



Biennale for contemporary music theatre
Four companies, three world creations, one festival

From May 17th - May 29th

Antwerp - Ghent

International congress and symposium about chamber
opera: A Little Bit of Opera?

May 20th - May 22nd



OPERA XXI

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OPERA XXI presents the world premieres of three new creations

After a successful debut two years ago, OPERA XXI, the contemporary musical-theatre biennale, will be on for the second time in Antwerp and Ghent, from 17 to 29 May 2011.

Four internationally acclaimed production companies – Flanders Opera, deSingel, Muziektheater Transparant and LOD – are once again joining forces to present new work on the cutting edge. With composers, directors, artists and ensembles that have already earned their worldwide reputations.

OPERA XXI is a festival for first performances of contemporary work. It warmly welcomes experiment and takes a broad view. This year we shall be turning the spotlight on chamber opera.

No less than five productions will be presented, three of them performed for the first time, ranging from the symbolist world of Maurice Maeterlinck to the negotiation tables of the Middle East. From Greek tragedy to martyrs.

As was the case two years ago, a symposium will once again provide a setting in which to exchange ideas with the international opera world about the future of contemporary creations. The title is 'A Little Bit of Opera' and it too will focus mainly on the less familiar and rarely staged genre of chamber opera. The guest speakers will include Giorgio Battistelli, Judith Weir and Dirk D'Ase.

OPERA XXI opts quite deliberately to invest in the future of opera and musical theatre. And not just because we love it.

The festival will take place at the Flanders Opera in Antwerp and Ghent and also at deSingel in Antwerp and the Vooruit Arts Centre in Ghent.

We will be happy to help foreign journalists plan their journey. You will find more information on this in this folder.



L' Intruse (The Intruder)

A composition commissioned by the Flanders Opera and deSingel
Coproducted by the Flanders Opera, deSingel, the Vooruit and
Abattoir Fermé

World premiere

The first, and so far the only Nobel Prize for literature won by a Belgian was awarded to the Ghent author Maurice Maeterlinck on 10th December 1911. Although he considered himself utterly ignorant of music, his works have on more than a hundred occasions provided the inspiration for composers, the best-known example of course being Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

It was in fact this musical potential and the wealth of Maeterlinck's oeuvre that led to the creation of *L'Intruse (The Intruder)*, a chamber opera with a libretto by Stef Lernous and music by Dirk D'Ase. D'Ase was able to help us at the last moment when illness forced the composer Luc Brewaeys to relinquish the assignment. This new work is not an opera adaptation of Maeterlinck's famous play, but a creation in its own right, a fantasy based on motifs from Maeterlinck's earlier work.

The theatre-maker Stef Lernous, together with his Abattoir Fermé theatre collective, is here making his debut as an opera director. Abattoir Fermé makes plays on man's fundamental fears, desires and obsessions, which in everyday life are hidden behind a solid veil of rationality. This focus on what is buried and unspoken is always to be found in Maeterlinck's work too. And while Maeterlinck's world is filled with symbols that are always ambiguous and refer to yet other things, symbols that stimulate the imagination in many ways, Lernous and Abattoir Fermé, in their own visual idiom, seek out the boundaries of what can be shown. In so doing, they also tinker with the boundaries of the theatre and performance genres.

The world Stef Lernous creates out of Maeterlinck's work is dark and frightening. With the aid of Belgium's best-known author he puts together a strange and mysterious fairytale that has ultimately become a dark tale for adults. All the typical characters in Maeterlinck's world are to be found: kings and princesses, the blind and the beloved, vulnerable girls and old men, hunters, and also ships and seas, nature in the wild, shadows and the moon, blue rooms and dark towers, they all stand out within the outlines of this realm. They are characters, or rather spirits driven by panic and longing. Figures who are extremely lonely and mostly blind to their dark, predestined fate.



