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Orpheus Chamber Orchestra with Benita Valente, soprano

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

with Benita Valente, soprano

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Orpheus Chamber Orchestra
with Benita Valente, soprano

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CELLO
Annabelle Hoffman
Zvi Plesser
Jonathan Spitz

BASS
Gail Kruvand

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Tonight's Program

ORPHEUS
with Benita Valente, soprano

TELEMANN
Suite from Don Quixote
Overture
The Awakening of Quixote
His Attack on the Windmills
Sighs of love for the Princess Alcine
Sancho Panza Being Swindled
Rosinante Galloping
The Gallop of Sancho Panza's Mule
Don Quixote at Rest

BRITTEN
"Les Illuminations" for soprano and orchestra, Op. 18
Fanfare: Maestoso
Villes: Allegro energico
Phrase: Lento ed estatico
Ancient: Allegretto, un poco movimento
Royaute: Allegro maestoso
Marine: Allegro con brio
Interlude: Moderato ma comodo
Being Beauteous: Lento ma comodo
Parade: Alla marcia
Départ: Largo mesto
Benita Valente, soprano

INTERMISSION

PIAZZOLLA
Four for Tango

BARTOK
Divertimento
Allegro non troppo
Molto Adagio
Allegro assai
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Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

Orpheus, one of the world's foremost chamber orchestras, performs without a conductor. Central to the annual musical season of the 26-member orchestra is the series of concerts at home in New York at Carnegie Hall, several recordings and national and international tours that have by now included performances in nearly 300 cities in 39 countries.

Orpheus was founded in New York City in 1972 by cellist Julian Fifer and a group of fellow musicians who aspired to perform chamber orchestral repertoire as chamber music—through their own close collaborative efforts, and without a conductor. Orpheus developed its approach to the study and performance of this repertoire by bringing to the orchestral setting the chamber music principles of personal involvement and mutual respect. Orpheus is a self-governing organization; the players demand of one another a high level of personal and musical responsibility, and they rotate the seating positions to give each player the opportunity to lead a section. Together they make the interpretive decisions that are ordinarily the work of a conductor. They also choose the repertoire and create the programs, and they continually study and refine their rehearsal techniques.

Central to the distinctive personality of Orpheus is their unusual pro-
cess of sharing and rotating leadership roles. For every work, the members of the orchestra determine the concertmaster and the principal players for each section. These players constitute the core group, whose role is to form the initial concept of the piece and to shape the rehearsal process. In the final rehearsals, all members of the orchestra participate in refining the interpretation and execution, with members taking turns listening from the auditorium for balance, blend, articulation, dynamic range and clarity of expression. And in recording sessions, everyone crowds into the production booth to listen to the initial playbacks. Members of Orpheus, who have received recognition for solo, chamber music and orchestral performances, bring a diversity of musical experience to the orchestra, which constantly enriches and nurtures the musical growth of the ensemble. Of the 17 string and nine wind players who compose the basic membership of Orpheus, many also hold teaching positions at prominent conservatories and universities in the New York and New England areas, including The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, Mannes College of Music, Columbia University and Yale University.

Orpheus has recorded extensively for Deutsche Grammophon. Included in the catalogue of over 40 recordings are several Haydn symphonies and Mozart serenades, the complete Mozart wind concertos with Orpheus members as soloists, romantic works by Dvořák, Grieg and Tchaikovsky and a number of twentieth-century classics by Bartók, Prokofiev, Copland and Stravinsky.


Benita Valente

The distinguished American soprano *Benita Valente* is one of this era’s most cherished musical artists. An internationally celebrated interpreter of lieder, chamber music and oratorio, she is equally acclaimed for her performances on the operatic stage. Her keen musicianship encompasses an astounding array of
styles, from the Baroque of Bach and Handel to the varied idioms of today’s leading composers.

As a participant in the prestigious Marlboro Festival, her performances and recordings with the legendary pianist Rudolf Serkin won great renown. Other major instrumental collaborators have included the Guarneri and Juilliard String Quartets, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, clarinetist Richard Stoltzman and pianists Emanuel Ax, Leon Fleisher, David Golub, Richard Goode, Lee Luvissi, Cynthia Raim and Peter Serkin.

