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The valley (an apocalypse)

Hans Op de Beeck | Eric Sleichim | Claron McFadden or Lore Binon |
Dirk Roofthoof | BLINDMAN [sax]

A compelling story about banality of violence, truth and reconciliation

Synopsis

A man is standing in the middle of a small arena. He tells us his incredible life-story. He is surrounded by musicians who underpin, colour and comment on his tragic narrative. Amongst them is a mysterious woman. Is she a guardian angel, his conscience, his supposedly lost daughter?

The soprano Claron McFadden (in alternation with Lore Binon) and actor Dirk Roofthoof are flanked by the BLINDMAN saxophone quartet in this partly narrated, partly sung story that is musically inspired by the 15th-century *Missa Gaudeamus* by Josquin des Prez.

For this production, the artist Hans Op de Beeck and composer Eric Sleichim are collaborating for the first time.

Backgroundinformation

Απο·α·lypse ἀποκάλυψις

1. *a prophetic revelation about the end of the world*
2. *disclosure of hidden knowledge or revelation*
3. *an event resulting in great destruction and violent change*

The Valley (an apocalypse) is a new music theatre performance by Hans Op de Beeck and Eric Sleichim.

Hans Op de Beeck is a renowned visual artist whose work has been shown at the Venice and Singapore Biennales, Tate Modern, Shanghai Art Museum, Centre Pompidou, throughout Europe and the United States. Since several years he has been writing and directing for theatre and opera. In *The valley (an apocalypse)* Op de Beeck directs, designs the scenography and costumes and provides the text –performed by actor Dirk Roofthoof.

Eric Sleichim is a composer who founded the BLINDMAN Ensemble and collaborates closely with a.o. Anna Teresa de Keersmaeker (Rosas), Jan Fabre and Ivo van Hove. In *The valley (an apocalypse)*, Sleichim merges reverberating sounds of his saxophone quartet, percussion and glass organs with virtuosity of Claron McFadden's (or Lore Binon's) voice and Dirk Roofthoof's strong stage appearance. Together they present a mixture of newly composed music and the *Missa Gaudeamus* of Josquin des Prez (1450-1521) (which is based on the *Book of Revelation*).

The valley (an apocalypse) deals with the daily banality of violence and how grand cataclysmic events are played out on the most intimate and personal level.

Op de Beeck likes to link the monumental to the everyday: *'I always try to link sublime beauty with the banal, with 'dirty habits'. I like to use 'shopping mall' kitsch. I always look for the balance between seriousness and soap opera. Therein lie relativity and humour. I am not interested in needless complexity: what I create must directly appeal to the spectator.'*

A good example is Op de Beeck's earlier work *Staging Silence 2* (see <https://youtu.be/8f6iMoG6dmc>). There you can clearly see how he combines beauty and everyday life: poetic vistas composed by home, garden and kitchen objects. This style sets the tone.

PROGRAM TEXT

by dramaturg Tobias Kokkermans

The work of both the artist Hans Op de Beeck and the saxophonist and composer Eric Sleichim is characterised by a wide-ranging orientation towards a variety of artistic disciplines. *The valley (an apocalypse)* is their first joint project.

Op de Beeck is well known for his sculptures, installations, video, photography, animated films, drawings, paintings, short stories and stage designs (including those for the productions *Sestina* and *Void* by Muziektheater Transparant). He is focusing increasingly on theatre, as it a place where many of these specialisations come together. For instance, he wrote and directed the plays *Nach dem Fest* (Schauspiel Frankfurt, 2015) and *De Nachtwandelaars* (HETPALEIS, 2016) as well as designing the sets and costumes. To this list he recently added the directing of an opera: *Herzog Blaubarts Burg* (Staatsoper Stuttgart, 2018).

The lines connecting music and theatre in Eric Sleichim's work stretch back to the 1980s, first in the group Maximalist! and later with his BLINDMAN ensemble, with compositions for choreography, performance, film, art videos, exhibitions and concerts. Sleichim both initiates projects himself and accepts commissions from such people as Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Wim Vandekeybus and Ivo Van Hove. For Muziektheater Transparant he has created or co-created works including *Men in Tribulation* (2004), *Romeinse Tragedies* (2007) and *Utopia::47* (2011).

For *The valley*, Sleichim is the composer and the musical director for the BLINDMAN saxophone quartet and the singer, a task performed alternately by Claron McFadden and Lore Binon. Op de Beeck is responsible for the script, directing, and the set and costumes, which will be performed by the actor Dirk Roofthoof.