Reading Lernous' libretto immediately prompted the Austrian-Flemish composer Dirk D'Ase to start work. In Lernous' writing he soon encountered links with his own musical idiom. After going to Vienna, D'Ase studied composition under Luciano Berio and Friedrich Cerha. Initially he mainly absorbed influences arising from his travels in Southern Africa and his intensive study of the sounds of that region. In his own work this led to a strong focus on the exceptional qualities and timbres of instruments and the human voice, and also on the development of a music that aims for a direct effect on the listener, while free of any avant-garde intellectualism. 'Everything I create I have sought in and drawn from life', is D'Ase's artistic credo. Music that permeates the listener's life.

The musical director for L'Intruse is the young Argentine conductor Alejo Pérez, who is very much at home in the contemporary repertoire and has an international reputation. He also conducts works from the grand opera repertoire at major opera houses in Europe and South America. The soloists in L'Intruse are the baritone Omar Ebrahim, who specialises in the contemporary opera repertoire and has in this way given the first performances of many roles. The mezzo-soprano Hannah Esther Minuttillo sings in the great opera houses of Europe, including the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, the Opéra National in Paris and the Nederlandse Opera in Amsterdam.



L'Intruse Information (The Intruder)

Composition commissioned by Flanders Opera, deSingel
Coproducted by Flanders Opera, deSingel, Vooruit and Abbatoir
Fermé

With the support of the City of Ghent

Selected for the Maeterlinck Centennial Festival Ghent

World Creation

Composition **Dirk D'Ase**
Libretto **Stef Lernous**
 After Maurice Maeterlinck

Musical Director **Alejo Perez**
Director **Stef Lernous**

Man **Omar Ebrahim**
Woman **Hannah Esther Minutillo**

When: **17th, 18th, 20th, 21st May | 8 pm**
 Vooruit Ghent
 23 Sint Pietersnieuwstraat

25th, 26th May | 8 pm
deSingel Antwerp
25 Desguinlei

Tickets € 20 | www.vlaamseopera.be | 0032 70 22 02 02



Maeterlinck 2011-2012

On 9 november 1911, the Swedish Academy granted the Nobel Price for Literature to Maurice Maeterlinck, an author of Gent origin. In 2011 it will be hundred years since Maeterlinck was distinguished with this highest literary award. To this day, he remains the sole Belgian writer having recieved the Nobel Price for Literature.

In his home city, he got almost forgotten, while his fame survived undiminished in the French speaking world, in the anglosaxon countries, in Russia, Central Europe and Japan.

Although Maeterlinck wrote in French, he considered himself as a Fleming and a man from Ghent, an identity he never abjured.

There is only one winner of the literary Noble Price in Belgium and that winner is a man from Ghent.

In the literature of the late 19th and the early 20th century, he was the undisputed grandmaster of avant garde poetry and drama. One can expect the centenary of his Nobel Price award will enjoy broad international attention. But it is his native city Ghent, which holds the best trump card: Ghent is the place where he was born and it was in Ghent that his literary talent ripened into astonishing masterpieces. His awareness of being from Ghent, his importance for world literature as the prince of literary symbolism and his international dimension make him a prominent part of the immaterial heritage of our city. Lots of reasons to concentrate on this centenary in 2011 and also in the first months of 2012 and to integrate Maeterlinck for good in the cultural excellence of our city.

Ghent will organise in 2011 and partly also in 2012 a number of cultural and touristic events in the context of the 100th anniversary of Maeterlinck's Nobel Price. By this occasion, Ghent, the place where he was born and where his literary talents evolved, will draw the attention of the international public to his undeniable but frequently ignored bond with his native city.

The Ghent Maeterlinck Year will be the result of a pluriform cooperation, by which the most important cultural institutes in Ghent will focus their programs for 2011 and 2012 on the Maeterlinck theme. Alle those initiatives will be brought together in one 'Maeterlinck Festival', an artistic celebration of his 100 years old Nobel Price.

