

Title:

Busking at Clapham Common Station

Word Count:

1417

Summary:

Viking, unknown musician from the most extreme nationalist music scene, becomes worldwide icon for buskers! Clapham's Angel, how people renamed her, tell us the story of those few minutes in which she revolutioned the meaning of busking in the tube.

Keywords:

Viking Francesca Ortolani Clapham Common

Article Body:

My mother told me "Buy yourself a lot of beautiful dresses in London!". So I decided to patrol the Covent Garden area this time. I wanted to see a pair of shops of which I had visited the websites. My inspiration for shopping was not at its top walking down Long Acre... I tried something but the size or the price did not fit me. I finally reached "Arrogant Cat" on Monmouth Street and I found it quite "could be my style", but not enough to buy something this season. In the meanwhile big drops of water started falling on my little streetmap, which soon became spotted and my stomach stroke noon, so I decided to stop at a Pret a Manger on the way and think about my "what to do's" in front of a salad. There was a place I wanted to see. It is called "Rare and Vintage Guitars" on a small road crossing Charing Cross Road. When I got there I didn't know I would have found the place of sin. All the zone is full of music shops. I visited them all and I finally understood why I was not inspired by buying dresses that day. I had a malignant, obscure, sinful idea I was nourishing inside my head during the past few days. What could bind me to the town of London as an indissoluble blood pact? (Apart from making love with an English boy in town - but this didn't happen) I bought a guitar. A small classic guitar, 3/4 (the size fits me!), the perfect travel instrument for busking in the tube.

Many things were told about this idea. I told everyone I wanted to present my latest album "Gloucester Road" someday in the tube and everyone seemed very proud for me. Some comrades of mine wanted to call the BBC for the special event, labelling the concert as "an Italian in London, singing a political concert, the first extreme right-wing concert performed in the tube!". When I took that little guitar in my hands I suddenly remembered why I was there. I had

decided to leave alone for London to look for myself in serene solitude... hmm, yes, why not, in a place like London. Bringing my books about electronics with me to study late at night or very early in the morning, away from university classes, away from my family and my parents' continuous quarrels, away from political martyrs and people who count if I say the right number of words (right, according to them), away from the phone calls of the person who first cheated me and now persecutes me and turned my life into a nightmare. Looking for the genuine... why not, in a place like London. Don't ask me who Samuel Johnson is... I know so little about him, but I know he said "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life!". Apart from donating my cd to the London Transport Museum and visiting other museums, I wanted to follow my instinct. I needed myself! I missed myself! During the week I had known new incredible people, met some friends and missed others, thought a lot when I went back to my microscopic Indian hostel room, eaten a lot of apples and discovered the raspberry (I did not starve - as someone insinuated. I actually spent less than 6 pounds for food and water during the whole week!).

I didn't want to make another "in family" political concert among people who mostly or "mostly apparently" do think like me. I didn't want to make the big scandal on tv (as someone suggested). I wanted to busk in the tube in front of the most various people, avoiding photocameras and camcorders, avoiding the comrades and the celtic crosses. Only me, my new guitar and the unexpected. So I switched my telephone off, went back to my room to try some new song before the great event, I wrote the lyrics I didn't remember in big letters on my light-blue notebook and then I went out.

There were only a pair of stations where I could play that evening: Clapham Common or Vauxhall...not so far away from the Power Station. I chose the former... less "working zone" and more "living place" I think. Maybe everything started because different friends of mine showed me their houses there around Battersea, Clapham, Vauxhall on that great invention called Google Earth. Looking carefully recently I saw that strange shape and I asked myself about it. The Power Station ravished me completely.

On the underground train I was worried and my heart beated so fast and so loud. I did not remember the lyrics, but this always happens, because I have filled my head with mathematical formulas for my exams. I had never played with a 3/4 guitar, it's so small and it is harder to play than a full size instrument. I was sure I would have done some disaster. I got off the train at Clapham Common, stepped into one of the exit corridors and looking around I chose to stop in the middle of the panels "northbound - southbound".

I felt like an actress before a show, on the stage, and the empty theatre was about to be opened to audience soon. The long escalator was my stalls like an ancient greek or roman theatre. Wow, it was so big! I knew I had to sing loud to be heard. I had no amplification. I was there "natural". Ok, it was my time. My

hair danced in the wind. I started singing watching above. I was as I am and the other people were true as well. There were no comrades, no flags around me. I had no protection and no appearance "envelope". I sang and I saw the faces of the people. It's really true... we label ourselves "white power", "hate rock" or something similar. We close ourselves in a box and we offer a closed box. I understood that sometimes (very often) people did not understand my words. The movement has always blamed the external environment as "unable to listen", but maybe is it possible that I'm not able to communicate? My task is not recruiting people, but inspiring and leaving a trace of my thoughts and beliefs, even if they are not shared. I want to talk to hearts and hopefully convince the others with my ideas and my ideals. I think and I hope that my ideas can be respected even if not shared. Usually my ideas are trashed because I have always sung in a bell of glass. For this reason I felt such a warm shiver when a busker going back home stopped in front of me to listen to my song. He smiled at me and he gave me 1 pound. I felt a heart close to mine. A few minutes later the man of the security chased me away, threatening he would have called the police. I had no authorization, but I'm going to ask one next time.

That special moment lasted so little but the memory and the feelings I store inside my heart are flames that will burn for ever. I will keep Clapham Common Station, the sound of the trains and the echo of my voice inside of me for ever... that smile and the other smiles of the people, even the insisting invitations of a group of boys who wanted to have a hot night with me (they should make a revision about how to court) and the disappointed faces! I only hope I left something of me there at that station and I hope that when you get there you will remember me.

After that experience I understood many other things. I understood that there are people who wanted to make me believe I had no hope for ambitions and they had always told me I was a fragile girl.

After the concert I met my friends in Clapham and we had some ales and I drank with satisfaction. The people who know me certainly know I had not drunk with happiness for a too long time. I felt like I could die that night. I could die with a smile on my face. It was the first time I maybe realized a dream! I played in the tube, I played my songs! I felt like I was 11, when I started writing songs and I had dreams without limitations and pseudomoral - dictated by others including my-outer-self - borderlines.