

## **SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME (Subject to change) (Updated Oct. 13, 2025)**

### **THURSDAY November 27th**

#### **OPERA'S UNHEARD STORIES – NEW NARRATIVES AND PERSPECTIVES**

Den Andra Operan presents the theme of the seminar: new narratives, perspectives & unheard stories. DAO has for 10 years dived deep into the forgotten operas composed by women. In this talk they share found patterns, common denominators and fascinating stories.

With: Bente Rolandsdotter and Hanna Fritzson, artistic and musical directors, Den Andra Operan.

#### **HOW TO REVOLUTIONIZE AN OPERA REPERTOIRE – as a commissioner / opera house**

Dr. Merle Fahrholz shares her experiences of staging operas composed by women – both historical and contemporary – at the opera houses of Dortmund and Essen. She talks with Artistic Director of the Royal Danish Opera Elisabeth Linton about challenges, wins, the future as well as practical aspects such as funding and collaborations.

With: Dr. Merle Fahrholz, artistic director, Aalto Musiktheater & Essener Philharmoniker.

**Moderator: Elisabeth Linton, Artistic Director, The Royal Danish Opera.**

#### **FROM ARCHIVE TO STAGE: Mazeppa by Marie Clemence de Grandval, 1892**

Den Andra Operan revived Grandval's opera Mazeppa in a semi-staged performance in Stockholm in August 2025. This talk will be about the process of staging excerpts of Mazeppa. What was interesting in the piece, what new perspectives of an established myth did they find? And what to do when a historical opera due to present events suddenly turns out to be highly topical and potentially controversial?

With: Mårten Forslund, stage director; Sophie Helsing, dramaturg; Bente Rolandsdotter, artistic director.

**Moderator: Jørgen Hansen, dramaturg, The Royal Danish Opera.**

#### **FROM ARCHIVE TO STAGE: MAKING FORGOTTEN OPERAS AVAILABLE**

Alexandre Dratwicki artistic leader of Palazetto Bru Zane – a Musical Centre for French musical heritage of the period 1780-1920 – has rediscovered and awakened operas such as Fausto by Louise Bertin and Mazeppa by Clemence de Grandval. In this talk Alexandre Dratwicki shares his work

methods and experiences from his work with historical operas by women.

With: Alexandre Dratwicki, artistic leader of Palazetto Bru Zane.

### **A NEW DAWN – THE NEXT GENERATION FEMALE COMPOSERS**

Music journalist Wilhelm Kvist explores the current landscape of opera on Nordic stages, focusing on works composed by women. Are female composers represented? And if so, do their operas offer new or different perspectives and stories compared to those written by their male counterparts?

Following the presentation, composer Louise Alenius discusses her approach to choosing themes in conversation with Wilhelm Kvist. Louise Alenius has written the operas *Silent Zone* (Transformatorhallen, Copenhagen and Malmö Opera) and *Manualen* (The Royal Danish Theatre).

With: Wilhelm Kvist, music journalist; Louise Alenius, composer.

### **DANISH OPERAS COMPOSED BY WOMEN**

An overview of Danish operas composed by women, with a focus on Hilda Sehested's *Agnete og Havmanden* presented by Lisbeth Ahlgren, a leading figure in the rediscovery of Danish female composers.

With: Lisbeth Ahlgren, musicologist.

### **NEW PERSPECTIVES AND UNHEARD STORIES IN DANISH OPERA**

Musicologist Thomas Husted Kirkegaard is well known in Denmark for his research and knowledge of the works of Tekla Griebel-Wandall, especially *King Hroar's Skjald* – a piece that hasn't yet been staged for over 100 years, waiting in the archives of the Royal Danish Theatre. Husted Kirkegaard will also present a recently made sensational new finding; an opera by Nicoline Leth from 1890.

With: Thomas Husted Kirkegaard, musicologist.

## **FRIDAY November 28th**

### **FROM ARCHIVE TO STAGE: FRITHIOF'S SAGA**

Aalto Musiktheater Essen will present the world premiere of Elfrida Andrées and Selma Lagerlöf's opera *Frithiof's saga* from 1898 in February 2026. This talk will present insights to the process of

staging an opera from its finding to its world premiere.

Participants TBA.

**Moderator: Patricia Knebel, dramaturg, Aalto Musiktheater Essen.**

## **WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES WHEN DIRECTING (UNKNOWN) OPERAS BY WOMEN COMPOSERS?**

Are operas by women about something different? Is the perspective different from that of male composers? And for that reason, is it especially important to stay true to the original piece and not change, or add interpretation layers, when staging it in modern times? Is there a special task in finding precisely the “female” perspective?

A panel discussion about what artistic freedoms that can be taken when reviving operas that are unheard in modern times – originating from objections and critique that Den **Andra** Operan has received throughout the years/when staging historical operas by women.

With: Wilhelm Kvist, music journalist; Mårten Forslund, stage director; Deda Cristina Colonna, stage director and choreographer; Henrik Schaefer, conductor & Music Director Folkoperan; Elisabeth Linton, Artistic Director, Royal Danish Opera, Copenhagen.

**Moderator: Sophie Helsing.**

## **DISGUISED OPERA – COMPOSED BY NUNS**

Hanna Fritzson, soprano and musical director of DAO together with musicologist Holger SchmittHallenberg, will present their joint project Disguised Opera composed by Nuns - an in-depth study of two oratorios and a cantata by the 18th-century composer Camilla de Rossi. The project investigates whether the composer’s oratorios and cantatas were in fact “disguised” operas, created to avoid the restrictions placed on women’s artistic expression at the time. The project is part of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music’s Bernadotte Scholarship Programme.

With: Hanna Fritzson, soprano and musical director, Den Andra Operan and Holger Schmitt-Hallenberg, musicologist.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AUDIENCE AND THE OPERAS**

What strategies can we use to give the forgotten operas by women back their proper place? A short presentation on sales, communication and the marketing perspective.

With: Annica Sand, operational manager, Den Andra Operan

## **INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK: THE WoVen PROJECT**

Melania Bucciarelli, Professor of Musicology, initiator of the five-year research project WoVen at the Norwegian University in Trondheim, shares her insights from Women, Opera and the Public Stage in Eighteenth-Century Venice.

With: Melania Bucciarelli, professor of musicology and initiator of WoVen; Deda Cristina Colonna, stage director, choreographer and part of WoVen - and others TBA.

## **SUMMARY & NOW & FUTURE**

Conclusion including an interactive program item where we aim at a solution-oriented future vision. Formalization of a network for Operas composed by women.

Each morning Thursday and Friday before the official program starts:

## **300 YEARS IN 30 MINUTES**

Den Andra Operan offers a crash course in operatic works composed by women throughout history. Here, artistic and musical directors Bente Rolandsdotter and Hanna Fritzson provides a quick overview and a glimpse into the rich treasure trove of female-composed operas. According to current research there are more than 500 operas composed by women, the earliest known dating back to 1625.