primeval arousal center originating in early fishes - limbic

As Walter Benjamin pointed out, the job of the translator is much more than finding the equivalent words in a second language but to realize the original impulse of the source and output it through new eyes, mouth, hands.

The gestures, syntax, and vocabulary of Amygdala are very much part of my everyday language on guitar.

In this composition, my desire is to plant these strands of musical DNA in these most-capable hands of Marco Cappelli and let them manifest in the body of this new exciting instrument that he has created.

E.S. [www.elliottsharp.com](http://www.elliottsharp.com)

ANTHONY COLEMAN - *The Buzzing in my Head*

The Buzzing In My Head was written in July 2003 at the Civitella Rainieri Center in Umbertide, Italy.

Some pieces of music come into creation in a laboured, painstaking way. But this one just flowed out...Why?

What was that all about? It's not like the theme was so pleasant...Since April, I've been suffering from a fairly serious case of Tinnitus. Sometimes my ears are buzzing, sometimes they're ringing (sometimes they're ringing and buzzing). So there's that...And then, I've always loved Samuel Beckett's theatre piece "Not I" with its refrain (quoted in my piece): "What? No! Who? She!". At some point in the text, there's the line "...and the buzzing - What? The buzzing?" and that really impressed me. When I first read Not I, I thought a lot about what "the buzzing" could be, and I found myself thinking about ambience, background, electrical hums and all the acoustical detritus of our world and our lives (see R.Murray Schaeffer's book "The Tuning of the World" for more information on this subject...) In August 1987, I was sitting in the train station in Trieste waiting for a train to Ljubljana. Ligeti's "Lontano" was playing over RAI 3 (I had a Walkman with a radio - essential equipment for my research while travelling in Eastern Europe). And the combination of droning strings with radio static caused me to write (in my journal):

"Ligeti - he wrote the buzzing". I always wanted to write the buzzing, and now - thanks to tinnitus - it's a lot easier...

A.C. [www.wnur.org/jazz/artists/coleman.anthony/](http://www.wnur.org/jazz/artists/coleman.anthony/)

DAVID SHEA - *Metta Meditations for Classical Guitar and Electronics*

These six movements are written as types of ritual duos for one guitarist who confronts himself internally with the instrument and externally with the electronics in the form of sound meditations. The electronic score's sources are all taken from the same musician and the same instrument. The guitar layers traditional playing with physical transformations of the instrument and its identity as the electronics transform the acoustic sources and play in counterpoint to the live guitarist.

D.S. [www.dshea.net](http://www.dshea.net)

OTOMO YOSHIHIDE - *Pi - Anode*

PI - ANODE is the work written by Marco Cappelli's request, and ANODE is my composition work series since 2000.

ANODE was a work for a big ensemble from the first, and it was the work which focuses on various sound phenomena started at random by preparing some musicians' restriction of the performance method.

PI-ANODE was rewritten this time for the soloist.

Various restrictions are prepared in a performance, and the work is built also here so that their ears may be strained in the phenomenon started accidentally.

I hope an audience can get a phenomenon with various sound which does not observe a music language but happens accidentally then deep listen to them.

A player does not discover music but an audience discovers it... Here is the essence of this music.

Therefore, although it is the work of a solo, this music could also be called DUO of a player and an audience in fact.

O.Y. [www.japanimprov.com/yotomo](http://www.japanimprov.com/yotomo)

ERIK FRIEDLANDER - *Iron Blue*

I have been a fool for the guitar and guitar players since I can remember listening to music of my own choice. Guitar was my first instrument before I took up the cello in 3rd grade and I find myself still under its sway.

During the 70's and 80's I spent a lot of time listening to Jimi Hendrix, Carlos

Santana, and Steve Howe (to name a few).  
Iron Blue is a look at the power and expansiveness that I felt then and that I want to hear now whenever a guitarist sits down to play.  
Composed September-October 2003 for Marco Cappelli.

