

Press release, Aarhus 15 March 2016

Kasper Holten directs the opera *Brothers* at the Danish National Opera in Musikhuset Aarhus in 2017



The Danish National Opera is to perform Susanne Bier's film *Brothers* as an opera in August 2017. The new Danish opera will be directed by Kasper Holten, and Steffen Aarving will create the stage design. The composer is the Danish-born Icelander Daniel Bjarnason and the librettist is Kerstin Perski (Reumert Prize winner for *The Confessional*).

"I'm really enthusiastic that the first job I am taking on as a freelance director after my time as Director of Opera at Covent Garden in the spring of 2017 will be with the Danish National Opera", says Kasper Holten and continues: "This was where I staged my first major operas, and I still remember it as one of my first 'artistic homes'. I am greatly looking forward to coming back to the Danish National Opera and not least to this exciting project as part of European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017. I have always had a special fondness for participating in the development of brand new operas. The libretto for *Brothers* seems to me to be one of the best new opera librettos I have ever read. I sat on a plane with tears running down my cheeks and knew that I had to say yes. With the innovative and funky musical universe that Daniel Bjarnason stands for, I hope that together we can make *Brothers* into an intense, unique experience for the audience."

Brothers is part of Musikhuset Aarhus' Bier Trilogy, in which the acclaimed film trilogy by Susanne Bier is adapted into three different genres in connection with Aarhus European Capital of Culture in 2017: *Brothers* as an opera, *After the Wedding* as musical theatre and *Open Hearts* as modern dance. *Brothers* is a collaboration between Musikhuset Aarhus, Aarhus 2017 and the Danish National Opera. "It's fantastic that the Danish National Opera has found an international opera heavyweight to direct the first part of the Bier Trilogy. With Kasper Holten as director of *Brothers*, Peter Langdal as director of *After the Wedding* and Palle Granhøj as choreographer of *Open Hearts*, all the pieces for the Bier Trilogy are falling into place with a real dream team," says Mette Kier, Head of Programming, Musikhuset Aarhus.

General Manager and Artistic Director at the Danish National Opera Annilese Miskimmon has been part of the process since the work was commissioned from the composer and librettist: "I am extremely sorry to have to withdraw from the *Brothers* project when I leave the Danish National Opera on 1 January 2017, but I will follow the work with great interest as I take up my new post at The Norwegian Opera & Ballet. I am delighted to have succeeded in securing such a wonderfully strong team to create this landmark Danish opera for Danish National Opera in Aarhus 2017." CEO of European Capital of Culture 2017, Rebecca Matthews, adds: "I am extremely excited about welcoming Kasper Holten as part of the Aarhus 2017 family. To have him join our team as stage director is a unique opportunity for us, and I am thoroughly convinced that his impressive international resumé will draw increased international attention to our year as Capital of Culture as well as the Bier Trilogy."

Brothers:

The team:

Composer Daniel Bjarnason, librettist Kerstin Perski. Director Kasper Holten. Stage designer Steffen Aarving. See attached CVs.

Cast:

Danish and international singers, the Chorus of the Danish National Opera and Aarhus Symphony Orchestra perform the opera *Brothers* at Musikhuset Aarhus.

Performance dates, August 2017:

Musikhuset Aarhus

Wednesday 16 August 19:30

Friday 18 August 19:30

Sunday 20 August 15:00

Tuesday 22 August 19:30

Ticket sales:

Ticket sales for the opera *Brothers* open in April 2016.

Fact sheet on the Bier Trilogy attached.

Further information and agreements on interviews with Kasper Holten:

Please contact Marketing and Communications Manager at the Danish National Opera:

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Yours sincerely

The Danish National Opera and Musikhuset Aarhus

The team:



Kasper Holten
Director

Kasper Holten is Director of Opera at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in 2011-17. Director of Opera at the Royal Danish Theatre 2000-2011. Director of Aarhus Summer Opera 1997-99. Former member of the Danish Music Council.

