

# VIVIER

## CHAMBER MUSIC & MUSIC FOR PIANO SOLO

Alessandro Soccorsi *piano*  
Thies Roorda *flute*  
Joseph Puglia *violin*  
Sietse-Jan Weijenberg *cello*  
Niels Meliefste *percussion*  
Pepe Garcia *percussion*

Claude Vivier 1948-1983

Chamber Music & Music for Piano Solo

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| 1. <b>Shiraz</b> for piano solo (1977) 14'44<br>Salabert, Paris   | 4. <b>Pianoforte</b> for piano solo (1975) 8'03<br>1985, Les Éditions YPPAN,<br>Saint-Nicolas, Canada                         |
| 2. <b>Pulau Dewata</b><br>for variable ensemble (1977) 13'03<br>Arr. for piano and percussion<br>by A. Soccorsi   | 5. <b>Paramirabo</b> for flute, violin,<br>cello and piano (1978) 14'23<br>1988, Les Éditions YPPAN,<br>Saint-Nicolas, Canada |
| 3. <b>Pièce</b> for cello and piano (1975) 6'52<br>1985, Les Éditions Dobermann –<br>YPPAN, Saint-Nicolas, Canada |   |

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Immediately after his birth, Claude Vivier (Montreal, 14 April 1948 – Paris, 7 March 1983) was taken to an orphanage. His mother abandoned the young boy simply because at the time, in Roman Catholic Quebec, society would not accept illegitimate children. When Armand and Jeanne Vivier visited the orphanage in December 1950, they were initially in search of a girl. They decided to adopt the little Claude instead. These events would mark his further life and art.

From his 13th birthday onwards, he attended a few schools with the aim of becoming a Catholic *frère*. Some five years later, the seminary advised him to withdraw. “Community life with rules: he wasn’t cut out for that.” His search for “life,” as he himself wrote, “in the most creative and universal sense of the term,” as well as his emerging homosexuality, may have been decisive reasons. His true vocation turned out to be music. He enrolled at the Conservatoire de musique in Montreal in 1967. Here, composer Gilles Tremblay, student of Olivier Messiaen, became his most important teacher.

After having attended the *Ferienkurse* in Darmstadt in the summer of 1970 with lectures by Stockhausen, Ligeti and Pousseur and two weeks full of new music, he decided to continue his studies in Europe: in 1971 initially with Gottfried Michael Koenig at the Institute for Sonology in Utrecht, The Netherlands, and a year later with Karlheinz Stockhausen in Cologne, Germany. In addition to the two-year German indoctrination, the Paris-based composer Paul Méfano also played an important role as dedicated mentor and supporter.

After his return to Montreal in 1974, he gradually gained more recognition as a composer. The Tremplin International Competition, for instance, commissioned him to write a number of pieces for the third selection round of the competition in 1975. *Pianoforte* and *Pièce pour violoncelle et pianoforte* were amongst these.

As an extremely devout student of Tremblay and Stockhausen, he had not failed to witness their trips to and interest in exotic countries. In 1972 Tremblay visited Indonesia and Korea, whereas Stockhausen had absorbed the essence of Indian

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religion and had been travelling to Japan. So, with financial support from the Canada Council, in September 1976 Vivier left for destinations such as Japan, Bali, Thailand, Iran and Egypt, hoping to find new inspiration and “to solve some musical problems.” This travelling would shape him as a person and as a composer.

Vivier stayed on Bali for some three months. The music he heard there and, of equal importance, the “kindness and tenderness shown to him by the Balinese people” had a great impact on him. He started playing the gangsa, a metal instrument that constitutes part of a gamelan ensemble. *Pulau Dewata* (meaning ‘Isle of the Gods’) is composed under the strong influence of this Balinese visit. The same goes for *Shiraz*.

In the years that followed, works such as the opera *Kopernikus* (premiered 8 May 1980 in Montreal) and *Orion* for orchestra saw the light of day. Influenced by the spectral music (‘compositional models based on sound, not on mathematics, literature or whatever’) of Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail, he composed important works such as *Lonely Child* (1980) for soprano and chamber orchestra, *Prologue pour un Marco Polo* and *Wo bist du Licht!*, meant to comprise part of an ‘opéra fleuve’ with the title *Rêves d’un Marco Polo*.

