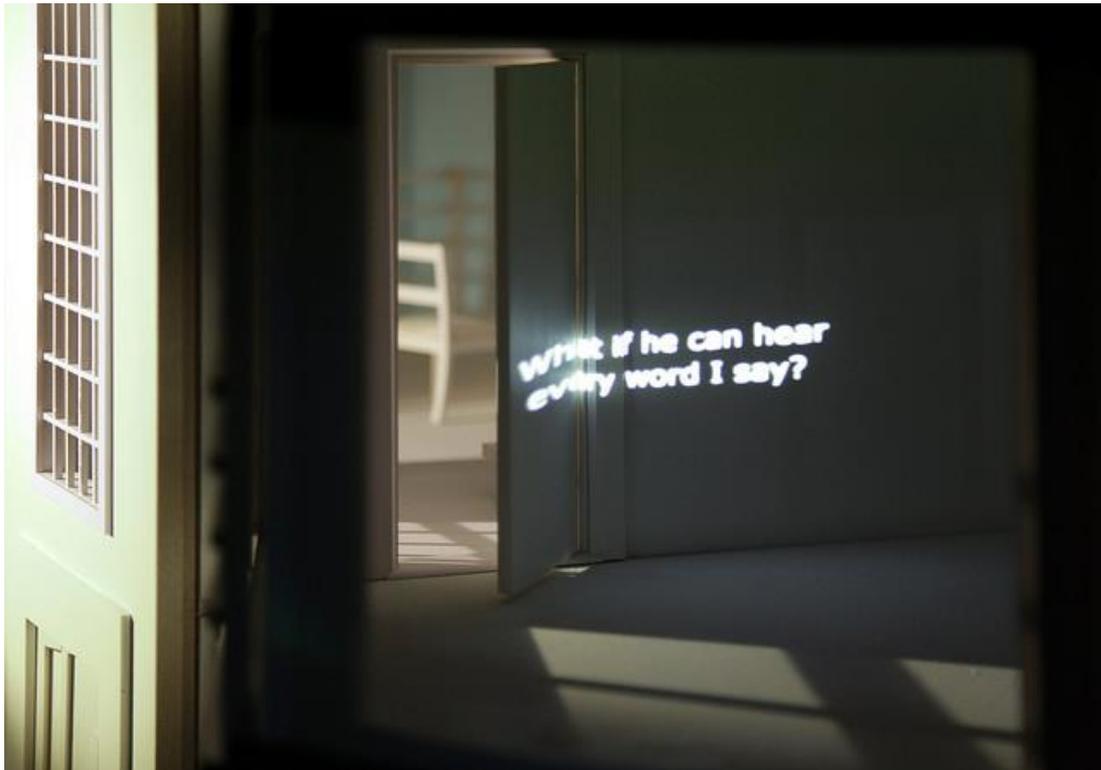




## Presskit

### *Private view*



© 33 1/3 Collective

**Annelies Van Parys | 33 1/3 Collective**

**Jen Hadfield | Gaea Schoeters**

**Tom Creed**

**Asko|Schönberg Ensemble | Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart**

Produced by Muziektheater Transparant and co-produced by the 33 1/3 Collective, Asko|Schönberg, Opera Days Rotterdam, Concertgebouw Brugge, Deutsche Oper Berlin, National Opera Bergen and Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg. With the support of the Productiefonds Oost Nederland and BesteBuren.

The composition was commissioned to Annelies Van Parys by Muziektheater Transparant and Kunsthuis Opera Vlaanderen.

The libretto was commissioned by National Opera Bergen.

Private View won the first Fedora – Rolf Liebermann Prize for Opera in 2014.

## Synopsis

For her first opera, the composer Annelies Van Parys had two themes in mind: voyeurism and social isolation. *Private View* is set in the enclosed world of a block of flats; the residents have withdrawn completely into themselves and hardly know their neighbours. The characters in Gaea Schoeters' scenario and Jen Hadfield's playful, ambiguous libretto are reduced to archetypes, metaphors for patterns of interhuman relations, sketched only by way of their actions or inaction. Under Tom Creed's directing, the singers of the Neue Vocalsolisten are no longer traditional protagonists, but they are 'neutralised' into 'operators' by the 33 ⅓ Collective, a deliberate intervention. Using found footage from old films, this video collective drives the story onward in an ambiguous manner; nothing is unequivocally true or untrue, everything remains open to interpretation.

