

'A ritmo endiablado de bomba' (To the infernal rythm of the bomba)

Synopsis:

Davilara is a living legend of the bomba, a percussion instrument played in the Chota Valley, a remote area inhabited by communities of African descent in Ecuador. But one day, the Devil himself comes to challenge him. Way up, at the top of the mountain, the musician will have to prove his courage, his dexterity, and his endurance. A story to listen to and dance to for people aged five and over.

Biographical information:

Chloé Despax is a sound producer, coordinator, and radio producer (Radio Grenouille in Marseilles, the Radio Moniek collective, the Saout Radio web platform, Radio Femmes Fatales, Radio Panik, and Radio Campus in Brussels). As a radio artist, she has explored the various possibilities offered by creative work in radio: documentary, fiction, field recording, sound poetry, radio drama, performance, and installation. Informed by her training in cultural mediation and in the sociology of culture, her work explores the place of “minorities” in our society; this requires drawing on a local base, empirical knowledge, and a real willingness to engage in intercultural dialogue. Her interest in people’s experience in relation to mental health and the questions it raises has its roots in her own childhood; it has resulted in, for example, her coordination, with the L’Autre lieu Recherche - Action sur la Psychiatrie et les Alternatives non-profit association, of a month-long cross-disciplinary series of mental-health-related programmes on Radio Panik in 2011.

0'21

To the infernal rhythm of the bomba

A story told by the black people
of the Chota Valley

The Candela group play the bomba

That day, sitting in front of his house,-
Davilara the musician

was thinking back to his friend's wedding-
Which he had entertained merrily-

the day before-
with his bomba.-

Davilara plays the bomba

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Suddenly, just above his head,-
The flies stop buzzing...-

Without warning, a man appears before him.-

This stranger has come to find him because-
he doesn't believe what people tell him.-

*You, Davilara, you're the best bomba player-
in the Chota Valley? Haha...-*

*Or is it me
that's the best bomba player?*

*Come, Davilara,
come up there to the top of the mountain,*

*we'll see which of the two of us
is the best...*

There, at the top of the mountain,
they can have a battle of talents

while making an infernal racket!
Come... Come... Come!

Davilara, cut to the quick,
jumps to his feet to accept the challenge.

A bell chimes

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As they ascend, the two rival musicians
pass through many villages and hamlets.

Before long, they find themselves
where even animals don't dare to go.

Nightfall follows on their heels.

*I can hear him muttering into his beard,
he is afraid...*

They reach the top of the mountain
in pitch darkness.

The stranger,
a sinister smile on his face,

jams the instrument between his legs
and begins to play.

A bell chimes

5'53
He alternates caresses and blows
on his bomba.

Deep, metallic sounds flow from it,
then others,

very, very strange sounds:
DA-VI-LA-RA

The Devil's Bomba

Davilara turns pale with terror.
He has just realised who he's dealing with.

It's the Devil himself he's up against!

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It's Davilara's turn to play. The blood drains,
ice-cold, from every part of his body.

He gulps, crosses himself with his right hand,
and begins to play with his left hand.

A bell chimes

Davi, Davi, Daviiii

*Tumbatú is with you, Tumbatú is in you
The Chota flows within you, Davilara*

*I am the earth.
Under your feet. Go on Davi!*

Davilara's Bomba

Little by little,
There, with you, Davilara,

he pulls himself together.
go on Davi, don't be afraid!

The rhythm warms his body and revives him
from his toes to the top of his head.

*(in Spanish) Listen, my name is Davilara,
I'll show you how the bomba is played!*

*Yes, I know who you are. Show me
what you can do with that instrument.*

The bomba is you, Davilara.

Now, his hands are talking with the bomba,
making it roar like never before.

The Devil is bursting with rage:

*It's out of the question for me to lose!
That can't happen!*

So he picks up a scorpion
and throws it onto Davilara's hands.

But Davilara has his eye on him
and guesses his sinister plan.

He quickly hides his hands
and keeps playing with his foot.

He doesn't feel the sting, not even a tingle.
Eh, eh...

Since he always walks barefoot,
His soles are as tough as old boots!

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10'35
In the village, his wife is worried.

A day and a night have gone by
and Davilara has still not come home.

She goes to look for him with neighbours,
who are worried too.

Davilara! Daviiii! Davilara! Daviiii

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The two drummers are still competing
with agility and ferocity.

*Arrghh, you can't see a thing here!
How is Davilara doing it?*

Playing so well, so loudly, for so looong!

Three nights have gone by and exhaustion
has not yet got the better of his adversary.

How is Davilara doing it??

The Bomba of Davilara and the earth

Beside himself,
the Devil throws his bomba to the ground
and disappears with a flash of lightning.

Thunder

Davilara strikes his bomba one last time
and collapses, exhausted.

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The wind carries the sound
through the Chota Valley

between peaks and cliffs,
to the village of Tumbatú.

Davilara's bomba in the distance

The villagers instantly recognise the sound
of Davilara's bomba carried by the wind.

They climb up as fast as possible
praying that the musician is still alive.

He is at death's door when they find him.
Taking great care, they bring him home.

Arrival home

His wife, with the help of neighbours,
Nurses him

with liberal doses of tobacco leaves,
sugar water, and oranges.

The women nurse Davilara

16'59

Davilara regains his strength.

After a few days, he's recovered emotionally.
He can at last tell his tale.

Bells chime in the distance

Davilara laughs

Ever since, Davilara warns anyone
who wants to learn to play the instrument:

*"Playing the bomba
is as dangerous as it is beautiful."*

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Credits

Bomba played by the group Candela

'A ritmo endiablado de bomba', a sound piece by Chloé Despax

Adapted from the book *A ritmo endiablado de bomba*, written and illustrated by Alice Bossut and Marco Chamorro (Comoyoko Ediciones, Ecuador, 2016).

Performed by: Ria Carbonez and Yvan Tjolle

Translation: Anne Casterman

Music: Teodoro Mendes and the group Candela

Singing: Marine Mechri

Additional music: Sébastien Schmitz

Recording and mixing: Félix Blume

Sound effects and mentoring: Céline Bernard

Recording of sound effects: Stijn Norga

Additional recording: Aurélien Lebourg

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