

## **Amelia Cuni**

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Singer and composer, born in Milan (Italy). Since 1992, resides in Berlin (Germany), has given numerous concerts in several European countries, in Asia and America (please, see press quotes on her homepage). She composes her own music on Sanskrit, Italian, Latin, English and other European languages and collaborates with composers and musicians of international repute. She gives workshops and seminars at universities all over the world and is a member of the teaching staff at the Conservatory in Vicenza (Italy), where she has been teaching Indian singing since 1999.

### **education & training**

Between 1976 and 1995, Amelia Cuni has been cultivating various Indian music and dance disciplines, studying full-time. Her main field of study and research is *dhrupad* singing, which she learnt in India for more than 10 years according to the traditional oral transmission system, that is, privately, with individual tuition. She has performed at major traditional Indian music venues in India and abroad, and is a recognized exponent of this ancient music which is universally accepted as the foundation of all genres of North Indian classical music. She received intensive singing training from some of the most renowned Indian masters: **R.Fahimuddin Dagar**, **Bidur Mallik** and **Dilip Chandra Vedi**. She also studied kathak dance with **Manjushri Chatterje**, and pakhawaj drumming with **Raja Chattapati Singh**.

She collaborates with artists from various backgrounds (Early and New Music, electroacoustic, ambient, experimental, jazz, folk, dance and theatre). One of her latest collaborations is a duo with **Terry Riley** (Raga d'oltreoceano). With her own projects she has taken part in international festivals in the UK, Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Hungary, Check Rep., Norway, Spain, Portugal, USA, Canada, Brazil, India, China... She has conceived and performs worldwide in the multimedia work ASHTAYAMA-Song of Hours, co-produced by **Podewil-Berlin** and **ZKM-Karlsruhe**.

- She performs internationally: i.e. solo concerts at **Nehru Centre** in Bombay, **Kamani and I.I.C.** in N.Delhi.at the **House of World Cultures**, **Podewil and Schauspielhaus** and **Radial System** in Berlin, **Gasteig** in Munich, **Zentrum f.Kunst und Medientechnologie** in Karlsruhe, **Barbican Centre**, **I.C.A.** and **Purcell Room** in London, **Tropical Museum and Die Ijsbreker** in Amsterdam, **Accademia Filarmonica Romana and Auditorium** in Rome, **Banco do Brazil** in Rio de Janeiro, **Serralves Museum** in Porto, **Yerba Buena Center** in San Francisco, **CNMAT-Berkeley University**, **Interpretation Series/Merkin Hall** in New York, **Red Cat** in Los Angeles, **BiennaleMusica** in Venice, **The Music Gallery** in Toronto a.o.

### **new music projects and collaborations in chronological order:**

- Perugia,1989: premiere of **REBIS**, by *Fernando Grillo* for Amelia, doublebass and tabla
- **TODO CANTO** (*Chico Mello*, 1996) for Amelia, operatic soprano, piano and tabla. Performed at **Schauspielhaus** in Berlin, **Musikakademie Rheinsberg** and **Banco do Brazil**, Rio de Janeiro
- **WHAT THE RIVER SAID** (Terry Riley, 1999) for Amelia, piano, Baroque strings and mridangam (ensemble *Sounds Bazaar/Francis Silkstone*). Performed at: **Norfolk & Norwich Festival 1999** (U.K.); **Rainbow over Bath** and **Oxford Contemporary Music Festival**.
- **SONG BOOKS COMPLETE** by *John Cage* (participation in a music-theatre performance produced by the new music vocal ensemble *Die Maulwerker*, **Bielefeld Theatre** (2001).
- **TRYING ORPHEUS**, music-theatre piece conceived and produced by *Francis Silkstone* and directed by *Richard Cuming*, with Indian modern dancer Astad Deboo (Winchester Jan/Febr 2002).
- **METALL** (*Roland Pfrengle*, 1999- 2002), electro-acoustic solo piece for Amelia, gong, tamtam and computer, performed at the **Essen Folkwang Hochschule/festival EX MACHINA 2002**. This composition is part of the theatre/music piece **AN SICH – Bilder/Stille** (*Pfrengle*, 2002) a coproduction by **Hebbel Theatre** and **Maerzmusik/Berliner Festspiele 2003**
- **FLORES** (*Maria de Alvear*, 2003), for 2 female voices, trumpet and ensemble. Performed at **FORUM NEUE MUSIK** in Cologne with the new music ensemble *Musikfabrik* and *de Alvear*, produced by **Deutschland Radio**.
- **GRAN SOL** (*Maria de Alvear*, 2005) performed with *de Alvear* and *Joan Jeanrenaud* (cello), at the Yerba Buena Center in SF, a commission by OTHER MINDS Festival

