

Handwritten title "Nanin" in a large, black, stylized font, set against a background of watercolor washes in shades of orange, yellow, and green.

Violet String Orchestra
opgedragen aan alle vluchtelingen
want ook ter wereld
dedicated to all those in search
of a shelter in the world

I see war as a cocktail of images, words, cries and...music. Music is sounds, that in my mind, always translate into something else. A grenade attack or a car bomb translate into silence. Immediately following a bomb, however, an unworldly silence turns into a chaotic burst of sounds. People screech, wail, and cry with raw emotion. When I reflect on these situations, I close my eyes and think of "Misere" or the "Stabat Mater. When I drive through some of the war-torn countries in the Middle East, I feel completely at ease when the sounds of Kurdish Mountain music come over the radio. Similarly, the songs of Oum Kalthoum, the Middle Eastern equivalent of Maria Callas or Edith Piaf, are everywhere to be heard. I then always ask myself, how can these musical poems, filled with so much sentimental love, exist amidst imagery that resemble a Bosch painting in which Mad Meg ensues havoc? "There is more between heaven and earth."

I therefore envy musicians, because it appears as if they have found the keys to a separate world. During my last visit to Israel and Palestine, I traveled with two youngsters, one Jewish, the other Palestinian. Despite their state of political separation, they nevertheless make music, together. They have something very few of their generation possess – A shared language and religion that is embedded in the structure of music.

On my return flights from the Middle East's war zones, I always search for Bach on the plane's audio channels. It acts as an instant detox, helping me reach "home." I can close my mind from invasive sounds, intrusive rhythms, alarming advertisements, and people who want to sabotage my mind with hateful messages.

In this world, where polarization and opposition set the daily tone, and the powerful use manipulation and controversy to bolster influence, Violet's recent project sounds like...music to the ears.

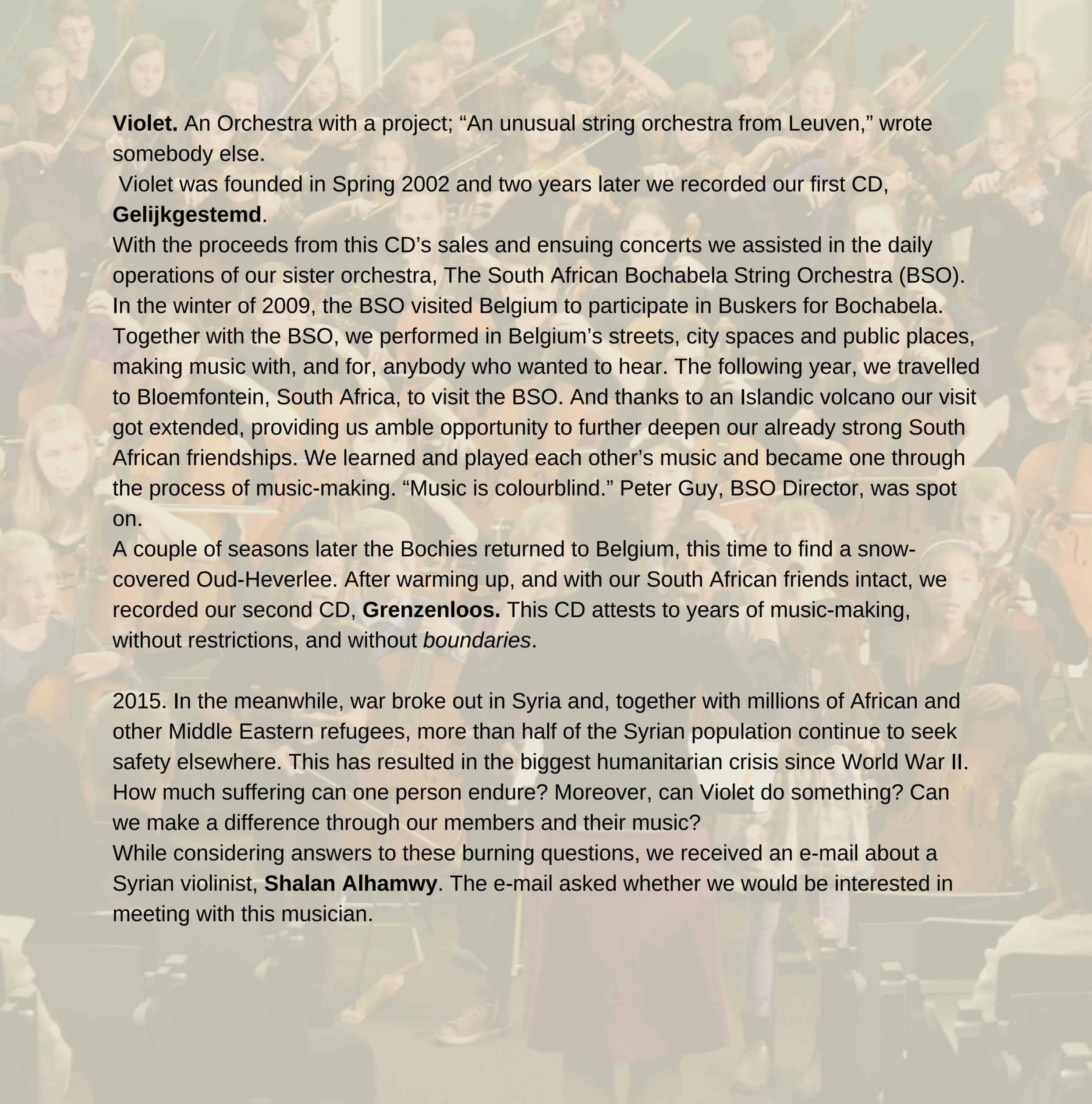
Music connects people. Community members, refugees, black or white, Christian or Muslim. What Violet is doing, feels right. Syrian music, musicians who make music together, the borders of us and them, dissolve through shared music-making. And this CD's goes to the core of what music can do: By directing the proceeds of this CD toward the "Life Skills Project" – a project that addressed war-related trauma - Violet actively helps reduce the sounds of war as they continue to haunt the victims and refugees of the Syrian war.