STORY

Op de Beeck describes the story of *The valley (an apocalypse)* as the account given by a man making a journey. He arrives in an almost deserted valley where a society is living through its last days and where Eros and Thanatos – love and death – go hand in hand.

Whereas in his earlier plays Op de Beeck's language was quite concise, for *The valley* he opts for extensive descriptions and plenty of adjectives. The result of this stylistic choice is that it can be experienced as a landscape that passes in front of the leading character's eyes with a mesmerising rhythm.

Although some unusual and sometimes even horrific events take place, the narrative remains recognisably familiar, larded with everyday actions and observations. Op de Beeck is interested in the daily banality in which love and violence can occur, without wishing to pass any judgement. This is above all a play about disengagement, about a man who experiences a difference between body and mind, between his emotions and his actions. The leading character is amazed that his body does things as if he himself were not involved. Very occasionally feeling and action do coincide, but they soon go their separate ways again.

MUSIC

Just as the script can be experienced as a description of a landscape, Eric Sleichim creates a landscape in sound. Vocals, saxophones, loop stations, singing bowls, percussion and an automatic accordion together make up a polyphonic texture in which worlds emerge and disappear again. For the singing part, Sleichim draws inspiration from the richness of the sounds in Koine Greek, the original language of the *Revelation of St John*, the book of the Bible that is also known as 'The Apocalypse'.

Sleichim also took inspiration from the *Missa Gaudeamus* by the Franco-Flemish composer Josquin des Prez (c. 1450-1521). This mass is linked to the *Revelation of St John* in various ways. Not only is it related to All Saints (the notion of the Last Judgement being an important element), but the work also has a mathematical structure that refers to ominous numbers in John's apocalyptic vision.

STAGING

The set is reminiscent of the structure of circus seating (like an abandoned attraction on Coney Island), a place for oriental rituals or a valley, but it could also be the fading stage for a Flemish retro ballroom orchestra. Here too Op de Beeck combines the banal with the sublime, the known with the improbable. The spectator enters into a fantasy tale which at times feels very recognisable.

The four saxophonists – Raf Minten, Koen Maas, Pieter Pellens and Piet Rebel – are positioned on the seating as a chorus providing a commentary on the events. The singer is located literally and figuratively in between them and the narrator. Is she a guardian angel, the conscience, the unattainable daughter? The spectator is given the freedom to find points of contact with the narration. Anyone familiar with the oeuvres of Hans Op de Beeck and Eric Sleichim will recognise all manner of references to their earlier work. It is as if this production retroactively offers new perspectives, presents new interpretations of the worlds and landscapes that we are familiar with from Op de Beeck and Sleichim.

CREDITS

Concept	Eric Sleichim and Hans Op de Beeck
Text, stage direction, set and costumes	Hans Op de Beeck
Composition and musical direction	Eric Sleichim
Dramaturgy	Tobias Kokkelmans
Artistic advisor	Alex Mallems
Vocals	Claron McFadden or Lore Binon
Actor	Dirk Roofthoof
BLINDMAN [sax]	Koen Maes, Pieter Pellens, Piet Rebel, Raf Minten
Lighting design	Peter Quasters
Translator	Prof. Dr. Mark Janse
Produced by	Muziektheater Transparant
In coproduction with	deSingel, Theaterproductiehuis Zeelandia, BLINDMAN, TANDEM scène nationale and Romaeuropa Festival
With support of	Tax Shelter of the Belgian Federal Government

Biographies

Hans Op de Beeck – Text, stage direction, set and costumes



Visual artist Hans Op de Beeck (°1969, Turnhout) lives and works in Brussels, where he has developed his career through international exhibitions over the past twenty years. His work consists of sculptures, installations, video work, photography, animated films, drawings, paintings and writing (short stories). It is his quest for the most effective way of presenting the concrete contents of each work that determines the medium that the artist ultimately selects. The scale can vary from the size of a small watercolour to a large, three-dimensional installation of 600m². The artist not only uses a very wide variety of media, but also deliberately employs a diversity of aesthetic

forms, ranging from an economical, minimalist visual language to overloaded, exaggerated designs, always with the aim of articulating the content of the work as precisely as possible.

Thematically, the work concentrates on our laborious and problematic relationship with time, space and each other. Op de Beeck shows the viewer non-existent, but identifiable places, moments and characters that appear to have been taken from contemporary everyday life, aiming thereby to capture in his images the tragicomic absurdity of our postmodern existence. Key themes are the disappearance of distances, the disembodiment of the individual and the abstraction of time that have resulted from globalisation and the changes to our living environment that developments in media, automation and technology have brought about.

