

It Rose
Behind The River

Goodmesh Concours 2021 Finale Portfolio



written and composed by



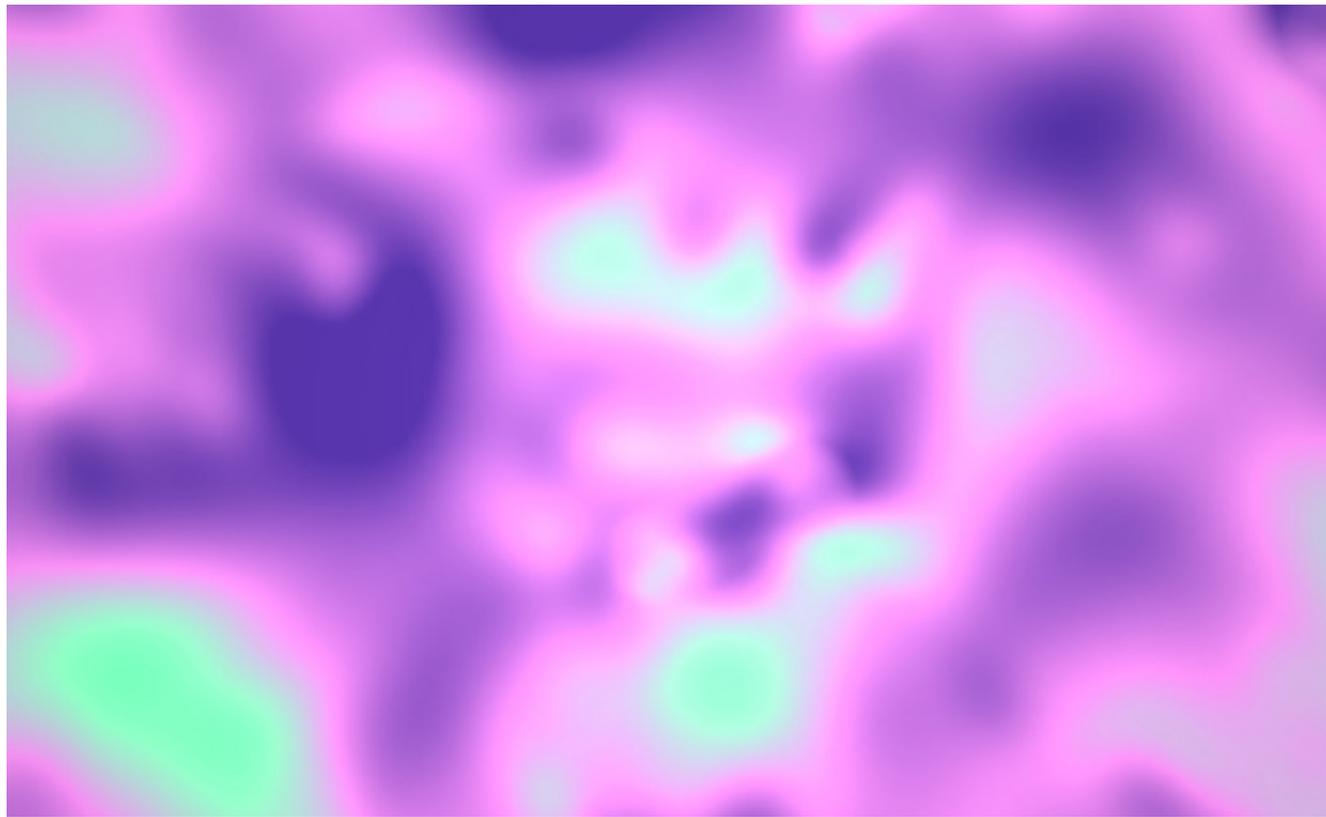
visualized by

Nuno Lobo & Pedro Lobo

performed by

Sketch

351



01. It Rose Behind The River, Final Video Footage



02. It Rose Behind The River, Scenography

It all came up to the symbiosis between music, the written narrative and Pedro's visuals. We tried to develop a framework where everything is so intertwined that the elements only make sense when together. The written narrative serves the visuals, and the visuals take from the written narrative. The written text becomes musical through sound, through scores, through notes and noise. Our instruments give voice to characters in an attempt to convey all the poetic imagery. We playfully move around playing our instruments, giving life to the characters, giving a different type of motion to the music, conveying a more dynamic experience to the audience. We played with the audience expectations as much as we did with each other. We made Nuno's beautiful open score our own. We tried to know each other better through our instruments and we got lost and found ourselves in many ways through the process.