## Credits

Composer: Annelies Van Parys

Libretto: Jen Hadfield

Video and set concept: 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  Collective

Scenario: Gaea Schoeters

Conductor: Etienne Siebens

Director: Tom Creed

Lighting Designer: Peter Quasters

### Ensembles:

\*Asko|Schönberg Ensemble: David Kweksilber, clarinet and sax / Serguei Dovgaliouk, horn / Koen Kaptijn, trombone / Joey Marijs, percussion / Renee Bekkers, accordion / Wiek Hijmans, electric guitar / Liesbeth Steffens, viola / Hans Woudenberg, cello / Quirijn van Regteren Altena, double bass

\*Neue Vokalsolisten Stuttgart: Johanna Zimmer, soprano / Truike van der Poel, mezzo soprano / Martin Nagy, tenor / Guillermo Anzorena, baritone / Andreas Fischer, bass

Produced by Muziektheater Transparant and co-produced by the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  Collective, Asko|Schönberg, Operadagen Rotterdam, Concertgebouw Brugge, Deutsche Oper Berlin, National Opera Bergen and Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg.

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With the support of deSingel Internationale Kunstcampus.

## **Texts from the makers**

### **Annelies Van Parys – composer**

Having worked on a number of projects about the ancient Greeks, I was drawn to a more personal subject matter: thrillers by one of my favourite directors, Alfred Hitchcock. His wonderful sense of humour and brilliant timing create a perfect build-up of suspense to the finale, without allowing things to become too stifling. Indeed, just like music, film is architecture in time achieved by means of a carefully tailored narrative.

Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* is ideal for translation into either theatre or opera, both as regards its themes (e.g. voyeurism) and as regards the set (the entire film is almost entirely limited to the view inside and from Jeff's apartment). So the choice was easy.

My work did not strictly follow the film, but highlighted a number of (to my mind) key contemporary themes (voyeurism and (social) isolation), in combination with thriller suspense and the typical tongue-in-cheek humour that is unique to Hitchcock. I

outsourced the set design to the video artists of the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  Collective to ensure that it did not become a remake of the original film. Subsequently, the librettist Jen Hadfield developed a number of intriguing characters, which were redrawn and plotted as 'nameless metaphors for (inter)personal (relationship) patterns' by the scriptwriter Gaea Schoeters.

The result is a smart thriller scenario with texts that are not only playful and witty, but also poetic and refined. It plays on the tension between truth and perception, and reality and imagination; both between the characters and the storyteller, and between the audience and the events taking place on stage.

With regard to instrumentation and voices, I had five singers from the Neue Vocalsolisten at my disposal, as well as nine instrumentalists.

For the singers, I chose two ladies (soprano and mezzo) and three gentlemen (tenor, baritone, bass). Bearing in mind that this was to become a kind of thriller opera, I wanted to opt for instruments with a dark timbre. So as my base I chose the three string instruments with the lowest notes (viola, cello, double bass). On top of these, I selected three wind instruments: the trombone, the horn, and the saxophone (tenor/alto/soprano) whose player would also need to play the clarinet. For my three remaining instruments, I opted for percussion, accordion and electric guitar.

The characters colour every scene, but there are also fixed motifs or moods that keep reappearing: paranoia, for example. The idea is that, on the one hand, the characters or situations remain familiar to the audience, and that on the other there is sufficient variation in the palette. Playing with timbres has become my trademark, and this opera will certainly be no exception.

