

Mélissa Von Vépy
// Cie Happés

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PIANO RUBATO

Creation January 2023

Aerial performance - live music

by and with Mélissa Von Vépy and Stéphan Oliva



Tour management contact :

Thomas Balouet

+33 6 51 88 61 40 / thomas@melissavonvepy.com

www.melissavonvepy.com

PIANO RUBATO

This ship floats on dry land, it is a sound ship.
It pitches in an endless journey, to the other world.
Attempting to reconcile with the invisible,
with the souls of those who went before us.
The captain is music, the woman is wind,
her breath animates this strange piano-boat;
All three, instruments of passage,
inextricable transmitter-transceivers.



*structure under construction
March 2022*

"RUBATO" is an Italian musical term, literally: "fly or subtilize" but in music: to play rhythmically with all the freedom available to an interpreter: his share of free will.

PIANO RUBATO

Aerial performance - live music

Duo / for all / planned length: 40/50min

Diffusion planned in different configurations: theaters (tiers - frontal view), or non-dedicated places: open air, halls, urban wasteland, arenas... (public installed in semicircular)

Conceived and interpreted by: MéliSSa Von Vépy

Musical composition and live piano: Stéphan Oliva

Scenography: Neil Price, MéliSSa Von Vépy, *electronic conception:* Cédric Cambon

Sound design: Jean-Damien Ratel

Light design: Sabine Charreire

Costume designer: Catherine Sardi

Technical management: Julien Chérault

Tour management: Thomas Balouet

Administration: Jean-Baptiste Clément

Produced by: Happés company // MéliSSa Von Vépy

Co-produced by: Culture Commune, National Scene from the Bassin Minier du Pas-de-Calais
Le Sirque, National Circus Center of Nexon
(in progress)

Supported by: French Ministry of Culture - DRAC Occitanie, Région Occitanie, Pyrénées - Méditerranée

Special support and thanks to: Amadeus Audio: development of a tailor-made electro-acoustic device, Jean-François Tobias - association Piano Historique, Raphaële Von Vépy and Andy Steiner

The *Happés company // MéliSSa Von Vépy* is Franco-Swiss.

The company is supported by the french ministry of Culture - DRAC Occitanie.

MéliSSa Von Vépy is an associated artist with the Sirque – National Circus Center of Nexon.



Intent

After directing five performers for "The Flyings" (created in February 2021), and 12 years after the creation "Mirror, Mirror" (Sujets à vif – Avignon Festival 2009, around 150 performances to date), I want to return to the stage with the composer Stéphan Oliva for a new duo creation.

The piano as a starting point

A piano - moving ship, scenical and musical object.

It will be Stéphan's instrument as much as mine. We also want it to exist on its own, like a sculpture. The lid of the piano will be disproportionately elongated, like a 5-meter-high ship's sail.

It is my breath, linked to a counterweight oscillating in the hull, which will make it move.

Like the slow beating of a wing that will allow me to evolve on/under it, in the condition of a scuba diver: my exhalation will put the ship down, allowing me to graze the ground, while the inspiration will lift me in the air.



Sculpture made by my late father, Bernard de Vépy, at the origin of this project, by the movement it inspires, the colors and strong sensations of the material: metal, burnt wood, plaster, oil, pigments, feathers - 1995

The design of scenographic structures closely intertwined with the dramaturgy is one of the striking specificities of the Happés company.

For the realization of this "piano-boat", I continue my collaboration (since 2011) with scenographer and builder Neil Price.

Currently under construction, this scenic object induces many technical challenges.

If it must immediately strongly challenge the imagination of the spectators by its evocative power, this scenic object is thought of both as a high-quality musical instrument - sound system designed by Jean-Damien Ratel with the exceptional support of "Amadeus sound system" - and of course, it must fulfill the function of "apparatus", of support for my aerial evolutions.

Added to this extraordinary design, the movement of the structure: pivoting on itself at 360°, it will oscillate at 180°; the electronic design of a counterweight device linked to my breathing will be carried out by Cédric Cambon.

A musical and visual dive

I would like, for this piece, to dig into the essence of my aerial practice as well as those of Buto and Qi gong, to compose, with Stéphan Oliva, a musical score that is both sound and visual.

I will tend towards a refined, minimalist choreographic writing, body states, focusing on moving areas, seeking a suspended presence, in transparency, and a very precise movement. Through resonances or as a counterpoint to Stéphan's notes, I would like to make this piano-boat dance, melt into the air, embodying - physically and without affect -, through my breath and my muscles, a woman-wind.

“...We embrace the souls of those who passed away before us and they give us their strength. This is where the unlimited power of Buto comes from (...) The dancer is there. He doesn't say anything. But his body has a past that gives it a weight, a thickness. Anonymous, it carries a human content, a summary of lived life...” Tatsumi Hijikata (co-founder of Buto)

Like this quotation, musically, it will not be a question of interpreting a musical composition, but rather of finding the systems of improvised games of a sound choreography which are naturally "engraved" in the "history" of the musician, who, like the captain of the ghost ship, wanders from stage to stage, with his musical background.