There are two exhibitions in the program, one in the Museum of Fine Arts on the artistic links between Maeterlinck and the sculptor George Minne. The other, in the Arts Hall Saint-Peter's Abbey, will be an introduction in the fairy world of Maeterlinck's best known play, 'The Blue Bird'. The program provides a lot of Music: concerts in the Music Centre De Bijloke and the Conservatory and music theatre by the Flemish opera house (a newly composed chamber opera on Maeterlinck's 'L'Intruse'),

and by the Music Theatre LOD (a so called 'hybrid' opera on Maeterlinck's play 'Les Aveugles'). Transparant has transformed Claude Debussy's 'Pelléas et Mélisande' on Maeterlinck's) homonymous play into a chamber opera. A scientific approach will be organised by the Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature. These important initiatives are accompanied by a lot of other events such as youth projects, 'Maeterlinck' walks, publications and touristic arrangements on the Maeterlinck theme.



Medea

Produced by the Veenfabriek and Muziektheater Transparant
Coproducted by deSingel, the Hermes Ensemble and Operadagen
Rotterdam

World premiere

When the Greek hero Jason lands on the shore of Colchis with his Argonauts, he steals the heart of Medea, the king's daughter. Now in love, she uses her magical powers to help him steal the Golden Fleece. Fleeing their pursuers, she saves the Greeks by killing her father and brother. When they arrive in Corinth, Jason and Medea get married and have two children. After ten years of happiness, Jason falls in love with the daughter of Creon, King of Corinth. He would like to marry her to secure his children's future. Creon agrees to the marriage because it enables him to save his royal house. But Medea refuses to accept the arrangement. Deeply insulted, she exacts a gruesome toll from the Corinthian princess and then kills her two sons.

The Veenfabriek musical-theatre ensemble and Muziektheater Transparant present a contemporary adaptation of the Greek tragedy by Peter Verhelst, with music by Wim Henderickx and directed by Paul Koeck. In this adaptation, the myth is told from the point of view of the old King Creon, who thought he would save his kingdom but ultimately loses everything.

Glauce says: I saw you looking at me. It's impossible for anyone to bring someone to life with their eyes like that, the way you have with me.

Jason says: We shall only ever regain our home if we go in search of something warm.

Medea says: My two boys, one at each breast. My boys are the two chambers of my heart.

Creon cries. He keeps on crying. Finally he says: How could it come to this? Why? Isn't there anyone, anywhere, who, even for only a second, would put their arm around our shoulders?



Medea Information

Produced by de Veenfabriek and Muziektheater Transparant
In coproduction with deSingel, Hermes Ensemble and Operadagen
Rotterdam

World Premiere

Composer & musical director

Wim Henderickx

Director

Paul Koek

Text/libretto

Peter Verhelst

Dramaturgy

Paul Slangen

Costume design

Dorothee Curio

Lighting design

Uri Rapaport

Actors

Reinout Bussemaker

Joep van der Geest

Yonina Spijker

Lizzy Timmers

Singer

Selva Erdener

Musicians

Hermes Ensemble

Duduk

Raphaela Danksagmuller

Joost Gils

Flute

Karin de Fleyt,

Clarinet/Bass clarinet

Peter Merckx

Viola

Marc Tooten

Guitar

Matthias Koole

Percussion

Gaetan La Mela

Electronics

Jorrit Tamminga

When:

18th , 19th and 22nd May | 8 pm.

deSingel Antwerp

25 Desguinlei

Tickets: € 20 | www.desingel.be | 0032 3 248 28 28



Blond Eckbert

A thriller opera based on a fantastic story by Ludwig Tieck
Produced by the Bregenzer Festspiele and Muziektheater
Transparant
Coproducted by Operadagen Rotterdam and the Oxalys Ensemble

Revival

Together with the artist-duo Sarah and Charles, the director Wouter Van Looy is staging Judith Weir's *Blond Eckbert*. This Scottish composer based her opera on the novella by the romantic writer Ludwig Tieck.