There is no single truth in the Syrian War and there is also little hope. Let the little hope that remains resound through this CD.

- Rudi Vranckx, May 2017



Rudi Vranckx for the series Little Heroes in Iriqian Kurdistan together with Ahmed and Basma



Violet. An Orchestra with a project; “An unusual string orchestra from Leuven,” wrote somebody else.

Violet was founded in Spring 2002 and two years later we recorded our first CD, **Gelijkgestemd.**

With the proceeds from this CD’s sales and ensuing concerts we assisted in the daily operations of our sister orchestra, The South African Bochabela String Orchestra (BSO). In the winter of 2009, the BSO visited Belgium to participate in Buskers for Bochabela. Together with the BSO, we performed in Belgium’s streets, city spaces and public places, making music with, and for, anybody who wanted to hear. The following year, we travelled to Bloemfontein, South Africa, to visit the BSO. And thanks to an Icelandic volcano our visit got extended, providing us ample opportunity to further deepen our already strong South African friendships. We learned and played each other’s music and became one through the process of music-making. “Music is colourblind.” Peter Guy, BSO Director, was spot on.

A couple of seasons later the Bochies returned to Belgium, this time to find a snow-covered Oud-Heverlee. After warming up, and with our South African friends intact, we recorded our second CD, **Grenzenloos.** This CD attests to years of music-making, without restrictions, and without *boundaries.*

2015. In the meanwhile, war broke out in Syria and, together with millions of African and other Middle Eastern refugees, more than half of the Syrian population continue to seek safety elsewhere. This has resulted in the biggest humanitarian crisis since World War II. How much suffering can one person endure? Moreover, can Violet do something? Can we make a difference through our members and their music?

While considering answers to these burning questions, we received an e-mail about a Syrian violinist, **Shalan Alhamwy.** The e-mail asked whether we would be interested in meeting with this musician.