Benita Valente has been sought as an orchestral soloist by every great conductor of the last two decades, including Abbado, Barenboim, Bernardi, Bernstein, Comissiona, Conlon, de Waart, Eschenbach, Harmoncourt, Kubelik, Leinsdorf, Leppard, Levine, Masur, McGegan, Muti, Ozawa, Rudel, Shaw and Tennstedt. With these conductors she has appeared with every great symphony in the United States, Canada and Europe.

The operatic stage has figured prominently in Ms. Valente’s career. Her Metropolitan Opera debut as Pamina in Die Zauberflöte was followed by numerous other productions, and she has since performed a number of other roles with the company, recently appearing as the Countess in Le nozze di Figaro.

Ms. Valente has been recorded by no fewer than 17 recording companies. She received a Grammy Award for her Columbia recording of Schoenberg’s Quartet No. 2 and a Grammy nomination for her SONY Classical recording of Haydn’s Seven Last Words of Christ, both performed with The Juilliard String Quartet. Her celebrated collaboration with mezzo Tatiana Troyanos is recorded on the MusicMasters recording, Handel and Mozart Arias and Duets. The soprano may also be heard on the Virgin Classics recording Love Songs and Lullabies with baritone Thomas Allen and guitarist Sharon Isbin. Her most recent recordings include Vaughan Williams’ A Sea Symphony with Thomas Allen and Leonard Slatkin conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra (BMC), the Pergolesi Stabat mater as arranged by Bach with the American Bach Soloists, Jeffrey Thomas, conductor (Koch) and a recording of Fauré and Debussy songs with pianist Lydia Artymiw (Centaur/Harmonia Mund).
Georg Philipp Telemann (1671-1767)
Suite from Don Quixote

Regrettably, Georg Philipp Telemann is the least known or appreciated among the great masters of the High Baroque. His life span exceeded those of his better known contemporaries, J. S. Bach, Handel, Domenico Scarlatti, Rameau and Vivaldi, and the volume, variety and general quality of his musical output merits far greater attention than it is accorded by the musical community today.

Telemann touched upon the tale of Cervantes’ addled old knight twice during his long career as a composer. His first setting resulted in the present suite, estimated to have been composed about 1715-1720. His second setting was a one-act comic opera, Don Quixote at the Wedding of Camacho, done at the ripe (and, we hope, not quixotic) age of 80 when the composer collaborated with a librettist 60 years his junior to produce a stage piece that allegedly gained quick popularity. There is no relationship between the two works, though the suite does have a fine overture and many charming dance pieces, which might have filled out the string of arias and duets that make up the little opera (or “serenata,” as it is precisely classified).

The lighthearted Don Quixote Suite reminds us that the mature Telemann was, above all, a modernist, whose esthetic leanings embraced the newer, simpler Italianate pre-classical style of, say, Pergolesi, as much as the Germanic baroque tradition in which he had been reared. It opens with a standard French baroque overture, descended from the operatic overtures fostered by Jean Baptiste Lully at the close of the 17th-century. The starchy rhythms of its opening Adagio give way to a jocular fugue, interspersed with many charming duets in the segments between its fugal statements. Like the French-style overtures in numerous stage works and suites by Handel, this one is expanded from its basic slow-fast two-part form to a three-part design that includes a return of the angular music heard in the opening section. The descriptive dances and airs that follow give evidence of Telemann’s wit and skill at portraying a character or episode from Cervantes’ tale. The soft air titled The Awakening of Quixote is characterized by an unusual, jerky rhythm suggesting the stiff old knight may have hobbled out of bed in the morning. His Attack on the Windmills is marked by short running figures, while Sighs of love for the Princess Alcine makes use of the drooping two-note sighing figures so common to descriptive music of the Baroque and early Classical eras. Snapping rhythms and little running flourishes depict Quixote’s squire, Sancho Panza being Swindled. The dances associated with their two steeds are most humorous—Quixote’s swaybacked horse, Rosinante, is set forth in a cantering 6/8 galop, while Sancho Panza’s bucking, kicking mule seems to bounce in a tight, stubborn circle.