E.F. [www.erikfriedlander.com](http://www.erikfriedlander.com)

MARK STEWART / MARCO CAPPELLI - *Improv su Etude # 1*

M.S. [polygraphlounge.com/Mark/](http://polygraphlounge.com/Mark/)

NICK DIDKOVSKY - *A bright moon makes a little daytime*

*1-Hammertoes 2-Poker Face Alters Conversation 3-The Ass's Demise*

N.D. [www.punosmusic.com](http://www.punosmusic.com)

## **“New York stories“**

by Pier Carlo Poggio

*Notes on the program of the EGP's premiere*  
Naples, Teatro delle Palme  
November 27, 2003 / Association Alessandro Scarlatti

It's probably from the times of Andrea Centazzo, percussionist and relevant figure of improvised music, that an Italian "emigrant" didn't pick up all his bags and instruments to go and experience in first person the scene of the American musical avant-guard, to confront with it and with its most representative characters. Marco Cappelli who, just by being Neapolitan and quoting the actor Troisi in the film *Ricomincio da Tre*, is an emigrant "with no choice", has found the courage to cross the ocean more and more often in order to reach that place where music, improvised or composed, experimental or blatantly commercial, acoustic or synthetic, is usually created a moment earlier than in any other place of the world: in New York City. The year in which Centazzo has for the first time a long tour in the United States is 1978 and the series of concerts is put together outside of the normal organizational structures thanks to the help of local musicians, with whom the percussionist from Friuli had been in contact during some of their rare European participations. Eugene Chadbourne, Henry Kaiser, Polly Bradfield, Tom Cora, Toshinori Kondo, Vinnie Golia, John Carter, Gregg Goodman: the list is partial but

very significant, and the echo of their sessions is recorded from labels run by the artists themselves, such as the Metalanguage, Trans, Parachute and, naturally, the Ictus label, founded by Centazzo himself a couple of years earlier because he was tired of seeing his recordings being refused by the recording establishment.

But we must add a name to the previous list, a name of essential importance in order to understand the development of American experimental music in the last twenty-five years - John Zorn.

Centazzo, remembering his experience with the American saxophone player, said that Zorn had become the leader of the radical improvisers of New York City in a very natural way, but he didn't hide that fact that he considered that young man with glasses who lived in two small rooms all painted in black and with no bathroom, where he had created his own surreal theater with carton characters, a really strange creature. A lot has been said and written about the alleged strangeness and eccentricity of the man, but almost all of it is indeed false. The only sure fact is that Zorn has represented, and continues to do so, the coagulating element around which a significant part of the avant-garde experience of New York City has come together. His beginning has been rather modest and it took him about ten years before being taken into serious consideration by the critics, before being invited to perform at the Brooklyn Academy of Music or at the Whitney Museum, or before being able to sign a decent contract with Elektra/Nonesuch and to work on a record with his amazing Naked City (with Fred Frith, Joey Baron, Bill Frisell, Wayne Horvitz).

But his relationship with the traditional recording market soon became difficult and after having carefully analyzed the issue, it was solved in 1995 with the birth of Tzadik, a label that at this moment has a catalogue of hundreds of titles and has good visibility on the shelves of music stores without ever being promoted by radios nor newspapers. Zorn records his own music but mostly the music of others, and even though the productions are the result of a rigorous selection, through the years the label Tzadik has been affixed on countless styles and musical genres, from contemporary to the sound of the Jewish tradition, from both old and modern Japanese sounds to jazz improvisation, from soundtracks to the cut-and-paste of the DJs, thus allowing Zorn's label to rise as the privileged witness of the never ending brilliancy of the musical scene of New York City.

A specific place for a simple fact: the great availability of musicians who either live there or are in transit and who exchange ideas and experiences with one another in order to cross their destiny for the time of one session or to the end of their days. The general climate, with the obvious exceptions, brings and almost "forces" everybody to open up their baggage of knowledge, to combine their creative force with others, and even the neuroses that they possess. All this may sound like a fairy tale, but in New York City it is normal, it's an unwritten law which is necessary to respect if you want to fully understand that rich creative world to then obtain the best benefit.

