

Jan Herman Markus (1942) studied piano at conservatories in Amsterdam and Brussels. He began to compose at a young age and worked on improvisation. Since moving to Berlin in 1976 he's been a piano teacher, choral accompanist and organist. Impressed with the works of the medieval mysticist Jan van Ruysbroeck, in 2011 he composed the Ruysbroeck Sonata for piano, violin, clarinet and narrator. The work premiered in 2011 in the Heilig-Kreuz-Church in Berlin. The work illustrates in an expressive manner the journey from a street in Brussels (Rue des deux Tours) to the town of Groenendael, where Ruysbroeck's priory was located. The composition traverses various stations, and details reflect earlier spots along the road. The piece contains a "Pelouse des Anglais", and there is an enchanting entrance into the Zoniënforest. The "Chanson du canot" highlights an unexpectedly glossy pearl. The final movement echoes its beginning: an earnest and profound text that alludes to the face of God.

The work is made up of five parts, which are performed without interruption:

**I A happy day** *piano*

Waking up to face the new day in the Brussels neighborhood of St. Joost ten Node

**II On the road!** *piano*

The car ride from St. Joost ten Node to Groenendael via Madouplein, Kunstlaan, Louiseplein, and Louiselaan

**III Terkameren forest** *piano*

Pelouse des Anglais, Robinson island, Chanson du canot, Minuett

**IV Entering the Zonienwoud forest** *clarinet and piano*

**V Groenendael 1** *piano*

**Groenendael 2** *piano, clarinet, violin, narrator with the Ruysbroek text*

The metronome numbers are not intended to be absolute, but rather as a directional indication.

The composer prescribes that the text is spoken three times before the start of the music.

The first time the original Flemish text

The second time one of the translations

The third time again the Flemish text

From bar 248 the translation is spoken (German in the score). At bar 269 the original Flemish text is heard and finally at bar 399 the translation is heard again.

*The original text by Ruysbroeck in Flemish:*

Eest dat Hem God vertoent onsen verstandeghen ooeghen in ghegaefden lichte,soe gheeft hi ons macht Heme te bekinnene in ghelikenessen alsoe in eenen spiegel, daer wi in sien: formen, beelden, ghelikenessen Gods.

Maer die substantie die Hi selve es, en moghen wi anders niet sien dan met hemselven, ende dat es boven ons selven, ende boven alle ufeninghe van dooghden.

*Translation:*

It is only when God shows Himself to our understanding eyes in the given light, that He gives us the power to recognise Him in parables, as in a mirror in which we see: forms, images, parables of God.

But we are not allowed to see the substance that He Himself is, except with Himself, and that is above ourselves and all virtue practices.