

**TAIDE-  
YLIOPISTO**

**✕ SIBELIUS-AKATEMIA**

# **FEMALE NUDE**

**Malla Vivolin's third doctoral concert**

**1.6.2021 at 19.00, R-building Concert Hall**

Malla Vivolin — flute, piccolo and alto flute

Miina-Liisa Värelä — soprano

Pinja Nuñez — cello

Emil Holmström — piano

Jon-Patrik Kuhlefelt — sound engineer

Sirje Ruohtula — lighting design

## PROGRAMME:

Albert Roussel (1869 – 1937): *Deux poèmes de Ronsard op. 26* for flute and voice

- *Rossignol, mon mignon...*

- *Ciel, air et vents...*

Kaija Saariaho (1952 –): *Laconisme d'aile* for flute solo

Andrew Ford (1957 –): *Female Nude* for alto flute solo

Maurice Ravel (1875 – 1937): *Chansons madécasses* for voice, flute, cello and piano

Toru Takemitsu (1930 – 1996): *Voice* for flute solo

George Crumb (1929 –): *Vox Balaenae* for three masked players (for electric flute, electric cello and electric piano)

*Vocalise ( ... for the beginning of time)*

*Variations on Sea-Time*

*Sea Theme*

*Archeozoic (Var. I)*

*Proterozoic (Var. II)*

*Paleozoic (Var. III)*

*Mesozoic (Var. IV)*

*Cenozoic (Var. V)*

*Sea Nocturne ( ... for the end of time)*

## Joan Miró

The wind's tongue.  
The always clear cobalt sky  
bit at  
your painting.  
In a prehistoric poster  
words doze like pebbles.

A gallop of feathers  
kidnaps  
the conversation between coarse ropes and wild beasts.  
You paint within a blinking birthmark  
the marriage of heaven and hell  
faster  
than tying a ribbon in a mirror.

Children's playground.  
From some rolling balls  
one transparent ball flies off.  
I call it Miró.

*Shuzo Takiguchi*

*(Translation: Mary Jo Bang & Yuki Tanaka)*

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I hope reading Joan Miró's name first on this programme won't distract you too much — Miró has absolutely nothing to do with this concert. Yet, how Shuzo Takiguchi writes of him beautifully describes *l'air* this programme has to me, the performer and its curator. And Shuzo Takiguchi has a lot to do with the concert: To him we owe the verses featured in Toru Takemitsu's *Voice*, one of the first and probably the most important solo piece in bringing theatricals to flute recitals. All in all, the interdisciplinary arts in terms of mental chains of inspiration and material sourcing turns out to be one of the most sustainable themes throughout the programme, although the emphasis is always on the use of one's voice. The painter Miró at some point greatly inspired the poet Takiguchi, whose other works were inspiration to the composer Takemitsu. Roussel and Ravel also drew from writers, as did Saariaho. Saariaho's quoted writer Saint-John Perse was affected by the works of the renowned painter Georges Braque. Another famous cubist, Piers Mondrian, was the source of ideas for the composition of Andrew Ford.

To put it bluntly, the undisputable significance of these works of art lies on the fact that they have inspired others to create additional significant works of various genres. I cannot think of a more simple and explicable criterion for the invaluableness of art.

What does it mean to have a voice? A voice is an identity, our most expressive face, revealing secrets even when we wish to hide them, and a means to both stand independently and interact with others. A voice is the first sound of solace, since from the minute we're born we recognise our mothers from their voices. A voice is our birthright and privilege. Everyone deserves a voice.

No two instrumentalists sound exactly the same; no two performers are alike. Our performer identities are silently formed by the opinions of others as well as by our perception of ourselves, by the numerous ways we choose to use our voices. Our identity is portrayed in the music that we program, the posters we choose to advertise with, how we perform the music on stage and how we bow our heads to receive the applause after.

