

2015 International Rostrum of Composers

Michel van der Aa (1970)

Miles Away (2012)



Composer: Michel van der Aa  
Title: Miles Away (2012)  
for mezzo-soprano, violin, piano and double bass  
text: Carol Ann Duffy

Performers: Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano  
Janine Jansen, violin  
Jendrik Springer, piano  
Rick Stotijn, double bass

Commissioned by International Chamber Music Festival Utrecht  
Recording premiere: NPO Radio4, 28 December 2012  
Venue: Vredenburg Music Centre, Utrecht  
Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes  
Duration: 6'40''

### **Michel van der Aa**

*“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)

### **Miles Away**

**Miles away** is an intimate work set to a poem by the British Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. The 7 minute piece was written for the mezzo-soprano Christianne Stotijn and violinist Janine Jansen and commissioned by the International Chamber Music Festival Utrecht.

### **- Carol Ann Duffy: Miles Away**

I want you and you are not here. I pause  
in this garden, breathing the colour thought is  
before language into still air. Even your name  
is a pale ghost and, though I exhale it again  
and again, it will not stay with me. Tonight  
I make you up, imagine you, your movements clearer  
than the words I have you say you said before.

Wherever you are now, inside my head you fix me  
with a look, standing here whilst cool late light  
dissolves into the earth. I have got your mouth wrong,

but it still smiles. I hold you closer, miles away,  
inventing love, until the calls of nightjars  
interrupt and turn what was to come, was certain,  
into memory. The stars are filming us for no one.

## **Biography**

**Michel van der Aa** (Netherlands, 1970) is a truly multidisciplinary figure in contemporary music. A unique voice, he combines composition with film and stage direction, and script writing. Classical instruments, voices, electronic sound, actors, theatre and video are all seamless extensions of his musical vocabulary.

Before studying composition (with Diderik Wagenaar, Gilius van Bergeijk and Louis Andriessen), Van der Aa trained first as a recording engineer at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. In 2002 he broadened his skills with studies in film direction, at the New York Film Academy, and in 2007 he participated in the Lincoln Center Theater Director's Lab, an intensive course in stage direction. Van der Aa's musical materials are hard to tease apart, constantly switching between stasis and high energy, concrete and abstract, acoustic and electronic, 'pure' and processed, brand new and half-remembered. Many of them are as visual as they are aural. The possibilities of digital and audio-visual technology often feature, not as a surface gloss to his work but at the core of his artistic outlook.

## **Keywordworks**

In 2007 the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra commissioned the song cycle [Spaces of Blank](#), and since 2011 he has been a 'house composer' with the orchestra. This association that will lead to several major new works, including a violin concerto for Janine Jansen. Over the last few years he has also developed strong ties with the Barbican Centre, with performances of [After Life](#) and [Up-Close](#), which led to the premiere of [Sunken Garden](#) in April 2013.

In 2010 he launched [Disquiet Media](#), an independent multimedia label for his own work, and in 2012 developed [Disquiet TV](#), an online virtual auditorium for contemporary music events.

Michel van der Aa is published by [Boosey & Hawkes](#), and his stage works are represented by [Intermusica](#). He is an active user of social media, with presences on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

## **Prizes**

He has worked with leading classical performers such as Sol Gabetta, Barbara Hannigan, Janine Jansen, Christianne Stotijn and Roderick Williams, as well as the Portuguese fado singer Ana Moura, pop acts Kate Miller-Heidke and These New Puritans, and well-known European actors like Klaus Maria Brandauer and João Reis.

In 1999 Michel Van der Aa was the first Dutch composer to win the prestigious International Gaudeamus Prize. Subsequent awards include the Matthijs Vermeulen prize (2004), a Siemens Composers Grant (2005), the Charlotte Köhler Prize for his directing work and the interdisciplinary character of his oeuvre (2005), the Paul Hindemith Prize (2006), and the Kagel Prize (2013). Michel van der Aa has won the 2013 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for his multimedia work [Up-Close](#).

Michel van der Aa: <http://www.vanderaa.net/>