



Cattleya Nitsi collage.

Cattleya Nitsi's Tricks - Revisited (Part 1)

By LINET HAMMAN
E-mail: linet@orchidssa.co.za

Photographs: ROELIE VAN ROOYEN, SIEG & LINET HAMMAN

Because 'Local is lekker' and because it is exciting to know that it is still true to say there is always something new coming out of Africa (*ex Africa semper aliquid novi*) now might be the right time to revisit *Cattleya* Nitsi and family.

Let's go back in time a little.... to the year 1973, to be precise.

Nitsi was helping her father, Roelie van Rooyen, in his small greenhouse at the bottom of the garden in Pretoria. If you have been growing orchids in South Africa you would know him or at least recognize his name. Roelie and his wife, Angela, have been actively involved in orchids for almost 60 years. They started growing a couple of orchids on the tiny little balcony of their flat in Durban while he was specializing in 1955. Since then they have both gone on to become international orchid judges and Roelie has produced more than 2000 new orchid hybrids over the years. Roelie was Chairman of the South African Orchid Council when the World Orchid Conference was hosted by South Africa in Durban in 1981.

Since she was a little girl his eldest daughter, Nitsi, had always shown a keen interest in plants. Being in grade 12 at that time, she found it fascinating to watch her father make an orchid cross. It seemed so simple to remove the anther cap, collect some pollen and place it onto another suitable parent. Nature was left to do all the intricate cell division, multiplying and creating of a batch of brand new plants. She wanted to have a go at it herself and, after much deliberation, decided to cross the two smallest cattleyas flowering at that time: *Cattleya* Luteriana and *Cattleya* Chicita.

The following year Nitsi started studying Botany and Genetics at Tukkies (University of Pretoria). The seed capsule of the cross she had made matured and (with a little help from her friends and some agar-banana medium) the seed was sown at the University of Pretoria Botany Lab. She was very excited when, at long last, she could bring a handful of baby plants back to her father who had by then moved down to White River.

Another two years of anticipation ensued and what a wonderful surprise when the first little charmer flowered. It was a perfect mini *Cattleya* with pale mauve flowers and a gorgeous lip. Roelie decided it would be a good idea to register his daughter's first cross, *Cattleya* Luteriana x *Cattleya* Chicita, as *Cattleya* Nitsi which he proceeded to do in 1984. Even with careful selecting it only happens once in a blue moon that a cross turns out to be a real star - *Cattleya* Nitsi is one of those lucky crosses. Not only is the quality of the flowers good, but as a parent *C.* Nitsi imparts many desirable attributes to its progeny.

Some of *C.* Nitsi's positive points:

- easy, fast grower - not prone to disease
- divides and repots without problems
- compact growth habit
- floriferous
- fertile
- a well-balanced, full flower with a beautiful open lip

There are only a few cultivars of *C. Nitsi* in cultivation,

- *C. Nitsi* 'Witrivier'
- *C. Nitsi* 'Baby Doll'
- *C. Nitsi* 'Angie'
- *C. Nitsi* 'no.4'

***Cattleya Nitsi* and progeny:**

All crosses made by Roelie van Rooyen at Van Rooyen Orchids, White River.

(I have kept the 'old' Sanders names under which these plants were originally registered, as some generic name changes have occurred).



***Cattleya Nitsi* 'Baby Doll' - this cultivar was used mostly in hybridizing.**

Photographer: Hendrik Venter



Cattleya Nitsi.



Cattleya Nitsi.