The suite concludes with Don
Quixote pitching his tent for the night out on the Spanish plain.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Les Illuminations, Op. 18

While the bulk of Benjamin Britten’s song cycles are set to English poetry, his setting of nine poems from Arthur Rimbaud’s Les Illuminations was the first of four cycles employing other languages. Britten scholar Peter Evans suggests this might have been a conscious effort to free himself from a dependence upon native poets, especially since much of the cycle was composed during the time Britten contemplated and actually began his three-year trip abroad, traveling with his companion, tenor Peter Pears, in the United States and Canada. Britten encountered Rimbaud’s symbolist poems in 1938 and completed them in October, 1939, about six months after he arrived in America. The entire cycle was dedicated to soprano Sophie Wyss, who sang many of Britten’s early song cycles, including the premiere of Les Illuminations in January, 1940. Individual poems in the cycle are dedicated to others close to Britten; the plaintive “Interlude” dividing the cycle bears the initials of Elizabeth Mayer, an emigrant from Munich who provided lodging for Britten and Pears during their stay in Long Island, N.Y. The beguiling, seductive “Antique” is dedicated to Wolfgang (“Wulff”) Scherchen, son of the famed German conductor, with whom Britten formed a bond five years earlier at an ISCM festival in Florence. The passionate imagery of “Being Beau-

teous,” the most famous song in the cycle, brought a dedication to Pears.

Britten’s unerring compositional talent reveals itself in every song of this cycle, even at his youthful age of 26. Word, tone and rhythm come together gracefully and with impeccable taste. And if Britten was indeed trying to free himself from British vocal traditions, some of these songs suggest an affinity for the mannerisms of continental European song composers. The breathless pace of the hard-edged “Villes” and the gaily marching “Royauté” bring to mind the patter-song pace of a Poulenc song, while the quiet resignation of the closing “Départ” echoes the sad, reflective quality of a typical apotheosis by Richard Strauss. In his preface to the vocal score, commentator Edward Sackville West notes that Rimbaud’s verbal images are so elusive as to defy meaningful definition. Given that inherent condition, the expressive tone of Britten’s music provides as much interpretation as the listener might hope to glean from these poems.

On the instrumental side of the ledger, Britten’s choice of a pure string sound cushions the vocal line with a gleaming orchestral texture, paralleling the verbal imagery of the title. And the string orchestra is deployed with real variety and virtuosity, from its trumpet-like accompaniment in the opening “Fanfare” to the galloping, accompaniment of “Villes,” the diaphanous harmonics in “Phrase,” the duetting voice of a solo violin in “Antiques” and the thin bass-line accompaniment that is eventually distilled from the texture of “Parade.”
Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

*Four, For Tango*

While it only takes two to tango, Argentinian composer Astor Piazzolla decided it would take four for the tango on tonight’s program. This work, published in 1989, was originally composed as a string quartet and can be heard on the Kronos Quartet album, *Winter was Hard*. Orpheus performs it in a string-orchestra version.

Known as the man who revived interest in the tango and transformed it in the second half of the 20th century, Piazzolla was born in Argentina but lived most of his early life in the Bronx, according to biographer Shawn Koppenhoefer. During his childhood, he mastered the difficult fingering system involved in playing the bandoneón, a melancholy-sounding Argentinian version of an accordion developed in Germany during the 19th century.

Piazzolla’s career began in the mid-1930s as a performer in tango orchestras headed by leading Argentinian musicians Carlos Gardel and Aníbal Tróilo. In the mid-1940s, he formed his own band, enlarging his tango arrangements to symphonic proportions and adding new percussion colors. Following studies in Paris with Nadia Boulanger in 1954, he returned to Buenos Aires to instill the tango with new influences from modern classical music and jazz, sometimes arousing violent reactions from fans of the traditional tango against these transformations of their beloved dance form.

From this point onward, Piazzolla seems to have enjoyed his greatest successes composing for chamber-sized ensembles from five to nine performers—always including the bandoneón, of course. While *Four, For Tango* has only the pure sound of strings, it reflects the dry, unsentimental distillation Piazzolla achieved in his later tangos. Indeed, the special effects called for in the musical score make it look and sound like a typical Bartók string quartet.

