

Press release

Den Norske Opera & Ballett, Oslo to present premiere of commissioned work 'Peer Gynt' by Jüri Reinvere, based on Henrik Ibsen's drama, on 29 November 2014

Den Norske Opera & Ballett in Oslo has commissioned a new opera based on the Norwegian national epic 'Peer Gynt' to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the country's constitution. The Estonian composer Jüri Reinvere has written both a new libretto and a new score for the piece, whose premiere is scheduled for 29 November 2014; the work will be produced by Sigrid Strøm Reibo, with Katrin Nottrodt designing the set and musical direction in the hands of John Helmer Fiore. The principal roles will be sung by Nils Harald Sødal (Peer Gynt), Marita Sølberg (the young Solveig), Ingebjørg Kosmo (Mother Ase and the old Solveig) and David Hansen, to name but a few. Additional performances will be held on 1, 11, 14 and 30 December 2014 and on 2, 11, 15 and 17 January 2015. The spectacular building occupied by Den Norske Opera & Ballett was opened in 2008, and now has the reputation of being one of the leading opera theatre stages in Europe. The American conductor John Helmer Fiore was appointed musical director in 2009, while Per Boye Hansen has been opera director there since the 2012/13 season.

Jüri Reinvere established himself as one of the most versatile contemporary composers with his opera 'Puhdistus' (Purgatory), which premiered at the Finnish National Opera to considerable acclaim in 2012. He was commissioned by Den Norske Opera & Ballett to write 'Peer Gynt' as his second opera. Adopting a present-day perspective, the composer reflects in his work the relevance which the Peer Gynt epic continues to have throughout Norway. When Ibsen's drama was written in the 1860s, society was standing right on the threshold of the modern age. We too find ourselves today in times of enormous change, facing situations which can produce individuals in the mould of Peer Gynt. We try to avoid commitment as never before, afraid of missing out on something – better opportunities, better jobs, better relationships, or whatever. But what does this fear of commitment do to us? We risk ending up alone, with no sense of belonging to any community or society. Like Peer Gynt, we are evolving into self-righteous egotists. For Ibsen, true love goes hand in hand with commitment, self-sacrifice and patience – ideals which have perhaps fallen by the wayside. And this is precisely what Jüri Reinvere's new 'Peer Gynt' sets out to examine: how would Ibsen have written his drama in the present time, against the backdrop of how we live our lives today?

Jüri Reinvere was born in Tallinn 1971 and has lived and worked in Berlin since 2005. He is not only a composer but also the librettist of his own operas. The multilingual artist's works and life have been shaped essentially by three factors: his childhood in an occupied country within the Soviet Union, his developing years in Finland and in Stockholm, and by his private teacher Käbi Laretei, pianist and novelist, and, most importantly, through the presence of her former husband, Ingmar Bergman; an environment which brought Jüri Reinvere close to the Nordic theatre tradition. Apart from composing he has also published essays and poems, produced

and written screenplays for documentary films, worked as a translator and for Estonian and Finnish radio. His works comprise 'Puhdistus', 'Peer Gynt', 'Opposite Shore', a radio opera, 'Northwest Bow', 'Written in the Sand', 'Four Quartets I', 'Requiem' and 'Norilsk – The Daffodils' to name but a few.

The young Norwegian director Sigrid Strøm Reibo (*1982) makes her debut at Den Norske Opera & Ballett with "Peer Gynt", her second opera directing work. She has distinguished herself with strong artistic productions in both Norway and Russia, where she was educated, and has won awards for best directing. John Helmer Fiore is considered one of Europe's leading conductors of opera, with Wagner a speciality. He has been principal conductor of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein and also headed the Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra before becoming musical director at Den Norske Opera & Ballett in 2009.

The extraordinary home of Den Norske Opera & Ballett was opened in April 2008. Designed to resemble a drifting iceberg, it is considered the greatest cultural project in post-war Norway. Per Boye Hansen has been opera director there since 2012/13, and was able to win large new audiences for opera and ballet last season, with 94% seat occupancy rates. Breathtaking architecture and world-class acoustics have certainly played their part. But sensational success on this scale is also due to the intelligent, sophisticated programme of events devised by Per Boye Hansen, which delights fresh audiences every month.

This year's string of premieres opened with Ole Anders Tandberg's production of Shostakovich's 'Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District' (from 4 September), which will transfer to the Deutsche Oper in Berlin in January 2015. On 24 April 2015, a new production of Verdi's 'La Traviata' will be staged in Oslo by Tatjana Gürbaca, 2013 'Director of the Year' (*Opernwelt*). Concert versions of two rarely performed one-act operas – Hindemith's 'Sancta Susanna' and Zemlinsky's 'A Florentine Tragedy' – will feature on the programme from 22 February 2015. Two new collaborations with Catalan director Calixto Bieito are also worthy of note: a revival of 'The Tales of Hoffmann' (from 2 October 2014) and Bizet's 'Carmen', a coproduction with the English National Opera (premiere on 23 January 2015). A version of Wagner's 'Lohengrin' will be making a guest appearance after being staged in Graz in September 2013 (premiere on 8 March 2015). Den Norske Opera & Ballett can call on the services of an outstanding Norwegian vocal ensemble. But it is also a magnet for international stars; this season, for instance, Pretty Yende is singing the part of Rosina in Rossini's 'The Barber of Seville' (from 21 December 2014) and Ildebrando d'Arcangelo that of Don Giovanni in Mozart's eponymous opera (from 18 October 2014).

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