### **Gaea Schoeters – scriptwriter**

Spying on the neighbours is something we all do from time to time. But who is this other person, and what do we discover about him by looking at him? Is what we see always true? Or do we colour in the pictures with our own (pre)conceptions? And to what extent does looking make us complicit in what we see? When should we step in? Where

does voyeurism end and social responsibility begin? And can shared anxiety bring people out of their social isolation, or does it actually drive them further apart? These questions are central to *Private View*. When Annelies Van Parys asked me to write the script for her first opera, she had two themes in mind: voyeurism and social isolation. Alongside these, she also wanted to stay true to the spirit of Hitchcock, and therefore to keep both the element of suspense and his tongue-in-cheek humour. *Private View* was to be a thriller first and foremost, forcing the audience into the role of voyeur, and obliging those watching to think about their own (social) responsibility and complicity.

### Social isolation

*Private View* takes place within the closed world of a block of flats. The characters that live there have completely withdrawn into themselves, and barely know their neighbours. The librettist Jen Hadfield developed a number of intriguing characters for this opera. Along the way, it became clear that the logical choice would be to reduce them to archetypes – and that this would be carried through into the visual idiom employed by the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  Collective. The characters, none of whom have a name, only know one another ‘by sight’.

There is the neurotic girl who does not dare to leave her flat, and who fills her day with compulsive actions. The eternal lonely seducer, who never gets closer to a woman than in his imagination. The extravagant young couple who see themselves as libertines, but who end up choked by their own bourgeois mentality. The seemingly perfect lesbian couple, whose marriage no one suspects is governed by psychological abuse. And the lonely old woman that no one notices, but who herself observes everything. The only character with access to everyone’s homes, and who has some idea of what is actually going on in the flats, is the handyman. But no one sees him, because he is nothing more than a tool that keeps the flats in working order. Apart from this, no one looks beyond his own microcosm. Only the three students who have recently moved into the block try, unsuccessfully, to make contact, but they come up against a wall of indifference and paranoia. The doors remain closed until a murder takes place and this paranoia spreads through the building.

Can shared anxiety be something that binds us together? For a while, it looks as though the search for the culprit will break through the residents’ isolation. The murderer is one of them: if they want to catch him, they will have to look one another in the eye, expose themselves, and share what they know and have seen. But do they want to do something about it, or will they choose to shut their eyes to what is going on outside their own flats? Is it not easier for them to stay blind, as long as they are not directly threatened? And what happens afterwards? Once the threat has gone away, will they slip back into their former isolation? Or is there hope, and do they succeed in escaping from the pattern of their lives, and in making contact once again with the world and with one another?

## Voyeurism

Voyeurism is everywhere; via social media, where we voluntarily expose ourselves, we spy on our neighbours more than ever. But although we spend a great deal of time looking, we actually fail to see very much. In the analogous world of the block of flats, this truth is expressed even more clearly. Because a voyeur only sees the surface; his gaze is limited to that which is visible. He or she has no insight into the thoughts of those at whom he is gazing from a distance, and cannot explain what he sees, but can only guess at its meaning. He fills in the blind spots with his own imaginings, which, it would seem, are often wide of the mark.

Has a murder really been committed? And by whom? Everyone behaves suspiciously, but don't we all have something to hide? At the start of the opera, the tension between truth and perception, reality and imagination is still wide open, both for the characters and for the spectators. Along the way, incorrect interpretations are adjusted; proof is supplemented by new information, characters address one another, and suspicions prove unjustified. For a long time, everyone strives to remain ignorant of what is staring them in the face, and thus to shirk their responsibility. It is only the narrator that constantly questions all the certainties, acting as a kind of collective conscience. For shouldn't those who are watching also act? It is not only the characters that are guilty of gratuitous spying; just as Hitchcock makes complicit voyeurs of his audience in *Rear Window*, Van Parys makes voyeurs of the opera's audience. The spectators become über-spies, and thus accessories. Because they too are silent witnesses who – more than the characters – know what has happened. Through this privileged insight, the spectators are confronted with their own role as voyeurs and are forced to reflect on the way they look at things, and on the responsibility that looking implies. Although, right up to the end, they can offer their uncertainty as to what they have seen as an excuse. Because what we see is only true insofar as we (want to) believe that it has really happened – or not.

