

Elisa Schmelkes
Poem: Nadia López García

Kue'e tachi

*Para Entrevoces y Coro Contrapunto
Proyecto Sonidos Interseccionales*

Kue'e tachi

Yu'u kuaki'vi kue'e tachi,
kinuú tokó me ra ke'e me tsa'a.
Kumani savi.

Me pa kachi ñá'an koi iin má'na,
yee kutu'uu staa ra cafe
yee kutu'uu mee koi kachi.
Me pa kachi koo chaa ñá'an
mee nanalu kuaku koo ñá'an,
nutsikaá ra yu'ú.

Vichi kachi me sivi' antivi,
mee saa ñá'an,
ntiki tsaa.
Tu'un me nchacha
me ñu'ú vixo.

Viento malo

Me entró por la boca el viento malo,
bajó por mis caderas y tocó mis pies.
Hace falta más lluvia.

Mi padre dice que las mujeres no soñamos,
que aprenda de tortillas y café
que aprenda a guardar silencio.
Dice que ninguna mujer escribe,
soy la niña que lloró la ausencia,
la lejanía y el miedo.

Hoy digo mi nombre en lo alto,
soy una mujer pájaro,
semilla que florece.
Las palabras son mis alas,
mi tierra mojada.

Bad wind

The bad wind entered through my mouth
It went down my hips and touched my feet.
More rain is needed.

My father says that women don't dream,
That I should learn of tortillas and coffee
That I should learn to stay silent.
My father says that no woman can write,
I am the girl who grieved the absence,
the distance, the fear.

Today, I proclaim my name on high,
I am a bird-woman,
a blooming seed.
Words are my wings,
my wet earth.

Composer notes

I chose this poem because it narrates the common experience of many women in the Global South, who have to overcome not only economic difficulties, classism and racism, but an entire patriarchal system that demands that they occupy a predetermined, invisible role in society. However, many of these amazing women rise through all these obstacles and triumph, setting an example for the following generations.

I also made the deliberate choice to set the poem entirely in Tu'un savi, even though it was translated to Spanish by the poet, because I am aware of the use of Spanish to erase our native languages, and I believe in the importance of singing in them and understanding them in their own terms.

The song follows the form of the poem, first setting the scene of how the "bad wind" enters the body, then denouncing the abuse and conditioning suffered in childhood, and finally, joyfully breaking through the clouds and shining forth with internal light.

Two compositional resources are worth specifying: the use of small canons, imitations or "echoes" in all three parts of the song to represent how actions and situations ripple out and spread to other people; and the role of men in the arrangement. Sorry, tenors and basses! I hope you don't get bored, but I wanted to let the women be the ones who speak out in this song. Your brief melodic incursion represents the voice of the father, telling Nadia to be quiet and stick to making tortillas and coffee. The rest of the time, your task is to lovingly accompany the lamenting, denouncing and resplendent voices of the Sopranos and Altos in your choir.

Performance notes

Ideally, this song should be sung from memory.

The percussion is intended to be body percussion, but it can be replaced or augmented by any drum, from a bombo legüero to a floor tom to an orchestral bass drum.

On the long notes in the Alto part in the first two pages, use choral breathing.

Part B: Basses may sing this part an octave lower.

Part C: The whisper on the Alto part is unvoiced.

Parts F, G and H: Tenors and basses should use choral breathing.

The yell in the last two bars (b. 141-142) is voiced. Notes should be recognizable but it should be more of a cathartic moment. The last note should be accompanied by some sort of hand gesture, a raised fist or a dancelike flourish.

Nadia López García (Tlaxiaco, 1992) is a Ñuu Savi poet, belonging to the nation whose name translates as "people of the rain", in the Mixtec Highlands in Oaxaca. Her mother could only speak her native language, Tu'un Savi ("word of the rain"), when she was a child, and therefore she could never finish her elementary education, which is taught in Spanish. She didn't teach her own language to her children because she feared them carrying the stigma of belonging to the Ñuu Savi culture. However, Nadia asked her grandmother to teach her to speak Tu'un Savi, and today she proudly proclaims her name on high in her beautiful tongue. She has published four books with her poetry and won prestigious awards and grants such as the Premio Mesoamericano de Poesía Luis Cardoza y Aragón 2021 and the grant offered by the Fundación para las Letras Mexicanas (2015-2017).

Elisa Schmelkes (Mexico City, 1987) is a composer, conductor, communicator and activist. Her choral compositions focus on amplifying messages of resistance and responding to complex societal issues such as femicides, state violence, inequality, immigration and solidarity during a catastrophe. As a conductor, she founded No Coro in 2018, an interdisciplinary, subversive, horizontal project which has become part of the Mexico City contemporary art scene. She is as much an activist as she is a musician.

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Poem: Nadia López García

Elisa Schmelkes

Lamentoso ♩ = 60 *The bad wind entered through my mouth,* ***p***

Soprano: Yu'-u—

Alto: ***p*** Yu'-u— kua ki' - vi kue' e ta - chi

Tenor/Bass: ***p*** Continue singing glissandi throughout this section
 Yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u,

7

S: kua - ki' - vi — kue' e ta - chi — ***mp*** Yu' - u — kua - ki' - vi — kue' e ta - chi

S: ***mp*** Yu' - u — kua - ki' - vi — kue' e ta - chi

A: Yu

T/B.: yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u,

14 *mp*

S Yu'-u kua - ki'-vi kue' e ta - chi

S Yu'-u kua - ki'-vi kue' e ta - chi

A *mp* Yu'-u kua-ki' - vi kue' - e ta - chi

A

T/B. yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u, yu' - u,

A ♩ = 80

It went down my hips and touched my feet.