VRO No	YEAR		CROSS	REGISTERED AS:
	1973	*	<i>C. Luteriana</i> x <i>C. Chicita</i>	<i>Cattleya Nitsi</i>
171	2/2/83	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>Lc. Trick or Treat</i> 'Orange Beauty' HCC/AOS	<i>Laeliocattleya Tricksi</i>
236	30/7/84	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>L. purpurata</i> fma. <i>carnea</i>	
239	28/8/84	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>C. Interglossa</i>	
257	19/1/85	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>Lc. Hillary's Hope</i>	
276	25/3/85	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>C. amethystoglossa</i> 'Orchidglade' AM/AOS	
353	5/4/86	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>Enc. pentotes</i> (syn. <i>Enc. baculus</i>)	
430	24/3/87	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>L. jongheana</i>	
458	28/5/87	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>Ctna. Rosy Jewel</i>	
476	13/10/87	-	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>Brassavola nodosa</i>	
477	13/10/87	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>Enc. fragrans</i>	
512	12/3/88	*	<i>Sc. Beaufort</i> x <i>C. Nitsi</i>	<i>Sc. Beaunitsi</i>
513	1/4/88	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>Lc. Chicanery</i>	<i>Lc. Can-Can</i>
514	1/4/88	*	<i>Lc. Chicanery</i> x <i>C. Nitsi</i>	<i>Lc. Can-Can</i>
544	28/6/88	*	<i>C. harrisoniana</i> x <i>C. Nitsi</i>	
545	28/6/88	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>Lc. Chicanery</i>	<i>Lc. Can-Can</i>
586	27/3/89	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>L. lundii</i>	
630	5/7/89	*	<i>C. (Nitsi</i> x <i>Interglossa)</i> x <i>Sl. Isabelle Stone</i>	
987	25/1/93	*	<i>Slc. Tangerine Jewel</i> x <i>Lc. Tricksi</i>	<i>Slc. Tricky Jewel</i>
1130	18/10/93	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>L. flava</i>	
1230	20/5/94	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>C. schilleriana</i>	
1305	26/2/95	*	<i>Lc. Mari's Song</i> x <i>C. Nitsi</i>	<i>Lc. Juanita's Song</i>
1356	19/9/95	-	<i>Lc. Puppy Love</i> x <i>C. Nitsi</i>	
1356b	19/9/95	-	<i>Lc. Puppy Love</i> x <i>C. Nitsi</i>	
1357	19/9/95	-	<i>Sc. Beaunitsi</i> x <i>Lc. Seagulls Gold Pixie</i>	
1367	11/1/96	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> 'Witrivier' x <i>L. furfuracea</i>	
1451	31/1/97	*	<i>Lc. Tropical Pointer</i> x <i>Lc. Tricksi</i>	
1462	23/4/97	*	<i>Lc. Tropical Pointer</i> x <i>Lc. Tricksi</i>	
1502	10/2/98	*	<i>Lc. Mari's Song</i> x <i>C. Nitsi</i> 'Angie'	<i>Lc. Juanita's Song</i>
1649	21/2/2000	*	<i>Lc. Tricksi</i> x sib	
1651	08/3/2000	*	<i>Lc. Tricksi</i> x sib (red x orange)	
1652	08/3/2000	*	<i>Lc. Tricksi</i> x <i>Lc. Chicanery</i>	
1654	15/3/2000	-	<i>Lc. Tricksi</i> x self	
1656	15/3/2000	-	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>L. anceps</i>	
1684	18/5/2000	*	<i>Lc. Tricksi</i> x <i>Lc. Chicanery</i>	
1761	06/3/2001	*	<i>C. Nitsi</i> x <i>C. Horace</i>	<i>C. Brettangi</i>

Second generation crosses:

- *Lc. Tropical Pointer* x *Lc. Tricksi* (1997)
- *Lc. Tropical Pointer* x *Lc. Can-Can* (1997)
- *Lc. Can-Can* x *Lc. Chicanery* (1998)
- *Lc. Tricksi* x *Lc. Chicanery* (2000)

Van Rooyen Orchids registered seven of these crosses at the RHS:

