

Doctor of Arts Lecture Recital
Chant d'amour de la dame à la licorne:
A Proposal for Staging

Ísis Jarnicki de Carvalho, soprano

with

Katherine Burrell, cello

Peter Douglas, piano

March 28, 5:30pm – Sursa Hall

Liana Alexandra (1947-2011)



Étienne de Sadeleer (1923-2017?)



The Libretto

La Dame à la Licorne



*Six poèmes
d'Etienne de Sadeleer
précédés d'un texte de
Rainer Maria Rilke*

Librairie Gründ, Paris

The Tapestries

A mon seul désir
("To my only lord/desire")



La vue (“Sight”)



L'ouie (“Sound”)



L'odorat (“Smell”)



Le goût (“Taste”)



Le toucher (“Touch”)



A recumbent (*gisant*, in Ancient French)



Inspirations for Staging

La dame à la licorne (Cluny Museum, 2008)



De Falla's *Master Peter Puppet Show* (Brazil, 2011)



Excerpt of Rilke's letter describing the tapestries to a friend

“There are these tapestries, Abelone, these tapestries. I imagine that you are here; there are six tapestries; come, pass slowly in front of them. But first, step back and look at them, all at once. How tranquil they are, are they not? There is a little variety in them. Here, always this little oval, blue island, floating in the background, discreetly red, which is flowery and inhabited with some small beasts all occupied with themselves. Only there, in the last tapestry, the island rises a little, as if it had become lighter. It always has a shape, a woman, in different clothes, but always the same woman. Sometimes, next to her, there is a smaller figure, an attendant, and there are always some heraldic animals: big², that are on the island and are a part of the action. To the left a lion, and to the right, in light, the unicorn; they wear the same banners that show, high above the water: a mouth of a blue band with three silver moons. Do you see? Do you want to start with the first one?”

Rilke's letter can be found in full in this link, in French and English:

<https://ballstate.box.com/s/dbngd8kh6do6klw564ud3qju1302isd>

Chant d'amour de la dame à la licorne (1995)

English translations by Katharine Burris

1. A mon seul désir

A mon seul désir
D'être à celui
Pour qui l'on meurt.
Il est parti me conquérir,
Mon beau seigneur.
Il est parti pour la guerre,
Dieu sait où, Dieu sait où.
Est-il temps, petite sœur,
De choisir mes bijoux?
Reviendra-t-il
Avant que passent les oiseaux migrateurs?
Il est temps, petite sœur
De nouer mes bijoux
Et son collier
Au joli chien qu'il m'a donné
Come Tristan à Ysolde.
Il reviendra
Avant que passent les oiseaux migrateurs
Et la cigogne
Qui déjà tourbillonne au-dessus de nous.
A mon seul désir
D'être à celui
Pour qui je voudrais mourir.

To my only desire¹

To my only desire
To be the one
For whom one dies.
He left to conquer me,
My handsome lord.
He left for the war,
God knows where, God knows where.
Is it time, little sister,
To choose my jewelry?
Will he return
Before the passing of the migratory birds
It is time, little sister,
To tie my jewelry
And his necklace
Of a pretty dog that he gave to me
Like Tristan and Isolde.
He will return
Before the passing of the migratory birds
And the stork
Who already swirls² above us.
To my only desire
To be the one
For whom I would like to die

¹ Some translations say, "My only desire"

² or "circles"

2. La vue

Ivoire virginal
Sculpté par le sel de la mer
Licorne dont tu te sers
Pour me défendre,
Ivoire virginal
Sculpté par la force des vagues,
Cheval, ô blanc cheval
Attelé à mon âme,
Car il me l'a donné
Pour lui rester fidèle.
Sorti de l'arche où Noë
A sur ton front posé
Cette dent qui te tourmente
Cheval, ô mon cheval
De tout ton poids pesant
De ce miroir
Détourne-toi
Et de tes yeux apprivoisés
Regarde-moi.

3. L'ouïe

Ecoute aussi
Cheval, ô doux cheval
Et vous renard, chiens courants
Et toi lion griffant
Ainsi que l'on griffe d'amour,
Ecoutez cet orgue naissant
De la respiration de celui que j'aime.
Ce n'est pas un chant de guerre,
Ce n'est pas un chant de paix.
Tu me disais que le silence
Était au creux des coquillages.
C'est là que j'ai trouvé
Le bruit du vent
Orgue de mon amour,
Celui qui soulève les fouillages,
Chant de mon amour
Hélas éparpillé bien avant
Que tu puisses l'entendre.