“I got used to death: a pianist is a man disguised as an undertaker, with in front of him, constantly, his piano which looks like a hearse.” Arthur Rubinstein



Isle of the Dead - Arnold Böcklin (1880)

The piano here has become a boat, vessel, ship. Extrapolation of its intrinsic potential, music moves us, from within. Therefore we conceive the writing of this performance as a journey on the open sea, sometimes calm, sometimes stormy, on the surface or in the depths, approaching islands with singular hues.

Like a delineation that places us on the edges of what's tangible, all that remains is the framework, the skeleton, of our piano-boat. It is the essence that is exposed, the mechanics of this instrument that conveys its history and all the music in its DNA. The ship is inhabited!

Passengers of this living sculpture, directly animated by my breath, we would like to probe this transitory and mysterious space, from the Living to the Other World. One could imagine our craft like that of the Flying Dutchman, like Böcklin's boat, or those of ancient Egypt, leading souls to the Other Shore.

A crossing where interior and exterior materials merge, giving way to the invisible and silence, where the intellect like the ego no longer has any use, and be nothing more than sound, breath and movement.

Mélissa Von Vépy

Artistical team

Mélissa Von Vépy // Happés Company Conception, Performance



Born in Geneva (Swiss) in 1979, she started the circus at the age of 5, then joined the CNAC (National Circus Formation Center in France) from which she graduated in 1999 as a trapeze artist.

Within her company, Happés, she creates shows combining her practice of aerial, dance and theater.

The scenographic elements she designs are an integral part of the dramaturgy of her plays, always based on aerial expression: the physical and interior dimensions of Gravity.

With faithful artistic collaborators - Sabine Charreire, Pascale Henry, Sumako Koseki, Stéphan Oliva, Neil Price, Jean-Damien Ratel, Catherine Sardi... - Mélissa Von Vépy has been exploring, for twenty years, the infinite metaphors of our vertical movements.

Past creations:

2021: *Les Flyings (*quintet*)

2018: Noir M1 (*solo*)

2017: *L'Aérien, causerie-envolée (*solo*)

2015: J'ai horreur du printemps (*live music - show with a jazz quatuor*)

2013: VieLLeicht (*solo*)

2009: *Miroir, Miroir (*duo for a mirror and a piano, with Stéphan Oliva*)

2009: Dans la gueule du ciel (*duo*)

2007: Croc (*solo, co-direction: C. Ikeda*) and En suspens (*quintet co-direction : C. Moglia*) Co-directed with Chloé Moglia :

2005: I look up, I look down...(duo) / Price Art du cirque SACD - 2007

2003: Temps Troubles (*trio*)

2001: Un certain endroit du ventre (*duo*) **show actually touring*

Performer: *Talk Show* (2017) with Gaël Santisteva, *Ce qui n'a pas de nom* (2015) with Pascale Henry, *Hans was Heiri* (2012) with Zimmermann & de Perrot, *UCHUU-cabaret* (2008) with Carlotta Ikeda, *Les Sublimes* (2003) with Guy Alloucherie.

Transmission and artistic advisor: Mélissa Von Vépy regularly leads workshops, master-classes on the aerial practice and is invited as a collaborator / artistic advisor by several companies.

She is currently working on the creation "Plonger" (autumn 23) by Sarah Devaux / Menteuses company, as part of her partnership with the Happés company.

The *Happés company* // Mélissa Von Vépy is Franco-Swiss.

The company is supported by the french ministry of Culture - DRAC Occitanie.

Mélissa Von Vépy is an associated artist with the Sirque – National Circus Center of Nexon.

Stéphan Oliva Composer, Pianist

Stéphan Oliva is a pianist and composer navigating between various artistic worlds (jazz, cinema, comics, theater, circus...).

He is one of the European pianists of great talent whose name evokes a modernity inscribed in the great history of jazz and improvisation. Recognized for the finesse of his playing, his originality and his eclecticism.



Regularly invited on French radios (Radio France, TSF, FIP...) for his multiple news and his work in the cinema, Stéphan Oliva performs on many stages around the world, addressing with passion and sharing to a wide audience.

- 4**** jazzman (1992 - 1999 - 2002 - 2008 - 2010-2019)

- « Grand Prix » jazz album from the Charles Cros Academy in 2017 - "France Musique Choice" in 2010, 2012 and 2013, 2017, 2019

Listen to Stéphan Oliva :

Live session on France Musique, 12th of February 2022:

<https://www.radiofrance.fr/francemusique/podcasts/jazz-club/stephan-oliva-fait-son-cinema-ausunside-5846899>

Stéphan Oliva "Cinéma invisible" - Bonus track #1:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6am_mB7Qw

Neil Price Scenographer, Builder



Neil Price was born in Hemel Hempstead in England where he studied engineering. At the age of 20, he left for a tour of Europe as a street artist and remained in France where he has lived ever since.