Many e-mails, social media messaging, and coffees later, Shalan started composing music for Violet. We also developed a music programme together, including music for traditional Arabian music instruments.

Not surprising, the Violet engines started moving like never before. Even **Rudi Vranckx** showed his support for our project. And the proceeds? These will go directly to projects focused on, and initiated by, refugees, regardless of place. For all those in search of a shelter. Worldwide.

HANIN

Passion and Beauty. Combined Forces. With a Touch of Nostalgia.



Conductors Jaap Kruithof, Aag Dereymaeker, Isabelle Robesyn, Freet Verhulst and Geert Adriaenssens

My name is Shalan Alhamwy. I am Syrian. One evening, my father took me to a concert in Homs, my home city, where a visiting orchestra was performing well-known music. When the violinist started his solo, my mouth fell open. I was speechless, yet realized immediately: I will become a violinist. Upon our return home, I immediately searched for the violin my father bought my brother two years prior. I was sixteen when I started experimenting with the violin.

Ten years later, in 2007, I graduated as violinist from the Higher Music Institute, Damascus. I was playing with different Syrian orchestras, both in Syria and abroad, was teaching violin at both the University of Homs' Department of Music and at the Music School of Damascus, and was also frequently performing as soloist. My dreams had come true.

Then war broke out. Little by little, violence started to consume Homs' cultural life.

Schools and universities opted for temporary closure, especially in suburbs where students' safety was no longer a certainty. Music concerts rarely took place.

Concerned over our safety, my mothers, sisters and I fled to Damascus and then to the rural areas, close to Tartus. There I found refuge in music composition and arrangement, the only activity I could do without leaving home.

The war took longer than I expected and the situation in my country continued to deteriorate, growing grimmer and grimmer by the day. In August 2015, my sisters and I decided to flee to Europe. Because of the anticipated grueling journey, I had to leave my mother and violin behind, not knowing whether I will ever see them again. We arrived in Belgium after twenty days of traveling.

After learning that I am a professional violinist, a nurse from the Sint-Niklaas Refugee Centrum brought me in contact with the city's academic orchestra. And, thanks to a call on social media, a warmhearted musician from the Netherlands decided to lend me a beautiful Klotz violin.

Slowly but surely, I started to encounter Belgian and Syrian musicians. Fortunately, nine months after my arrival in Belgium, my mother joined us after a safe journey from Syria. She also managed to bring my instrument.

After more than 18 months, I am grateful that I can return to my life as a musician. I currently play in different orchestras and ensembles and continue to compose music.

War still torments my country. I hope this atrocity will soon come to an end.



*Shalan Alhamwy (viool)
Tarek Alsayed Yahya (Oed)
Hassan Ali Shaker (Kanoen)
Tammam Ramadan (Ney)
Robbe Kieckens(Percussie)*

A background image showing a group of musicians performing in a traditional setting. They are wearing headscarves and playing various instruments, including ouds and neys. The scene is dimly lit, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.

Tarek Alsayed Yahyah grew up in Aleppo, Syria where his fascination with the Oud started at a young age. While he did follow private lessons, Tarek is mostly a self taught musician. In 2005 he gave up his career as math teacher to focus exclusively on music. He soon took up a position as Oud instructor at two music conservatoires in Aleppo, he started composing music, and also joined several music ensembles, including Nawa and Wajd. One year after the start of the Syrian civil war, Tarek escaped the violence in Aleppo and found refuge in Belgium.

He currently teaches oud at the music academy of Sint-Niklaas and has also reconnected with several of his former musician friends. This reconnection has led to performances with the Wajd ensemble. Tarek likes both the traditional music of Aleppo and more contemporary arrangements of Arabian classics. He has mastered the art of improvisation but also composes his own music.