Piazzolla calls for three types of *glissandi* (sliding effects) on the strings, all performed with whip-like intensity and evaporating in a silvery string harmonic. The very first *glissando*, heard in the fourth measure of the piece, involves a four-note chord divided between the two violin parts, sliding upward over an entire measure. Toward the end of the piece, this is transformed into a longer slide, done while the bow executes a trembling tremolo on the upward-bound chord. A much shorter, whipping *glissando* is employed numerous times throughout the piece.

The composer also calls for drumming effects, achieved by plucking the strings, playing scratchy-sounding noises behind the bridge in an effect aptly called “sand paper,” and tapping the thumb on the underside of the instrument to simulate the sound of a conga or bongo drum.

The harmonic idiom in *Four, For Tango* is also quite Bartókian and, while the rhythm is quite syncopated, its sophistication is a far cry from what a couple would expect
to hear from the middle of a dance floor.

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)
Divertimento for Strings (1939)

Three of Béla Bartók's mature works owe their existence to conductor Paul Sacher, who founded the Basel Chamber Orchestra. Bartók first met Sacher at a 1929 meeting of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Basel and their friendship resulted in Sacher's commissions for the Music for Strings Percussion and Celesta (1936), the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1938) and the Divertimento for Strings (1939). Sacher invited Bartók to visit Switzerland, where he composed the Divertimento in a burst of creative activity between August 2-17, during the last month before World War II destroyed peace in Europe. Sacher had requested a simpler piece for this occasion, and Bartók rewarded him with one of his sunnier compositions but one that synthesized his bitterest experiments in dissonant harmony with a broadly triadic, tonal style.

Though the title, Divertimento, suggests a light entertainment, music of a dance-like character is confined to the two outer movements, especially the finale. The instrumental layout of the piece is that of a baroque concerto grosso, alternating solo and full ensemble groupings of the string choir. The form of the first movement is a sonata-allegro, whose long opening theme spins itself out in the first violins, over gently alternating meters of six and nine beats to the bar. It is a beguiling melody, whose tonality of F is tinted with inflections of two different modal scales. A lightly mincing second theme in A major leads to a dramatic closing section marked by repeated octaves and an echo of the opening theme at the very end of the exposition.

Six short episodes in the development section call up Bartók's contrapuntal skills at contriving numerous canonic and other imitative devices. The themes return in varied shapes and tonalities during the recapitulation, with the key of F re-established only toward the end. The funereal slow movement is in sharp contrast to the mood of the outer movements. Its gnarled opening theme entwines itself in narrow chromatic steps and the central section cries out in a climax of piercing trills and sharp, jagged rhythms. Humor returns in a more brusque manner during the rustic chain of dance tunes that make up the finale. When the dancing resumes, it builds toward dramatic changes of pace—mostly faster—at the end of the movement. Apart from a few modest glissando and pizzicato passages, the Divertimento has none of the wild sliding, strumming or string-snapping effects so prominent in the Fourth and Fifth string quartets and the Music for Strings Percussion and Celesta. In all, it is a gentle but masterly summation of his colorful, lifelong adventures in string-ensemble writing.
Les Illuminations

Fanfare

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade, 
de cette parade sauvage.

I alone have the key to this parade, 
to this savage parade.

Villes ("Towns")

Ce sont des villes!
C'est un peuple pour qui se sont montés 
ces Alleghanys et ces Libans de rêve!

These are the towns!
This is a people for whom these illusory 
Alleghenies and Lebanons reared 
themselves up!

Ce sont des villes!
Des chalets de cristal et de bois se meuvent 
sur des rails et des poulies invisibles
Les viex cratères, ceints de colosses 
et de plamiers de cuivre rugissent 
mélodieusement dans les feux.

These are the towns!
Chalets of wood and glass move on 
invisible rails and pulleys. The ancient 
craters, encircles by colossi 
and by vats of cooper, 
or roar melodiously in the flames.

