



**CD FLOT SUSPENDU / *SUSPENDED FLOW***  
**(Véronique Piron, 2018)**

**by Mike McInerney**

Studio Gimini, Brittany-France  
Gérard Lhomme

1. Passageway
2. Incantation
3. *Shingetsu*
4. Suspended Flow
5. *Daha*
6. Messenger-flight
7. *Reibo*
8. Migration
9. *Kuyô no kyoku*
10. *Mukaiji*

*Flot Suspendu (Suspended Flow)* combines core repertoire pieces from the Hon Kyoku with original compositions from the performing artist, Véronique Piron. The album has been carefully put together with an ear to overall flow and shape, and the repertoire pieces have been well selected to articulate this shape, while counterpointing the original compositions that they surround. The understated use of double tracking and interspersed natural ambiances in her own compositions underpins the abiding aesthetic, which emphasises atmosphere and references from the natural world.

The album opens with an evocative compound of non-instrumental sounds – moving water, a suitably monastic bell and, later on, the sounds of birds in a rural landscape. These provide a supportive ambience for the first track, *Passageway*, which combines them with a shortened rendition – the opening five phrases rounded off with an original coda - of *Mukaiji* (translated here as *Flute in the Ocean Mist*).

Piron's playing style has a great clarity of tone and an elegant way with nuance. There is something refined, yet steely, about the way she approaches the core repertoire, and the pieces chosen by her for this album have given her a chance to revel in this combination of grace and power. *Daha*, for instance, which forms the fifth track, breaks the contemplative mood which has suffused the album to this point with a performance of striking vigour. *Shingetsu*, by contrast (track 3), is gently and soberly placed. It has been closely miked by Lhomme, which allows the listener to get close to the incidental sounds which, in this performance, play a key role in its expression.

The four original tracks that are interlaced between these repertoire pieces – *Incantation* (tr. 2), *Suspended Flow* (tr. 4), *Messenger-Flight* (Tr. 6) and *Migration* (tr. 8) – allow Mme Piron to explore her own melodic sensibility. Each track is accompanied by its own subtle ambience, either from shakuhachi double-tracking or from the inclusion of natural acoustic sounds. The depth of tone heard in her Hon Kyoku solos is now applied to a pitch series which is both unconventional and radical, in the purest sense of the word, in being derived simply from the “five holes of the flute, [either] open or closed” (from the album cover notes). Choosing this resource as her basis has enabled the artist to create a soundworld whose consistency only reveals itself to the listener over time, as it appears through these four pieces, and which enables her to explore subtle, but invariant, contrasts of pitch and tone. For me, it was not until 3½ minutes into *Messenger-Flight*, when the melody dips into a ruminative section clearly reminiscent of the opening of *Incantation*, that the consistency and evocative power of this device really became apparent.

*Messenger-Flight* is the most substantial of the four original works. Reminiscent of Frank Denyer’s *Winged Play* (1984) in its almost conversational use of trills to evoke something avian and mercurial, it displays Piron’s substantial understanding of the shakuhachi in the number of subtly contrasted, corresponding, and always idiomatic trills and shakes she has found across the instrument’s range.

Piron’s inherent musicality shines through these compositions in the way that one melodic phrase grows organically from its predecessor. Her ability to sustain this melodic flow is apparent in the opening section of *Incantation*, which opens with more than three minutes of unbroken melodic development, and continues with alternating sections of variable length, each exploring a melodic fragment in the same vein. The parallels, and tensions, between this approach and Hon Kyoku melodic development lends the album an ambivalent sense of unity.

The album closes as it began, with a soundscape of water, bell and bird song. Finally, *Mukaiji* is played in full, on a longer instrument, bringing Piron’s musical expedition to a satisfyingly grounded conclusion.

Link to the [Cd page](#)