A flute player's voice as a research question leads self-evidently to the area of extended playing techniques. While it is of course a matter of technical realisation, I'm convinced that it is by equal amount an interpretational topic as well. In this programme the voice is used in several different ways, some more metaphorical than others, some more technically processed than others. If I compare the three solo works in this concert's programme and their use of (vocal) extended techniques, from a performer's point of view it feels as if playing Saariaho is like braiding hair, weaving together strands of speech, extended and traditionally produced sounds. Ford, on the other hand, attaches the conventional and extended techniques together like building blocks. With Takemitsu both worlds, the concrete traditional and the ethereal effect world, are ever present but somehow not really touching.

In this programme, music gives a voice to the generations before us and to the nature that will thrive long after it's done with us. This music brings to our ears tunes from outside our own society and travels the distances we at this moment cannot. If one considers the voice as a manifestation of identity, this concert programme will evoke thoughts – on both personal and societal level – on how we rank ourselves amongst others and how easy it has been to put words in the mouths of others instead of giving everyone the opportunity to speak for themselves.

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To some music historians **Albert Roussel** (1869 – 1937) is a more remarkable composer of the French 20<sup>th</sup>-century style than Maurice Ravel (1875 – 1937) ever was — the leading innovator and reformer of the era being, without question, Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918). Roussel started writing music significantly later than his contemporaries. He spent his early years roaming the seas as a naval officer but resigned after his poor health and the urge to write music forced him on land permanently. He attended the *Schola Cantorum* which was considered to be the alternative for the Paris Conservatory and studied under Vincent D'Indy. D'Indy and his strict stylistic methods are founded in Roussel's writing. Roussel was quite the master of *contrapunctus*, although it became clear early on that his aim was on a style more individual and imaginative than that of his mentors.

To me personally, French music of the early 20th century always has an air of perfume surrounding it, especially in the flute writing: long, free-flowing passages with dashes of colour and personal warmth via educated use of vibrato, twined in exotic scales and fantastic-sounding arpeggios. The music and particularly the harmonics of Roussel, thus, is like a walk to the sea shore: mostly freedom and freshness, but with the occasional whiff of pungent weeds, algae and fishy creatures. He was not afraid to use dissonances, bitonalities and unprecedented harmonic changes which sometimes might appear even a bit harsh.

In his later years Roussel wanted to create music for its own sake without trying to paint anything too concrete on the imaginary canvas of the listeners' minds. During his earlier years, and for example around the time he was composing the *Deux poèmes de Ronsard* (1924), he was a remarkably gifted landscape painter - figuratively speaking. The places he'd visited and things he'd experienced when travelling in India and Indo-China are easily on display also in his most popular flute composition, the suite *Joueurs de flûte* (1924).

The two pieces for flute and soprano set on the poems by Pierre Ronsard were created on the proposal of Henri Prunières for the May 1925 issue of *La Revue musicale*, in a special publication to celebrate the 400th anniversary of de Ronsard's, France's greatest renaissance poet's birth. Other composers featured in the same review include well-known names such as Ravel, Honegger, Caplet and Dukas. Of the commissioned composers Roussel was the only one to pair the human voice with a melodic instrument. This creates a particularly interesting and inspiring setting for the first song, *Rossignol, mon mignon*, where the soprano voice and flute voice compete for the attention of the listener, portraying the storyteller's relation to the blackbird to whose ears he is pouring his deepest insecurities. The flute's role in *Ciel, air et vents* is much more accompanying in the traditional sense — or, as customary for Roussel's writing, painting a lively landscape backdrop for the singer's verses.

Saariaho writes about *Laconisme de l'aile*: *Flute has always been to me an important instrument. Laconisme de l'aile, my second piece for a solo flute was started in Freiburg and finished in Paris in 1982. As starting points I had ideas about blending the rhythms of speech and timbres of breathing into more traditional flute expression.*

*The text fragments are borrowed from Saint-John Perse's Les Oiseaux ('Birds'), and the title refers to birds, meaning something like 'the terseness of a wing'.*

*I had in my mind, despite of bird song, above all the different ways birds fly, winning the gravity, crossing the sky. The solo flute draws these lines into acoustic space.*

One tiptoes on the borderlines of the numerous facets of flute performance while playing **Kaija Saariaho's** (1952 –) *Laconisme de l'aile* for flute solo. With the verses written by French poet and diplomat Saint-John Perse in Washington 1962 opening the piece, the flutist is immediately forced out of the accustomed comfort zone of traditional concert performance, and has to adjust their performer's identity to a new frequency more resemblant of the work of an actor than a musician. The tight-rope dance continues as the performer is to commence creating sounds on their instrument. As typical of Saariaho's music, the mix and intersection of a broad spectrum of different sounds and techniques – timbre, or the texture of sounds – is the most important focus.