- **RAGA D'OLTREOCEANO** in duo with *Terry Riley*. Concerts at **Contempo**, Montefalco; **Contemporanea**, Udine; **Centro d'Arte**, Padova. (2005-6)
- **SOLO 58 (18 microtonal ragas)** from the **SONG BOOKS** (*John Cage*, 1970), with ensemble, produced by Cuni together with several European venues: **Maerzmusik/Berliner Festspiele** (premiere in Berlin, March 2006); **Expozice nové hudby** - Brno (Czech Rep.); **Musicadhoy** - Madrid; **Autumn Festival** - Budapest; **Casa da Música** - Porto; **Voix Nouvelles - Fondation Royaumont**; **Handelsbeurs** - Gent (B); **Ultima**, Oslo and in Stavanger (N); **Venice BiennaleMusica** ; **OTHER MINDS** - Berkeley; **Red Cat Theatre/CalArts** - Los Angeles; **Aterforum Festival** - Ferrara; **Rec-Festival**, Reggio Emilia
- **AVATARS**: electro-acoustic (Max/MSP) collaboration with English composers Francis Silkstone and Michael Young and with dhrupad singer Uday Bhawalkar (at Goldsmiths, University of London, project funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2008-2011, to be continued)
- September 2010, **collaboration** with some of the **Berliner Philharmoniker** on the project **SONGSCORO**, based on Luciano Berio's CORO. This collaboration will be continued in May 2012 with a new project.
- world premiere of **GRAMOPHONE SARASWATI** (Cuni & Durand) commissioned by the New Music Festival **MaerzMusik/Berliner Festspiele**, with the **futurist intonarumori orchestra (Performa New York)** conducted by Luciano Chessa, March 20th, 2011, Radial System, Berlin

Amelia is engaged in several **collaborations with composers and musicians** of various backgrounds. In the field of New and Experimental music she has also worked with well known artists including *David Moss*, *Rajesh Mehta*, *Roberto Paci Dalò*, *Zeitblom*, *Yuval Avital* and theatre director *Giancarlo Cauteruccio*. With *David Toop*, *Paul Schütze* and *Toshinori Kondo*, **Impakt Festival** 1997 in Utrecht. She has a long standing collaboration with the English composer **Francis Silkstone** (now AHRC Creative Fellow at Goldsmiths, University of London) who has written for her voice and Baroque strings a.o. She has performed at the **ZKM (Centre for Arts and Media Technology)** in Karlsruhe in a concert including electronic music by several composers. With *Werner Durand* and *Maria Jonas* (early music singer) she has conceived a performance based on ragas and the music of *Hildegard von Bingen* presented at **KlangZeit Festival in Münster** in 2008 and at **Imago Dei festival 2010, Klangraum Krems**.

Her music has been featured in several radio portraits and interviews. She has recorded for radio and TV productions.

#### **scholarships/residencies etc.**

- 1982 to 1986 - received **scholarships from the Indian government** to study privately with her singing teachers R.F.Dagar, D.C.Vedi and V.Mallik
- 1999 - a one-year **ARTIST IN RESIDENCE grant at Podewil** in Berlin (centre for contemporary music) where she realized the multimedia work ASHTAYAMA-Song of Hours, co-produced by ZKM (Zentrum f. Kunst u. Medientechnologie) in Karlsruhe.
- 2004 - **one-week residency at the Djerassi Foundation** in California as composer, and her work was featured at the festival Other Minds in San Francisco
- 2006 - **one-week residency at the Royaumont Foundation** near Paris, to work on the interpretation of John Cage's SOLO 58 (Song Books, 1970): 18 microtonal ragas
- November 2007 - **3-day residency at California Institute for the Arts (CALARTS)** for her interpretation of Cage's SOLO 58
- September 2009, Berlin - invited to be a **member of the jury** for the nation-wide world music competition CREOLE - Weltmusik aus Deutschland
- **Commission** (together with Werner Durand) by the new music festival **MaerzMusik/Berliner Festspiele** for a 10 minutes long composition including an ensemble of "Intonarumori" (reconstructions of Futurist "noise tuners" funded by PERFORMA) titled GRAMOPHONE SARASWATI and premiered in Berlin on March 20th, 2011
- **Residency at the MATRALAB**, Concordia University, Montreal, from April 27th to May 6th, 2011 as part of her contribution to the project NATIVE ALIEN conceived by composer Sandeep Bhagwati and aiming at the development of specific MAX-Msp software. Other soloist/improvisers involved are: Rohan de Saram, David Rosenboom, Dhruva Ghosh, Wu Wei, Mike Svoboda, Ensemble Transmission (Montreal) funded by Quebec Fund for Research in Society and Culture (FQRSC)

- October 2011, she has been awarded a **1-month residency at the Artisti In Residence KREMS** (Austria)

