

Improvvisatore Involontario: Contemporary Italian Jazz in New York

Luca Delbello (March 02, 2011)



They come from Italy ready to face the discerning public of the Big Apple. They are the artists of the project "Improvvisatore Involontario"; a true revelation of contemporary jazz scene, this project reunites some of the most innovative artists of the European and International scene

[Improvvisatore Involontario](#) [2] boasts some 20 European musicians and was born from an idea of Francesco Cusa, Paolo Sorge and Carlo Natoli.

i-Italy interviewed the protagonists of this "musical expedition" to New York made possible by an intuition of [Marco Cappelli](#) [3], professor of classic guitar at [Palermo's conservatory](#) [4] and one of the most eclectic and active musician of the Big Apple.



The project promises to be a one-of-a-kind event for anyone interested in avant-garde music, experimental sounds and discovering a truly excellent Italian musical enterprise.

[Francesco Cusa](#) [5], President and co-founder of the association and drummer, and Paolo Sorge, guitar player and co-founder, answered our questions from Italy before their departure.

Marco Cappelli, in New York, gave us more details about the situation in New York and the exceptional presence of artist [Mauro Pagani](#) [6].

How did you come across the idea of Improvvisatore Involontario and what pushed you toward creating this project?

- Paolo Sorge:

It happened some years ago. It was during an evening in Catania, after a Skrunch's concert. Francesco told me and Carlo Natoli he thought of "Improvvisatore Involontario", somehow an oxymoron, as the perfect name for the collective group he had had for a while in mind to create.

After all, it was just about making official an already existing network of artists who, probably, did not believe anymore in individualism in artistic life.

Francesco and I, no matter how young we look [he laughs], have already roughly 25 years of musical carrier behind us: we surely could not just wait for the protagonists of the music industry to contact us. We had developed our own musical style: transversal, eclectic, difficult to catalogue. The time had come to roll up our sleeves, get to work and make us better known.

This group is, thus, not only an independent label, but also a place where ideas born from different backgrounds can crystallize, a place capable of putting coherently together different artists, players or even just amateurs and give them a shared creative process. This is about the poetic of doing, the creative process before the theory, the cultural bio-diversity against the flattening imposed by the market.

Since then, time seems to have proven us right, and now more than ever out collective self-management seems the best way to spread our ideas.

What is the common denominator of these artists and what were the selection parameters?

- Francesco Cusa:

Anybody can become part of the project. Sure, there are some specific requisites, but the bottom line is that those who want to participate in the initiative must show a great enthusiasm to create and share this wonderful experience. I'd say we are more of an opinion movement than a label. The main objective is to convey a certain kind of message. This is why the selection is not based on the musical abilities but rather on human and intellectual affinities. Of course, we have outstanding musicians in our midst, but they are somehow "serving a cause", just like the amateur artists that are part of the initiative.

What do you expect from this American experience?

- Francesco Cusa:

Nothing more or less than what we expect from any other concert. I know that the impact with the Big Apple will be tough, but I think we will manage and interpret in our music the smells, tastes and boundless culture of this "expressive continent", of this microcosm of cultures and currents that is New York. Many of our sources of inspiration come from here: I think we can say it will be a particularly sparkling experience.



What type of relation do you have with musicians from New York?

- Paolo Sorge:

As a musician, having received an initial training from Jazz and teaching this language in Conservatory, it is a relationship that could easily fall in the cultural subjection. On the contrary, even though I have been playing for about a year with Don Byron and even though I have direct contacts with some New York jazz musicians, I want to proudly affirm the autochthonous cipher of the Italian musician. In fact, sometimes talking about an approximate jazz gives interesting results, it might produce more original outcomes.

How did you come in contact with Improvvisatore Involontario?

- Marco Cappelli:

I met Improvvisatore Involontario in 2006: I was already in New York, but I happened to perform some duets in concerts with Francesco Cusa, a great musician who I had already been following as a drummer/composer and as “thinker”. He talked to me about Improvvisatore Involontario, and it immediately seemed to be a very important issue for the Italian music scene, from which I scooted. I took the decision of going into partnership, even if I have been more of a supportive member than an active one.

How was the idea of the New York show born?

- Marco Cappelli:

New York is a “caput mundi” of creativity: some of the most innovative artistic experiences of contemporary history started here and they still do. Whoever deals with art, and more specifically with music, sooner or later runs into New York events. So, relating to the New York scene becomes a sort of obligation and it is fair that whoever has the courage to cross the ocean and put himself to test ends up in the spotlight, inevitably.

For Improvvisatore involontario the spotlight will be important to start the ball rolling for the unchanging Italian cultural environment in Italy, where, in spite of the enormous creative energies available on the territory, few things happen. The creative experience is often frustrating, sometimes impossible.

Improvvisatore Involontario is here not only to create musical dialogue with its American and international representatives, but to show, in its own house, that it is possible to break the chains that imprison creativity in Italy, blowing a raspberry at the snobbish circus, in a friendly way. Like Totò used to say.

How did you conceive the program?

- Marco Cappelli:

At the beginning, the idea was to give visibility to the record projects available in the catalogue of the Improvvisatore Involontario label (I invite everyone to take a look at online), with particular attention to the “grande ensemble” Naked Musicians, because they are the “improvvisatori involontari” directed by Francesco Cusa. Moreover I tried to use my years of musical life in New York to improve relations between “Improvvisatore Involontario” and some key local musicians; in fact, the guitar quartet of Paolo Sorge Tetraktys will meet his New York counterpart, Dither, at White Box on March 8th and [Elliott Sharp](#) [7] will perform his modular composition Flexagon with Naked Musicians at [Brecht Forum](#) [8], on March 12th (the divine, the immense E#, who will celebrate his 60th birthday in these days at Issue project Romm with some fantastic concerts!). Moreover, besides the concert on March 9th



at the [Italian Academy of Columbia University](#) [9], where we will have on the stage our great singer [Cristina Zavalloni](#) [10], (intercepted in tour in the US) and a myth of our rock as Mauro Pagani (even he is actually in New York), we will have special guests in different concerts of Naked: come and see!

What were the biggest difficulties in organizing an event like this?

- Marco Cappelli:

There weren't any, really, except the work necessary to put together the playbill.

Here in New York everything is easy, this is the answer of the people dealing with the spaces of the culture (be it a club or a theatre of a prestigious university), it's always coherent, fast and functional: in a word, Anglo-Saxon.

I am sorry, instead, that I have not received any institutional financial aid from Italy, because my country will be magnificently represented in this festival. But, it doesn't matter, we are generous people: we will not stop at the local poverty and we are sure that better times will come.

There is an outsider among the musicians, Mauro Pagani. How will his presence combine with other artists inside the program?

- Marco Cappelli:

Mauro is a wild card able to upset the game and turn it into something unique. It is impossible to know how he will combine with other artists until he will join the show. Come in crowds: I can assure you that you will see some pretty good things...

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[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/improvvisatore-involontario-ny>

[2] <http://www.improvvisatoreinvolontario.com>

[3] <http://www.marcocappelli.com>

[4] <http://www.conservatoriobellini.it>

[5] <http://www.francescocusa.it>

[6] <http://www.officinemeccaniche.biz/mauropagani/layout2.htm>

[7] <http://www.elliottsharp.com>

[8] <http://brechtforum.org/>

[9] <http://www.italianacademy.columbia.edu>

[10] <http://www.cristinazavalloni.it>