Having to continuously balance between different extended techniques and portraying the piece simultaneously through both speech and instrumentalism might too easily create a stressed and anxious sonic environment, but Saariaho masters the character of Perse's free-soaring birds in an organic and almost minimalistic way. From the performer's point of view, there's nothing extra in the score but it does include everything you need to know for perfecting your own interpretation.

As for my own preparation with this music, I have found the *laconism* of the whole piece and its material to be essential. There's much energy, but of blooming nature instead of aggressive, and it seems to be always happening somewhere further away and not within the flutist's actions. As when reading any poem, I've pursued a personal translation of the text, as resonant to my own surroundings and situation as possible. I often feel a back tone of *tendre* in Saariaho's music. I don't want to label it as feminine, but in this piece I find a certain maternal note as the soothing, lullabyesque overtone I wish to convey to the audience. The birds of Saint-John Perse are as immortal, as omnipotent as our own offspring who we also must, in a sense, let go regardless of the fears we might have.

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This concert, my 3rd doctoral recital, borrows its title rightfully from **Andrew Ford's** (1957–) alto flute solo *Female Nude* — when we use our voice, we're somehow more exposed than ever. In this piece are best presented the research questions specific for this concert — the use of one's own voice in performance and as an extended technique of flute playing — and it is also a beautiful example of the kind of repertoire I wish to make more known to the DocMus public: a groovy, contemporary recital piece from a little less known source, written for the — in my opinion — most soulful member of the flute family, the alto in G.

Ford is a British emigrant living in Australia, and despite the fact that *Female Nude* (1993) in his own words was inspired by the mathematical and architectural ratios and relations in the works of the Dutch painter Mondrian (think squares of different colours, printed and on display on numerous hotel rooms), the lopsided flow of the rhythm in *Female Nude* also brings to my mind the aboriginal people's music. This, of course, is purely based on a vague image, a bit like Ravel's writing sounds authentically 'Madagascan' to some researchers. This version for alto flute alone is a transcription by the composer from the suite *Mondrian* for flute and percussion.

Although the piece is seemingly rational in its technical demands, how Ford writes the use of human voice separated from the flute sound is actually quite the task. *Female Nude* demands skilled control of one's vocal chords as the different vowels should to be produced pitch perfect. The use of quarter tones in the alto flute line — Ford has chosen to use a two-stave score, not very familiar to read for flutists - reveals any missteps from the intended tuning.

The use of one's voice in a manner close to *sprach-gesang*, somewhere between the singing projection of the voice and a pitch-controlled speaking voice, builds an exquisitely intimate atmosphere. Ford writes both open vowels and closed mouth consonants mixed with pure flute sound and extended techniques. The melody becomes unambiguously very expressive with the merging of flute and human sounds, yet — or because of that — Ford doesn't write any adjectives or other performance notes on the score. Singing and playing simultaneously on the alto in strong dynamics works like a distortion amplifier, accelerating the expression for the build-ups.

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Programming **Maurice Ravel** (1875–1937) in a concert with a solo recital profile might not be the most obvious of choices. However, I feel there are numerous reasons why any flutist should care about *Chansons Madécasses* (1926), one of the few chamber works Ravel has written for us. He was and still is one of the greatest orchestrators, painting with a million colours, and any chamber work he has left us to work with is thus worth putting on our music stands.

Especially interesting in tonight's set list is the opportunity to compare the works of Roussel and Ravel. The most cynical of music historians have been of the opinion that Ravel was not much more than a mere copy-cat, only imitating what others had been innovating at the time; the friendlier and fortunately more popular opinion being that his genius, celebrated by the masses, was painfully tormented by unsatisfiable perfectionism. In their respective works, composed only two years apart, both Ravel and Roussel flirt with bitonality and an extra-musical soundscape. Roussel drew inspiration from the musical style of Ronsard's age and the fauna and flora of featured in the poems, Ravel of the "Madagascan texts" imagined nationality. It is plausible that both works were premiered by the same flutist, Louis Fleury, although no validated records have survived to prove this.