In June 1982, Vivier departed for Paris, where he planned to write an opera based on the death of Tchaikovsky, for which he had received a grant from the Canadian Council of Arts. In March 1983, however, he was stabbed to death by a twenty-year-old man who he had picked up on the streets of Paris. *Glaubst du an die Unsterblichkeit der Seele*, an unfinished piece, seems to contain a premonition of his death.

Although in Vivier’s music it is quite simple to find influences by teachers, by other composers or by his travels, it is difficult to give a general characterization of his instrumental music. The musicologist Harry Halbreich, when describing Vivier’s music, wrote, “His music really resembles no other, and he puts himself right on the fringe of all trends. ... Claude Vivier found what so many others have sought for, and still seek: the secret of a truly new simplicity.” György Ligeti, who admired Vivier’s music and his colourful writing, judged: “Ni neo, ni retro but in no way an avantgardist.”

Claude Vivier wrote *Shiraz* in 1977, after returning from his half-year trip that included Bali and Iran. The composer himself says about *Shiraz*: “Shiraz – a city in Iran, a pearl of a city, a hard-sculpted diamond – inspired in me a work for piano also sculpted by an idea: the movements of the hands on the piano. The strict four-part writing (two voices for each hand) develops in directions that are always homophonic, from which slowly emerges a two-voice counterpoint. A return to these brusque movements and finally a chorale in the form of a question mark.” A similar ending we hear in *Pulau Dewata*.

The work is dedicated “to the marvellous pianist Louis-Philippe Pelletier and, indirectly, to two blind singers who I followed for hours in the marketplace in Shiraz.”

When Louis-Philippe Pelletier asked Vivier to write a new piece, he specifically asked him to write a piece comparable to Schumann’s *Toccata*, Op.7. One cannot deny that the two voices per hand, the resulting hand movements and the perpetuum mobile, present in both works, connect the two pieces, although Vivier “never really explicitly indicated that he had conceived his piece as a response of any kind to the Schumann work.”

As David Bergeron remarks, it can also be said that the percussive qualities of the outer movements of *Shiraz* are reminiscent of Balinese music as well as of certain joyful pieces by Messiaen, as, for example, *Regard de l’Esprit de Joie*.

*Pulau Dewata* for variable ensemble (1977), is presented here in an arrangement for piano and percussion (2 players) by Alessandro Soccorsi. As the title indicates, performers have a certain freedom regarding the instrumentation. In view of the major inspiration for the piece, Vivier’s experience in Bali, a percussion ensemble seems a logical option for the musical content (the piece is dedicated to the McGill Percussion Ensemble), but combinations such as a quartet of Ondes Martenot, a quartet of saxophones, and even an ensemble of viola, percussion and piano are

also known. In Soccorsi's version, the great variety of instruments gives the piece its range of colours: tubular bells, Thai gongs, marimba, xylophone, vibraphone, crotales, glockenspiel, besides the use of a (sometimes prepared) piano. Vivier wrote about *Pulau Dewata*, "This piece is a succession of nine melodies deriving from a single one ..." and, it "may sometimes recall Bali because I wanted to write a piece with the spirit of Bali: dance, rhythm and in particular an explosion of life, simple and obvious. The end of the piece is the traditional signature of numerous Balinese pieces." Ligeti commented: Vivier "has invented an orient ... He made things that are absolutely his own fantasy ... it's like a non-existent folklore from south-east Asia."

In the beginning of 1975 Vivier had to compose a series of pieces for the third round of the Tremplin International Competition. *Pièce pour violoncelle et piano* is one of these works. Both instruments often perform in rhythmic unison, a technique we find also in *Paramirabo*. The blend of piano and cello creates new and surprising sound colours. In certain melodic lines, both instruments play in unison, whereas the cello weaves an independent rhythmic texture. Liberating itself from the piano, the cello sometimes rises to expressive, even ecstatic, heights.