Sight

Virginal ivory
Sculpted by the salt of the sea
Unicorn which you yourself serve
To defend me,
Virginal ivory
Sculpted by the force of the waves,
Horse, oh white horse
Yoked to my soul,
As he gave it to me
To remain faithful to him.
Out of the Ark of Noah
Has on your forehead set
This tooth which torments you
Horse, oh my horse
With all your heavy weight
Of this mirror
Turn away
And with your tamed eyes
Look at me.

Sound

Listen also
Horse, oh soft horse
And you fox, hounds
And you clawing lion
So that one claws it of love,
Listen to this emerging organ
To the respiration of the one I love.
It is not a song of war,
It is a song of peace.
You told me that the silence
Was in the hollow of shells.
It is that which I found
The sound of the wind
Organ of my love,
That which raises the foliage,
Song of my love
Alas scattered long before
You could hear it.

4. L'odorat

Passionnément,
Oui passionnément,
Fleur que j'effleure,
Passionnément je l'aime
Mon seul seigneur.
C'est pour lui cette couronne
Lapins des bois, respirez,
Respirez l'herbe du matin
Et ces milles fleurs
Entre mes doigts mouillés
Par la rosée.
Lapins blessés, respirez
La rose que l'on vous a volée
La rose et l'oranger
Et l'herbe folle qui foudroie
Qui d'autre que nous doux
La broie,
Philtre brûlant encore
Au fond de moi.

5. Le gout

Sorbier sauvage
Rouge de soleil
Bel oiseau de présage
Battant des ailes,
Battant des ailes.
Ma main est une branche
Et tu viens y manger,
Bel oiseau apeuré
Trouant l'écorce amère.
Ils t'ont crevé les yeux
Pour te faire chanter,
Bel oiseau aveuglé
Battant des ailes,
Battant des ailes.
Si tu t'envoles,
L'épervier est là
Pour te tuer
Et tous les fruits
Que j'ai cueillis pour son retour
Auront un gout de terre.

³ A philter is a magical potion; one could surmise a love potion in this context.

Smell

Passionately,
Yes passionately,
Flower that I touch,
Passionately I love him
My only lord.
It is for him this crown
Rabbits of the woods, breathe,
Breathe the grass of the morning
And these thousand flowers
Between my fingers wet
With the dew.
Wounded rabbits, breathe
The rose that was stolen from you
The rose and the orange tree
And the wild grass that strikes
Who else than the two of us
Crushes it,
Still burning philter³
In front of me.

Taste

Mountain ash
Red of the sun,
Beautiful birds of omen
Beating their wings,
Beating their wings.
My hand is a branch
And you come to eat there,
Beautiful frightened bird
Piercing the bitter bark.
They gouged out your eyes
To make you sing,⁴
Beautiful blind bird
Beating their wings
Beating their wings.
If you fly away,
The sparrow hawk is there
To kill you
And all the fruits
That I picked for his return
Will have a taste of earth.

⁴ Or to blackmail you – similar to the American idiom, “Make him sing like a bird,” and tell all under some sort of threat

6. Le toucher

Ombre de mon beau seigneur,
Ne touchez pas à lui,
A son drapeau
Que je porte bien haut
Avec ses trois croissant de lune.
Ombre qui devant moi grandit
D'heure en heure
Pour ne faire bientôt,
Comme l'aiguille au méridien
Pour ne faire plus qu'une.
Licorne sous ma paume
Aussi lisse que ton front,
Licorne sous ma paume
Aussi pure que le sable du temps
qui nous sépare...
La croix de ton épée
Toujours entre nous deux
S'est trouvée.
Croix pleine de ton sang,
Si l'on devait, à cet instant,
Me la rapporter
Parmi mes bêtes, mes arbres
Et ces fleurs sur lesquelles
jamais tu n'as marché,
Ô mon amour, mon gisant,
Mon seul seigneur,
Je dresserais ma licorne
qu'elle me perce le coeur.
Il reviendra
Avant que passent les oiseaux migrateurs
Et la cigogne
Qui déjà tourbillonne au-dessus de nous.
A mon seul désir
D'être à celui
Pour qui je voudrais mourir.

Touch

Shadow of my handsome lord,
Do not touch him,
To his flag
That I carry high
With its three crescent moons.
Shadow who grows larger before me
Hour by hour
Not before long,
Like the needle to the meridian
To become one.
Unicorn under my palm
As smooth as your forehead,
Unicorn under my palm
As pure as the sand of time
That separates us...
The cross of your sword
Always between the two of us
Is found.
Cross full of your blood,
If one were to, at this instant,
Bring it back to me
Among my beasts, my trees
And these flowers upon which
You have never walked
Oh my love, my recumbent,⁵
My only lord,
I would raise my unicorn
That it pierces me in the heart.
He will return
Before the passing of the migratory birds
And the stork
Who already swirls⁶ above us.
To my only desire
To be the one
For whom I would like to die.