Maybe it's Ravel's enigmatic personality and legacy that has left a handful of historians annoyed. He left behind virtually no unfinished scores, no correspondence, and what's even worse – no evidence of love affairs, mistresses or (illegitimate) children. Neither did he contribute on the education of the future generations on a larger scale, as he only taught a few odd students. Although there are rumours about an alleged romantic liaison with fellow composer Manuel de Falla, it is most likely that during his adult life Ravel only truly cared about the appearance of his wardrobe, home decor and music.

But why should either listeners or musicians care about something as detached as the composer's supposed sexual orientation or other personal traits? My argument is that because the texts chosen for the music bring those aspects to our observation. As some of the most important public discussions of our time are finally opening our eyes to the fact that most of the world wide historiography has been done by a rather homogenous group of privileged individuals, texts like the viscount de Parny's poems and the musical solutions Ravel is using in setting key passages to music may be more than revealing. If one wishes so, a contemporary reading of the poems quickly translates them as sexist, misogynist and racist because of their orientalisation. The second poem, *Beware the White Men*, however, gives a welcomed voice to the natives. Parny never travelled to Madagascar, but his recorded journeys in India might have given him some ideas. In Ravel's score it is stated rather misleadingly that the texts have been translated into French by Parny when in fact Parny is their creator.

The verses in the first and third poems are at some points downright erotic, but Ravel seems to wish to evade the climatic eruption of carnality as well as overflowing emotions with his music. Similar manoeuvres he'd done before in his *Pelléas and Mélisande* and the song cycle *Shéhérazade*. If you think about it, it is rather puzzling to compliment for example the solo voice's part "Your kisses penetrate my heart; your caresses light my senses afire: enough! or I shall die!" with laconic, somewhat asthmatic sounding middle-range piccolo flute melody, isn't it? It is almost as if Ravel was refusing to back Parny's inappropriate behaviour.



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**Toru Takemitsu's** (1930–1996) *Voice* for solo flute was composed in one single day, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1971, and remains an avant-garde classic to the date. Among the works performed in this concert, this is where the use of the human voice is at its most theatrical. The text by Shuzo Takiguchi that Takemitsu quotes offers the performer so much and yet so little to work with. "*Who goes there? Speak, transparence, whoever you are!*" The same line of the poem is used for material twice, first in French, then in English. Perhaps Takemitsu had in mind both the flutist of the premiere, Aurèle Nicolet, and the international audience and venue at the Osaka World Exposition.

*Voice* has been widely performed and recorded, and looking at the vast majority of these performances now, 50 years after the premiere, one can say that there's a possibility to a perfect example of cultural appropriation within the interpretation of Takemitsu's most important solo flute piece: A common interpretation of the piece includes a misunderstanding, or in fact a fictitious execution of the composers instruction.

One is left with several question marks after reading the score, on the execution of extended techniques the way Takemitsu instructs them. The fingerings, when needed for multiphonics or special timbres, are from the book *New Sounds for Woodwinds* by Bruno Bartolozzi. Albeit Bartolozzi was doing pioneer work with this manual, it is no longer widely in use, nor is it flute specific. The transcription of *Voice* must have been done under some haste, because there are a few misprints in addition to designated fingerings that won't quite speak and can be bettered with alternative manoeuvres from other, more recent extended flute technique manuals.

Most importantly, the way Takemitsu guides us to interpret notes with white diamonds above them has left the large flute community dubient. It seems most players have been ready to jump into conclusions and have decided to execute the instruction "*Strong accent without tonguing as on Japanese Noh flute (i.e. including forceful breathing mixed in with the sound)*" as an invitation to imitate the one and only Japanese instrument most of us Westerns recognise, the *shakuhachi* flute.