He who watches is also watched. All too often, the voyeur forgets that the subject of his gaze is looking back. So when the murderer begins to dispose of the witnesses, the threat shifts directly to the voyeur *par excellence*: the audience.

### **Tom Creed – director**

*Private View* casts the spectator in the role of a voyeur, like the characters played by James Stewart and Grace Kelly in Hitchcock's film *Rear Window*. Can we believe what we see, or is our imagination playing tricks on us? The opera presents a cast of characters, living next to each other in a block of flats, but so disconnected that they could be miles apart. Two strangers living isolated lives begin to discover one another. A woman tries to break out of a possessive and destructive relationship. The spectacle of a dazzling gothic couple masks a surprisingly banal daily routine. A group of medical students become amateur detectives and try to solve a murder that may (or may not) have happened. There is a cry in the night, and the old woman who watches from her window disappears. Has a murder really occurred? Or are we the real victims – of our own overactive imaginations?

Five singers embody the entire cast of characters in the apartment building, with the support of the video design by the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  Collective. The combination of bodies, voices and visual details magnified and multiplied on screen tries to find a new way of depicting character, of presenting the full breadth of humanity and the complications and contradictions of life. The video design discovers a cast of characters in films from the early days of Hollywood, now in the public domain. This film footage is edited, distorted, looped and magnified to create a dizzying sense of suspense and suspicion. Can we really believe our eyes?

Hitchcock confronted his audience with a micro-world: a plot, a storyline with a frequently unpredictable ending and message. Do we know how we and the world will end up? Do we gaze like voyeurs into a reflecting mirror image?

### **33 $\frac{1}{3}$ Collective – video collective**

*Private View* (based on Hitchcock's *Rear Window*) is an expressively designed musical thriller in which a murder is committed, the circumstances of which unfold in three acts. When Guy Coolen (Muziektheater Transparant's artistic director) asked us if we wanted to collaborate on this production (which was, as yet, untitled) we were pleasantly surprised. The key thing that attracted us was the idea that *Private View* is purposely not modelled on the classic musical-theatre template, where singers (the protagonists) act out and sing a story. Indeed, this 'departure from the norm' suits us perfectly: to tell a story using projections in such an overtly visual way that the audience not only becomes fascinated, but is also misled. In *Private View*, the images are not only projected onto multiple screens, but also onto the singers of Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart, who in this unusual set-up also serve as mobile projection screens.

- Biographies -

**Annelies Van Parys** (°1975) studied composition at the Royal Conservatoire in Ghent under Luc Brewaeys. She is a winner of the Tactus International Composition seminary for orchestra and was selected as honorary ambassador of the Royal Conservatoire in Ghent for 2011. In 2011 she was also awarded the prestigious post of laureate of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium. She is increasingly in demand as a composer, her work is performed at major festivals and theatres around the world and she is a regular member of juries in international composition competitions. Annelies Van Parys lectures in formal analysis and orchestration at the Royal Conservatoire in Brussels and piano at the Municipal Conservatoire in Bruges. Since 2007 she has been a resident composer at Muziektheater Transparant, where she has composed music for the productions *RUHE* (2007), *An Index of Memories* (2010), *An Oresteia* (2011) and *Pelléas et Mélisande* (2012). In 2015 she wrote her first opera, *Private View*, for Transparant.

**Jen Hadfield** (°1978) grew up in the north of England but lives in Shetland. She tutors, and performs her poetry internationally. In early 2013, she visited Kurdistan as part of the British Council and Firefly International's poetry translation/cultural exchange project *Reel Iraq*, and she was in New Zealand as part of the Scottish Poetry Library's

Commonwealth Poets United in March 2014. She has won numerous awards for her work, including an Eric Gregory Award in 2003, and the 2012 Edwin Morgan Poetry Competition for her poem *The Kids* in 2012. Of her first two books, *Almanacs* (2005, Bloodaxe Books) and *Nigh-No-Place* (2008, Bloodaxe Books), *Nigh-No-Place* won the T.S.Eliot Prize in 2008, making her the youngest poet ever to win the prize. Her third and latest poetry book, *Byssus*, was published by Picador in February 2014. Ever curious about the dramatic and poetic possibilities of everyday language, she's excited to be involved in a music theatre project for the first time.