⁵ In ancient French, the word, “gisant,” refers to a sculpture of a figure lying down, a recumbent. These sculpture were placed atop tombs of medieval nobility. Here is a reference which may help with the imagery in this poem.

<http://www.saint-denis-basilique.fr/Explorer/Histoire-du-monument#>

⁶ or “circles”

References

- Campbell, Gordon. "Millefleurs." *Grove Art Online*. 11 Feb. 2013; Accessed 15 Oct. 2020. <https://www-oxfordartonline-com.proxy.bsu.edu/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7002073104>
- Cosma, Octavian. "Alexandra, Liana." *Grove Music Online*. 2015; Accessed 7 Feb. 2021. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.bsu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000044948>.
- Crichton, Ronald. "Retablo de maese Pedro, El." *Grove Music Online*. 2002; Accessed 27 Feb. 2021. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.bsu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000008097> .
- "Google Images: La Dame a La Licorne." Google Search. Google. Accessed January 20, 2021. <https://www.google.com/search?q=la+dame+a+la+licorne&tbm=isch&hl=en&tbs=isz%3Al&sa=X&ved=0CAEQpwVqFwoTCLD0n9jsn-8CFQAAAAAdAAAAABAC&biw=1349&bih=568> .
- "Histoire Du Monument." Centre des monuments nationaux, 2018. <http://www.saint-denis-basilique.fr/Explorer/Histoire-du-monument#> .
- Kimball, Carol. *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005.
- La Dame à La Licorne. Translated by Katharine Burris. *YouTube*, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qg3ih3YCalo>
- La Dame à la licorne - Partie 2 - Interprétation historique [The Lady of the Unicorn – Part 2: Historical Interpretation]. Translated by Katharine Burris. *YouTube*, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1unZ6KBcws>
- La Dame à la Licorne: Restauration des Tapisseries [The Lady of the Unicorn, restoration of the tapestries]. Translated by Katharine Burris. *YouTube*, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_JWVnSrEmA
- La Dame à la Licorne, Une Histoire de Noces Alchimiques. Translated by Katharine Burris. *YouTube*, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EaBzUuA8ws>

Law, Jessica. "Bird That Solved Migration Mystery Now Illegally Killed on Its Journey." BirdLife International, February 26, 2019. <https://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/news/bird-solved-migration-mystery-now-illegally-killed-its-journey> .

Les Techniques Médiévales de la Broderie [The Medieval Techniques of Embroidery]. Translated by Katharine Burris. *YouTube*, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EboMkzMyrWQ>

Moraru, Liana A. *Chant d'amour de la Dame à la Licorne (1995): opéra de chambre après six poèmes d'Étienne de Sadeleer*. [Song of Love of The Lady of the Unicorn: chamber opera upon six poems by Étienne de Sadeleer]. IMSLP, 1995.

[https://imslp.org/wiki/Chant_d'Amour_de_la_Dame_a_la_Licorne_\(Alexandra,_Liana\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Chant_d'Amour_de_la_Dame_a_la_Licorne_(Alexandra,_Liana))

Paris, France. Cluny Museum. Translated by Katharine Burris. *YouTube*, 2017.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyGKM5w08bQ>

de Sadeleer, Etienne. *La Dame à la Licorne: Six Poèmes d' Étienne de Sadeleer Précédés d'Un Texte De Rainer Maria Rilke* [The Lady of the Unicorn: six poems by Étienne de Sadeleer preceded by a text by Rainer Maria Rilke]. Translated by Katharine Burris. Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1973.

Souchal, Geneviève F. *Chefs-d'oeuvre de la Tapisserie du XIVe au XVIe siècle: Grand Palais, 26 Octobre 1973-7 Janvier 1974*. Paris: Éditions des musées nationaux, 1973.

Sowley, Katherine Ilsley. "The Lady and The Unicorn: The Iconography of Love in a Series Of Fifteenth-Century Tapestries." Master Thesis, McGill University, 1998.

Visite privée: Magiques licornes du musée de Cluny [Private Visit, Magic unicorns of the Cluny Museu]. Translated by Katharine Burris. *YouTube*, 2018.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyGudrrwxJ8>

"White Stork." White Stork - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics. Accessed February 1, 2021.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/white-stork> .