In my opinion, this is not correct. The *noh* shouldn't be mistaken for a *shakuhachi*. Although Takemitsu's words are not unequivocal, the *noh* flute tradition and sound is by far more suited to the aesthetic and extramusical imagery and inspiration of *Voice*. It is also worth noting that Takemitsu's writing leans heavily on the use of *noh*-theatre effects and sounds, and lacks instructions elemental for the supposed *shakuhachi* interpretation such as guidance on the use of vibrato.

Ghost stories are a vivid part of Japanese folklore, and the spirit world is still considered to be present in everyday life on a more profound level than here in Europe. In the traditional *Noh* theatre, the *noh* flute is used either to portray spirits or to mark dramatic happenings in the storyline. What Takemitsu writes as extra for the *noh*-flute part should be understood as elements borrowed from other instruments and characters of the theatre set.

As well as the theatrical origins, I've tried to incorporate the concept of *ma* Takemitsu was so fond of in my version of *Voice*. The *ma* has its origins in ancient Japanese religious practices. It is a word that translates to both space and time, a silence of the most utter importance, the silence that contains all the sounds. It is emptiness filled with the promise of action. In Perse's words: "*L'espace traversée d'une seule pensée*", if you will.

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A performance in the time of a global pandemic was not what I had in mind while programming a trio for three masked players. This is, however, the perfect timing for **George Crumb's** (1929–) *Vox Balaenae*. The piece celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, and the triumph of nature over man that Crumb wanted to portray with his music feels closer than perhaps ever before, thanks to a minuscule virus.

Crumb is one of the most celebrated American composers of our time, and *Vox Balaenae* — the song of the whale — was an instant hit with the audience after its premiere in Washington in 1972. Crumb got the original idea for the piece after hearing recordings of humpback whale singing, caught on tape by biologist Roger Payne and released on a disc in 1970. He instructs amplification on the acoustic instruments flute, cello and piano as a means of capturing even the smallest changes in timbre and for generating a unified, rather haunting soundscape.

Technically speaking, there are a multitude of extended playing methods in use through the piece in all three instruments. Crumb brilliantly uses these modern ways of playing to evoke the ancient in the piece — something considered typical of his style. He paints the primeval sea for our senses with not only his orchestration but also with guidelines for lighting design. A subtle element of theatre is present, with the black visor masks "dehumanizing nature" by hiding away the most expressive part of the performers' faces.

*Vox Balaenae* is a journey through time, from the very beginning of our earth and the immortal sea until we are no more. The sea holds all potential to both life and destruction and to all noise and silence, very much resembling the *ma* concept in Takemitsu's music and Japanese philosophy. An element of mythical nature is said to be present in all Crumb's works especially from this era, and with this concept

also comes the understanding of time as a non-linear, cylindrical and multidimensional frame

*“Although technical discussions are always interesting to composers, I suspect that the truly magical and spiritual powers of music arise from deeper levels of our psyche. I am certain that every composer, from his formative years as a child, has acquired a “natural acoustic” which remains in his ear for life. The fact that I was born and grew up in an Appalachian river valley meant that my ear was attuned to a peculiar echoing acoustic; I felt that this acoustic was ‘structured into’ my hearing, so to speak, and thus became the basic acoustic of my music. I should imagine that the ocean shore or endless plains would produce an altogether different ‘inherited’ acoustic. In a large sense, the rhythms of nature – large and small, the sounds of wind and water, the sounds of birds and insects – must inevitably find their analogues in music. After all, the singing of the humpback whale is already a highly developed artistic product: one hears phrase-structure, climax and anticlimax, and even a sense of large-scale musical form!” (George Crumb in Music: Does it have a Future?)*

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## MUSICIANS

Cellist **Pinja Nuñez** regularly performs in various chamber music ensembles and has given concerts in Europe, the USA, Russia and Japan. Nuñez’s instrumental repertoire is extensive, ranging from traditional repertoire from the classical and romantic periods to premieres and personal arrangements. She is a member of the chamber ensemble Uusinta.

Since 2016, Nuñez has been pursuing her doctoral degree in musical performance at the DocMus Doctoral School of the Sibelius Academy. In her doctoral dissertation she researches the relationship and interaction between art and the surrounding society, as well as the politics of performativity particularly from the perspective of a performing artist.