Hans Op de Beeck sometimes calls his works ‘proposals’; they are irrefutably fictional, constructed and staged, leaving it up to the viewer whether to take the work seriously, as a sort of parallel reality, or immediately to put it into perspective, as no more than a visual construct. His work is nourished by a keen interest in social and cultural reflection. The artist also questions the difficult relationship between reality and representation, between what we see and what we want to believe, between what is and what we create for ourselves in order to make it easier to deal with our own insignificance and lack of identity. The visual output of that investigation often produces slumbering, insidious, melancholy and astonishing images. www.hansopdebeeck.com

Eric Sleichim – Composition and musical direction



Eric Sleichim (°1958) studied at the conservatories of Brussels and Liege. In the '80s he co-founded with Thierry De Mey, Peter Vermeersch and Walter Hus the group 'Maximalist!', that provided music for the first productions of Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker and Wim Vandekeybus. In 1988 Eric Sleichim founded BL!NDMAN, a saxophone quartet with a traditional line-up that developed new playing techniques and immensely expanded the repertoire for the saxophone quartet by continuously exploring the interfaces with other art disciplines.

As a composer-saxophone player, Sleichim acquired international reputation by the extremely idiosyncratic way in which he plays the instrument: he makes use of squealing springs, sounds of keys, pop and smack-noises as well of the tonal qualities of the saxophone. Sleichim turns what is traditionally considered a side effect into a main focus thus creating, often in combination with other art forms, soundscapes that were never heard before.

At the beginning of his career he composed 'Visting the Sound' (1985) for the Flanders Festival, 'Chambre d'amis' (1986) for brass quintet commissioned by Jan Hoet and laMonnaie, 'Five Movements' (1988) for the Festival De Stoute Jaren. In the '90s he composes 'Poortenbos' (1989) for saxophone quartet and releases a CD on the Brussels label Sub Rosa, 'Motus' (1991) for muted saxophone quartet, 'Verwicklungen/Les Anamorphes' (1992) for Documenta IX, 'Aleatoric Variations 1 & 2' (1995-96) based on aleatoric elements and 'Extra citates/Ex-citations' (1996) for the prestigious Victor Horta-exhibition. Sleichim wrote new music for four silent movies to be performed live: the Japanese film 'Kurutta Ippeiji' (1926) by Teinosuke Kinugasa, 'Steamboat Bill Jr.' by Buster Keaton (1928), 'La chute de la Maison Usher' the silent avant-garde/horror movie by Jean Epstein (1928) and 'Geheimnisse einer Seele' by GW Pabst (1926). In the mid-90's he concentrates for the first time on multimedia performances, such as 'Momentum' (1994), 'Breath' (1995), 'Meer' (1997), 'Dust makes Damage' (1998), 'Announced Movements' (2000) and '7 Tijdelijk Autonome Zones' for which he collaborated with artists such as actor-writer Josse de Pauw, plastic artist Trudo Engels, theatermaker Guy Cassiers, cyber-artist Ulrike Gabriel, the symphonic orchestra of Lille and video artists Peter Misotten and Geert Mul, choreographers VA Wölfi and Amanda Miller, author Peter Verhelst and jazz musician Gerry Hemmingway.

In his oeuvre, Eric Sleichim prefers to connect to other disciplines. For Ivo van Hove and Toneelgroep Amsterdam he wrote the music for the 6 hour Shakespeare marathon performance 'Roman Tragedies' (2007) and for the theatre adaptation of 'Teorema' by Pier Paolo Pasolini (2009).

He worked also with the choreographers Vicente Saez, Meg Stuart, Elisabeth Corbett and Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker. For Jan Fabre he developed the electro-acoustic score 'The Angel of Death' which he performed live and he wrote the music for 'L'histoire de Larmes', the opening production of the Avignon Festival in 2005.

Fabre at his turn wrote the original text of Sleichim's music theatre piece 'Men in Tribulation' (2004) about Antonin Artaud, coproduced by the KunstenFestivalDesArts and the HollandFestival. This is the first part of the 'Trilogy of tragic Fates' that Sleichim is developing as a house composer for Muziektheater Transparant. In the second part 'Intra Muros' (2007), Pier Paolo Pasolini was the central character on a text by Peter Verhelst with a scenography by Jan Versweyveld. The third part 'Stills' will be inspired on the writer Sylvia Plath (2013).

For 2010 he creates Kwadratur#2/Transfo: a performance for the complete BL!NDMAN collective and collaborates with composer and dj Matt Wright (UK) and video-artist Olga Mink (NL) to make "Totem", a production for 8 turntables and video-environment.