Tammam Alramadan was born in Aleppo in 1994 and started playing the ney at the age of ten. In 2010 he earned his degree in music from the conservatorium of Aleppo where he also started teaching music courses in 2011. Tammam has been a member of a variety of ensembles, including the Aleppo music school band, Ramal, and Wajd. He has performed in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, France, Germany, The Netherlands, and Belgium. In February 2014, Tammam obtained a visa to perform in a European city. But following the performance, he decided not to return to the war-torn reality of his country. Since then he's been living in Belgium where he and his musician friends are reviving their once popular Wajd ensemble.

In 2016 and with the support of Musique 3, the Wajd ensemble recorded *Musique d'Allep*. This album acts as an antidote to the Syrian war, successfully capturing the country's rich cultural heritage.

Robbe Kieckens' love for percussion stem from his childhood in Rwanda, where he also received his first music lessons. While he is mostly self-taught, he also took lessons from master percussionists in Senegal, Crete and Turkey. Exposure to such a diverse group of teachers, meant that Robbe could learn a wide variety of styles and techniques. Robbe's most impactful music experiences came from collaborating with Myrddin, Nathan Daems, Tristan Driessens, and many years of playing drums for African dances sessions.

Robbe's music interests range from West African drumming to Persian, Turkish, and Arabian styles and instruments. Because of his continuous search for new timbre and alternative rhythmic patterns, Robbe has not only developed his own personal percussion vocabulary, but also seeks ways of incorporate this vocabulary into Western folk, pop, and jazz.

Qanun instrumentalist **Ali Shaker Hassan** (1990) started taking music lessons at the age of six. This includes qanun lessons at the music and ballet school of Bagdad where students could learn both Middle Eastern and Western music styles. In 2004, one year after war started in Iraq, Ali and his family fled to Cairo, Egypt. Here Ali continued receiving qanun instruction and at the age of 17, completed his diploma in music with the highest distinction. Ali briefly returned to Bagdad and performed as one of Iraq's top musicians to audiences in Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Algeria. But because of the ensuring cultural and intellectual cleaning overtaking his country, Ali decided to leave the podium, status, and success behind by fleeing from his country of origin. After an intense period of acclimating to life in Belgian, Ali came in touch with people and music styles he is less familiar with. This includes styles from Macedonia, Albania and Romania. Ali composes his own music and hopes for eventual connections with Belgium's classical music world.

Hanin (Nostalgie) *Nay / Oud / Qanun / Strings / Percussion (4:29) | Shalan Alhamwy*

Hanin, or Nostalgia in English, is a beautiful melody filled with longing for the Syrian city, Homs. Shalan started composing this piece while fleeing from Syria. The piece is derived from a traditional Arabian song, entitled Tahmila. The song comprises of an introduction, a main theme, and improvisations. Less traditional is the almost western orchestral accompaniment to the solo section. The piece's musical development and improvisations are also more reminiscent of jazz than traditional Arabian improvisations, which are played more freely and independent.

Grastûno Bal *Strings / Percussion (3:02) | Trad./arr. Uwe Rössler*

This piece, which is very popular among the Sinti of Eastern Europe, describes the mane of a horse. Throughout the piece you can hear the horse's walk, gallop, and run. This energizing and joyful Romani melody can bring anybody to their feet!

Byssan Lull *Ney / Oud / Strings / Percussion(4:55) | Trad./arr. Tormod Tveke Vik/Violet*

Byssan Lull is a Swedish lullaby that shares that good things happen in measures of three. One of the lullaby's stanza's, for example, describes the following trilogy: Faith, hope, and love. Violet transformed Byssan Lull into a pleasant youthful arrangement for strings, including a Violet-Syrian section with improvisation by the Oud and Ney. This piece illustrates, yet again, how music is a language well understood by people from different cultural backgrounds.

Imate li vino *Nay / Oud / Qanun / Strings / Percussion (3:22) | Trad./arr. Lies Houben*

“Do you have any wine?” Even though this Macedonian piece sounds like a religious circle dance, the original lyrics share a completely different story. You will hear an instrumental version of the song, arranged specifically for Violet, but the real song is actually more of a mischievous song. The mostly male singers first go on a hunt for red wine...and lots of it. Then, they beg for lots of money, and followed by a stern request for maidens, and lots of them too. They also want lots of grandmothers, but they do eventually change their minds on the latter request!