Soprano **Miina-Liisa Väreälä** studied at the Sibelius Academy where she received her diploma in 2012 with excellent marks. She was the young debutant of the Helsinki Festival 2011, during which she performed as the soloist of Mahler’s 2nd Symphony with Ingo Metzmacher and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. As an active concert and lied singer Väreälä has appeared at Korsholm and Kangasniemi music festivals, as a soloist with Kuopio Symphony Orchestra and Opernwerkstadt. In 2012 she appeared in Mahler’s 4th Symphony with Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra and Hannu Lintu, at Savonlinna Opera Festival gala concerts with Kuopio Symphony Orchestra and at a concert with Turku Philharmonic Orchestra.

She won the Timo Mustakallio Singing Contest in July 2011. In the summer of 2009 she was awarded with the 1st price at Kangasniemi Singing Competition. In 2010 she was a finalist and special prize winner of the Lappeenranta Singing Competition. In 2010 she was awarded at the International Belvedere Singing Competition in Vienna with Verena Keller scholarship.

Pianist **Emil Holmström** is an aesthete. Not in the sense of having an immutable style that has always remained intact, but rather, one that has consistently been the result of conscious choices, whether regarding his outfit, a detail of interior decoration at home, the planning of a concert program, or very concrete aesthetic considerations in a particular piano piece.

If Emil Holmström has allowed himself to be influenced, in the literary realm, by Finnish-Swedish modernists such as Henry Parland or Elmer Diktonius, the 1981 Nobel laureate Elias Canetti, or by masters such as Marcel Proust, his own repertoire choices reflect this diversity, as well: he is equally happy to play Beethoven as Brahms, or Berio as Boulez, and, where appropriate, Bach or Britten, or why not Britney (if the setting is right), or Beyoncé (as sampled by Bjarnason).

It's quite a phenomenon that Emil Holmström can be seen in so many different settings and at so many festivals: that he can play at a renovated old shack by the beach during the day, and appear the same evening at the Helsinki Music Centre on stage with one of the city's symphony orchestras.

**Malla Vivolin** is a flautist and a pedagogue based in Tampere. She's especially fond of performing on different doubling instruments. As a member of Uusinta Ensemble she has collected quite a list of them to date, ranging from the bass flute to various electric cables. During the concert season 20/21 Vivolin has enjoyed some time off her position as the co-principal flute of Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra to concentrate on her doctoral studies at her alma mater, the University of Arts' Sibelius Academy. She plays a custom Emanuel flute, built 2008 in Boston, with a J.R. Lafin head. A contemporary music enthusiast, she is keen on unfamiliar places and familiar people and currently finds peace with cultivating tomatoes.

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## LYRICS

### *Deux poems de Ronsard*

#### 1. Rossignol mon mignon, qui dans cette...

Rossignol mon mignon, qui dans cette saulaie  
Vas seul de branche en branche à ton gré voletant,  
Degoisant à l'envie de moi qui vais chantant  
Celle qui faut toujours que dans la bouche j'aie.

Nous soupignons tous deux; ta douce voix s'essaie  
De flechir celle-là, qui te va tourmentant,  
Et moi, je suis aussi cette-là regrettant  
Qui m'a fait dans le coeur une si aigre plaie.

Toutefois, Rossignol, nous différons d'un point  
C'est que tu es aimé, et je ne le suis point,  
Bien que tous deux ayons les Musiques pareilles:

Car tu fléchis t'amie au doux bruit de tes sons,  
Mais la mienne qui prend à dépit mes chansons  
Pour ne les écouter se bouche les oreilles.

*Nightingale, my pretty who in this willow row  
Flits alone from branch to branch at will,  
Striving to outdo me as I go singing of  
Her who must always be on my lips,*

*We sigh together: Your sweet voice trying  
To express the friendship of one who loves you so much,  
And I, sad, I go longing for that beauty  
That makes in my heart such a bitter wound.*

*However, Nightingale, we differ on one point:  
It's that you are loved and I am not at all,  
Even though we two may have like music.*

*For your sway your sweetheart with the sweetness of your sounds,  
But mine, who is annoyed by my songs,  
So not to hear them plugs up her ears.*

