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**"Julien Blaine: A god of performance poetry who simply... couldn't
do otherwise..."**

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Julien Blaine is one of the "gods of poetry." He is the person who significantly contributed to the emergence of the synesthetic dimension of poetic art. He is the one who utilized the full width and length, depth and height of poetic language, seen as a dialogue, counter-speech, capable prologue, and worthy epilogue of life, to stimulate as many human senses, feelings, and emotions as possible. Because through poetic language, he can hear smells, see sounds, smell images, and thus multiply stimuli, extend their perceptions, enhance the functioning of our senses, making us all synesthetic receivers at every poetic ceremony. Indeed, each presentation by Julien Blaine is a ceremony and follows the entire ritual of a collective mystagogy, where the great, common gift of speech –both verbal and non-verbal, audible and inaudible, polyphonic and sometimes voiceless, in its embodied and immaterial dimension– is utilized to achieve the purpose of poetry, which is to oxygenate human breath. As it has been said, Blaine's poetry is the body of the word and the word of the body, meaning the value given to the word as an entity with social power and political purpose and the way this value is signified and communicated through its physical support. In short, Blaine's poetry is representative of the genre of performance poetry, known worldwide as performance poetry, a type of poetry that, being aware of its social purpose, breaks the barrier of the page and visual observation and radiates into an event-mark for its recipients, a participatory experience where the message is stirred during the fermentation of artist-audience and its crystallization is achieved mutually.

Born in 1942 in Rognac, on the edge of the Etang de Berre, today one could argue that he is a genuine creation and a unique creator of performance poetry, a type of poetry that emphasizes the "production" (creation) and "presentation" (performance) of a work in front of an audience ("performed speech"). A body rolling down the steps of the Saint-Charles train station in Marseille (Chute-chut!) or a tongue hanging out, trembling but also making others tremble (La langue n'a point d'os) are some of the means by which his political speech is embodied and fulfilled. Emphasizing, Blaine today is one of the greatest performance poets, who has provided unique

experiences of poetic presentations to the audience and has, in turn, written his own significant history in the pages of the book called "political poetry". Because every performance poetry event is political, in the sense that on the one hand, it addresses sociopolitical issues, aiming to highlight underlying pathologies, and on the other hand, it treats the person as a whole, inviting them to participate in its ritual as a collective with common goals, expectations, dreams, sorrows, and disappointments. Therefore, Julien Blaine is a political man because he did not confine himself to the narrow boundaries of a closed poetic speech that does not resonate and does not serve the social whole; because he found a way to make his personal talent a tool for others to reap the Aristotelian "proper pleasure" within the framework of generous offering and co-creation; because as a tireless craftsman, even at an advanced age and despite any difficulties, he continued to take to the stages or declare his "statements", his declarations—the use of the symbol © serves the poet-artist's need to declare that every statement must constitute an action; because he directs and organizes the most bloodless and elegant revolutions, a hopeful bulwark in an environment that favors comfort and nirvana; because as a Socratic gadfly, he does not stop buzzing around social fields, prodding people about their gullibility and easy acceptance of anything proposed as a solution and outlet; because as a Platonic guardian, he daily makes that ascent to the world of Ideas not alone but dragging with him a crowd of captives, who thirst to see their ideas restored.

But Blaine is not a philosopher and knows well his difference from them: philosophers know that there are no answers to certain issues, while he searches for an answer in an unknown, in another language. This great need for answers in another language, beyond the selfless and collaborative nature of Blaine, also highlights his great love for the world of poetry and his belief that it will be enriched if all poetic perspectives resonate in a unique concert dedicated to humanity. As a skillful conductor, he attempted to coordinate all poetic voices through the research he conducted as the founder of the internationally renowned, historical magazine Doc(k)s (1976-2007), which concerned how different cultures (such as that of China) developed their poetic methods, expressing in their own way and culture the eternal, universal, human anxieties. In this way, he formed a colorful poetic mosaic, in which each piece gave something of its own color to the overall composition, something of its own pioneering way to shine in the global poetic light. Consequently, a communicative bridge was established over the crossroads of poetic destinations, a meeting point, a familiarization where the different constitutes a new proposal for understanding and expressing the familiar, where poetic idiosyncrasy is an extension of personal temperament and, thus understood, can evolve each person, and in turn, each person can evolve the other. This opening of poetic art to its various extensions by Blaine presupposes, on the one hand, an understanding of the social role of art in general, and on the other, the consideration of poetry as an art that must

lead in the collective struggles for securing more humane societies, a pivotal moment in the history of this art, which often enjoys introversion and/or parallel monologues.

