

Nzikitanza¹

A piece on the resistance against the MUOS in Niscemi, Sicily

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Abstract: *Nzikitanza* for accordion, violin, cello and tape was written in 2012 as a reflection on the deployment of Sicilian territory for NATO and US military operations. In particular, the piece was inspired by the then newly formed resistance committee against the MUOS in Niscemi. This brief commentary will illustrate *a priori* and *a posteriori* reflections on the status of the piece as a contribution to forms of antagonistic culture.

Keywords: Sicily, resistance, demilitarization, MUOS, composition.

¹ The title of the piece means “continuously” in Sicilian. Submitted on: 12/09/2015. Approved on: 20/11/2015.

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The piece *Nzikitanza* for accordion, violin, cello and tape was written in 2012 and premiered on May 28th of the same year by the Red Note Ensemble at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, Scotland.³

When writing *Nzikitanza*, in spring 2012, I had just witnessed the launch of some Canadian military aircrafts from Trapani Airport, a civilian airport in Sicily: the aircrafts headed towards Libya, as part of the NATO Operation Unified Protector. In the same period, the project of constructing the MUOS, a military communications satellite system owned by the US Navy, near the town of Niscemi, was reaching its final stages. This in turn triggered the organized resistance of various groups of Sicilian citizens, who founded the NO MUOS committee (LA LOTA, 2012).

The piece reflects on the resistance against the deployment of Sicilian territory for NATO and US military operations, which persists since the end of World War II despite the prescribed demilitarization of Sicily ruled by the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty (MANCUSO, 2009, p. 45). The word “*nzikitanza*” is a Sicilian expression that means “continuously” or “uninterruptedly” and is used here to refer to the tireless resistance against the military exploitation of the Sicilian territory. This resistance has been perseverant throughout post-WWII history, and its most tragic episode was the murder of anti-missile protest leader Pio La Torre in 1982, which still raises suspicions as to the US-based interests that might have been behind it (AMADORE, 2012).

The piece responded to a precise call for scores, which prescribed the exclusive use of a 4/4 time signature throughout the piece and the employment of a pre-recorded tape part. I tried to use these constraints as creative opportunities, for instance using the rhythmic staticity prescribed by the call to express a sense of stubbornness and perseverance; or by using some repeat bars in a slightly asymmetrical manner, in a way to break the musical phrase and render an idea of unstable cyclicity (bb. 20-26); or, finally, by using the tape part to evoke both an atmosphere of serious protest (by using samples from various demonstrations), and of a bold and derisory attitude towards authority (by using various slapstick sound effects).

The NO MUOS protest has been constantly based on all these elements: an obstinate perseverance that coexists with the consciousness of its inoffensiveness; the coexistence with a cyclical alternation between quiet phases and sudden crises (police interventions, legal sentences, etc.); finally, a derisory attitude towards higher authorities that does not attenuate the seriousness of the protest.

Figure 1 shows a protest staged by activist Turi Vaccaro Cordaro in April 2013 to symbolically impede access to the MUOS construction site: the protester simply lays in front of a police car, playing the

³ A recording of the piece is available at <https://youtu.be/OlgS-UhSb0k>

recorder and apparently disorienting the officers, who seem to struggle to figure out what to do in response (MOCCIARO & FIASCONARO, 2013).



Fig. 1 – Turi Vaccaro Cordaro’s protest in April 2013 (photo published with permission of its author Giuseppe Fiasconaro)

Nzikitanza aspires to the same status as Vaccaro Cordaro’s protest, namely that of an inoffensive, yet intensely symbolic act, capable of expressing utter indignation while also attempting to convey artistic content.

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Marcello Messina

Nzikitanza

for accordion, violin, cello and tape

Performance notes

Instructions

Extra equipment: mixing desk or audio interface with two or more outputs. Headphones for each instrumentalist, three-way splitter for the headphones jacks. The tape part is contained in a single .mp3 file, available at <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/15191503/Nzikitanza%20backing%20track.mp3>

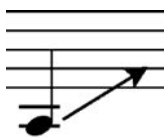
The left channel of the .mp3 file contains a click track, to be sent just to the headphones provided to the players; the right channel of the file consists of the actual tape part, which is to be played back to the audience alongside the instrumental part. Before the actual start of the tape part, the click track will beat 2 empty bars: the performers will start playing at the beginning of the 3rd bar.