More rain is needed.

19 *mf* Almost whispered **Tempo primo**

S ki-nuú to-ko me ra ke' e me tsa'a. Ku-ma-ni sa - vi.

A *mf* Almost whispered ki-nuú to-ko me ra ke' e me tsa'a. Yu' - u

T/B. *mf* Almost whispered ki-nuú to-ko me ra ke' e me tsa'a. Yu' - u, yu' - u Ku-ma-ni sa - vi

B *With rage and frustration* ♩ = 120

27 *f* Whispered

A Sa vi, ku ma ni sa - vi, ku ma ni sa - vi ku ma sa - vi ku ma - ni sa - vi ku ma ni

T/B. *mf* *My father says that women don't dream,*
Me pa ka chikoo ña' an, me pa ka chikoo ña' an, me pa ka chikoo ña' an koi in ma - na me

37 *p*

S Sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi

S Sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi,

A Kue' - e ta chi Kue' - e ta chi Kue' - e ta chi Kue' -

T/B. pa ka-chi koo ña' an, me pa ka-chi koo ña' an, me pa ka-chi koo ña' an koi iin ma - na

Perc. Foot stomp

44 **C** *mf* *That I should learn of tortillas and coffee, that I should learn to stay silent.*

S yee ku-tu'uu yee ku-tu'uu yee ku-tu'uu yee ku-tu'uu Me

S ku - ma - ni sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi, ku - ma - ni sa - vi, ku - ma - ni.

A *mf* staa ra ca - fe, mee koi ka - chi, staa ra ca - fe, mee koi ka - chi.

A e ta chi Kue' - e ta chi Kue' - e ta chi Kue' - e ta chi Kue' - e ta chi.

T/B. *p* Staa - ra ca - fe me koi ka - chi.

Perc. **C** Clap

D

53 *My father says that no woman can write.* rit.

S
8
pa ka-chi koo chaa ña' an, Me pa ka-chi koo chaa ña' an, me na-na-lu kua-ku ña'

A
Me pa ka-chi koo chaa ña' an, Me pa ka-chi koo chaa ña' an, me

E

58 *I am the girl who grieved the absence, the distance, the fear.* **Jubilant** ♩ = 120

S
8
an nut-si - kaá ra yu'u

A
na-na-lu kua-ku ña' an nut-si - kaá ra yu'u

T/B.
Si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi,

66 *Today, I proclaim my name on high,* *I am a bird-woman,* *a blooming seed.*

A
mf
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa.

T/B.
si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi,

F

74 *mf*

S
8
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa.

A
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa.

T/B.
si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi,

82 **G**

S
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi, vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi

A
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi, vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi

T/B.
si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an-ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi, si-vi an ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si-vi,

90

S
mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa. mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa.

A
mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa. mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa.

T/B.
si-vi an ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si vi, si-vi an ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si vi, si-vi an ti-vi an si-vi si-vi si vi, si-vi an ti-vi an si-vi si vi si vi.

98 **H**

S *f*
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - vi an - ti - vi mee saa ña'

A *f*
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - vi an - ti - vi mee saa ña' an

104 *ff*

S
an nti - ki, Vi - chi ka - chi me si - vi an - ti - vi!

A
nti - ki tsaa. *ff* Vi - chi ka - chi me si - vi an - ti - vi!

T/B. *ff*
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - vi an - ti - vi!

I ♩. = 80

111 *sub p* Words are my wings, *pp* my wet earth.

S
8 Tu' - un me ncha - cha, tu' - un me ncha - cha me ñu'-u vi - xo, _____

A
sub p *pp*
Tu' - un me ncha - cha, tu' - un me ncha - cha me ñu'-u vi - xo, _____

T/B.
sub p *pp*
Tu' - un me ncha - cha, tu' - un me ncha - cha me ñu'-u vi, si - vi an - ti - vi an,

J ♩. = 120

123 *ff*

S
8 Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa.

S
ff
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña' an nti - ki

A
ff
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa.

A
ff
Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña' an nti - ki

T/B.
f
si - vi an - ti - vi an si - vi si vi si vi, si - vian ti vian si - vi si vi si vi, si - vian ti - vian si - vi si - vi si vi,

131

S Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña'

S tsaa. Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi

A Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi mee saa ña'

A tsaa. Vi - chi ka - chi me si - ví an - ti - vi

T/B. si - vi an - ti - vi an si - vi si - vi si - vi, si - vi an - ti - vi an si - vi si - vi si - vi, si - vi an - ti - vi an

136

S an nti - ki tsaa. mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa! *fff* Shouted

S mee saa ña' an nti - ki, mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa! *fff* Shouted

A an nti - ki tsaa. mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa! *fff* Shouted

A mee saa ña' an nti - ki, mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa! *fff* Shouted

T/B. si - vi si - vi si - vi, si - vi an - ti - vi an si - vi si - vi si - vi, mee saa ña' an nti - ki tsaa! *fff* Shouted

Perc. *f* Chest beat Foot stomp