Ce sont des villes!
Des cortèges de Mabs en robes rousses, 
opalines, montent des ravines.
Là-haut, les pieds dans la cascade et les ronces, 
les cerfs tettent Diane.
Les Bacchantes des banlieues sanglotent 
et la lune brûle et hurle.
Vénus entre dans les cavernes des forgerons 
et des ermites.

These are the towns!
Processions of Mabs in russet, 
opaline dresses rise from the ravines. 
Up there, Diana suckles the harts whose 
feet are in the waterfalls and the 
brambles.
Suburban Bacchantes sob, 
and the moon burns and howls.
Venus enters the caves of the blacksmiths 
and hermits.

Ce sont des…
Des groupes de beffrois chantent 
les idées des peuples.
Des châteaux bâtis en os sort 
la musique inconnue.

These are the…
Groups of belfries give tongue 
to the thoughts of the peoples.
From castles fashioned in bone 
comes unknown music.

Ce sont des villes!
Ce sont des villes!
Le paradis des orages s'effondre.
Les sauvages dansent sans cesse, dansent, 
dansent, dansent sans cesse la Fête de la 
Nuit.

These are the towns!
These are the towns!
The paradise of the storms collapses.
The savages dance ceaselessly, dance, 
dance ceaselessly in the Festival of 
Night.
Ce sont des villes!
Quels bons bras, quelle belle heure me rendront cette région d'où viennent mes sommeils et mes moindres mouvements?

Phrase ("Strophe")
J'ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher; des guirlandes de fenêtre à fenêtre; des chaines d'or d'étoile à étoile, et je danse.

Antique ("Antiquity")
Gracieux fils de Pan!
Autour de ton front couronné de fleurettes et de baies, tes yeux, des boules précieuses, remuent,
Tachées de lie brune, tes joues se creusent.
Tes crocs luissent.
Ta poitrine ressemble à une cithare, des tintements circulent dans tes bras blonds.
Ton cœur bat dans ce ventre où dort de double sexe.
Promène-toi, la nuit, la nuit, en mouvant doucement cette cuisse, cette seconde cuisse et cette jambe de gauche.

Royaute ("Royalty")
Un beau matin, chez un peuple fort doux, un homme et une femme superbes criaient sur la place publique:
"Mes amis, mes amis, je veux qu'elle soit reine, je veux qu'elle soit reine!"
Elle riait et tremblait.
Il parlait aux amis de révélation, dépreuve terminée.
Ils se pâmaient l'un contre l'autre.
En effet, ils furent rois toute une matinée où les tentures carminées se relevèrent sur les maisons, et tout l'après-midi, où ils s'avancèrent du côté des jardins de palmes.

These are the towns!
What kind arms and what lovely hour will give me back that place whence comes my slumbers and my slightest movements?

I have hung strands from steeple to steeple; garlands from window to window; chains of gold from star to star, and now I dance.

Graceful son of Pan!
Under your brow crowned with little flowers and berries, your eyes, precious globes, are looking around.
Stained with brown dregs, your cheeks grow hollow.

Your fans shine.
your breast is like a zither,
tinglings run in your fair arms.
Your heart beats in that belly where the dual sex sleeps.
Walk abroad at night, at night,
gently moving that thigh,
that other thigh and that left leg.

One fine morning, amongst a gentle people, a man and a woman-proud creatures—were crying out in the public square
"My friends, my friends, I want her to be Queen, I want her to be Queen!"
She laughed and trembled.
He spoke to his friends of revelation, of final proof.
They rivalled each other in their rapture.
Indeed, they became sovereigns for a whole morning, when the scarlet hangings went up on the house, and for the whole afternoon when they came from the palm gardens.
Marine ("Seascape")

Les chars d'argent et de cuivre,
Les proues d'acier et d'argent,
Battent l'écume,
Soulevant les souches des ronces.
Les courantes de la lande,
et les ornières immenses du reflux,
Filent circulairement vers l'est,
Vers les piliers de la forêt,
Vers le fût de la jetée,
Don l'angle est heurté par des tourbillons... tourbillons de lumière.

Interlude ("Intermezzo")

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade,
de cette parade sauvage.