Amelia Cuni is a keen teacher: since 1999, she has been teaching Indian singing at the **Vicenza Conservatorium** (Italy). She has given innumerable lec-dem, classes and workshops in Indian singing and dance all over Europe and in USA. Just to name a few: **Conservatoires** of Zurich and Parma, **Universities** of **Siegen, Bologna and Trento, King Alfred's College** in Winchester, **La Sapienza University** in Rome, **Amsterdam University (UVA), Udine School of Drama 'Nico Pepe', Summer School 1998 at Dartington (U.K.), Mills College** and **CALARTS** in USA. **Tanz Etage** Frankfurt, **Tanzfabrik** Berlin, **Musik Akademie** Basle, **Teatro Tascabile** Bergamo, **National Yoga Congress** Berlin. **Intercultural School of Music** (IISMC, Fondazione G.Cini, Venice), **Ethnological Museum in Berlin-Dahlem**. Amelia has collaborated as dhrupad teacher in the theatre/dance/music production **BIG IN BOMBAY** by Constanza Macras, touring world wide.

**Amelia Cuni's discography includes :**

solo album **Danza d'Amore** published on New Earth (Munich 1998) and with the Italian magazine 'Medioevalia' ( New Sounds 1997); **Monsoon Point**, New Earth Records 1996, (in collaboration with Al Gromer Khan). She is a guest musician on David Toop 's solo album **Pink-Noir**, Virgin 1996. She is featured on the Cd **The beat generation** (Harta Performing 1996) and on **Ashwattha** with music by Raviindra (world-jazz), 1998. She has contributed with her voice to several other CD productions and compilations and her skills in the recording studio are widely appreciated. Live-recording of a *dhrupad concert* by Amelia in Mumbai: **MORNING MEDITATION** on the Indian music label NAVRAS, London/Mumbai, 2000. Another studio dhrupad recording, **OCEAN OF COLOURS** has appeared on Navras in 2009.

In collaboration with Werner Durand: **Ashtayama -Song of Hours** on Amiata Records, Florence 2000. With Werner Durand and the percussionist Marika Falk, **DRUMMING BREATH** on the Spanish label Syntorama NO-CD, 2000. In collaboration with Alio Die, **APSARAS** on Projekt, USA 2002.

A CD production of **John Cage's SOLO 58 (18 microtonal ragas) -SONG BOOKS** (1970) was released in September 2007 on the Californian label OTHER MINDS with the support of a grant by the A. Copland Foundation. Other collaborations with **Werner Durand, AQUA SHIVA** and **KEDARIKA-nadayoga vol.1** are on magnatune.com. The LP **ALREADY AWAKE IN THE NIGHT**, in collaboration with Werner Durand has been released on the Belgian label ini.itu in March 2011.

Her **publications** include: **Dhrupad Annual** 1992, Varanasi; **Teaching Musics of the World** 1994, Basle; **Indian Music and the West** (S.R.A. seminar Mumbai1996), **Indische Musik in Deutschland** (Aachen, 1998), **Journal of the Indian Musicological Society**, (Mumbai,1999) , **Ear & Eye-Encounters with world musics**, Schott Verlag (Mainz, 2004), **inter.kultur.politik. Kulturpolitik in der multiethnischen Gesellschaft**, (Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft-Klartext Verlag, (Essen, 2004). She has contributed with extensive sleeve notes (**CREATING 18 MICROTONAL RAGAS**, 2007) to the CD recording of **SOLO 58 by John Cage (OM 1010-2)**. **MUSINGS ON RAGAS in einfach**, (edited by Hannes Böhringer), Hans Hansen und Axel Kufus, Berlin (Merve) 2009. The Italian version has appeared in **Il libro della voce**, Auditorium, Milano 2010. She has contributed advise, music sample and notation to a text-book for German gymnasiums, **'Dhrupad - der heilige Gesang aus Nordindien'** (by Uwe Steinmetz in *Sound Check S II*, Schroedel Verlag, Braunschweig 2008).

Amelia has been invited to take part in several **international symposiums**: **Teaching Musics of the World** (Musikakademie-Basel, 1994); **Cultural Politics in a Multicultural Society** at the HKW in Berlin, 2003; **MUSIC NOTATION** at the UDK in Berlin, 2007. She has been invited to present her work on the J.Cage's RAGAS at the Conference **India and the World, (intercultural) performing arts, University of Amsterdam**, November 2008.

*Cuni's singing is what should make her a sensation in various new, world, experimental and alternative music scenes. She is essentially an Indian vocalist with Italian flair, theatricality and technique. This is a new kind of hybrid singing, and it is stunning. (...) Hers is a huge array of vocal effects impressively disciplined.*

**Mark Swed in Los Angeles Times November 2007**

*Cuni manipulates the minuscule micro-divisions between notes wit an innate ease that Western performers can take as a measure for the future. The result is a profoundly authentic, Apollonian beauty.*

**Philip Clark GRAMOPHONE, July 2008**