Few stories characterise Romanticism as powerfully as Ludwig Tieck's 1797 literary fairytale *Der Blonde Eckbert*. The story tells of Eckbert and his wife Berthe. This couple lives a retired but peaceful life in the Harz mountains in Germany. One stormy evening Eckbert's friend Walther pays them a visit. Berthe tells him the story of her life. Oddly enough, Walther turns out to know quite a lot about Berthe. Eckbert's suspicions are aroused and he kills Walther while out hunting. Overcome with fear and mistrust, Eckbert goes into retreat. Guided by a singing bird, he relives magical scenes from Berthe's childhood. And he discovers the terrible truth about Walther, Berthe and himself. Irrational fears and a combination of dream and reality make the story a compelling, puzzling nightmare. In *Der Blonde Eckbert*, Ludwig Tieck wrote what seems to be an historical forerunner of the threatening worlds that characterise the films of Alfred Hitchcock and David Lynch.

The Scottish composer Judith Weir adapted the novella into an opera, which opened in London in 1994. She later reworked it into a chamber opera for four singers and a chamber orchestra. This 'less is more' version is extremely gripping and demonstrates better than ever Weir's characteristic, original, fascinating voice.

For their version of *Blond Eckbert*, Wouter Van Looy and the duo of Brussels artists Sarah & Charles have a fascinating visual concept that makes Tieck's compelling narrative into a thriller-type film script. The production presents a confrontational reflection on Romanticism and man's longing for oneness with nature and himself. The shaky structure he creates to achieve this looks as splendid as it does fragile. This opera shows unrelentingly that the bubble will sooner or later burst.



Blond Eckbert Information

Produced by Bregenzer Festspiele and Muziektheater
Transparant in coproduction with Operadagen Rotterdam and
Oxalys Ensemble

Music and text	Judith Weir
Musical Director	Robin Engelen
Director	Wouter Van Looy
Set design and video	Sarah & Charles
Costume advisors	Sarah Deboosere and Machteld Van de Perre
Costume design	Lina Celis
Lighting	Paul van Laak
Dramaturgy	Lieke van Hoogenhuyze
Assistent-director	Anne Slothouwer

Eckbert	Adrian Clarke
Berthe	Lien Haegeman
Walther/Hugo/Old Woman/Dog	Harry Nicoll
Bird	Romana Beutel
Dog	Aline Cornelissen

Musicians	Oxalys ensemble	
	Hobo	Piet van Bockstal
	Clarinet	Nathalie Lefèvre
		Nele Delafonteyne
	Horn	Eliz Erkalp
		Simon Haspeslagh
	Harp	Annie Lavoisier
	Violin	Shirly Laub
		Frédéric d'Ursel
	Cello	Martijn Vink
		Amy Norrington

When: **21st May | 8 pm**
Vlaamse Opera Antwerp
3 Frankrijklei

Tickets € 20 | www.vlaamseopera.be | 0032 70 22 02 02



Middle East - LOD / Frank Nuyts, Philippe Blasband & Johan Dehollander

Produced by LOD and coproduced by the Spectra Ensemble, Operadagen Rotterdam and the Flanders Opera

World premiere

In June 2000 the American president Bill Clinton arranged a meeting between Yasser Arafat, president of the Palestine National Authority, and Ehud Barak, Prime Minister of Israel, at Camp David, to continue with peace negotiations and to take them to a satisfactory conclusion.

The initial negotiations were so promising that Barak even agreed to hand over East Jerusalem. But when it came to the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, the discussions deteriorated so much that the situation turned critical. Peace seemed impossible.

In recent years the Israelis and Palestinians have never been so close to peace as then while yet so far. It is impossible to find out precisely what happened at Camp David. The Israeli and Palestinian negotiators lived there in two parallel worlds that never came into contact with one another. The two parties put the blame for the deadlock on each other. There is one thing we can assume, however, which is that they all, both Israelis and Palestinians, tried to win the peace the same way one wins a war.

The Palestinians insisted on settling the ultimate aim of the negotiations in advance, while the Israelis wanted to define the starting points. And they all foundered over the fate of Al Quds, or Jerusalem. Ehud Barak refused to meet Arafat as long as the negotiators had not reached a compromise. And the negotiators never did reach a compromise. On 25th July 2000 the two parties brought the discussions to an end. At the end of September 2000 the second Intifada began. On 11th November 2004 Yasser Arafat died.