**Tom Creed** (°1980) is a theatre and opera director based in Dublin. He is currently developing new opera projects with Donnacha Dennehy and Alarm Will Sound in New York and St Louis, and with Jürgen Simpson and Turning Point Ensemble in Vancouver. He is an associate artist of Opera Theatre Company in Dublin and completed a Jerwood Opera Writing Fellowship at Aldeburgh Music. He was nominated for Best Director at the Irish Times Theatre Awards in 2007. His production of *Watt* by Samuel Beckett with acclaimed Irish actor Barry McGovern has been presented at several festivals as Edinburgh International Festival and Perth International Festival but also at the Barbican Centre in London and the Public Theatre in New York. From 2011-2013 Tom was Festival Director of Cork Midsummer Festival, one of Ireland's leading contemporary arts festivals. He was nominated for an Irish Times Irish Theatre Award in 2012 "for original and dynamic use of local spaces at Cork Midsummer Festival".

The Belgian conductor **Etienne Siebens** (°1957) was offered guest conductorships both at home and abroad almost immediately after his studies in orchestral conducting under Lucas Vis, Hiroyuki Iwaki and Jorma Panula, which led the press to describe him as 'the man to watch in a Belgium lacking in conductors'. From 1992 to 2008 he was the conductor and artistic head of the Prometheus Ensemble, which he had founded. As a full-time conductor of the Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen, Siebens was able to make his very personal mark on the orchestra's performances with his individual accents and bold interpretation. Over the last few seasons he has conducted the MusikFabrik, Klangforum Wien, Collegium Vocale Ghent, the Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest and the Nederlands Kamerkoor. His name appears regularly at such festivals as the Holland Festival, the Flanders Festival, Festival Wien Modern, the Montreux-Vevey Festival and Warsaw Autumn. Since the 2012-2013 season Etienne Siebens has been a regular visiting conductor at the Asko|Schönberg Ensemble.

The **33 $\frac{1}{3}$  Collective** is a platform for artists based in Zwolle and set up by Jules van Hulst, Douwe Dijkstra and Coen Huisman, who got to know each other as students at the art academy. With video projections for the musical-theatre adaptation of *The Falls*, *Bidden Met De Pet Op* and *Onderbelicht*, they created their rather contrary trade mark: in a highly unconventional manner, project an illusory, often grotesque reality that appealed very much to the imagination, onto everyday objects and ready-mades. With the successful *Blauwbaard*, a video opera, the Collective were not only highly praised by colleagues, but also by programmers from abroad, like on festivals in Glasgow and New York. At the present time, the Collective is working on *No More Masterpieces*, a concert video in association with the Ensemble contemporain that focuses on the music of Wolfgang Rihm.

**Asko|Schönberg** is a leading ensemble based in Amsterdam that plays twentieth- and twenty-first-century music with various combinations of players. In addition to music by such major established names as Mauricio Kagel, György Kurtág and Karlheinz Stockhausen, this also includes creations by such younger composers as Michel van der Aa, Jörg Widmann and Robert Zuidam, and also of the very youngest generation, where the ink on the score has not yet even dried. Asko|Schönberg is an 'ensemble in residence' at the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ in Amsterdam and has also performed in a variety of concert halls in the Netherlands and abroad, as well as at festivals in Cologne, Cracow, Paris and elsewhere, and in coproductions with the Nationale Toneel, the Veenfabriek and Muziektheater Transparant. Asko|Schönberg is also involved in education, with projects for seven-year-olds, secondary schools and master students who wish to gain skills in the performance of contemporary music.