The interest and regard for the work of the colleagues is a real tradition in New York, aided by the easiness to establish a contact. When a musician is attracted by the sound of another, he doesn't need the intervention of a promotional manager form some specialized agency: a phone call is enough to, a few hours later, just play

together, and as soon as these artists feel comfortable and ready to experience the reaction of the audience of some cult places such as Tonic, The Knitting Factory, Bowery Poetry Club, The Cooler, The Kitchen, or of the numerous art galleries that favorably open up their spaces to music (one name for all: Project Issue Room), they will play. And the spontaneity with which ten important representatives of New York's creative world did not betray the expectations of "the last newcomer" Marco Cappelli, is the tangible proof of how things work over there. Now more than ever the saying that in New York a musician cannot play anything else but what he wants really rings true.

Yet it is important to specify that in this American metropolis made of tentacles, the spirit of independence and the need to communicate are not inventions of the new millennium, indeed the first signs date back to almost forty years ago, when a first generation of "free improvisers" used to meet in the Lower East Side to shout their dissent for the consolidated and dejected circuit of all jazz clubs in the city, thus creating, in 1964, a week of concerts at the Cellar Cafe under the guidance of the trumpet player, Bill Dixon. With him Sun Ra, John Tchicai, Roswell Rudd, Paul Bley, and Milford Graves set the foundations for a musical revolution destined to last through the years and to favor new and future associations. At the beginning of the Seventies, the drummer Rashied Ali and the saxophonist Sam Rivers will be the first to avoid the help of promoters and to organize live performances in their own homes in the Lower East Side, at a time where the area was really damaged and all the cheap priced lofts were colonized by artists. The Ali's Alley and the Studio Rivbea became the primary shelters in which unknown musicians could develop their style without being subject to the asphyxiating pressures of the directors of the city's nightclubs.

The children of that loft revolution are still perpetuating the teachings of the "fathers" and that same spirit of freedom and auto-determination in the making of music. William Parker, David S. Ware, and Charles Gayle, after a decade of indifference, around the end of the 90s, (Gayle had been homeless for years) have finally been considered relevant artists and, most importantly, inspiration for some young musicians (for example, the pianist Matthew Shipp) to act in the same way. But there is still a more interesting aspect to analyze: the New York improvisation style of Afro-American matrix of the last years has borrowed musical concepts of diverse origins to synthesize them in a language of great strength and intensity, a language able to reach and grab even interest of the audience and the artists of alternative rock in its numerous meanings (avant, noise, hardcore&), to flirt with the School of Zorn mentioned before, and to graze the contemporary range.

There are infinite examples of such continuous and unstoppable pouring of genres, trends and currents of which are protagonists the ten players involved in Cappelli's project. Rock artists such as Henry Rollins or Thurston Moore (of Sonic Youth) become sponsors of improvised music and ask other artists to play together. Two of the labels most interested in improv, Eremite and AUM Fidelity, have been founded by producers previously involved with hardcore and noise. The guitarist Marc Ribot, chamaleontic figure par-excellence, during his career smoothly moves from the cover soul of Wilson Pickett and Carla Thomas to play with Tom Waits and Elvis Costello, from the composition of ballet and film music to the new music of the

Lounge Lizards, from the re-discovery of the lesson of Albert Ayler with the band Shrek to duet with Fred Frith (English guitarist and bass player who, for the last fourteen years, has set roots in New York playing with groups such as Massacre, Skeleton Crew, Keep The Dog and composing for the Rova Saxophone Quartet and the Ensemble Moderne), or concentrating on Arsenio Rodriguez thus creating the Los Cubanos Postizos. Elliott Sharp, another guitarist, on a mission to discover blues in the native Cleveland, found himself, after his move to New York in 1979, to be a first-class electro-acoustic experimenter, the leader of numerous groups (including Carbon, Dyner's Club, Tektonics, Boodlers) also a composer (studies with Morton Feldman), the creator of installations and a producer (Zoar Records). Erik Friedlander, present in many of Zorn's projects, is instead an extraordinary cello player of classic formation, comfortable both in the execution of contemporary music and in the role of improviser (with Joe Lovano, Marty Ehrlich, Dave Douglas), leads a "double" life and has also participated in the founding of a quartet (Chimera) and of a trio (Topaz).