## 2. Ciel, air et vents...

Ciel, air et vents, plains et monts découverts,  
Tertres vineux et forêts verdoyantes,  
Rivages tors et sources ondoyantes,  
Taillis rasés et vous, bocages verts,  
Antres moussus à demi-front ouverts,  
Prés, boutons, fleurs et herbes rousoyantes,  
Coteaux vineux et plages blondoyantes,  
Et vous rochers, écoliers de mes vers!  
Puisqu'au partir, rongé de soin et d'ire,  
A ce bel œil adieu je n'ai su dire,  
Qui près et loin me détient en émoi,  
Je vous suppli', ciel, air, vents, monts et plaines,  
Taillis, forêts, rivages et fontaines  
Antres, prés, fleurs, dites-le-lui pour moi.

*Heaven, air, and wind, plains and bare mountains,  
Branched knolls and verdant forests,  
Twisted shores, and undulating springs,  
Cut thickets, and you green groves;  
Moss-lined caverns with half-opened mouths,  
Fields, buds, flowers, and rustic herbes,  
Wine-rich hills, and golden beaches,  
Marshland, Loir, and you my sad verses:  
Since at the parting, gnawed by care and ire,  
To those beautiful eyes, the Good-bye I could not bear to say,  
Who far and near fills me with emotion:  
I beg you, Heaven, air, wind, mountains, and plains,  
Thickets, forests, shores and fountains.*

Pierre de Ronsard (1524– 585)

*translation by Wendell Dobbs & Dr. Terence Mcqueeny for The Flutist Quarterly,  
Winter 1996/97*

## Chansons Madécasses

### I. Nahandove

Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove! L'oiseau nocturne a commencé ses cris, la pleine lune brille sur ma tête, et la rosée naissante humecte mes cheveux. Voici l'heure; qui peut t'arrêter, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Le lit de feuilles est préparée; je l'ai parsemé de fleurs et d'herbes odoriférent; il est digne de tes charmes, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Elle vient. J'ai reconnu la respiration précipitée que donne une marche rapide; j'entends le froissement de la pagne qui l'enveloppe; c'est elle, c'est Nahandove, la belle Nahandove!

Ô reprends haleine, ma jeune amie; repose-toi sur mes genoux. Que ton regard est enchanteur, Que le mouvement de ton sein est vif et délicieux sous la main qui le presse! Tu souris, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Tes baisers pénètrent jusqu'à l'âme; tes caresses brûlent tous mes sens: arrête, ou je vais mourir. Meurt-on de volupté, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove?

Le plaisir passe comme un éclair; ta douce haleine s'affaiblit, tes yeux humides se referment, ta tête se penche mollement, et tes transports s'éteignent dans la langueur. Jamais tu ne fus si belle, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Tu pars, et je vais languir dans les regrets et les désirs. Je languirai jusqu'au soir. Tu reviendras ce soir, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

*Nahandove O beautiful Nahandove! the night bird has begun its song, the full moon bathes my head and the earliest dew moistens my hair. This is the hour; who can stop you, Nahandove, O beautiful Nahandove!*

*The leafy bed is ready; I have strewn it with flowers and scented herbs; it is worthy of your charms, Nahandove, O beautiful Nahandove!*

*She comes. I recognized the rapid breathing of one who hurries; I hear the rustling of the cloth wrapped around her loins; it is she! it is Nahandove, the beautiful Nahandove! Oh, catch your breath, my young love, rest on my lap. How bewitching your gaze, how live and deliciously your breast stirs under the hand that presses it! You smile, Nahandove, O beautiful Nahandove!*

*Your kisses penetrate my heart; your caresses light my senses afire: enough! or I shall die! Can one die of voluptuous pleasure, Nahandove, O beautiful Nahandove?*

*Pleasure passes like a lightning bolt. Now your sweet panting grows gentler, your brimming eyes close, your head droops in weariness, and our rapture gives way to languor; yet never have you been so beautiful, Nahandove, O beautiful Nahandove! You depart, and I shall languish alone in longing and desire, until nightfall. You will return at nightfall, Nahandove, O beautiful Nahandove!*

## II. Méfiez-vous des blancs

A-oua! A-oua! Méfiez-vous des blancs, habitants du rivage. Du temps de nos pères, des blancs descendirent dans cette île. On leur dit: Voilà des terres, que vos femmes les cultivent; soyez justes, soyez bons, et devenez nos frères.