03. Production, Pedro Lobo, Nuno Lobo and Ana Ribeiro



04. Scenography, Maria Nabeiro, Nuno Lobo and Pedro Lobo

MUSIC, CONCEPT AND STORY

All members of our team are in their early twenties. Some of us are finishing our studies, some of us are slowly starting our professional life. We might all be living different lives, but we are all taking our first steps in adulthood. Our childhood can now be seen as the first half of our life. That allows us to look at ourselves from the outside and to slowly understand how our child-like perception of the world has changed. As a kid you dream about what you will be when you grow up, you visualise your dream-house or dream-family. For us, back then, adulthood meant freedom: freedom of making own decisions, freedom of choosing how to spend your money, freedom to travel the world or to stay at home all day. We are slowly learning that things are not that simple. What about the responsibilities, the bills to pay and the new house to find, because your rental contract is temporary? Kids witness these challenges, but their expectations are distorted and contrast with reality.

Our story grew from this concept. We imagined a world where everyone tries to run away from adulthood. There are no sugar coated dreams about becoming an adult, no long-term goals, no wish for this freedom. There is only fear of growing older and the wish to avoid it at all costs. In our story, two children walk towards a mysterious light on the horizon, which is believed to be the only way to avoid adulthood. On their journey, they meet different creatures that share the same path and the scary expectation of growing older.

Nuno decided to present this narrative as an opera. However, we wanted to contradict the expectations connected to Opera. He calls the chosen format "virtual opera". As in traditional opera, the narrative is mainly communicated through music. In this case, there is no physical representation of a stage, musicians or singers. Everything happens in the audience's mind. The only visual element that the audience can see is a video-projection that helps to give a "human voice" to the instrumentalists. This, together with visual illustrations, will help to trigger the audience's imagination. To make this happen, the audience has to be surrounded by an opaque fabric, guaranteeing that there is no visual contact with the musicians. Those will be scattered around the created space. By doing this, the audience is fully immersed, with sounds coming from all corners.

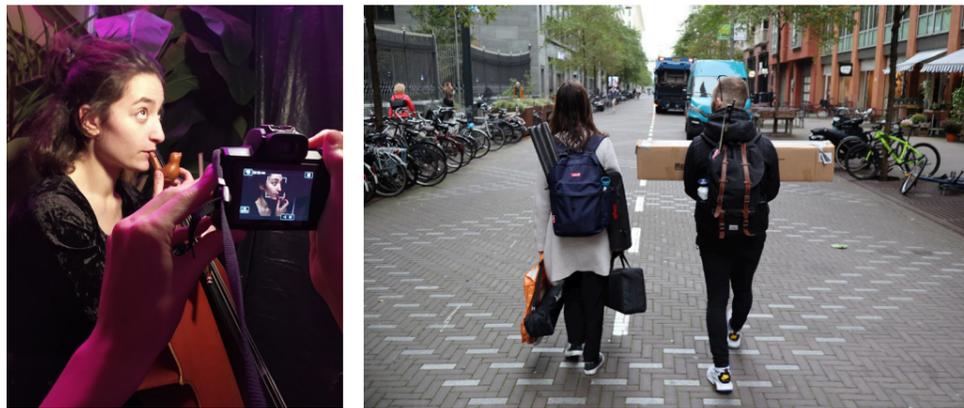
Composing a virtual opera is a different challenge than writing a normal opera...but a fun one. Of course, the story also determines the creative drive and helps to define the overall structure of the music. Our story can be compared to a fable. "It Rose Behind The River" has a succinct narrative, where certain creatures and elements from nature are anthropomorphized. The Larva, the River and the Tree share their stories in a repetitive and cyclical fashion, ultimately leading to the conclusion of the narrative. A Fable is a genre often common in children's literature. It therefore makes it perfectly combinable with our concept, in which all dream of eternal youth. We strengthened this further by applying a child-like mood to the music though the use of toy instruments (whistles or melodica).

The melodies are the result of a close collaboration with the instrumentalists, depending on their interpretation of their characters and their lines of the script. The composer works as a director, while the musicians perform as actors. At the same time, the music has the task to set the right mood for the narrative (similar to a soundtrack), while giving space for the musical dialogues to lead. In our piece, every one of the five musicians is giving voice to a character: Piccolo - Elena, Trombone - Renn, Melodica - Mr. Larva, Low Tom - Mr. River, Violoncello - Mr. Tree. Each of them has guidelines on how to impersonate these characters, while respecting their individual freedom to interpret the text as they will.

