



NILS HARALD SODAL (PHOTO: ERIK BERG)



JÜRI REINVERE (PHOTO: JANA NOWACK)

# World premiere of an Ibsen opera by Reinvere

*The Norwegian National Opera, a byword in opera circles the world over, commissioned **Jüri Reinvere** to write an opera based on Norway's national epic, *Peer Gynt*. The music by **Edvard Grieg** for Ibsen's drama is known universally. Reinvere has interpreted the work anew with his music and his own libretto, and the new opera will receive its world premiere at the Oslo Opera House on 29 November 2014.*

"I have long felt that **Henrik Ibsen's** *Peer Gynt* was well suited to opera," says **Per Boye Hansen**, Director of the Norwegian National Opera. "Its theme is as relevant today as when it was written, while the open format offers many interpretive possibilities and affords a composer great freedom."

"When Per Boye Hansen approached me, I was immediately enthusiastic at the prospect," comments Jüri Reinvere. "To make an opera of *Peer Gynt* is a fantastic idea. This drama embraces the history of Norway and Europe – it is about our very identity. The opera will also incorporate elements from other Ibsen plays as well as lines from the *Edda* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*."

*Peer Gynt* was specially written for the singers of the Norwegian National Opera and will be sung in Norwegian, although the original work is in German.

## The composer

With the international acclaim of his first opera *Puhdistus* (*Purge*), 🎬 premiered at the Finnish National Opera in 2012, Estonian-born composer Jüri Reinvere gained his reputation as one of the

most faithful, yet versatile composers of our time. His works and life have been shaped by three essential factors: his childhood in an occupied country within the Soviet Union, his developing years in Finland and in Stockholm, and his private teacher **Käbi Laretei**, pianist and novelist, and, most importantly, the presence of her former husband, **Ingmar Bergman** in an environment which brought Reinvere close to the Nordic theatre tradition and influenced him as a composer, a thinker and as a writer in the most personal way.

In addition to composing, Reinvere has published essays and poems, worked for the Estonian and Finnish radio, produced and written screenplays for documentary films, translated and co-written books, and written the libretto for his earlier opera, *Purge*. **Sofi Oksanen** has described him as a "true cosmopolitan with Estonian roots". Since 2005, Reinvere has lived and worked in Berlin, where he has also written contributions as a political essayist for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, as well as for radio and TV.

Reinvere's music, known for being transformational, highly versatile and subtle, is characterised by unpredictability and unreality. In his poetical thinking, it is possible to trace philosophical themes such as the concept of time, the enigma of God, the psychological depths of man and the state of trauma in post-Soviet societies. Most of his works are based on his own poetry, written originally in English, using different musical genres in an assessment of humanity and its polarities.

## The opera

*Peer Gynt* is a story of the search for an identity that constantly escapes us. According to Jüri Reinvere, the character of *Peer Gynt* is a symbol of now. He is an exact embodiment of Western man: powerful and content. He has been true to his goals and engaged in lurid ventures, achieving

the ultimate diamond: success. Yet he is unfulfilled and has become contrite.

There is a saying: "One cannot become a great businessman without going bankrupt three times: twice financially and once personally." In the opera, *Peer Gynt* – being utterly true to Ibsen – returns home personally bankrupt. He has been a great businessman, and like all great businessmen he understands that success needs to be seen only as a resource for something else. But what is there behind the maze of goals and greed? Who stands at the gate? Solveig, a woman, trying to redeem him from himself? And if she cannot do so, who can redeem him from offences that have affected millions?

"Our Western culture is on the road downwards, together with all its outsourcing and delusional life – and yet we do nothing but dwell on the beauty of our symbols," says *Peer Gynt* morosely in the new opera. Yet he never gives up hope. Hope for redemption, somehow, somewhere.

In addition to **Nils Harald Sodal**, cast in the role of *Peer Gynt*, the world premiere presents such rising stars as countertenor **David Hansen**. Reinvere has created new roles for him and **Johannes Weisser** – characters that Ibsen did not have in his play. The stage director is **Sigrid Strøm Reibo**, famous in the theatre for her renderings of Ibsen and Shakespeare. The costume and stage designs are by **Katrin Nottrodt**.

*Text sources: Jüri Reinvere, Norwegian National Opera*

### More information:

[www.peergynt-opera.net](http://www.peergynt-opera.net)  
[www.operaen.no](http://www.operaen.no)  
[www.reinvere.de](http://www.reinvere.de)