
3^{thousand} RIVERS

VOICES IN THE FOREST

| a multimedia work in progress
| for chamber orchestra and singers
| composed by Victor Gama



3_{mil}RIVERS

VOZES NA FLORESTA

3thousandRIVERS: prelude was specially commissioned for the 2013 Prince Claus Awards Ceremony at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam.

'... the work is the prelude to a much larger multimedia opera, told through the stories of people living in the rain forest. Through sound, music and video, you will be carried deep into the rain forest to experience its beauty, but also the urgency of its depletion...'

Christa Meindersma
director, Prince Claus Fund
at the 2013 Awards Ceremony





Yetzabel Arias Fernandez, soprano

"Victor Gama's multimedia opera '3thousandRIVERS' is a visual and aural journey across continents and between cultures. Art and music are perfectly intertwined, featuring a unique combination of music, opera and traditional Angolan song framed by a compelling visual narrative that unfolds deep in the forests of Colombia. The delicate sounds from Gama's hand-crafted instruments are complimented by the beauty of their unusual shapes and forms, resulting in a truly multi-sensory experience that is as aesthetic as it is harmonious."

Selene Wendt
The Global Art Project, Oslo

ORIGINS

'3 thousand Rivers' is the fourth large composition in a series started in 2006 with 'Rio Cunene' exclusively written for the Kronos Quartet and premiered at Carnegie Hall in 2010, 'Rio Cubango' commissioned by the Prince Claus Fund and the Amsterdam Funds for the Arts, and 'Vela 6911' commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and staged at Harris Theater, with support from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