For any problem, please feel free to contact me at marcellomessina@mail.ru

A recording of the piece is available at <https://youtu.be/OlgS-UhSb0k>

Strings

scratch Bow with very high pressure with no distinguishable pitch. A way of doing it is by damping the string while bowing it. The triangle-shaped noteheads used in correspondence of this indication do not indicate the position to be stopped on the string, but just the string to be used.



Glissando as high as possible in pizzicato technique

 = vibrato

Accordion

bellow shake



Notation for the performance of a bellow shake tremolo.

 = vibrato

Nzikitanza

Marcello Messina

2 empty click
track bars
then start

A Andante ♩ = 80

Musical score for the first system of 'Nzikitanza'. It features three staves: Fisarmonica (Harmonica), Violino (Violin), and Violoncello (Cello). The time signature is 4/4. The tempo is Andante with a quarter note equal to 80 beats per minute. The Fisarmonica part starts with a dynamic of *f*, moves to *mf*, then *ff*, and finally *mp* with a 'bellow shake' effect. The Violino part starts with *f*, then *mp* with a glissando, and ends with *f*. The Violoncello part starts with *f*, then *ff*, and ends with *mf*. There are wavy lines above the Fisarmonica staff and below the Violoncello staff, indicating tremolos or sustained notes.

Musical score for the second system of 'Nzikitanza'. It features three staves: Fisarmonica (Fisar.), Violino (Vln.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The time signature is 4/4. The Fisarmonica part starts with a dynamic of *ff*, then *f*, then *mp*, and ends with *pp*. The Violino part starts with *mf* and ends with *mp*. The Violoncello part starts with a glissando, then has a 'scratch' effect, and ends with a dynamic of *fff*. There is a '15^{ma}' marking above the Fisarmonica staff. The system ends with a double bar line.

7

Fisar. *f* *ff* *mf*

Vln. *ff* *mf* *fff* scratch

Vc. *fff* *ff* scratch

9

Fisar. *f*

Vln. *f* *fff* scratch

Vc. *f* *ff* scratch

B

12 *15^{ma}*

Fisar. *f* *ff* *f*

Vln. *ff* *f*

Vc. *f* *ff* *f* *gliss.* *mp* *f*

15 **bellow shake**

Fisar. *ff* *fff* *mf*

Vln. *gliss.* *ff* *f* *gliss.* *ff*

Vc. *ff*

18

Fisar. *mf* *f*

Vln. *f* *ff* *f*

Vc. *mf* *f* *mf*

20

Fisar. *ff* *f* *ff* *f*

Vln. *ff* *mf* *ff* *f*

Vc. *ff* *f* *ff*

bellow shake

gliss.

Fisar. *ff*

Vln. *ff* *fff*

Vc. *f* *gliss.* *fff* scratch

C

Fisar. *f* *ff* *f*

Vln. *mp* *fff* scratch

Vc. *f* *fff*

28

Fisar.

ff *mf* *f*

Vln.

p

Vc.

f *ff* *f* *ff*

30

Fisar.

Vln.

scratch

fff

Vc.

mp

||:3 times:||

33

D

Fisar. *ff*

Vln. *ff*

Vc. *pizz.*
(ff)

35

E

Fisar. *f*

Vln. *f* *ff* *f*

Vc. *f*

38

Fisar.

Vln.

Vc.

ff

ff

41

Fisar.

Vln.

Vc.

1.

scratch

f

ff

f

mf

fff

44

Fisar.

Vln.

Vc.

2.

ff

scratch

fff

47

F

Fisar.

Vln.

Vc.

mf

p

pp

15^{ma}

p

arco

gliss.

gliss.

sfz

p

mf

49 bellow shake

Fisar. *mf* *ff* *fff*

Vln. *mf* *fff* *f* scratch

Vc. *mf* *ff*

53 slowly fade tape out after end of cello part

Fisar. *pp* *15^{ma}*

Vln.

Vc. *mp*