David Bergeron writes about *Pianoforte* (1975): "In the first three measures, Vivier composes with the first numbers of the Fibonacci series, i.e. 2, 3, and 5, both in the duration of the melody notes (quarter, dotted quarter, eighth tied to a half note [crotchet, dotted crotchet, quaver tied to a minim]) and in the duration of the bars themselves (5/4, 3/4, 2/4). In fact, Vivier uses this idea throughout the piece, which, like *Shiraz*, is built on a simple mathematical series, a technique often used by Stockhausen and Messiaen, for instance in *Klavierstück IX* and *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, respectively." These technical explanations, which could be given for each of the pieces presented here, may help in getting more grip on the content of the piece and may show the influence of Vivier's teachers; the real understanding is in the listening.

*Pianoforte*, like *Shiraz*, ends with a chorale. In this chorale, Vivier uses for the first time the magical effect of 'overtone-derived harmony'. The left hand plays *fff*, the right hand *ppp*.

*Paramirabo* for flute, violin, violoncello and piano (1978) is one of several pieces with exotic names like *Samarkand*, *Shiraz*, *Bouchara*, *Siddharta*, and *Zipangu*. Vivier may have wanted to write 'Paramaribo', a city whose name he probably felt exotic enough to use, even though he never visited it.

In this piece we can distinguish passages with rhythmic unison (as already encountered in *Pièce pour violoncello et piano*), piano solo interruptions and instrumental solos. The rhythmic unison of flute, violin and cello, as in a 17th-century broken consort, often displays colours never previously conceived.

According to literature, the often-prescribed whistling and certain effects in the strings result in a piece of a light-hearted character. Although this undoubtedly is an aspect of the piece, we also encounter really serious moods, if it were only for the austerity of its beginning. And how shall we interpret the gasp at the end of the piece?

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Two excellent sources were paramount in helping to write the text for this booklet: Bob Gilmore, *Claude Vivier, A Composer's Life* (Rochester, NY, University of Rochester Press, 2014); David Bergeron, *Shiraz for piano solo by Claude Vivier. An analysis for the performer*. (Thesis; Vancouver, The University of British Columbia, 2010).



**Alessandro Soccorsi** (piano) graduated from the Conservatory 'Alfredo Casella' in L'Aquila in 2003 and continued his studies at the Arts Academy in Rome. He moved to the Netherlands in 2008, where he studied for his Master's degree at the Royal Conservatory (The Hague). Alessandro Soccorsi has performed as a soloist and as a chamber musician with ensembles at numerous festivals and music events in Italy and the Netherlands. His participation in the music programme 'The Age of Boulez' organized by the Boulez Foundation was highly praised. In the Liszt Festival at the Royal Conservatory he was soloist in Liszt's Second Piano Concerto and in 2013 with the Brabant

Orchestra in Mozart's Piano Concerto in D minor. In 2016 he was a soloist with the Orchestra Sinfonica Abruzzese, performing in the L'Aquila Contemporanea Festival. His performance of Vivier's *Shiraz* was praised unanimously by new music lovers and connoisseurs and has triggered his interest in the work of this composer. After careful study of the piano and chamber music works by Vivier, he decided to present an album with some of the most interesting pieces. His adaption of *Pulau Dewata*, music for variable ensemble, for piano and two percussionists displays the composer's colourful writing at its best. Alessandro has collaborated as an accompanist with musicians such as William Bennett and Sergio Azzolini. He is a professor of chamber music at the Royal Conservatory (The Hague).



**Thies Roorda** (flute) studied at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague with Paul Verhey and in the USA with the renowned Geoffrey Gilbert. After a long orchestral career (he is emeritus flutist of the Dutch Radio Philharmonic Orchestra), he now dedicates himself to niches in the flute repertoire that particularly interest him. His recordings of works from around the turn of the 20th century, such as, for example, the complete works for flute by Sigfrid Karg-

Elert and Charles-Marie Widor, have received critical acclaim.

Several composers have dedicated works to him, including Isang Yun and Jean Françaix. Regarding the latter, he recorded the Divertimento for flute and piano, accompanied by the composer himself. In addition, he has recorded works by Isang Yun, Giacinto Scelsi and Rudolf Escher. Thies Roorda is a passionate teacher, most recognized for the way he addresses the expressive qualities of the flute sound in all its facets. His approach to – what he likes to call – the 'Blow How' of the flute is widely sought after. He is professor of flute at the Royal Conservatory (The Hague) and teaches privately at his Amsterdam studio. He has given master classes in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Australia and Canada (Banff).



