

Getting into Events  
by Ken Friedman

Over the years since 1962, many event scores have been published under the aegis of Fluxus. The scores have appeared in boxes and multiple editions, on cards, in books and catalogues, and in several other forms. Several of us have presented our scores as exhibitions, on paper as drawings, calligraphy or prints, and on canvas as silk-screens or paintings. The event scores of the artists associated with Fluxus have never been available in the single, encyclopedic compilation that George Maciunas envisioned.

George announced on any number of occasions grand plans to publish 'the complete works' or 'the collected works' of Fluxus artists, La Monte Young, Emmett Williams and Jackson Mac Low among them. His failure to do so -- or their unwillingness to permit George sole authority over their work under the Fluxus aegis, led to some of the fractures within Fluxus. Other plans to publish major selections of work never came to fruition. This led in Dick Higgins' case to the publication of *Postface/Jefferon's Birthday*, and to the establishment of the legendary Something Else Press (and yet another schism in Fluxus). In my case, it led to a series of carbon-copy, xerox and mimeograph editions of my events and scores during the 60s, while waiting for George, and by the end of the 60s, to exhibitions and publications of the scores in the many different forms and contexts in which they have been seen since. )I was always careful to copyright them to Fluxus while waiting for George to finish the boxed Fluxus edition, which, as with so many of George's wonderful plans, remained unfinished.)

George did realize boxed editions of many important suites of event scores. The *Magna Carta* of boxed event structures was surely George Brecht's *WaterYam*, a quintessential Fluxus edition. Other scores in boxed editions included work by Takehisa Kosugi, Mieko Shiomi, Robert Watts, Albert M. Fine, Eric Andersen, and Ben Vautier. Some of the Fluxus artists also realized different editions of their own pieces. The best known and most influential of these was Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit*, a milestone in the evolution of conceptual art and performance art, and without doubt the best known and most widely distributed publication in this genre. A number of us followed Yoko's example in creating our own editions of scores. Dick Higgins, Bengt af Klintberg, Milan Knizak, and I all took this path. As *Grapefruit* was, these compilations were later expanded and issued by other publishers who developed an interest in the work.

The Fluxus Performance Workbook is the largest compilation of scores available to date in one volume. Even so, I estimate that it represents less than 10% of the event structures and score notations created by Fluxus artists. Space was a challenge here -- and availability of the scores themselves was an even greater limiting factor. Fluxus event notations have several features that distinguish them from those art forms to which they bear a relationship. They are musical, but their musicality lies in the ability of anyone to perform the work from the notation, not in the need for virtuosic performance.

You can perform a Fluxus event in virtuoso or bravura style, and you can perform it straight-out, with the unvarnished, direct style that so many Fluxists prefer. You can give it a fast pace, jamming each piece into the minimal time possible as Ben Vautier does, go for a slow, meditative rhythm as Alison Knowles does, or strike a balance as you'll see in the concerts organized by Dick Higgins or Larry Miller. Pieces can have powerful torque, energized and

dramatic, as in the work of Milan Knizak, the earthy folkloric touch seen in Bengt af Klintberg's pieces, or the atmospheric radiance, spiritual and dazzling, that is seen in Beuys's work. But whichever attitude, whichever style, the artists who created the event works are 'composers' of these pieces. When a Fluxus artist performs a Fluxus event, it's like Bach playing Bach or Copeland conducting Copeland: the work is embodied in the notation, it is open to many interpretations, and the creator need not be present for a true interpretation to be realized. As has happened more than once in the history of performing art, other interpreters or performers than the creator of the work have sometimes found the center of the work better and released it more fully than the artist who created the piece. The artists gives birth to the piece, but the interpreter gives it its voice. That is why these works are at heart musical.

The distinction between musicality and a painterly sensibility is important to understanding this work. Performance art is signature art: the creator does it, and without the artist, the work is no longer itself. Only Beuys can have done a Beuys performance. The same is generally true of happenings: only Vostell can have done a Vostell happening. And of those Fluxus artists like Knizak or Higgins who created happenings as well as events, their event scores are open to all, but their happenings were essentially restricted to creation under their personal guidance.

There is an important distinction that George Maciunas drew between the sensibility of the happening and the sensibility of the event. He referred to happenings as 'neo-Baroque' theater, a phrase that summoned up the elaborate flourishes of European Baroque architecture and music, as opposed to the concentrated, austere focus of Japanese poetry and its architecture which was reflected in the event form that Maciunas termed 'neo-Haiku theater.' Yoko Ono characterized this work as having an 'event bent,' while I created a term that caught both the meditation and the humor in Fluxus pieces with the term 'Zen vaudeville.' In every respect, the heritage of Japan and of Zen Buddhism has influenced the development of Fluxus, and nowhere more clearly than in the event as a form of art to be enacted, seen and contemplated.

Another important aspect of the event is its philosophical basis. One may perform an event, realize it, follow through a notation to develop physical objects and processes -- or, perhaps, just think about it.

Each of these avenues of realization and perception is equally valid. Each has its unique rewards and benefits. In annotated, contemplated form, you can carry a great many concerts and exhibitions in your pocket.

#### Publishing History

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