In 2004 he joined "Les 3 points de suspension / Dakota", a Franco-Swiss company.

He realizes the scenographies, designs the accessories and plays with them as an actor and technical manager.

Since 2011, he has been creating the scenographies for Mélissa Von Vépy / the Happés company for each of their plays (VieLLeicht, J'ai honneur du Printemps, L'Aérien, Noir M1, Les Flyings).

An outstanding constructor-engineer, Neil Price works in close collaboration with the directors to materialize their ideas, with the constant concern to serve a purpose, a singular aesthetic universe, while respecting precise specifications in terms of safety and practicability.

For ten years, many performing artists have called on his skills to create their scenographies (Sumako Koseki, Ana Ventura, Thomas Guiral, Mathilde Jaillette, Olivia Csiky Trnka, Sarah Devaux, etc.)

He is currently collaborating with Mélissa Von Vépy – Piano Rubato, La Cie du Prélude – Littoral and Charlie Moine – The Festival Committee.

Press - extracts

About "Mirror, Mirror", the previous show created with Mélissa Von Vépy and Stephan Oliva
(created in 2009 for "Les Sujets à vif" in the Avignon Festival)

"...A real dialogue is established, the musician - Stéphan Oliva - relaunching the trapeze artist to push her to her last limits. All this in a state of poetic grace that verges on perfection. A dazzling performance in its refined fragility. »

Les Trois Coups, Marie-Christine Harant

"...Here, the mirror crosses itself both literally and figuratively, and here she is stuck on the other side. Up there, however, the same questions remain. But, for a few minutes, the body gave birth to a reflection and a world apart, troubled and cruel, served by a high-level interpreter."

La Terrasse, Nathalie Yokel

"...Created in Avignon in 2009, this poetic moment is a superb gift from jazz to art itself. "

Jazz Magazine, Philippe Méziat

"...Mirror, Mirror of the Franco - Swiss Mélissa Von Vépy. A miracle of grace and poetry within the framework of the "Sujets à Vif" offered by the Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers (SACD). Coming from the circus, she is an aerial dancer with the imagination of a great choreographer..."

Le Figaro.fr, Nathalie Simon

"...Mélissa Von Vépy offers a moment of aerial and poetic grace, accompanied on the piano by Stéphan Oliva. Beautiful, moving, sublime. A miraculous half hour of pure beauty.

We touch here, by this game above the ground, something of the spirituality that we seek in art, we are touched by this mastered and poetic magic. We cry and we applaud...Go ahead! "

Figaro blog, Armelle Héliot,

" ...Breathtaking! The young woman passes to the other side of the mirror, as if swallowed by it, then she reappears. Limited experience of self-knowledge? Willingness to return to oneself? We would like this beauty to never, ever stop..."

Vincent Josse's blog



Extracts from *Mirror, Mirror*: <https://www.melissavonvepy.com/en/mirror/>

Creation's planning

September 2021 to April 2022:

- production set-up (see estimated budget)
- research and construction of the scenography in Aigues-Vives, at the Happés company's place

Residencies in residence: (8 weeks)

- May-October 2022: Aigues-Vives, at the Happés company's place (3 weeks)
- August 22-27, 2022: La Cigalière - Sérignan Theater (to be confirmed)
- October 2022 (6-day periods, requests in progress)
- October 31-November 5, 2022: Le Sirque, National Circus Center of Nexon
- December 12-16, 2022: Arles theater
- January 3-14, 2023: Culture Commune, National Scene of the Bassin Minier du Pas de Calais

Touring (pre-order's calendar in progress)

- 12th, 13th January 2023 first dates in LOOS-EN-GOHELLE, Culture Commune, National Scene
- January 17th, 2023 (2 rep) LILLE, Le Prato, National Circus Center
- May 2023 SERIGNAN, La Cigalière
- June 2nd and 3rd, 2023 AIGUES-VIVES, at the Happés company's place
- August 8th to 13th 2023 NEXON, Le Sirque, National Circus Center
- September 2023 SÈTE, National Scene, season opener

Welcoming conditions

The show can be presented in different settings: theaters (tiers - frontal view), or non-dedicated places: open air, halls, urban wasteland, arenas... (public installed in semi circular)

Aerial performance with live music, for all, approximative length 40/50min

- 2 shows minimum, possibility to play twice a day (4h delay between 2 representations)
- 4 people touring, please ask us for invoice and prices

Technical requirement (see temporary technical rider)

Minimum stage size: a circle of 10m of diameter (flat ground - resistance: 500 kg per square meter), height under grill or ceiling: 7m.

We will ask for sound and light equipment

Touring management contact:

Thomas Balouet +33 6 51 88 61 40

thomas@melissavonvepy.com / www.melissavonvepy.com