The Sultan's Throne *Strings/ Percussion (2:55) | Trad./arr. Edward Huws Jones*

Na Prijestolu Sjedi Sultan is a Bosnian Sevdalinka melody. Sevdah, or Sevdalinka, is a passionate and melancholic music genre from the Balkans that represents an amalgamation of Jewish, Eastern and European musical elements. The song tells the story of a Vizier, the second in charge after the Sultan, who was caught in the Sultan's harem. The Sultan was furious, ordering the Vizier's death. But at the end of the song, the Vizier's life was spared after he declared his eternal love to the Sultan's oldest sister.

Ah Ya Zeen *Nay / Oud / Qanun / Strings / Percussion (4:00) | Trad./arr. Shalan Alhamwy*

Ah Ya Zeen is a well known Arabian folk song, composed as an ode to Imam Ali ibn Husayn, also known as Zayn al-Abidin. He was famous for his detailed teachings and endless grace, but also his handsomeness. In Egypt, Zayn al Abidin is regarded as a martyr. The song was composed between 660 and 720 and has since been the inspiration for many arrangements and improvisations. The lyrics tells the story of a murdered martyr whose blood turns into a bed of flowers as it flows through the pastures. This version, arranged by Shalan, is composed in a typical Arabian tonality, entitled Hijaz.

Schoon Lief *Violin solo / Oud / Strings (3:45) | Trad./arr. Stefaan Baert*

“Beautiful love of mine: how you are lying here, sound asleep dreaming your first dreams.” The Flemish folk song, Schoon Lief is originally from Belgium’s Brabant region and dates back to 1610. In this piece, the Syrian oud and the young string players of Violet come together in a remarkable way. Although the song is also popular in diverse student clubs, for the purposes of this music collaboration, the orchestra interpret Schoon Lief as a sad farewell to a loved one. Composed specifically for Violet, this recording of Schoon Lief produces an intense and emotionally filled musical moment.

An Old Bell *Oud (2:12) | Improvisation / Tarek Yahya*

Improvisation is one of the musical pillars of Arabian music. Improvisers express themselves freely in a variety of tonalities and keys (maqams) and in this way, illustrates their virtuosity, musical abilities, and creativity. Improvisations are also indicative of a musician’s geographic and music background. At the end of this improvisation, Tarek returns to the piece’s original key, and sets the tonal stage, so to speak, of the next piece, Ele Chamda Libi.

Ele Chamda Libi *Nay / Oud / Strings / Percussion (2:49) | Trad./arr. Kristof Quaegebeur/Violet*

Ele Chamda Libi or My heart’s desires, is a traditional Jewish religious song, but people also frequently sang it while participating in circle dances. The original version demands that the “Unending Source of Beauty” no longer hides but instead, show itself to the world. The piece was originally arranged by a former Violet member with a cello solo introduction. This time around, we swapped the cello for a Oud and Ney duet.

Two Syrian Dances I. The Rozana Ship *Strings (3:03) | Trad./arr. Shalan Alhamwy*

During Ottoman rule, its leaders sent a ship, called Rozana, to Beirut. During that time, Syria and Lebanon were one country. The ship was loaded with very cheap products from all over the East, with the intention to sink the Beirut economy. But instead dealers from Aleppo decided to help their Beirut counterparts and bought most of the products. This piece, of which the composer remains unknown, is therefore a definite sign of gratitude from the Beirut dealers to those in Aleppo, thanking them for saving their economy.

Two Syrian Dances II. The Delicate Girl *Strings (1:45) | Trad./arr. Shalan Alhamwy*

The Delicate Girl, or Bint el-shalabiya in Arabic, is an old folk song, and depending on the source, originated in either Syria, Iraq, or Lebanon. The song, which dates back to a historical period when the area was still a combined region, is without a doubt one of the best love and most played songs in the Arab region. In this beautiful song, a young man confesses his love to the girl of his dreams: “Beautiful lady with the almond shaped eyes - I love you with all my heart, all my heart.”

