

François Tusques - La Chasse Au Snark (The Hunting Of The Snark) (2020)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

Thursday, 10 September 2020 15:27 -

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1. *La Chasse Au Snark (Studio Version 1968)* 15:53 2. *Sa Triste Histoire Il S'Offrit à Dire (Live Version 1969)* 15:49 3. *Car Le Jubjub Etait Un Boojum, Voyez-Vous (Happening At La Vieille Grille 1967-8/Biennale de Paris 1971)* 16:54 4. *Survint Un Silence Suprême (Live Version 1968)* 20:12

In 1967, 1968 and 1969 most of my works were happenings loosely based on Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting Of The Snark*, a not-so-cryptic poem that, to my mind, gave clues to free the theatre in the same way the "new music" had freed jazz. It never made it to record and I gave up on the idea when I met Sunny Murray and Alan Silva when they arrived in Paris in the summer of '69. Few concert venues would have anything to do with us but we didn't want that kind of connection with the public – famous or not (Jacques Higelin joined on occasion!) – which more often than not would join us on stage to bang percussion, sing, dance, freak out. Our favorite part was when we shut down the lights near the end, silently left the stage, and when the light went on for the curtain... The public had formally taken our place.

Galleries, museums and art/theatre/dance festivals, on the other hand, were open to this early multimedia event – complete with films, masks and early electronic devices (Bernard Vitet, the trumpet player, brought an early portable reverb system to the proceedings). The reels and cassettes we rescued from my basement are rather evasively labelled and the following data is far from precise. The core group was me on piano, Bernard Vitet on trumpet and electronic treatments, Beb Guérin on double bass, Daniel Laloux (who later had tremendous success in film, theatre and voice acting) as MC, Jean Frenay and Jean Vern (who did the artwork for *le nouveau jazz*) on saxophones, Michel Kurylo, Annick Astier, Lambert Terbrack and my then wife Françoise Tusques "singing" and "acting", so to say. Jacques Thollot, Aldo Romano and later Noel Mcghie were on drums.

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I know for sure side A is a studio recording carried out in August 1968 by the comité action musique, an activist group of artists and engineers aiming to reclaim the means of production from the “record industry”. The line-up is me, Vitet, Guérin, Laloux, Frenay, Vern, Astier, Françoise Tusques, no drums (everyone doubling on percussion), and Michel Portal on bass clarinet and saxophone as guest. Side C is a montage of the surviving bits of the happenings that took place at La Vieille Grille between August 1967 – March 1968 (sometimes on a daily basis in ‘68!), the museum of modern art during the May ‘68 demonstrations, and the Biennale Of Paris in February 1969. Sides B and D are less theatre oriented and may have been recorded either at the American center in October 1968, the international students center in November 1968 (Barre Phillips on bass and Barney Wilen on sax guested on these dates but I’m not able to confirm they are on the tapes), or in the winter and spring of 1969. However, the cassette for side b only read “Snark 1969”...

The name of the group (it changed every time it ventured out), the title of the concerts and accordingly the cuts on these LPs were all lifted randomly from Lewis Carroll’s poems and novels.

Back then, I described what we did in this way: “Composers, directors, writers, band leaders, those people are vampires sucking the blood of musicians and actors. They are byproducts of the current state of our society. Yet, someone who has something to convey needs performers... Unless a cultural revolution happens soon, I think it’s impossible to overcome those contradictions. Therefore, I wish that this rendition of the hunting of the Snark would be the last ever rendition of any work of art, and that the next stage of evolution is that any individual craving for expression will have the physical and intellectual means to create without constraints, to freely associate with others, without bearing the weight of so-called geniuses and nobodies. We want to bring to the stage the same revolution that happened in jazz with the new music. ---François Tusques, finderskeepersrecords.bandcamp.com

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