

Jurassic Trip (1998)

Seven prehistorical miniatures for ensemble

For narrator, flute, clarinet, two pianos, percussions and string quintet

Text by Ivan Alexandre

Commissioned by the Festival des Forêts.

Partial premiered on July 5, 1998 by the Ensemble Musique Oblique at the Festival des Forêts. Complete premiered on August 3, 2001 at the Festival de l'Empéri by Lambert Wilson and the musicians of the Festival.

Written using the same instrumental roster as Saint-Saëns' *Carnival Of Animals*, this series of prehistoric miniatures may be seen as twofold portraits : portraits of animals and portraits of composer friends. Whether found in illustrated encyclopedias, films by Steven Spielberg or, more recently, in the outstanding British documentary *Walking with Dinosaurs*, Tyrannosaurus engrosses present-day children as did the elephant and the lion those of Saint-Saëns' day. The exoticism of forever bygone times has gradually replaced geography-based exoticism. I have attempted here to pay homage to modern manifestations of the marvelous and to the mythology of today's children.

Paysage marécageux (« Marshy Landscape » to Jean Louis Florentz) Washes of strings in flux and colour-chords in the pianos and glockenspiel usher us into those damp plains where tree ferns, conifers and cycads intertwine in an unsettling jungle. The fluttering of a few wings reminds us that we are not alone...

Danse marine du Plésiosaure (« The Plesiosaurus' Seabound Hunt » to Marcel Landowki) A leaping, very nimble theme in the strings, accompanied by splashes of water, portrays this sea reptile, over three meters in length, on the hunt.

Attaque des raptors (to Paul Landowski) The most intelligent, quickest, wildest and most dangerous of carnivores have set out on a bounding chase. In the middle of the piece, a rap rhythm in the piano postpones the attack for a few seconds prior to the final assault.

Petit carnivore (to René Bosc) A parody of « contemporary music » at once and minimalist, played by the flute, the bass clarinet and a sole violin. This little carnivore gobbles up its prey without as much as a thought...

Vol en rase-mottes des Ptérodactyles (« TheTurf-Grazing Flight of the Pterodactyls » to Thierry Escaich) Before birds, they were the kings of the skies. Akin to bats with an eight-meter wingspan, they glided and honed in on their aquatic victims, then devouring them. Their high-pitched calls and abrupt drops in altitude are illustrated by highly virtuosic and aggressive music.

Déjeuner du Brontosau (« The Brontosaurus' Lunchtime » to Jean-François Zygel) This gentle, twenty-meter herbivore, weighting more than twenty tons, is finishing up its lunch under a blazing sun. A long, calm unison melody in the cello and double bass, accompanied by the piano's kaleidoscope harmonies, rises up to increasingly heartrending effect, eventually falling back into slumber.

Combat des Tyrannosaures (to Pascal Zavaro) These predators, twelve meters in length and five meters high, clash in violent, cannibalistic combat. Motor rhythm in the piano, punctuated by violent chords in the xylophone, alternate with the snapping of the jaws (by the whip) in a nightmarish ambiance. The score concludes with the agonising cry of the mortally vanquished.

Guillaume Connesson