Vu bist du geveyzen *Strings / Percussion (2:36) | Trad./arr. Lies Houben*

“Where were you when you were young and our hearts still burning with love?” This Klezmer song Vu bist du geveyzen captures a traditional Jewish marriage. In this case, however, the newly wedded groom leaves his beautiful bride immediately after the wedding feast. He returns a many years later, only to find that he and his wife are both not only older but also poor.... “And today you have returned, but the hair is grey and my hands shaking” .

Broeder Jacob/Ranna Aljarasu *Nay/Oud/Qanun/Strings/Percussion (3:00) | Trad./arr. Shalan Alhamwy*

This version of the well known children's song, featuring Ali on the Qanun, was arranged Shalan for Arabian instruments and all 120 Violet orchestra members. The arrangement also includes the well known Brother John canon sung in both Flemish and Arabic by Violet's youngest members. The Arabic version describes an early morning scene, with a rising sun, the crow of a rooster, and a ringing school bell, announcing that the first lessons of the new school day are about to start. In the Dutch version of Brother John, he overslept and thus forgot to ring the church bells. There is a definite difference between these two days!

Mi Chamocha *Strings / Percussion (2:05) | Trad./arr. Lies Houben*

This original Israeli prayer song praises God for saving the Israeli forefathers from slavery in Egypt. To save them, God parted the seas, allowing them to cross the dry ocean bed to safety and freedom.

The piece first asks, Mi Chamocha - "Who is like You?" Followed by the rhetorical answer, Ein kamocho - "There is nobody like You." Violet performs Mi Chamocha in full orchestra including Violeter, Bassolet and Violet.



Ranna Aljarasy

Hana aldarsu
Iemaou iesmaou
Sawtohou jamilon
Malahou mathielon
Din dan don
Din dan don

Akhi Yakoub

Akhi Yakoub, Akhi Yakoub
Lahala nayem, lahala nayem
Rannet kil aljras
Rannet kil aljras
Bim bam bom
Bim bam bom

De bel klinkt

Tijd om naar de klas te gaan
Luister ernaar, luister ernaar
Het klinkt zo mooi
Het mooist van alles
Bim bam bom
Bim bam bom

Broeder Jacob

Broeder Jacob, Broeder Jacob
Slaapt gij nog, slaapt nog
Alle klokken luiden
Alle klokken luiden
Bim bam bom
Bim bam bom

The bell rings

Time to go to class
Listen how it rings, listen how it rings
It sounds so nice
The nicest of sounds
Bim bam bom
Bim bam bom