Les blancs promirent, et cependant ils faisaient des retranchemens. Un fort menaçant s'éleva; le tonnerre fut renfermé dans des bouches d'airain; leurs prêtres voulurent nous donner un Dieu que nous ne connaissons pas; ils parlèrent enfin d'obéissance et d'esclavage. Plutôt la mort! Le carnage fut long et terrible; mais, malgré la foudre qu'ils vomissaient et qui écrasait des armées entières, ils furent tous exterminés. Aoua! Aoua! Méfiez-vous des blancs, habitants du rivage.

Nous avons vu de nouveaux tyrans, plus forts et plus nombreux, planter leur pavillon sur le rivage. Le ciel a combattu pour nous. Il a fait tomber sur eux les pluies, les tempêtes et les vents empoisonnés. Ils ne sont plus, et nous vivons, et nous vivons libre. Aoua! Aoua! Méfiez-vous des blancs, habitants du rivage.

## II. Beware The White Man

*Aoua! Aoua! beware the white man, riverbank dwellers! In our fathers time, white men set foot on this island. They were told here is land, let your women work it, be just, be good, make yourselves our brothers.*

*The white men promised and even so were making trenches. A menacing fort arose, with thunder concealed in bronze mouths. Their priests tried to give us a god we do not know; they ended by speaking of submission and slavery. We'd sooner die! The bloodbath was long and terrible, yet for all the lightning bolts they spewed out, slaying army after army, they themselves were exterminated. Aoua! Aoua! Beware the white man!*

*We then saw new tyrants, even stronger and more numerous, setting up tents on our shores. The heavens took up our battle. It unleashed on them rains, tempests and poisonous winds. They are gone and we, we live free. Aoua! Aoua! beware the white man, riverbank dwellers!*

## III. Il est doux de se coucher

Il est doux de se coucher durant la chaleur sous un arbre touffu, et d'attendre que le vent du soir amène la fraîcheur.

Femmes, approchez. Tandis que je me repose ici sous un arbre touffu, occupez mon oreille par vos accents prolongés. Répétez la chanson de la jeune fille, lorsque



ses doigts tressent la natte, or lorsqu'assise auprès du riz, elle chasse les oiseaux avides.

Le chant plaît à mon âme. La danse est pour moi presque aussi douce qu'un baiser. Que vos pas soient lents; qu'ils imitent les attitudes du plaisir et l'abandon de la volupté.

Le vent du soir se lève; la lune commence à briller au travers des arbres de la montagne. Allez, et préparez le repas.

### *III. It is good*

*It is good to lie down in the heat of the day under a leafy tree, and to wait thus till the evening wind brings a cooling breath.*

*Women, come to me. While I take my rest under this leafy tree, delight my ear with your soothing voices. Sing again the song of the young girl while she braids her hair or, seated by the rice patch, chases off the greedy birds.*

*This singing is pleasing to my soul. For me their dancing is almost as sweet as a kiss. Move slowly; let your steps mime the poses of pleasure and the surrender to voluptuous bliss.*

*The evening wind arises, the moon begins to glimmer through the trees on the mountain side. Go now, prepare the meal.*

Evariste-Désiré de Forges, Vicomte de Parny (1753–1814)  
*Translation by Robert Erich Wolf/John Ranck*

### Laconisme de l'aile

Ignorants de leur ombre, et ne sachant de mort que ce qui s'en consume d'immortel au bruit lointain des grandes eaux, ils passent, nous laissant, et nous ne sommes plus les mêmes. Ils sont l'espace traversé d'une seule pensée.

*Ignoring their own shadows, knowing of death only the immortality implicit in the noise of distant waters, they vanish, they leave us, their lonely thoughts traversing space, and we are changed forever.*

(fragment from Saint-John Perse: Oiseaux VIII (translation: Derek Mahon))

### Voice

Qui va là? Qui que tu sois, parle, transparence! *Who goes there? Speak, transparence, whoever you are!*

Shuzo Takiguchi