The pianist and organ player Anthony Coleman ranges from the music of the Jewish sephardic tradition to the that of the Balkans, he weaves together salsa, tango, and mambo with ragtime and bebop, without forgetting to be a modernist improviser. David Shea, tame and open-minded character of an omnivorous curiosity, has chosen to apply himself to the art of sampling ("I", Sub Rosa 1995), often combined with the interaction with executors of flesh and bones ("Hsi-Yu Chi", Tzadik 1995), thus obtaining results, needless to say, absolutely amazing, and testing himself in compositions of a definite contemporary angle ("Classical Works", Tzadik 1998). Ikue Mori

painter and multimedia artist, left her native Japan to move to New York in 1977; after a first performance as a drummer for the historically famous Dna of Arto Lindsay, she has later developed an original language of percussion exploiting the possibilities of the drum machine and taking into consideration all the musical applications of the laptop. The fellow countryman Otomo Yoshihide, guitar player and manipulator of sounds, moving spirit of the famous Ground Zero (who broke up in 1998 almost after a decade of wonderful mixtures of jazz, rock and noise,) remains in Tokyo, but his contacts with Zorn (who has had and still has a prolific artistic presence in the Japanese capital) has brought him to tie himself with the double thread of the New York scene (collaborations with Jon Rose, Christian Marclay, Butch Morris). Another significative experience is that of the collective Bang on a Can (promoted by, above all others, Michael Gordon, David Lang, Julia Wolf). Too

eccentric for the Academy and too formal for the clubs, in 1987 they create a festival that unites 28 composers in search of a specific identity at the Exit Gallery in SoHo. In the program, the compositions tend to pass over all ideologies and categorizations, and to position themselves at the border between genres - the unknown joins the known. They also connect with the educated European musical tradition through the Dutchman Louis Andriessen, an author of classic education who, differently from many of his colleagues, has no difficulty in respecting the existence of American minimalism and of rock. In the following years the review gains notoriety and they form an ensemble of soloists (Bang On A Can All Stars) for



which innumerable composers of contemporary expertise will write, including Annie Gosfield, author of a couple of recordings for the Tzadik label characterized by a dynamic and complex structure interwoven with noise, ambient, minimal music, drones, improvisations, rock, sirens and whatever else. Another member of the group, Evan Ziporyn, clarinet player and author involved in the recent recordings of "Sorcerer Sessions" by Matthew Shipp and William Parker, re-confirmed the ease with which some musicians, in New York, are able to switch roles, transmigrating without any sort of prevention from avant-rock, to noise, improvisation, minimalism, and contemporary music. So, just to close the circle, Nick Didkovsky, guitarist and expert of computer music, is the member of the avant-rockers group Doctor Nerve, but he has also been part of the Bang On A Can All-Stars and of the duet Maya Baser (cello) and Steve Schick (percussion) who also are themselves supporting members of that ensemble with the guitarist and composer Mark Stewart (who along with Didkovsky and Rene; Lussier, is part of the Fred Frith Guitar Quartet). The game of joint collaborations could continue forever and everyday in the Big Apple many add their own piece to this gigantic puzzle seemingly limitless. In conclusion, in New York everything seems to get along with everything, and so the presence in that musical jungle of a player of classic molding but open and curious such as Marco Cappelli does not appear incongruous but absolutely normal if taken into consideration by a perspective of artistic life whose principle-guide is to regard other people's achievements in order to modify your own and drive yourself a step forward above music. In the New York of many musical faces, looking forward, trying to understand the future and working to make it is a reality not just a pose, a trend of the moment, but it probably is the only way to really feel alive. We shall not forget that the artists above mentioned and the ones that did not appear in the text, have given and still give proof of a strong civil and social commitment, of a non rhetorical interest in the destiny of the world, and they publicly represent the face of that side of America that's open to dialogue and understands the views of others. And thanks to Marco Cappelli and to his disenchanted and stubborn will to penetrate in that universe that's not only made of sounds, this time a piece of the future of New York is written in Naples.