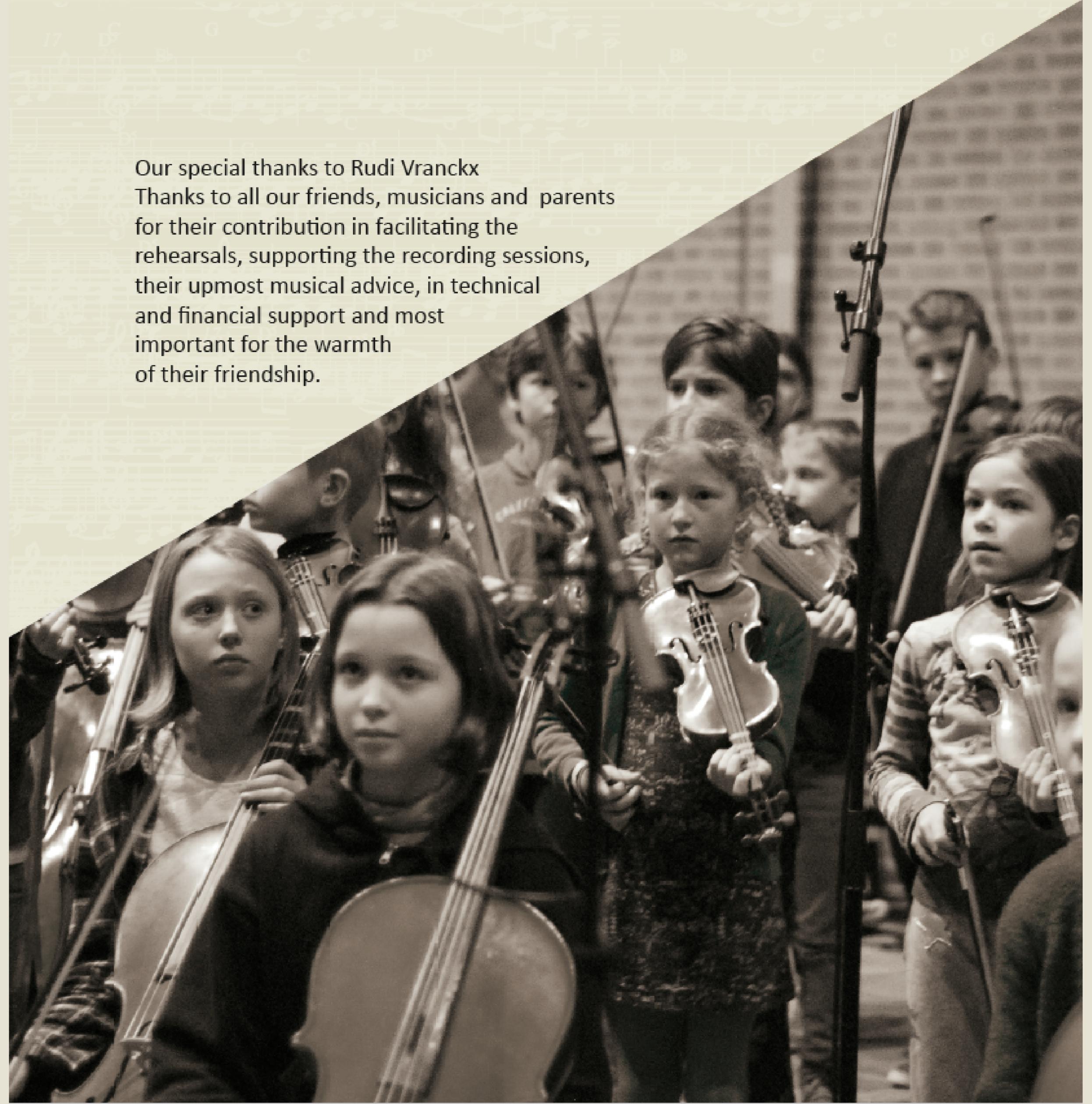
Brother John

Brother John, Brother John
Are you still asleep, Are you still asleep
Go and ring the bells, go and ring the
bells
Bim bam bom
Bim bam bom