**Joseph Puglia** (violin) began the violin at age four. In 2002, he was accepted to Juilliard's college division where he studied under Robert and Nicholas Mann. He received his Master of Music degree at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague in 2008, working with Vera Beths. Joseph is increasingly known as one of the top interpreters of 20th and 21st century music, and in recent seasons has performed violin concerti by John Adams, Gyorgy Ligeti, and Kaija Saariaho in Europe and the US. In 2014, Joseph created a project dedicated to the music of Luciano Berio. For the Berio project, he has recorded an album for the Attacca label, and continues to give performances and masterclasses at leading conservatories, institutions, and concert halls

throughout Europe and in the US. He also performs as the concertmaster of the AskolSchoenberg ensemble, the leading Dutch ensemble for contemporary music. He appears regularly as guest concertmaster with various orchestras including the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, The Hague Philharmonic, and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic.

As a chamber musician Joseph has collaborated with members of the Juilliard and Brentano string Quartets, Osiris Trio, among others. Joseph is currently on the violin faculty at the Royal Conservatory (The Hague).



**Sietse-Jan Weijenberg** (cello) studied with Jan Ype Nota and Truls Svane at the Prins Claus Conservatorium (Groningen, The Netherlands), and with Michel Strauss at the CNSM in Paris. He participated in masterclasses with Richard Aaron, Janos Starker, Natalia Gutman and others. Sietse-Jan is a laureate of many competitions, including a top prize at the 2009 Rostropovich Competition. Since 2010, Sietse-Jan has been performing as principal cellist with various Dutch orchestras, such as the Residentieorkest, the Noord Nederlands Orkest as well as the Nederlands Kamerorkest. He is also successful as a chamber musician; his trio won a first prize at the 2009 Maria Canals Piano Trio Competition. He is a regular guest at international festivals

such as the Peter the Great Festival, the festival Musique à Giverny, the Storioni Festival and the Kuhmo Festival. He appears frequently as a soloist, having performed a substantial part of the concertante repertoire with orchestras such as Amsterdam Sinfoniëta, the National Dutch Student Orchestra and the Orchestre de Paris. Sietse-Jan plays a cello by Antonio Pelizon (Gorizia, 1839), on loan from the collection of the Dutch Musical Instruments Foundation.



**Niels Meliefste** (percussion) completed his studies at the Royal Conservatory (The Hague). His teachers there were Wim Vos, Luuk Nagtegaal and Aly n'Diaye Rose. His talents as a musician were recognized at the Tromp Competition and the Gaudeamus Competition, where he was a prizewinner.

His versatility and imagination are proverbial. "I can make music just as seriously on a marimba as on a saucepan with a hand mixer." Niels is a prominent member of the well-known ensemble, The Hague Percussion. In its use of instrumentation as well as sound sources, The Hague Percussion is notable for its enormous diversity. Equally broad is its programming: from specialized research projects to accessible programmes for a general public, and from concerts for the youngest generations to large-scale (inter)national co-productions. Niels Meliefste is a member of the Nieuw Amsterdams Peil ensemble, and has also participated in concerts of The Hague Philharmonic (Residentieorkest), the ASKO/Schönberg Ensemble, Ensemble Modern, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen as well as the Nieuw Ensemble. He is a professor of percussion at the Royal Conservatory (The Hague).



**Jose 'Pepe' Garcia Rodriguez** (percussion) is a versatile Mexican performer, living in the Netherlands. Percussion is just one of the many facets of his musical prowess. He specializes in working together with composers, performers and other artists to create exciting new pieces. Pepe gained his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the

Royal Conservatory (The Hague). He has travelled to India to study Mridangam and Carnatic music with B.C. Manjunath. He received awards with the Ear Massage Percussion Quartet at the IPCL 2004 (International Percussion Convention Luxembourg) and the Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition in 2009. Recognized for his charisma and musicality, Pepe Garcia is a pioneer in creating ways of approaching new music with the aid of unconventional methods of musical notation, designing new instruments, fusing technical resources from non-western cultures and extending the possibilities of traditional percussion instruments through electronic processes. Pepe is a member of The Hague Percussion, a group that has gained a leading position, both nationally as well as internationally: a position that has taken them to virtually all European countries, the USA, South America, the Middle East, Japan and Korea. He is a professor of percussion at the Royal Conservatory (The Hague).