This was why Blaine sought common elements in the evolution of contemporary poetic methods in various and different cultures through his research activity in the magazine Doc(k)s. A magazine which –along with Action poetique (the publication of which has now been discontinued)– is one of the oldest magazines of contemporary French poetry, with openings to global culture. (It is worth noting that at just 20 years old, he created his first magazine, Les Carnets de l' Octor, and simultaneously started his first performance, the first act of performance poetry, interviewing an elephant, an action known as Repts elephant 306). From 1976, when the publication of the magazine Doc(k) began until today, 120 voluminous issues have been published, composing a "geography of poetry", a mosaic of poetic ways, while since 1990 the magazine has been passed into the hands of Philippe Castellin and Jean Torregrosa, who, with a group of poets and intermedia performers, engage in exploring the new possibilities offered by the development of digital technology in poetic creation.

Blaine's historical journey also includes the "International Poetry Meetings" initially in Cogolin and from 1988 in Tarascon, while in 1989-1990, he made the heart of the old city of Marseille, the Centre international de poesie Marseille (cipM), a place for spreading and promoting poetic creation. He was a pioneer of the Voix de la Mediterranee festival in Lodeve shortly after its creation in 1998 and the inspirer of many exhibitions –unforgettable is the one he presented at the (mac) Musee d' Art Contemporaine de Marseille– organizer of many poetry book presentations and numerous actions, Blaine is a prominent figure, a central figure on the map of performance poetry, a cohesive link for an international network of poets, and an intermediary link for the conduct of events involving poet-ambassadors from every corner of the world. In short, he seems to have made the exhortation/wish he expressed in an interview come true: "Poets of the world, multiply!".

The French Julien Blaine is a poet-performer, researcher, publisher, and organizer of poetry festivals. He declares himself a philosopher, architect, sculptor, movie maker, archivist, draftsman, musician, writer, painter, artist, choreographer, cook, and gardener. He loudly proclaims and daily affirms all these identities through his (declar©tions) declarations-actions. The dozens of faces of the poet are a way to see and show reality in a multifaceted way, to question the way meanings are formed, to broaden the poetic perspective to surpass the level of the "elementary", and to finally set in motion that language which, utilizing its own basic elements (analogous to air, earth, water, fire, roots which are the beginning of beings), that is, all the traces of human civilization around the world, is capable of crowning every revolution with success. With this logic, Julien Blaine crafts a form of poetic archaeology

for the birth and evolution of language over time, a research he has been publishing for years under the title *Les Cahiers de la 5e feuille*⁴.

Undoubtedly, all great movements needed two centuries to come to fruition, consequently, as Blaine himself claims, performance poetry is halfway there. However, with his own contribution, capable successors, the so-called "poet-artists" (*poetartistes*), have been prepared, who herald new great emotions for this uniquely beautiful art. Julien Blaine will bid farewell to performance poetry with his exhibition "Le grand Depotoir" (March 13-May 10, 2020) in Marseille –where he resides– having marked the pages of performance poetry with the tireless activism of a true leader and having opened new paths in an art which, in its conventional form, could not serve the social body, which needed to interact with new technologies and other arts, to be enriched by intense orality and even more intense physicality and, above all, by the audience's participation, so that with each performance a new poem is written. After all this, it is obvious why John Giorno has called him "one of the gods of poetry" and even more self-evident the words of his daughter, Marie Poitevin, at the end of the film she directed titled "Julien Blaine, the Elephant and the Fall": "Although I directed this film and managed my father, I still wonder about his actions and his work; of one thing I have no doubt: that he could not have done otherwise".