Zoë Hemmeryckx • Wout Sohier • Willem Van Och • Wenke Daems • Ward Geens • Veronica Staes • Tuur Lumbeeck • Tess Declercq • Sumer Sanah Ullah • Stijn Baumers • Simon Van Eekert • Sigrid Janssens • Sien Geraerts • Si-Die Demeester • Seppe Coesens • Ruben Marchal • Roosje Daelemans • Roos Verhaegen • Robbe Eerdeken • Pieter Dewulf • Paulina Bernard • Paulien Jans • Oskar Dekeyser • Nolan Jacquemijn • Nina Siegertsz • Nina Sato • Nelis Franceus • Nel Beelen • Nathan Van Mol • Nathalie Locquet • Nalani Vanderheyden • Michiel Baumers • Michiel De Klerck • Max den Boef • Marthe Vandenbossche • Marjan Van de Peer • Marike Dewulf • Marieke Janssens • Margot Brumagne • Manou Van den Eynde • Manon Lefever • Luz Aerden • Lotte Vanherck • Lore Van Droogenbroeck • Loïc van Wieringen • Loes Daelemans • Lien Touchant • Lien Van Eekert • Lennert Janssens • Leander Bouckaert • Lama Altarbolly • Laura Stalmans • Laura Van Passel • Lars Geys • Lara Weiler • Kim Savonet • Katrijn Minten • Katrijn Rumbaut • Kate Vanbrussel • Kate Toelen • Jose Noel Vanbrussel • Joppe Wevers • Joni Van Orshaegen • Jolien Gadeyne • Jits Dehaes • Jef Hendrickx • Jade Adriaenssens • Irena Vandenberghe • Inke Moens • Ingrid Stoop • Imana Vanderheyden • Helen Martens • Heleen Van de Peer • Hanne Buyse • Hannah De Bièvre • Hannah Dewulf • Fran Vanbrussel • Floor Verhaegen • Eva Coppens • Eva Staes • Esther Van Haver • Ellen Vanbrussel • Elise Weiler • Eline Stuyven • Elias Kruithof • Elena Lesire • Edith Janssens • Droene Bex • David Minten • Clara Peeters • Charlotte Lauwers Castelein • Bie Lumbeeck • Beren Loos • August Vannes • Astor Brumagne • Astarte Sourbon • Arwen Willems • Antoon Reynaert • Annabel Van Bladel • Anna Kruithof • Amber Bienstman • Abel Goris • Vincent Goris • Veerle Segers • Tarek Alsayed Yahya • Tammam Ramadan • Shalan Alhamwy • Robbe Kieckens • Myriam Vreys • Kris De Schepper • Jaap Kruithof • Isabelle Robesyn • Inge Dumon • Hassan Ali Shaker • Guy Remmerie • Greet Verhulst • Geert Adriaenssens • Carine Spiloes • Anne Willekens • Aag Dereymaeker

Our special thanks to Rudi Vranckx
Thanks to all our friends, musicians and parents
for their contribution in facilitating the
rehearsals, supporting the recording sessions,
their upmost musical advice, in technical
and financial support and most
important for the warmth
of their friendship.



Violet String Orchestra, Shalan Alhamwy (Violin), Tammam Ramadan (Nay), Tarek Alsayed Yahya (Oud), Hassan Ali Shaker (Qanun), Robbe Kieckens (Arabic Percussion)

Conducted by Aag Dereymaeker, Geert Adriaenssens, Greet Verhulst, Isabelle Robesyn, Jaap Kruithof

Production Violet vzw (Nr. 882.379.108)

Recording Engineer, mixing and mastering Pieterjan Seynaeve
(www.motormusic.eu)

Musical Direction Vincent Goris

Cover Sébastien Bogaerts

Booklet Astrid Van de Sompele

Fotografie Cato Van Passel, Paul Van Bladel

Liner Notes Inge Dumon, Myriam Vreys, Aag Dereymaeker en Geert Adriaenssens

Translations Elene Cloete (English), Shadan Alhamwy (Arabic)

Recording 1st-4th of March 2017 @ MotorMusic Studios Belgium
(1-12), Jezüietenkerk Heverlee (13 & 14)

Supporting Board Anne Willekens, Inge Dumon, Kris De Schepper,
Myriam Vreys en Veerle Segers

English version of the booklet: www.violetvioletje.com

Hope with hope

Nostalgic

lanin

Na.

Oud

Kanoun

Vn I

Vn II

Vn III

Va.

mf

f

f

pizz.

Handwritten musical score for the piece "Na.". The score is written on a system of seven staves. The instruments are: Na. (top staff), Oud (second staff), Kanoun (third staff), Violin I (Vn I, fourth staff), Violin II (Vn II, fifth staff), Violin III (Vn III, sixth staff), and Viola (Va., seventh staff). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The Na. part begins with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Oud part begins with a dynamic marking of *f*. The Kanoun part features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes. The Violin I and II parts have dynamic markings of *f*. The Violin III part has a dynamic marking of *pizz.* (pizzicato). The Viola part has a dynamic marking of *f*. The score is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Violet String Orchestra

Shalan Alhamwy