In 2011 Eric Sleichim conceives "Utopia :: 47 - a very last Passion", a commission of the MA-Festival (Bruges) and Klarafestival (Brussels) and a collaboration with Muziektheater Transparant.

As from the opening of the MAS, Eric Sleichim is composer in residence of the new museum in Antwerp.

Claron McFadden – soprano



The American soprano Claron McFadden (°1961) graduated from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York and has been living in the Netherlands since 1984. She is known for her very varied repertoire, ranging from Baroque to Contemporary music and has worked with conductors such as Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Frans Brüggen and Sir Andrew Davies. Important opera roles she has sung include the title role in *Lulu* at Glyndebourne, the role of Zerbinetta in the Dutch Nationale Opera's production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* and the title role in Cavalli's *La Didone* at La Scala with Fabio Biondi.

She is known for her unique interpretation of contemporary music and has many world premières to her credit, including works by Harrison Birtwistle, Jörg Widmann and Michel van der Aa. She works regularly with The Arditti Quartet and Klangforum Wien. She has participated in several projects that combined different art forms, like Alain Platel's *Pitié*, and Ruben van Leer's dance film *Symmetry*, filmed at C.E.R.N. She is frequently asked to join improvising musicians such as Kris Defoort and is a regular member of the David Kweksilber Big Band. She is artist-in-residence at Muziektheater Transparant and has realized several multidisciplinary projects: *Lilith* (2012), *Secrets* (2015), *Nightshade: Aubergine* (2017) and most recently *Façade: The last days of Mata Hari* (2017). In 2002 She was nominated for a Grammy Award and in 2007 she was awarded the Amsterdam Prize for the Arts. She is a member of the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Her TEDx talk in 2010 was selected to be shown on the prestigious TED.com website. www.claronmcfadden.com

Lore Binon – soprano



Lore Binon's rich and sensitive musical personality makes her much sought after as a soloist. She enjoys regular collaborations with ensembles such as Ictus, Oxalys, Flemish Radio Choir, Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra and Spectra Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra, Freiburger Barockorchester, De Filharmonie, Vlaams Radio Koor, Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen, performing f.i. *Die sieben letzte Worten unseres Erlösers* (Haydn), *Magnificat* (Bach), *Dixit Dominus* (Händel), *Lobgesang* (Mendelssohn) et *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (Brahms).

She has collaborated with conductors such as René Jacobs, Hervé Niquet, Jos van Veldhoven and Michel Tabachnik and performed in venues such as Bozar (BE), Salle Pleyel (FR), Opera de Lyon (FR), Palau de la musica (ESP) De doelen (NL) and Tchaikovsky Hall (RS).

Chamber music is another of Lore's passions. She collaborates with many different ensembles such as Ictus, Oxalys, Zefiro Torna, Il Gardelino and De Nederlandse Bachvereniging, and is a founding member of the ensemble *Revue Blanche*, a quartet consisting of the rather unusual combination of harp, flute, viola and voice. In 2013 the ensemble was awarded the Klara for 'promising young artist' and has followed an impressive path ever since. This season Lore sings the role of Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Flemish Opera. She is artist in residence for the Festival of Flanders Mechelen and will perform the solo soprano part in the *4th Mahler Symphony* with the Orchestre Symphonique de Mulhouse under the baton of Loethar Koenigs. In november 2017, a CD including melodies of a.o. Debussy and Hahn, will be released by Outhere Music. www.lorebinon.com

Dirk Roofthoof – actor



Dirk Roofthoof (°1959) has since 1981 worked with theatre directors, choreographers and musicians including Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers/Needcompany, Luk Perceval, Ivo van Hove, Theu Boermans, Jan Ritsema, Josse De Pauw, Peter Vermeersch, Wim Vandekeybus, Ron Vawter (The Wooster Group), The London Symphonietta, jazz icon Henry Threadgill (opening Salsburger Festspiele 1998) and opera director Peter Sellars.

With Guy Cassiers he made *Kaspar* (Peter Handke) and *Tristan* (Klaus Mann) in the beginning of 1980, *Het liegen in ontbinding* (Decomposing lies - 1993) and *Bezonken rood* (Sunken Red - 2004), which is still on tour in different languages. In 2006 - 2007 he played the leading part in Guy Cassiers' *Mefisto for ever*, for which he was awarded the Louis d'Or.

