

Voices of the rainforest (2008)

Program notes

by Elisenda Fabregas

Voices of the rainforest for flute (alto flute), cello and piano (2007) was written for the Meininger-Trio, a group based in Germany. The premiere took place on March 15, 2008, at the WDR Broadcasting Radio Station in Cologne, Germany, in the program titled *Nachtmusik*.

Voices of the rainforest is a loose representation of a day in the life of the rainforest in Papua New Guinea. This work came about as a result of my life-long fascination and love for nature and a request from Christiane Meininger. A recording of actual sounds of insects, barking frogs, birds, and the singing of natives of the Papua New Guinea rainforest was the final inspiration for this work.

I. *Awakening* - At first a mix of darkness and light, then slowly the light filters through the tall trees taking over the darkness, and the stillness begins to move. Birdcalls and the incessant metallic buzzing of insects mark the beginning of a new day. The natives call this part of the day from morning night to real morning. The flute starts with a birdcall that will be an important structural element in this work. This movement leads without interruption to the second movement.

II. *Sago gatherers* - During the afternoon darkening human voices appear in the forest. The Kaluli women in Papua New Guinea cut and collect sago, an essential food plant in their diet. They sing haunting monotonous calls inflected with irregular accents while they work. First is one voice, and then other voices join in like a cacophonous choir.

III. *Evening rainstorm* - The wind arrives, sounds explode. Cicada calls, barking frogs and the insistent metallic buzzing of pulsing insects brings afternoon darkening and the arrival of the daily downpour, the wild wind, the random crash of weak branches, the sonic boom of thunder a cacophony of sounds.

IV. *Voices of inside night* The expressiveness of the alto flute reflects on the mystery of the rainforest night and the quiet sorrow of the creatures within. V. *Night spirits* is an abstract representation of a ceremonial night-dance by which natives drive their dead (spirits) away. Hundreds of dancers run wildly to the edge of a central fire while the chorus sings a song, the dancers then move wildly, doing a circling dance around the fire until dawn, driving the spirits of the dead away and leaving the tribe in peace.