PRODUCTION

It's always a hard task to reflect and write about the creation and production of a project. Maybe our biggest challenging during the production of the project was finding a suitable and affordable venue. For our performance, we needed to create a structure surrounded by an opaque material. The audience would sit inside this structure, with a video projection, whilst the musicians would be scattered behind it and moving around it during the performance. We had, therefore, some specific requirements. We needed a room of a considerable size, with a grand piano and a beamer. Our aim was to look for places that were close enough, so that we could avoid spending a lot of our budget transporting the percussion instruments. Many possibilities came to our minds, however the search wasn't easy. As we are starting as an ensemble and didn't have a big budget, we thought about resorting to the Koninklijk Conservatorium building. We soon realised this wouldn't be an option and tried to move on to other possible solutions. In the beginning of the process, we were looking for a place where we could record both the audio and the video. This ended up being almost impossible to find, concerning our requirements and our availabilities. We ended up deciding to record the audio at the Amare Studios and record the video in another place.

Then, we asked friends and colleagues for advice about possible places and foraged the internet hunting for venues. Many hours were spent, and many e-mails were sent. We got all sorts of answers. Eventually, we settled for Studio Loos. Since it seemed to us as a versatile and affordable place, we took a shot and booked it. As we predicted, on the day of the recording we were able to transform it our way and it suited the project perfectly. After all the hours put into the production it came the part all the musicians yearn for: practising, rehearsing, and recording. That's the moment you start to forget all the work put into the production and can finally focus on the music. Our time was very tight: Nuno had to quickly compose this ambitious piece while saving enough time for us to practise our parts and rehearse together. He created an open score, with many improvisation boxes and flexibility in terms of ensemble playing. We can't deny how much fun we had finding our way through the music: impersonating characters with our instruments, conveying the narrative through playing, using non-traditional instruments. We had some very intense days rehearsing and recording for many, many hours. We knew, however, that it would be all worth it. In the end we were exhausted, but watching now the final result, is a very gratifying experience.



05-08. Production,
from top to bottom left to right:
Maria Nabeiro and Nuno Lobo,
Daniel Martins,
Inês Lopes and Ricardo Oliveira,
Ana Ribeiro and Nuno Lobo



09-12, Pedro's Illustrations, from top to bottom left to right:
Elena's Hands, Mr.Tree, Rebirth, Mr.Larva

VISUALS

Since the beginning of writing "It Rose Behind The River", Nuno wanted to tell a story about a world that moves towards this "light". A light that attracts the attention of those who are too afraid of becoming old. In this story, we don't know much about it – what is its nature, where does it come from or even what it is – but we know that in a way or another, this light affects all the characters equally and, in consequence to this, they respect it.

Representing such an energetic force was quite a challenge. We're sure that it had to be beautiful, persuasive and mighty. After many experiences, we found the ideal form: A light can be a natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible. And this light illuminates everything in this story. Literally and metaphorically.

So, we visualised this light at the edge of the horizon, pulsing, shimmering, almost addictive. Our characters share this journey of walking together towards it, so this light has to grow larger and larger until it expands throughout the whole screen. For the characters, it was crucial that they would be portrayed in a different style from the light. Hand-drawn illustrations were made, in order to animate the personality of each character while connecting to the "child-like" genre of this story. Later, this drawing got digitally edited to be in balance with the colours and the digital aspect of the light.



13, Nuno Lobo, Pedro Lobo, Marco Torres Lunchof, Sketch 351
(Ana Ribeiro, Daniel Martins, Inês Lopes, Maria Nabeiro, Ricardo Oliveira)



18, Nuno Lobo, Pedro Lobo, Marco Torres Lunchof, Sketch 351
(Ana Ribeiro, Daniel Martins, Inês Lopes, Maria Nabeiro, Ricardo Oliveira)



14-17, Sketch 351, from top to bottom and left to right:
Inês Lopes, Ricardo Oliveira, Daniel Martins, Maria Nabeiro, Ana Ribeiro

written and composed by

Nuno Lobo

visualized by

Pedro Lobo

performed by

Sketch 351

Daniel Martins / Trombone / (*Renn*)

Ana Ribeiro / Piccollo / (*Elena*)

Inês Lopes / Piano and toy instruments / (*Mr. Larva*)

Ricardo Oliveira / Percussion / (*Mr. River*)

Maria Nabeiro / Violoncello / (*Mr. Tree*)

Audio recording and mixing / Marco Torres Lunchof

Video recording and editing / Nuno Lobo & Pedro Lobo

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Beatriz Lobo, Pedro Levandeira,
Maria Barros and Frieda Gustavs.