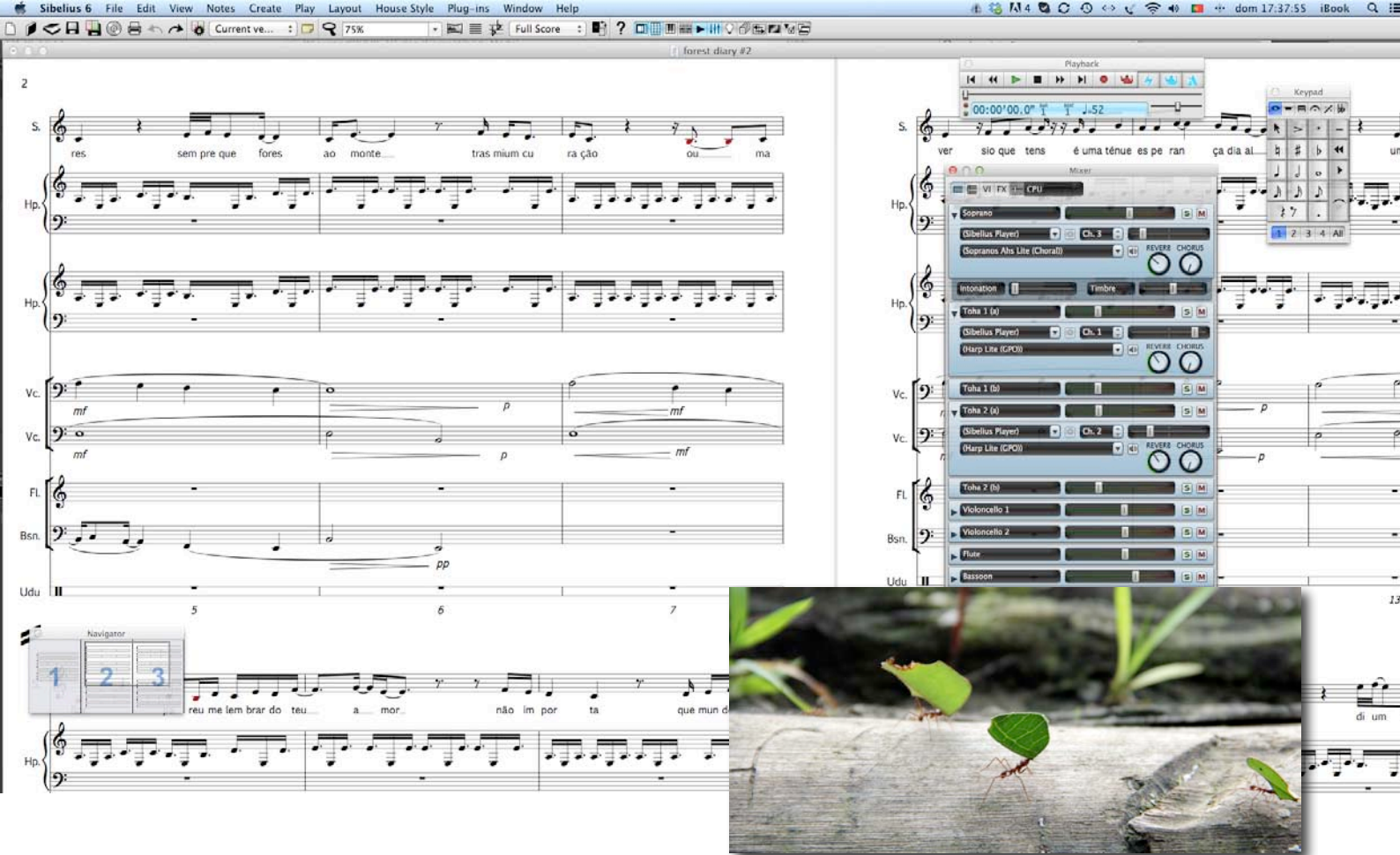
HEARING VOICES

The piece is based on fieldwork in the rain forests of Amazonia, El Choco and the Andes in Colombia and Brazil. It addresses the destruction of that particular environment as well as the beauty of its nature and the lives of its inhabitants. Gama and local teams gather field research through photography, video, sound and interviews with people living in those rain forests such as teachers, musicians, community leaders and more to structure a composition written for orchestral musicians, his own musical instruments, and singers.

AIMING AT

While the prelude made use of the material gathered during the first phase of research in El Chocó, Colombia, the current project aims at producing and presenting the complete work resulting from the next two phases of research in the Andes and Amazonia.





COMPOSITION

The score and video are intimately connected and respond to a 'plot', expressed in song and through text layered on the video, based on stories of real people, fragmented narratives of their day-to-day struggles, intertwined with the living nature of the forest and its rivers. Lasting from 90 to 120 min, the work is to be presented as a multimedia opera in three acts, each

associated with the three main rivers crossing these rainforests, the Guapi, the Amazonas, the Magdalena and some of their effluents. The soloist singers embody the characters in each section, at times a man or a woman, at times living organisms of nature, such as ants or tiny little insects manifesting the web of life that is a rain forest.

"Even though the composer's name is usually on the score, an opera is very much a collaborative enterprise."

James MacMillan
composer, Scotland



COLLABORATION WITH CARLA FERNANDEZ

Crucial to developing new components of the composition and its narrative structure is the collaboration with fashion designer Carla Fernandez as custom designer for the full piece.

Carla has brought into her work a direct link to the ancient traditions and art of the Maya and the Aztecs and we think this can add another rich layer to the whole presentation.

Carla Fernandez is a Mexican Fashion Designer and the founder of Taller Flora. Taller Flora is Carla Fernandez's demi couture line, co-designed by and using the delicate craftsmanship of Mexican artisans. She won a 2013 Prince Claus Award.



© José Frade/Teatro S.Luiz

We'd like **3thousandRIVERS** to be a new arena for experimentation with sound, song and a diversity of instrumentation, with musicians and singers that carry the DNA of ancient musical knowledge from further afield.

SCENOGRAPHY

We intend to use technology of image projection and mapping, on the stage surface and screens, coupled with surround sound of the contextual environments being presented. An immersive experience that will help sharpen the audience's awareness of the narratives and messages conveyed by the music, singers and video, mostly replacing high budget demanding scenography used in classical opera.



At the 2013 Prince Claus Awards Ceremony in Amsterdam
3thousandRIVERS:prelude
 featured surround sound specifically installed at the main hall of the Royal Palace to reproduce the sounds of the forest being projected on a wide panoramic screen. We post-produced a multitrack film that carried all of the sounds of the forest positioned in 3D space where even rain drops could be heard falling on the river water close to the roots of a huge 'seiva' tree.

DIGITAL FILM, POST-PRODUCTION

Over the years and with the opportunity of making a prelude to this piece we have acquired the capabilities of developing all of the video and sound production and post-production in-house. We are well positioned to tailor any production, thus contributing to an effective reduction of costs while keeping highly demanding levels of quality.

"... the prelude of 3thousandRIVERS ... took us on a trip to the Colombian Pacific coast, in a perfect and subtle mix of music, video and testimony, whispering into our ears the hidden history that rivers carry downstream..."

Silvia Ojeda
 Mas Arte Mas Acción

3thousandRIVERS: voices in the forest



Té Macedo, soprano, marimba
Yetzabel Arias Fernandez, soprano
and the Oophaga Ensemble

VOICES IN THE FOREST

while the prelude has a duration of 23 minutes, the complete piece should have a total duration between 90 minutes and 120 minutes.

instrumentation:

one flute;

two trombones;

one basson;

four violins;

two violas;

two cellos;

two percussionists;

two musicians (Victor Gama, Salomé Pais Matos) playing toha, acru and dino.

four singers.

TIME FRAME

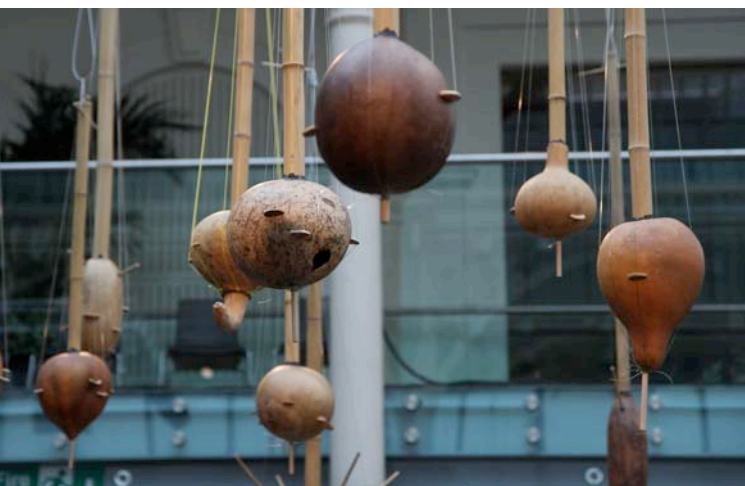
First phase - completed in May 2013 in El Chocó, Colombia through the artistic residency 'Intercambios Sur-Sur' by invitation of la Fundación Mas Arte Mas Acción from Bogota.