The **Neue Vocalsolisten** established as an ensemble specializing in the interpretation of contemporary vocal music in 1984. Founded under the artistic management of Musik der Jahrhunderte, the vocal chamber ensemble has been artistically independent since the year 2000. Each of the seven concert and opera soloists, with a collective range reaching from coloratura soprano over countertenor to "basso profondo", shapes the work on chamber music and the co-operation with the composers and other interpreters through his/her distinguished artistic creativity. According to the musical requirements a pool of specialist singers complements the basic team. The ensemble's chief interest lies on research: exploring new sounds, new vocal techniques and new forms of articulation, whereby great emphasis is placed on establishing a dialogue with composers. Each year, the ensemble premieres about twenty new works. Central to the group's artistic concept are the areas of music theater and the interdisciplinary work with electronics, video, visual arts and literature, as well as the juxtaposition of contrasting elements found in ancient and contemporary music.

### **Muziektheater Transparant**

Going from the artistic and social topicality, production house Muziektheater Transparant enters into an intensive dialogue with artists from various disciplines and wants to create, renew and present musical-theatre in its entire diversity for a wide audience. The voice is placed firmly at the centre of the projects, and it continually blends the old and the new. Also other disciplines like visual arts, film, video, graphics are integrated in the productions. The company pays particular attention to offering contemporary musicians the chance to develop and try new work. It has produced operas by Wim Henderickx and worked with composers like Jan Van Outryve and Eric Sleichim. A more theatrical approach is added with directors An De Donder, Josse De Pauw, Caroline Petrick and Wouter Van Looy. Annelies Van Parys and Joachim Brackx, two most promising Flemish composers, are invited for a three-year residence to take their first steps in music theatre. Transparant is internationally active: touring productions are an important part of their work, and it has performed at many festivals, including the Salzburger Festspiele, Shanghai International Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, the Holland Festival, the KunstenfestivaldesArts and at several European Capitals of Culture (Bruges 02, Lille 04, artist in residence in Stavanger 08, etc.) . This variety of shows, artists and production methods gives Muziektheater Transparant a unique national and international character.

## **Rolf Liebermann Prize for Opera 2014**

*Private View* received the first FEDORA – Rolf Liebermann Prize for Opera in 2014, an incentive prize awarded by Opera Europa.

This organisation is a joint venture by most of Europe's opera houses and festivals. The prize was established to support productions (and co-productions) by international artistic teams consisting of young creators from various disciplines for the creation of new forms of opera. The jury consists of a group of internationally renowned authorities on opera.

### **Playlist**

**02.07.2015** | 19:00

#### **BOEDAPEST**

Armel Opera Festival

[www.armelfestival.org](http://www.armelfestival.org)

+36 (1) 269 38 82

**04.07.2015** |

#### **PILSEN**

[www.plzen2015.cz](http://www.plzen2015.cz)

+42 (0)72 400 13 08

**04.09.2015** | 14:00 & 20:00

#### **ZWOLLE**

Stadsfestival Zwolle

[www.stadsfestival.nl](http://www.stadsfestival.nl)

**29-30-31.10.2015** |

#### **BERLIN**

Deutsche Oper Berlin

[www.deutscheoperberlin.de](http://www.deutscheoperberlin.de)

+49 (30) 343 84 343

**05.11.2015** |

#### **'S-HERTOGENBOSCH**

Theater aan de Parade

[www.theateraandeparade.nl](http://www.theateraandeparade.nl)

**14.11.2015** |

#### **BRUGES**

Concertgebouw

[www.concertgebouw.be](http://www.concertgebouw.be)

+32 (0)70 22 33 02

**27.11.2015** |

#### **LUXEMBOURG**

Les Théâtres de la Ville

[www.theatres.lu](http://www.theatres.lu)

+35 247 963 900

**15.01.2016** | 20:00

**NEW YORK**

Prototype Festival

[www.prototypefestival.org](http://www.prototypefestival.org)

+1 212 352 3101

**25.04.2016** | 20:00

**KORTRIJK**

Schouwburg Kortrijk

[www.schouwburgkortrijk.be](http://www.schouwburgkortrijk.be)

+32 (0)56 23 98 55

**29.04.2016** | 20:15

**AMSTERDAM**

Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ

[www.muziekgebouw.nl](http://www.muziekgebouw.nl)

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