

# Press Release

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Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited

**26 November 2012** strictly embargoed until this date

## **Michel van der Aa wins 2013 Grawemeyer Award for *Up-close***



Photo: Marco Borggreve

### [about \*Up-close\*](#)



Photo: Sébastien Grebille

### [audio-visual links](#)

Dutch composer Michel van der Aa has won the 2013 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for his multimedia work *Up-close*, which offers a unique blend of cello concerto with film. The Grawemeyer Award, granted annually by the University of Louisville, is the world's most prestigious composition prize, worth \$100,000 (£63,000; EUR78,000). Van der Aa's *Up-close*, premiered in 2011, was selected from a wide international field of entries, and the Grawemeyer's prize announcement describes how "the 30-minute work is a highly innovative fusion of musical and visual art. It's a virtuoso concerto but also a fascinating multimedia experience that defies simple classification. It really creates its own genre."

Michel van der Aa writes of his reaction on winning the award: "It is a huge honour to win the 2013 Grawemeyer Award. I am touched to receive such a significant acknowledgement of my work, and feel humbled to be listed alongside so many previous recipients that I greatly admire. I'd like to say thanks from the bottom of my heart to Amsterdam Sinfonietta and Candida Thompson, who were essential for the birth of this piece. I especially want to thank Sol Gabetta, the ultimate protagonist; her passion, virtuosity, and openness were a true source of inspiration."

Michel van der Aa, aged 42, wrote *Up-close* for the Argentinian-French cellist Sol Gabetta and the Amsterdam Sinfonietta. The work was commissioned by the European Concert Hall Organization, with support from the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Performing Arts Fund. It received its first performance in Stockholm in 2011 with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta directed by Candida Thompson accompanying Gabetta as soloist. Following its premiere, the same performers toured the work to concert halls throughout Europe, visiting such cities as Luxembourg, Brussels, London, Amsterdam and Hamburg, and receiving high acclaim from both audiences and critics. The label Disquiet Media, founded by van der Aa, released a DVD of the work in performance in 2011.

"A solo cellist begins with a melancholy, yet insistent soliloquy. As the string orchestra behind her joins in, an image suddenly appears on screen. In the middle of a deserted concert stage, laid out exactly as for the concerto, we see an elderly woman, scribbling coded messages on sheets of paper", said van der Aa, who composed and filmed the work. As the piece progresses, the music and film begin to mirror each other. The older woman seems to be an alter ego of the cellist, but much is left unexplained. The piece can be performed by string forces of variable size from ensemble to orchestral.

To watch video excerpts from *Up-close* visit  
[www.boosey.com/podcast/13199](http://www.boosey.com/podcast/13199)

To view the score of *Up-close* visit  
[www.boosey.com/cr/perusalsscore.asp?id=19316](http://www.boosey.com/cr/perusalsscore.asp?id=19316)

To watch a web documentary on Michel van der Aa visit  
[www.boosey.com/podcast/12906](http://www.boosey.com/podcast/12906)

For CDs, DVDs and downloads of music by Michel van der Aa visit  
<http://disquietmedia.net/>

Continued...

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To download photos and biography please visit:  
**www.vanderaa.net/biography/**

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about the Grawemeyer Awards

The University of Louisville awards half a million dollars, \$100,000 each for music composition, education, ideas improving world order, religion and psychology. The selection process includes a jury of professionals from each discipline and a knowledgeable lay panel. The Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition was established in 1984 and previous winning composers published by Boosey & Hawkes have included Harrison Birtwistle, John Adams, Unsuk Chin and in recent years Brett Dean (2009), York Höller (2010) and Louis Andriessen (2011). The late Charles Grawemeyer was an industrialist, entrepreneur and University of Louisville graduate who had a lifelong passion for music, education and religious studies.

about Michel van der Aa

Michel van der Aa, currently house composer for the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam, is considered a pioneer in musical theatre. Born in 1970 in Oss, Netherlands, he studied composition and recording engineering at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. Louis Andriessen, winner of the 2011 University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Music Composition, was among his teachers. Van der Aa also trained in film and theatre at the New York Film Academy and the Lincoln Center Theater Director's Lab.

Many of his works incorporate multimedia and crossover elements such as live and pre-recorded electronics, theatre and film. His most recent partnership is with the English novelist David Mitchell, with whom he is writing his fourth work for music theatre, *Sunken Garden*, an 'occult-mystery 3D film-opera' co-commissioned by English National Opera, the Toronto Luminato Festival, Opéra de Lyon, the Holland Festival and the Barbican Theatre. The opera is scheduled to be premiered in London in April 2013.

He is a regular guest at the world's most prestigious festivals and concert halls, including London's Barbican, Opéra de Lyon, Berlin Festival, Venice Biennale, Donaueschingen Music Days, Gaudeamus Music Week, Huddersfield Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Warsaw Autumn and Melbourne Festival.

His compositions have been performed by MusikFabrik, International Contemporary Ensemble, Tokyo Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern, Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Opera, BBC Symphony Orchestra, SWR orchestra Baden-Baden & Freiburg, the ASKO/Schoenberg ensemble, Philharmonia Orchestra London and Helsinki Avanti Ensemble.

Boosey and Hawkes, a global classical music company with offices in London, New York and Berlin, publishes his music.

Van der Aa also has founded a multimedia label, Disquiet Media, to distribute his pieces and has launched an Internet multimedia channel, Disquiet.tv, to showcase his work and that of other artists.

For further information visit **www.boosey.com/aa** and **www.vanderaa.net**