Besides his work for the theatre, Dirk Roofthoof is a successful film actor. He is known mostly for his parts in the series *Terug naar Oosterdonk* (Back to Oosterdonk) and *Het verdriet van België* (The Sorrow of Belgium - 1995), a series by Claude Goretta based on Hugo Claus' novel. He played in films by Dominique Deruddere (*Hombres Complicados* and *Hochzeitfeier*), Patrice Toye (*Rosie*) and *Pleure pas*, *Germaine* by Alain de Halleux, *De Ronde* (2011) and *Clan* (2012), for which he was awarded Best Actor at the Night of the Flemish Television Stars 2013.

In 2006 Dirk Roofthoof and Jan Fabre were guests of honour at the Theatre Festival of Avignon. At the Festival, Roofthoof performed Jan Fabre's plays *The Emperor of Loss*, *The King of Plagiarism* and *Je suis sang*. In the autumn of 2010, Dirk Roofthoof and composer and jazz musician Kris Defoort created *The Brodsky Concerts*, based on texts by Joseph Brodsky. He also had a part in *The Art of Entertainment*, by author and director Jan Lauwers (Needcompany, 2011). And he created with Coline Struyf the monologue *Lettre à D.* (2015) for Théâtre National, the year wherein he also with Claron McFadden and David Kweksilber Big Band played in the music theatre production *Saul* directed by Dick Hauser.

Dirk Roofthoof is known for his role in *Ruhe* (2008, Muziektheater Transparant), directed by Josse De Pauw. In March 2013, he and Diederick De Cock made *The Cutter-off of Water*, based on the short story by Marguerite Duras. He played in four other Muziektheater Transparant's productions: *Walcott Songs*, *Enoch Arden*, *Escorial*, Josse De Pauw's adaptation of the one-act play by Michel de Ghelderode (May 2013) and *Van den Vos* (December 2013).

Dirk Roofthoof has won several film and theatre awards in Belgium as well as abroad. He regularly appears in Muziektheater Transparant's productions. He acts in Dutch, French, English, Spanish and German.

BL!NDMAN



Eric Sleichim's contemporary music ensemble BL!NDMAN is not just another saxophone quartet, but the name of a lab that houses a continual working process since 1988. In 1988 Eric Sleichim founded BL!NDMAN, a saxophone quartet with a traditional line-up, which develops new performance techniques and substantially expands the repertoire for the instrument by continually exploring the boundaries with other disciplines and early music.

In 2008 BL!NDMAN became a collective in which the 20 years of stage experience accumulated by the original quartet – BL!NDMAN [sax] – is shared with three young quartets: BL!NDMAN [drums], BL!NDMAN [vox] and BL!NDMAN [strings]. In 2014 the vocal quartet was replaced by BL!NDMAN [hybrid], a mixed quartet. A collective composed entirely of quartets: unique in the music world.



Four quartets, countless possibilities for 'unheard of' cross-fertilisation. A highly individual repertoire of old and new. As always, BLINDMAN embraces other artistic disciplines, delights the eye, questions the ear and considers experiment of paramount importance. www.blindman.be

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. Transparant is internationally active and it has performed at many festivals, including the Salzburger Festspiele, Edinburgh International Festival, the Holland Festival, the KunstenfestivaldesArts and at several European Capitals of Culture. This variety of shows, artists and production methods gives Muziektheater Transparant a unique national and international character. www.transparant.be

TOUR

Premiere 03.05.2019: ANTWERPEN (BE): [deSingel](#) at 20h (Claron McFadden)
04.05.2019: ANTWERPEN (BE): [deSingel](#) (Claron McFadden)
27.05.2019: ARRAS DOUAI (FR): [TANDEM scène nationale](#) (Claron McFadden)
28.08 & 31.08 & 3-7.09.2019 : VISSINGEN (NL) Machinefabriek: [Zeeland Nazomerfestival](#) (Lore Binon)
26-27.09.2019: ROME (IT): [Romaeuropa festival](#) (Claron McFadden)
09.10.2019: AMSTERDAM (NL): [Muziekgebouw](#) (Claron McFadden)

COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

Promotion images:



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To download: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/51803530@N06/albums/72157679710188478>

PRESS & PRODUCTION PHOTOS

©Koen Broos will be available on the 3th of May 2019, before the premiere at deSingel.

VIDEO

SET TEST with BL!NDMAN: <https://vimeo.com/315204773>



For more information, tickets photo's etc. do not hesitate to ask:

Patricia Van de Velde,
Press and communication,
patricia@transparant.be,
Tel: + 32 (0) 486 29 99 22

Muziektheater Transparant vzw, Albrecht Rodenbachstraat 21 bus 1, 2140 Borgerhout
www.transparant.be
<http://www.transparant.be/en/productions/ThevalleyanapocalypseEN-2018-2019>