



Press Release

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Powerful women take to the stage at Operadagen Rotterdam | 17 - 26 March 2019

A portrait of feminist Sylvia Plath, the impressive life story of the Afro-American freedom fighter Harriet Tubman, and life from behind a niqab, based on the work of three poets who participate in the Afghan Women's Writing Project. All of this can be experienced during the 14th edition of Operadagen Rotterdam. No fewer than 15 female composers will storm the opera bastion during the annual 10-day music theatre festival that takes place from 17 through 26 May 2019.

Operadagen Rotterdam pays a lot of attention to powerful women. The upcoming festival edition focuses on heroic women who were (and are) committed, in an extraordinary way, to women's rights, equality, and the wellbeing of fellow humans. According to Guy Coolen, artistic director of Operadagen Rotterdam:

*"The spotlights are on social change with powerful women taking the lead. Afghan women are given a voice and status in **Unknown, I Live With You**. The ground-breaking feminist **Sylvia Plath** and the pioneering anti-slavery activist **Harriet Tubman** are central stage. The unique installation performance **ORLANDO** pays homage to androgyny. On top of this, we proudly present major talents and innovative makers such as **Lisa Verbelen** and **Nicole Beutler**".*

But there is much, much more. This festival edition comprises **more than 100 performances** and an extensive fringe programme. 10 days of contemporary, state-of-the-art, and trailblazing performances by the (inter)national top and young adventurous makers.

Operadagen Rotterdam's full programme is announced on **Wednesday 13 March** during the festive kick-off in Theater Rotterdam, Schouwburg (5-7 PM).

Specifically for **International Women's Day 2019** (8 March 2019), the festival organisation proudly presents the first highlights with powerful women in the lead:

- Beautiful lullabies from all over the world, collected in refugee camps, form the basis for **Lullaby Movement**, a theatrical song cycle in no less than 18 languages. The Australian singer and composer **Sophia Brous** discovered the lullabies in camps across Europe where she interviewed refugees and migrants from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe since 2014, together with the documentarist and activist **Katie Barlow**. Lullaby Movement is a unique amalgam of acoustic and electronic music that incorporates Brous' soaring and uplifting voice. *Friday 17 and Saturday 18 May, Theater Rotterdam, Schouwburg.*
 - **Ten female composers** bring a musical ode to liberated women in **Fantastic Women**. What are the women themselves saying? What is the perspective of a woman? How does she sound, what is her tone? Fantastic women is a theatrical recital about women created by women from many different backgrounds. A raft of new compositions, melodies, and songs in every conceivable variation! *Saturday 18 May, De Doelen.*
 - The Swiss director **Julie Beauvais** presents a hybrid opera at Operadagen Rotterdam that purposely merges movement, video installation art, architecture, and live music. **ORLANDO** can best be described as a sensorial experiential opera inspired **Virginia Woolf's** androgynous protagonist. *Saturday 18 May, Theater Rotterdam, Schouwburg.*
 - **Unknown, I Live With You** is based on the work of three poets of the Afghan Women's Writing Project. The Afghan women tell their stories with great courage, unfiltered by husbands, family, or the media. The performance is executed by singers, dancers, a string quartet, and live electronics as part of a modern opera installation in which the audience can move freely across the stage. *Saturday 18 May, Theater Rotterdam, Schouwburg.*
 - The festival theme of Operadagen Rotterdam 2019 is **Metamorphosis**. Therefore the festival stages the world premiere of **8. METAMORPHOSIS** in Nieuwe Luxor Theater in Rotterdam in that specific context. **Nicole Beutler** found the inspiration for her modern dance opera in M.C. Escher, Ovid, and Purcell's famous Cold Song. *Monday and Tuesday 20 and 21 May, 2019, Nieuwe Luxor Theater.*
 - The soprano **Claron McFadden** embodies the Afro-American freedom fighter **Harriet Tubman** (c.1822-1913) in **HARRIET**. The performance tells the moving tale of a brave woman who managed to escape an existence where she was doomed to slavery via the hidden paths of the (in)famous 'Underground Railroad'. She became the head of this network of abolitionists at a later stage. *Tuesday 21 May, Theater Rotterdam,*
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Schouwburg.

- **Sylvia** is an original rock opera, created by the director Fabrice Murgia and informed by the diaries of poet **Sylvia Plath** (1932-1963). As a feminist figurehead, Sylvia struggled all her life to fulfil the American Dream. The audience can see a busy film set during the performance and take a look behind the scenes. The Belgian pianist and singer/songwriter **An Pierlé**, accompanied by her own Quartet, plays *Sylvia*. *Wednesday 22 May, Theater Rotterdam, Schouwburg.*
- **ALL.**, performer Lisa Verbelen's latest work, emphasizes the relationship between the sound and the form of music. **Lisa Verbelen** (1988) is a core member of the much-lauded theatre company BOG but she is also praised effusively for her music theatrical solo pieces. Lisa was nominated for the BNG Bank Prize for New Theatre Makers in 2016 and won the award for Best Vocal Design at the Fadjr Theatre Festival 2017 (Teheran). The Operadagen Award was presented to her in 2018. 'It is no exaggeration to say that she's got it', said the jury. *Wednesday 22 through Friday 24 May, Theater Rotterdam, Schouwburg.*

Go to www.operadagenrotterdam.nl to find additional information. The full programme will be posted here on Wednesday 13 March. Ticket sales for all performances start the same day.



Note to the editor, not for publication:

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