- *C. Nitsi* x *Lc. Trick or Treat* as *Lc. Tricksi* in 1990 (now *Cattlianthe Tricksi*)
- *C. Nitsi* x *Lc. Chicanery* as *Lc. Can-Can* in 1992 (now *Cattlianthe Can-Can*)
- *Sc. Beaufort* x *C. Nitsi* as *Sc. Beaunitsi* in 1997 (now *Cattleya Beaunitsi*)
- *C. Nitsi* x *Lc. Mari's Song* as *Lc. Juanita's Song* in 2010 (now *Cattleya Juanita's Song*)
- *C. Tangerine Jewel* x *Lc. Tricksi* (now *Ctt. Tricksi*) as *Cattlianthe Tricky Jewel* in 2010
- *C. Nitsi* x *C. Horace* as *C. Brettangi* in 2012
- *C. Tropical Pointer* x *Ctt. Can-Can* as *Cattlianthe Shafrans* in 2012.

Douglas McMurtry also made a cross with *C. Nitsi* and registered it as *C. Réne Ferreira* (*C. longipes* [syn. *L. lucasiana*] x *C. Nitsi*) in 2007.



Laeliocattleya Tricksi (pink flowered cultivar).

Laeliocattleya Tricksi

(*C. Nitsi* x *Lc. Trick or Treat* 'Orange Beauty' HCC/AOS)

Lc. Tricksi is the first *C. Nitsi* cross (made in 1982). A rainbow of colours emerged; from white to blush, yellow, apricot, pink, light orange, bright orange and even a few flares. The combination with



Laeliocattleya Tricksi.

Photographer: Gideon Scheepers

the orange of *Lc. Trick or Treat* (a large plant that bears clusters of bright orange flowers) and the pale mauve of *C. Nitsi* gave the broad spectrum of colour in the progeny (also noticeable in the crosses made between *C. Nitsi* and *Sc. Beaufort* and *Lc. Chicanery*). The plant size of *Lc. Trick or Treat* was reduced and floriferousness of *C. Nitsi* increased.

Cattleya Nitsi x *Encyclia baculus*

So far only a few have flowered bearing clusters of two or more smaller cream (in some cases more mauve) flowers on a short stem. Most of the flowers have turned and don't flower 'back-to-back' as *Enc. baculus* does. The striking radiating lines from the lip of *Enc. baculus* have come through strongly and the flower size has improved.



Cattleya Nitsi x *Encyclia baculus*.



Cattleya Nitsi x *Cattleya amethystoglossa*.

***Cattleya Nitsi* x *Cattleya amethystoglossa* 'Orchidglade' AM/AOS**

Using *C. amethystoglossa* as a parent resulted in the improvement of flower size as well as the occurrence of some beautiful spots and, in some cases, even

fine bars on the petals and sepals. The plant size was reduced dramatically due to the influence of *C. Nitsi*. Most of the flowers are light to dark purple, the lip shape of *C. amethystoglossa* was improved, and the lovely dark splash of colour on the lip was retained - all in all an enchanting outcome.



Cattleya Nitsi x *Cattleya amethystoglossa*.

Cattleya Nitsi* x *Cattleya schilleriana

Interesting colouring came through, but unfortunately the flower shape was not greatly improved. *C. schilleriana* was very dominant.



Cattleya Nitsi x *Cattleya schilleriana*.



Laeliocattleya Can-Can.



Laeliocattleya Can-Can.

Laeliocattleya Can-Can

(*C. Nitsi* x *Lc. Chicanery*)

Lc. Can-Can produced a better flower shape than *Lc. Tricksi* and the same wonderful variety of all the colours in the rainbow. The plants tend to be more miniature than *Lc. Tricksi*. At a SA National Orchid Show in Bellville (Cape) a beautiful mauve *Lc. Can-Can* was voted the Best Bred and Raised South African hybrid on show.

Cattleya Nitsi* x *Laelia jongheana

This is really a most interesting combination of genes. The fascinating flatness of *L. jongheana* is very prominent and the *C. Nitsi* improved the over-all shape. One can almost say that it looks like an ennobled *L. jongheana*.