At the Danish National Opera he directed his first major opera *La Traviata* (1997) as well as among other works *Anatomical Opera*, *The Land of Smiles* and *King and Marshal* (2000). *Brothers* is the first production Kasper Holten has taken on as a freelance director after his period as Director of Opera at the Royal Opera House.

He has staged opera and theatre in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Austria, England, Japan, Australia, Russia and the USA.

In the years 2003-2006 he directed *The Ring of the Nibelung* at the Royal Danish Theatre and has most recently staged *Der Freischütz* there ('15). His most recent productions at the Royal Opera House have been *Eugene Onegin*, *Don Giovanni* and Szymannowski's *Król Roger*.

He made his debut at the Wiener Staatsoper in 2014, and in 2016 he makes his debut at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan with *The Turn of the Screw*.

In 2006 he was appointed as an adjunct professor at Copenhagen Business School. As an opera and theatre director he has won several Reumert prizes, most recently in 2006 for *The Ring of the Nibelung*.

His debut film, *Juan* (2010), is a modern English-language cinema version of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*.



Steffen Aarfang
Stage Designer

Steffen Aarfang staged the Reumert-winning *The Confessional* at the Danish National Opera in 2006. He trained at the Architectural School of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Since 1980 he has created stage design for over 100 productions in Denmark and abroad. He has worked regularly with Betty Nansen Teatret, Aalborg Teater and others. Over the past ten years Steffen Aarfang has designed opera sets for the Royal Danish Opera (including *The Ring of the Nibelung*), Íslenska óperan, Neue Oper Wien and the San Francisco Opera. He has also worked with stage design for theatre, musicals, dance and film. At the Danish National Opera he has earlier designed sets for among other productions *Faust* ('08), *King and Marshal*, *Laughter in the Dark* and *La Traviata* ('97).

Most recently he has designed sets for *Das Liebesverbot* (2016) at Teatro Real in Madrid and *The Marriage of Figaro* (2016) at the Royal Danish Theatre (6 stars in *Berlingske Tidende* and *Kristeligt Dagblad*). Upcoming productions include Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* at Teatro alla Scala in Milan.



Daniél Bjarnason
Composer

Daniél Bjarnason, Icelandic composer, born in 1979 in Denmark. Studied piano and composition in Reykjavík, Iceland, and orchestral conducting at Freiburg University Music, Germany.

As a composer Daniél has worked with many different orchestras and ensembles, including Los Angeles Philharmonic, Ulster Orchestra, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Nieuw Ensemble Amsterdam and Sinfonietta Cracovia.

He has composed works for the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He has garnered wide acclaim for his debut album, *Processions* (2010), about which Time Out NY declared that Bjarnason creates “a sound that comes eerily close to defining classical music’s undefinable brave new world”.

He has twice won prizes at the Icelandic Music Awards as Best Composer, and was named Composer of the Year 2013 for his works *The Isle Is Full of Noises* and *Over Light Earth*. In 2013 he and Ben Frost won the *Edda Award* for Best Soundtrack for the film *The Deep*.

YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8aMvgT5p2UgzqegBye_2LQ

Album ‘Over Light Earth’: <http://danielbjarnason.bandcamp.com/yum>



Kerstin Perski
Librettist

Kerstin Perski wrote the libretto for the opera *The Confessional*, which was given its first performance at the Danish National Opera and won a Reumert for Opera of the Year 2007.

She has most recently written librettos for new operas such as *Notorius* (premiered in 2015 at the Gothenburg Opera staged by Keith Warner), *The son of heaven* (premiered at the Vadstena Academy in 2015). The Royal Opera in Stockholm has also commissioned an opera, *Eldvåg*, which has not been premiered yet.

Since 1995 she has worked as a librettist and music dramatist. She has written opera libretti for several Swedish and Danish composers, for example Hans Gefors, Paula af Malmberg Ward, Karin Rehnqvist, Jonas Forssell and Niels Marthinsen. Kerstin Perski has also written new texts for classic music drama works like *The Merry Widow* and *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. She trained as a dramaturge and has a long succession of works behind her for the theatre and in novel form.