



## Michel van der Aa

### Composer, Filmmaker, Stage Director

*“One of the most distinctive of the younger composers in Europe today. His ability to fuse music, text and visual images into a totally organic whole sets him apart from nearly all his contemporaries.”*  
Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*

Michel van der Aa, winner of the 2015 Johannes Vermeer Award and 2013 Grawemeyer award, is one of today's most sought-after composers and stage directors. A pioneer in the realms of new music and technology, his staged works – incorporating film and sampled soundtrack – are a seamless hybrid of musical theatre and multimedia. In 2014, he was selected to be an inaugural member of a prestigious new Academy of Arts in Netherlands that has been established to study the relationship between science and art, and to act as an independent sounding board for politicians and policy-makers.

Van der Aa's imaginative music theatre works [Sunken Garden](#) (2011-12), [The Book of Disquiet](#) (2008), [After Life](#) (2005/06) and [One](#) (2002) have received critical and public acclaim internationally. Staging, film and music are interwoven into a collage of transparent layers, resulting in works that are part-documentary, part-philosophy. His repertoire also includes concert works and chamber music for small ensemble, soloists and soundtrack and he collaborated with Sol Gabetta on the cross-media cello concerto [Up-close](#) (2010). A hugely successful project, the work has been performed in many cities including Berlin, London, Brussels and Hamburg and has received excellent reviews. His 3D film opera, *Sunken Garden* (2013), an 'occult-mystery film-opera', was created in partnership with the English novelist David Mitchell, the author of *Cloud Atlas*. Co-commissioned by English National Opera, Opera de Lyon, Toronto Luminato Festival and Holland Festival, the work received its world premiere by ENO at the Barbican, London in April 2013.

Netherlands-born, van der Aa maintains strong roots in his home country including close ties with the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and the Holland Festival. The Concertgebouw Orchestra announced a long term partnership with van der Aa. The new position of 'House Composer' led to the creation of several major works including a new [violin concerto](#) written for Janine Jansen, which was premiered in autumn 2014 by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Winner of numerous awards for his innovative work, van der Aa is a regular guest of the world's most prestigious festivals and concert halls including London's Barbican Centre, Opera de Lyon, Berliner Festspiele, Venice Biennale, Huddersfield Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Festival and Autumn in Warsaw. His compositions have been performed at the highest international level: by the ASKO|Schoenberg, Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Modern, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, musikFabrik, Tokyo Sinfonietta, Philharmonia Orchestra and Helsinki Avanti Ensemble. In 2010, van der Aa launched [Disquiet Media](#), an independent multimedia label for his own work.

In 2015-16, Van der Aa created an interactive digital song cycle, [The Book of Sand](#), a co-commission of the Holland Festival, Sydney Festival and the BBC's The Space, that was released as a website and smartphone app at the end of May 2015. His music theatre work, *The Book of Disquiet*, had its English-language premiere with actor Samuel West as part of Peak Performances, Montclair, New Jersey, and presented by London Sinfonietta at the Coronet Theatre, London.

Van der Aa's latest music theatre work, *Blank Out*, received its world premiere in March 2016, presented in Dutch National Opera's Opera Forward Festival. A 3D chamber opera for solo soprano onstage, baritone Roderick Williams on film, and Nederlands Kamerkoor and electronic soundtrack, the world premiere was performed by Miah Persson. *Blank Out* is a co-production of Dutch National Opera with Lucerne Festival and Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, and will have performances at Beijing Music Festival and Musica Nova Helsinki in 2016-17. Michel van der Aa will be Composer-in-residence at the 2017 Lucerne Summer Festival. The festival programme will include the Swiss premieres of *The Book of Disquiet*, *Up-close*, *Hysterisis* and *Blank Out*.