In *MIDDLE EAST*, the author and scenarist Philippe Blasband (*La femme de Gilles, Une liaison pornographique, Irina Palm*) describes the failure of the peace negotiations between the arch-enemies Israel and Palestine. He focuses on the point when the two protagonists take their seats at the negotiation table. Before anyone has actually spoken.

What are the negotiators thinking? How can they talk about a reality that is seen so differently from the two sides? An actor, a singer and an orchestra provide a channel for their heated voices and thoughts. Frank Nuyts is the composer, and Johan Dehollander links the situation to the present.



Middle East Information

LOD in coproduction with SPECTRA Ensemble, Operadagen Rotterdam & Vlaamse Opera

Composition

Frank Nuyts

Libretto

Philippe Blasband

Director

Johan Dehollander

Set design and lighting

Stef Stessel

Costumes

Lieve Pynoo

Dramaturgy

Geert Opsomer

Musical Director

Filip Rathé

Actor

Thomas Bellinck

Singer

Ruth Rosenfeld

Musicians

SPECTRA Ensemble

Violin

Pieter Jansen

Viola

Bram Bossier

Cello

Lieven Baert

Flute

Jan Vercruysse

Clarinet

Kris Deprey

Percussion

Frank Van Eycken

Piano

Tae Yoshioka

When:

26th, 27th May | 8 pm

Vlaamse Opera Gent

3 Schouwburgstraat

Tickets | €20 | www.vlaamseopera.be | 0032 70 22 02 02



De Gehangenen (The Hanged) – LOD / Josse De Pauw & Jan Kuijken

Produced by LOD and coproduced by the KVS, the Théâtre National in Brussels, the Grand Théâtre in Luxemburg, Le Maillon in Strasbourg, the Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie, VocaalLAB Nederland and the KunstFestSpiele Herrenhausen in Hanover.

‘Doubting Thomas!’ Is this a compliment or an insult?

In *De gehangenen*, LOD gives two actors and three singers the chance to speak, even though they are in quite a perilous position: dangling over the heads of the musicians of the Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie, they perform a new composition by Jan Kuijken.

These people, ‘the hanged’, do not submit to what is known or written. They think for themselves. Which is rarely taken kindly. Galileo Galilei claimed that the earth orbited around the sun and was banished for his pains. For his theory of the infinite universe, Giordano Bruni ended up at the stake.

Josse De Pauw transposed the accusations of the hanged into prose and songs. Two actors and three singers tell their story, accompanied by the orchestra and sampled voices and sounds. Their Latin chants are not only pleas for mercy. Through the thoughts and feelings of seekers, scientists and the inquisitive, we also hear the charges against those in power who condemned them.

De gehangenen is a tribute to all those who have been hanged, tortured, burned or imprisoned for their visionary ideas.



De Gehangenen (The Hanged) Information

Produced by LOD in coproduction with KVS, Théâtre National de Bruxelles, Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg, Le Maillon Strasbourg, Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie, VocaalLAB Nederland en KunstFestSpiele Herrenhausen (Hannover)

Text & director	Josse De Pauw
Music	Jan Kuijken
Concept	Josse De Pauw & Jan Kuijken
Lighting	Enrico Bagnoli
Musical director	Etienne Siebens
Costumes	Greta Goiris
Research	Geerd Magiels
Actors	Tom Jansen & Hilde Van Mieghem
Singers	VocaalLAB solisten
	Soprano Janneke Daalderop
	Mezzo soprano Ekaterina Levental
	Tenor Steven van Gils
Musicians	Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie & Jan Kuijken
Voice child soloist	Lidewei Loot
When :	28th en 29th May 8 pm
	deSingel Antwerp
	25 Desguinlei

Tickets : € 20 | www.desingel.be | 0032 3 248 28 28



International congress and Symposium

'A little bit of Opera?' - On Chamber opera and small-scale musical theatre.

From Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd May 2011/ Ghent/Antwerp - Belgium

Those taking part include **Giorgio Batisstelli, Judith Weir, Xavier Zuber, Wim Henderickx,...**

'Chamber opera' is not clearly defined either as a concept or a phenomenon, but in practice the term is frequently applied to specific forms of small-scale musical theatre. It may refer to the form of the composition, the place where it is performed, the scale of the work or a combination of these factors, or to a specific form of musical theatre analogous to chamber theatre. In a great many cases the term is also associated with new or contemporary opera work.

Despite this emphatic presence and the broad range of meanings, it is striking that 'chamber opera' is conspicuously absent from the literature and critical reflection. Its relevance to operatic practice is not reflected in discussion and debate. It is this paradox that provides the basis for the symposium, the intention of which it to consider the phenomenon of chamber opera in the context of contemporary musical theatre. On the one hand there is the question of its role in relation to the repertoire of grand opera, and on the other with regard to smaller and larger forms of contemporary musical theatre. The symposium will be held as part of the OPERA XXI Biennale, a showcase for new and contemporary musical theatre and/or chamber opera. It is organised by deSingel, Flanders Opera, Muziektheater Transparant and Lod in association with the Flanders Music Centre.

The congress links up with the performances in the Biennale of contemporary musical theatre which will be given in the weekend of Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd May 2011.

The congress opens at the Vooruit in Ghent on Friday 20th May. The main symposium will take place at deSingel in Antwerp on Saturday 21st May. On Sunday 22nd May the symposium will be brought to a close at the Flanders Opera in Antwerp. Those who will speak and debate at the symposium are artists, researchers and organisations of international repute.

The congress is intended for organisers, artists (composers, directors), dramaturges, researchers, theatre and musical-theatre students and members of the public who are interested in contemporary musical theatre.

The congress language is English. The detailed programm will be announced shortly at www.operaxxi.be.



Symposium Information

Price: € 80 (includes tickets for three performances)

To register for the symposium www.operaxxi.be

Included in the price for the symposium are tickets for the performances:

L'Intruse | Friday 20th May 8 pm
Vooruit Ghent

Blond Eckbert | Saturday 21st May 8 pm
Flanders Opera Antwerp

Medea | Sunday 22nd May 8 pm
DeSingel Antwerp

OPERA XXI recommends following four star partner hotels. When booked through OPERA XXI you can enjoy a discount on your stay

Lindner Hotel (****)
125 Lange Kievitsstraat
Antwerp
www.lindner.de
€ 85 per room/night incl Breakfast when booked through OPERA XXI

NH Hotel Ghent Belfort (****)
63 Hoogpoort
Ghent
www.nh-hotels.com
€ 85 - € 115 per room/night incl Breakfast when booked through OPERA XXI (limited availability. When fully booked you'll be transferred to NH Ghent St-Pieter)

Ramada Plaza Hotel (****)
94 Desguinlei
Antwerp
www.ramadaplaza-antwerp.com
€ 71 per single/night incl breakfast
€ 86 per double/night incl. breakfast
€ 96 per single executive room/night incl. breakfast
€ 111 per double executive room/night incl. breakfast

To book in Lindner and NH hotel, please contact press@operaxxi.be

To book in Ramada Plaza Hotel, please contact Bernadette.scheerders@desingel.be



Festival Information

OPERA XXI is organised by Vlaamse Opera, deSingel, muziektheater Transparant, LOD, Kunstencentrum Vooruit in association with Muziekcentrum Vlaanderen.

OPERA XXI takes place from 17th May till 29th May in Antwerp and Ghent

Locations:

Vlaamse Opera Antwerp
3 Frankrijklei
Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera Ghent
3 Schouwburgstraat
Ghent

deSingel
25 Desguinlei
Antwerp

Kunstencentrum Vooruit
23 Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat
Ghent

All ticketprices are 20 euro

Tickets L'Intruse, Middle East and Blond Eckbert:

www.vlaamseopera.be | 0032 70 22 02 02

Tickets Medea, De Gehangenen:

www.desingel.be | 0032 3 248 28 28

All information: www.operaxxi.be



For the press

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OPERA XXI gladly helps international journalists in organising their travel and accommodation. For more information please contact the press office.