

## Michel van der Aa | Composer, Filmmaker, Stage Director

“One of the most distinctive of the younger composers in Europe today. His ability to fuse music, text and visual images into a totally organic whole sets him apart from nearly all his contemporaries.”  
Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*



Michel van der Aa, winner of the 2015 Johannes Vermeer Award and 2013 Grawemeyer award, is one of today's most sought-after composers and stage directors. A pioneer in the realms of new music and technology, his staged works – incorporating film and sampled soundtrack – are a seamless hybrid of musical theatre and multimedia. In 2010, van der Aa launched Disquiet Media, an independent multimedia label for his own work.

Van der Aa's imaginative music theatre works *Blank Out* (2015-16), *Sunken Garden* (2011-12), *The Book of Disquiet* (2008), *After Life* (2005/06) and *One* (2002) have received critical and public acclaim internationally. Staging, film and music are interwoven into a collage of transparent layers, resulting in works that are part-documentary, part-philosophy. His repertoire also includes concert works and chamber music for small ensemble, soloists and soundtrack, such as his cross-media cello concerto *Up-close* (2010). His 3D film opera, *Sunken Garden* (2013), an 'occult-mystery film-opera', was created in partnership with the English novelist David Mitchell, the author of *Cloud Atlas*. Co-commissioned by English National Opera, Opera de Lyon, Toronto Luminato Festival and Holland Festival, the work received its world premiere by ENO at the Barbican, London in April 2013.

Van der Aa's latest music theatre work, *Blank Out*, received its world premiere in March 2016, presented in Dutch National Opera's Opera Forward Festival. A 3D chamber opera for solo soprano onstage, baritone Roderick Williams and Nederlands Kamerkoor on film and electronic soundtrack, the world premiere was performed by Miah Persson. A co-production of Dutch National Opera, Lucerne Festival and Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, the work has since had performances at Beijing Music Festival, Musica Nova Helsinki, KunstFestSpiele Hannover and Park Avenue Armory.

The 2018-19 season includes performances of *Blank Out* at Trondheim Chamber Music Festival (where van der Aa is the featured composer) and Megaron Concert Hall, Athens. Van der Aa's concerto for violin and cello, *akin*, has performances by Patricia Kopatchinskaya and Sol Gabetta with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (cond. Peter Eötvös) in Cologne and Amsterdam. The season culminates with the premiere of a new virtual reality installation, *Eight*, featuring singer-songwriter Kate Miller-Heidke and the Nederlands Kamerkoor. In collaboration with designer Theun Mosk and virtual reality company The Virtual Dutch Men, van der Aa has created a unique groundbreaking fusion of musical theatre, VR and visual art. This will have its world premiere at Holland Festival, followed by Chateau La Coste / Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, alongside performances of *Blank Out*. In the following season, the installation will be presented at Beijing Music Festival and Kunstfestspiele Hannover.

Netherlands-born, van der Aa maintains strong roots in his home country including close ties with the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and the Holland Festival. In 2011, the Concertgebouw Orchestra announced a long-term partnership with van der Aa. The new position of 'House Composer' led to the creation of several major works including a new violin concerto written for Janine Jansen, which was premiered in autumn 2014 by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Winner of numerous awards for his innovative work, van der Aa is a regular guest of the world's most prestigious festivals and concert halls including Barbican Centre, Opera de Lyon, Berliner Festspiele, Venice Biennale and Huddersfield Festival. His compositions have been performed at the highest international level: by the ASKO|Schoenberg, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Modern, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, musikFabrik, Philharmonia Orchestra and Helsinki Avanti Ensemble. In August 2017, van der Aa was composer-in-residence at Lucerne Festival, where a variety of his works including *Blank Out* and *The Book of Disquiet* received performances.