Being Beauteous

Devant une neige, un Etre de beauté de haute taille.
Des sifflements de mort et des cercles de musique sourde font monter,

s'élargir et trembler comme un spectre
corps adoré; des blessures "écarlats
et noires éclatent dans les chairs superbes.
Les couleurs propres de la vie se foncent,
dansent et se dégagent autour de la vision,
sur le chantier.
Et les frissons s'élèvent et grondent,
et la saveur forcenée de ces effets
se chargeant avec les sifflements mortels
et les rauques musiques que le monde,
loin derrière nous, lance sur notre mère de beauté, elle recule, elle se dresse.

Oh! Nos os sont revêts d'un nouveau corps amoureux.
O la face cendrée, lécusson de crin,
les bras de cristal! le canon sur lequel je dois m'abattre à travers la mêlée des arbres et de l'air léger!

The carriages of silver and copper,
The prows of steel and of silver,
Thrash the foam,
Stir up the bramble roots.
The currents of the wasteland,
and the immense tracks of the ebb-tide
Flow in circles toward the East,
Toward the columns of the forest,
Towards the piers of the jetty,
Whose jutting corners are battered by whirlpools... whirlpools of light.

I alone have the key to this parade,
to this savage parade.

Before a background of snow, a tall, beautiful Being.
Hissings of death and circles of muffled music cause this adored body to rise,
to spread and tremble like a spectre; scarlet and black wounds break out on the glorious flesh.
The true colors of life fuse,
dance and separate around the vision of the stocks.
And tremors arise and growl,
and the frenzied flavor of these effects charged with the mortal hissing
and the raucous music which the world,
far behind us, casts on our mother of beauty, recoils and rears up.

Oh! Our bones are re-clad in a new loving body.
The ash-grey face, the shield of horsehair,
the crystal arms! the cannon on which I must subside through the tangle of trees and soft air!
Parade

Des drôles très solidiques.
Plusiers ont exploité vos mondes.
Sans besoin, et peu pressés
de mettre en œuvre leurs brillantes
facultés et leur expérience
de vos consciences.
Quels hommes mûrs!
Quels hommes mûrs!

Des yeux hétéres à la façon de la nuit d’été,
rouges et noirs, tricolors, d’acier peiqué
d’étoiles d’or; des facies déformés, plombés,
blêmis, incendiés; des enrouements folâtres!
La démarche cruelle des oripeaux!
Il y a quelques jeunes!
O le plus violent Paradis de la grimace
enragée!

Chinois, Hottentots, Bohémiens, niais, hyènes,
Molochs, vieilles démences, démons sinistres,
ils mêlent les tours populaires, maternels,
avec les poses et les tendresses bestiales.
Ils interpréteraient des pièces nouvelles
et des chansons “bonnes filles.”
Maitres jongleurs, ils transforment le lieu
et les presonnes et usent
de la comédie magnétique.

J’ai sur la clef de cette parade,
de cette parade sauvage.

Départ (“Departure”)

Assez vu.
La vision s’est rencontrée à tous les airs.
Assez eu.
Rumeurs des villes, le soir, et au soleil,
et toujours.
Assez connu.
Les arrêts de la vie.
O Rumeurs et Visions!
Départ dans l’affection et le bruit neufs.

Downright knaves.
Several have explored your worlds.
Having no needs, and seldom required
to put into action their brilliant
faculties and their experience
of your consciences.
What mature men!
What mature men!

Eyes drugged like a summer night,
red and black, tricolor, steel dotted
with golden stars; features deformed, livid,
blemished, burnt; wanton deformed!
The cruel bearing of the tawdry finery!
There are some young people!
Oh most violent paradise of the furious
grimace!
Chinese, Hottentots, Gypsies, fools, hyenas,
Molochs, mad old women, sinister demons,
they mingle their popular, motherly tricks
with animal poses and affections.
They would interpret new pieces
and “good girl” songs.
Master jugglers, they transform the place
and the people and make use
of irresistible comedy.

I alone have the key to this parade,
to this savage parade.

Enough seen.
The vision was to be found in every tune.
Enough had.
Murmurs of the town, of the night, and
in the sun, and always.
Enough known.
The decrees of life.
Oh murmurs and Visions!
Departure in new affection and noise.