Laeliocattleya Can-Can 'Rainbow Nation' AM/SAOC (*C. Nitsi* x *Lc. Chicanery*).



Cattleya Nitsi x *Laelia jongheana*.



Laeliocattleya Can-Can 'Nitacan' AM/SAOC.

Photographer: R. van Rooyen



Cattleya Nitsi x Laeliocattleya Hillary's Hope.



Cattleya Nitsi x Laeliocattleya Hillary's Hope.

Cattleya Nitsi x Laeliocattleya Hillary's Hope

Lc. Hillary's Hope is also a miniature cluster-type *Cattleya* with a rather tall plant and a good inflorescence length. The shape of the flowers is rather open, but the mauve colour and interesting lip is very attractive. In this cross *C. Nitsi* was not always successful in improving the shape of *Lc. Hillary's Hope* and a lot of the colour was washed out. There are, however, some charming plants with a beautiful combination of the lip of both parents.



Cattleya Nitsi x Laeliocattleya Hillary's Hope.



Cattleya Nitsi x Cattleya harrisoniana.

Cattleya Nitsi x Cattleya harrisoniana

Studying the genealogy of *C. Nitsi* reveals that *C. loddigesii* is the species most often encountered in Nitsi's background. Adding the similar *C. harrisoniana* to the equation resulted in a very pleasing pot plant – ideal for mounting on trees in the garden. The variety of colours was interesting with pale, shell-pink flowers right through to bright lavender-pinks.

***Sophrocattleya* Beaunitsi**

(*C. Nitsi* x *Sc. Beaufort*)

This is one of the most successful of all the Nitsi crosses with an overall good flower quality. Both parents have a small compact growth habit and very good flower shape. *Sc. Beaufort* regularly breaks out into multiple leads and *C. Nitsi* aids floriferousness. These qualities can contribute to wonderful specimen plants. Colour varies immensely; from white, pale yellow, cream, orange, and pink through to red (this actually happened almost every time *C. Nitsi* was crossed onto a red/orange).



***Sophrocattleya* Beaunitsi 'Lynbee'
HCC/SAOC 78% 1997.**

Photographer: Hendrik Venter



***Cattleya* Nitsi x *Laelia purpurata* fma.
carnea.**

Cattleya* Nitsi x *Laelia lundii

The tiny little *L. lundii* has made a lovely match with *C. Nitsi*. The shape of the *L. lundii* is very dominant, but the plants are stronger and the flowers much bigger with all the lovely frills and trims of the *L. lundii* lip. They grow very well mounted on a horizontal stick due to the dominant rhizome-like growth habit. One of my personal favourites – a true miniature.



***Cattleya* Nitsi x *Laelia lundii*.**



Cattleya Nitsi x *Cattleya Interglossa*.



Cattleya Nitsi x *Cattleya Interglossa*.

Cattleya Nitsi* x *Cattleya Interglossa

C. Interglossa is a primary hybrid between *C. amethystoglossa* and *C. intermedia* 'Aquinii'. It is an interesting combination of the two parents. The spots (from *C. amethystoglossa*) and flares (from the splash petals of *C. intermedia* 'Aquinii') were retained in most of the offspring when crossed with *C. Nitsi*. In some cases, however, the colour markings were not clearly defined and gave a smudgy effect.

My opinion is that *C. Nitsi* has proven itself as an excellent breeding parent and that this is only the beginning of the Nitsi story. With miniature plants and especially miniature cattleyas becoming so popular the next chapter of *C. Nitsi* breeding is definitely an event to which the Orchid World is looking forward.



Cattleya Nitsi x *Laelia lundii*.

2012: And Nitsi herself? Well, she is now Nitsi Louw, married to Danie, mother of Angie, Frans and Philip, chairman of SAOC judging and she has an orchid house at the bottom of her garden... *



Nitsi van Rooyen 1978.



Nitsi Louw 2012.