Second phase - to take place in 2014 through an artistic residency hosted by Fundación Flora ars+natura from Bogota. Research along the Magdalena river and the Andes rain forest.

Third phase - Amazon rain forest, Amazon and Putumayo rivers; field work and research during 2014.

Writing score - from first quarter 2014 to first quarter 2015.

Presentation - season 2015/16 and thereafter.



VICTOR GAMA

'the event's most impressive and resonant mix of sound, vision and concept was Instrumentos, an exhibition/performance in the beautiful Paul Hamlyn Hall by Angola-born inventor and musician Victor Gama. Each instrument is a beautiful object; each implies a different audio-visual journey that's both ethnic and high tech.'

The Guardian

Victor Gama (Angola 1960) is a composer, performer, designer of innovative musical instruments as well as an electronics engineer. He holds a BSc in electronics engineering and an MA in Music Technology from the Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design in London and was recently artist fellow at the Stanford Institute for Creativity and the Arts at Stanford University and at MIT Center for Art Science and Technology. Gama has collaborated with the Kronos Quartet who premiered his piece 'Rio Cunene' at Carnegie Hall in

March 2010. 'Rio Cubango', commissioned by the the Prince Claus Fund and the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts premiered in November 2011 at Concertgebouw in Amsterdam as part of the series 'Música para Rios'. In 2012 a commission by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra resulted in "Vela 6911" a piece for an ensemble of musicians of that orchestra premiered at Harris Theatre, Chicago in 2012 and staged on the 20th of January 2013 at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.

He has exhibited his instruments and sound installations and performed extensively in Africa, Latin America, USA, Canada and Europe, having received a Project Development Award by Visiting Arts/British Council for his exhibition and performance at Ormeau Baths Gallery in Belfast in 2004.

Among several albums and recordings for dance and film, his album Pangeia Instrumentos was released by Aphex Twin on Rephlex Records. Naloga is a recent compilation of works specially released for the exhibition INSTRUMENTOS staged at the Royal Opera House in London in summer 2012 and at the Fundación Carlos De Amberes in Madrid in November 2012.



Music/Tech: Victor Gama at MIT

by Anya Ventura

Victor Gama is a composer whose process begins with the creation of an entirely new instrument, one whose design is steeped in symbolic meaning. Concept design, the selection of materials, fabrication, and scoring is all part of the rigorous way Gama creates new music for the 21st century, blending current fabrication technologies with ideas, materials, and traditions inspired by the natural world.

From March 2-7, Gama shared his visionary work with the MIT community: performing in a concert, visiting classes and dorms, and presenting a lecture/demonstration for the class “Music and Technology.” In each of these contexts, people gravitated towards his instruments as if attracted by a magnetic force. The post-digital world, Gama said, has circled back to the object.

“The same technology that has dematerialized the object is working to rematerialize the object,” Gama said in his lecture/demonstration. Innovations like 3D printing and digital CAD modeling have brought the object back to center stage after becoming seemingly obsolete with advances in digital technologies and the creation of digital sound libraries. It is about being human, Gama said, and finding ways to merge the virtual and physical worlds in profound new ways. “Can an instrument be a living organism?” he asked, “Can it learn? Can it

interact?” In Gama’s philosophy — heavily influenced by the pre-colonial architecture and cosmology of his native Angola — the instrument is a ritual form, a container of meaning whose design reflects a constellation of allusions to stories, beliefs, and social and natural events.

The instrument is not just an instrument, but a “symbolic system” and “semiotic interface” created by the composer. With the greater control afforded by digital technologies, these symbolic systems can become more finely tightened and tuned, actualizing a geometry as complex as their concept. His instrument, “Toha,” for example, was inspired by the nest of the weaver bird. “One of nature’s most astounding sound installations,” Gama said.

The harp-like instrument is meant to be played by two people, just like the many birds who would make a home in the nest. During the military upheavals in Angola from the late 70s onwards, “the nests were totally empty, you couldn’t see any birds. They all had migrated because of the conflict,” Gama said. Like these densely woven nests, Gama’s work — both the instrument and the resulting music — weaves together the complex strands of the cultural, social, spiritual, and natural.



For more information please visit:
premiere of 3thousandRIVERS: prelude

<http://vimeo.com/84232134>

Vela 6911, latest piece:

<http://vimeo.com/59298136>

more about the music and instruments of Victor Gama

<http://www.pangeiainstrumentos.org>

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current partnerships



Fonds

Prince Claus Fund for
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3thousandRIVERS: voices in the forest