

# ARTS TALK

## *International*

Number 3

Autumn 2024



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Some really exceptional things happening around Europe. On stage we review a controversial *Tosca* in Munich and a revival of Alan Bennett's *The History Boys* in the UK. We meet Swiss clowns Compagnia Bacçalà and visit Rubens' garden in Antwerp. Swedish artist Hilma af Klint is showing at the Guggenheim in Bilbao and we meet Leonid Marushchak, a Ukrainian trying to save his country's art treasures from the Russians. Finally, we meet Snowapple Collective a multi-national group of ladies working together in a variety of artistic disciplines.

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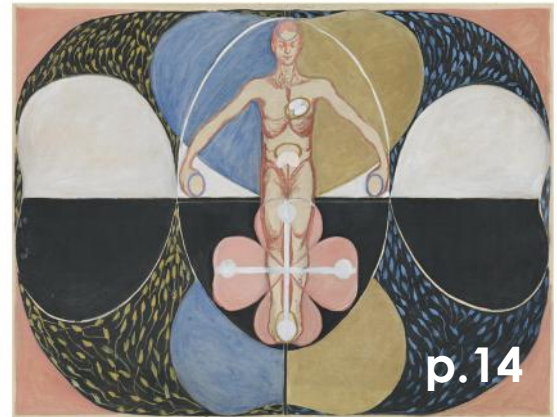
A scene from Kornél Mundrucz's  
*TOSCA* at Bayerische Staatsoper in  
Munich. Photo by Wilfried HOESL

# Contents



Swiss clowns  
Compagnia  
Baccalà

p.4



Swedish artist  
Hilma af Klint is  
showing at the  
Guggenheim in  
Bilboa

p.14



p.20

A controversial production of  
Puccini's *Tosca* in Munich



p.28

Rubens' garden in  
Antwerp has had a  
make-over



p.36

Alan Bennett's  
*The History Boys*  
on tour in the UK



p.42

Leonid Marushchak fights to  
save Ukraine's art treasures from  
the invaders



p.50

Snowapple  
Collective is  
a multi-national  
group of  
creative  
ladies



Compagnia

# Baccalà

— SENZA TEMPO —

Michael Hasted became an instant fan when he saw them recently for the first time



Photo by Pierre Colletti

***They are innocents abroad, strangers in a strange land full of wonder and mystery where every aspect presents a new challenge.***

A lot of people don't like clowns. I've never understood that myself, why some people find them scary. Maybe Stephen King is to blame and I do admit that *It* was quite frightening. But the days of big shoes, red noses and slosh routines seem to have largely disappeared and now I guess a clown can be defined as a comedy act that involves circus skills. And circus acts now do not have to contend with windy tents and sawdust on the floor – they have come in from the cold.

One act that is basking in the heat of success is the Swiss duo Compagnia Bacçalà whose accomplished routines have amazed audiences around the world for the past twenty years.

Simone Fassari and Camilla Pessi first met when they were students at Accademia Teatro Dimitri in Verscio and have been a double act since 2004. They were joined four years later by theatre artist, musician and good friend Valerio Fassari to act as technical director and an objective eye.

In 2010, with director Louis Spagna, completed their first full-length work, *Pss Pss*, a show ecstatically received and acclaimed all over the world and still playing today. They

appear, and are frequent award winners, at circus festivals on all five continents and regularly play to sell-out audiences at the Edinburg Fringe Festival

I first saw Compagnia Bacçalà at the Circusstad Festival in Rotterdam earlier this year and for me *Pss Pss* was beyond doubt, the best show. The performance possessed all the ingredients of great circus and much more besides. The two characters created by Simone and Camilla epitomise clowning at its very best. They are innocents abroad, strangers in a strange land full of wonder and mystery where every aspect presents a new challenge. They are like characters from an old silent movie that pull through despite the obstacles thrown in their way.

But behind the make-up and costumes there are two performers who seem to have mastered every circus skill. They have performed over 1000 times in fifty-three countries and have been awarded fifteen prestigious international awards from around the world. Their routines leave you not knowing whether to gasp or laugh. Everything they do, whether it be on the trapeze or juggling, is conditioned by humour and, of course, its bedfellow, pathos.



Compagnia

# Baccalà

SENZA TEMPO

with Camilla Pessi and Simone Fassari | directed by Louis Spagna  
lights Cristoph Siegenthaler | more than technical manager Valerio Fassari

[WWW.BACCALA-COMPAGNIA.COM](http://WWW.BACCALA-COMPAGNIA.COM)











Photo by Hugo Saint-Laurent



*They are like characters from an old silent movie who triumph despite the obstacles thrown in their way . . .*





You can't help but like and be amazed by Compagnia Baccalà and I would urge you to see them if you ever get the chance. In the meantime there are several videos on YouTube with which to whet your appetite - I particularly like the one on the railway station.

The hour spent watching *Pss Pss* seemed to fly by and I'm sure, like me, the audience wanted more, much more, and would have been happy to watch them all night - and most of the following day too □

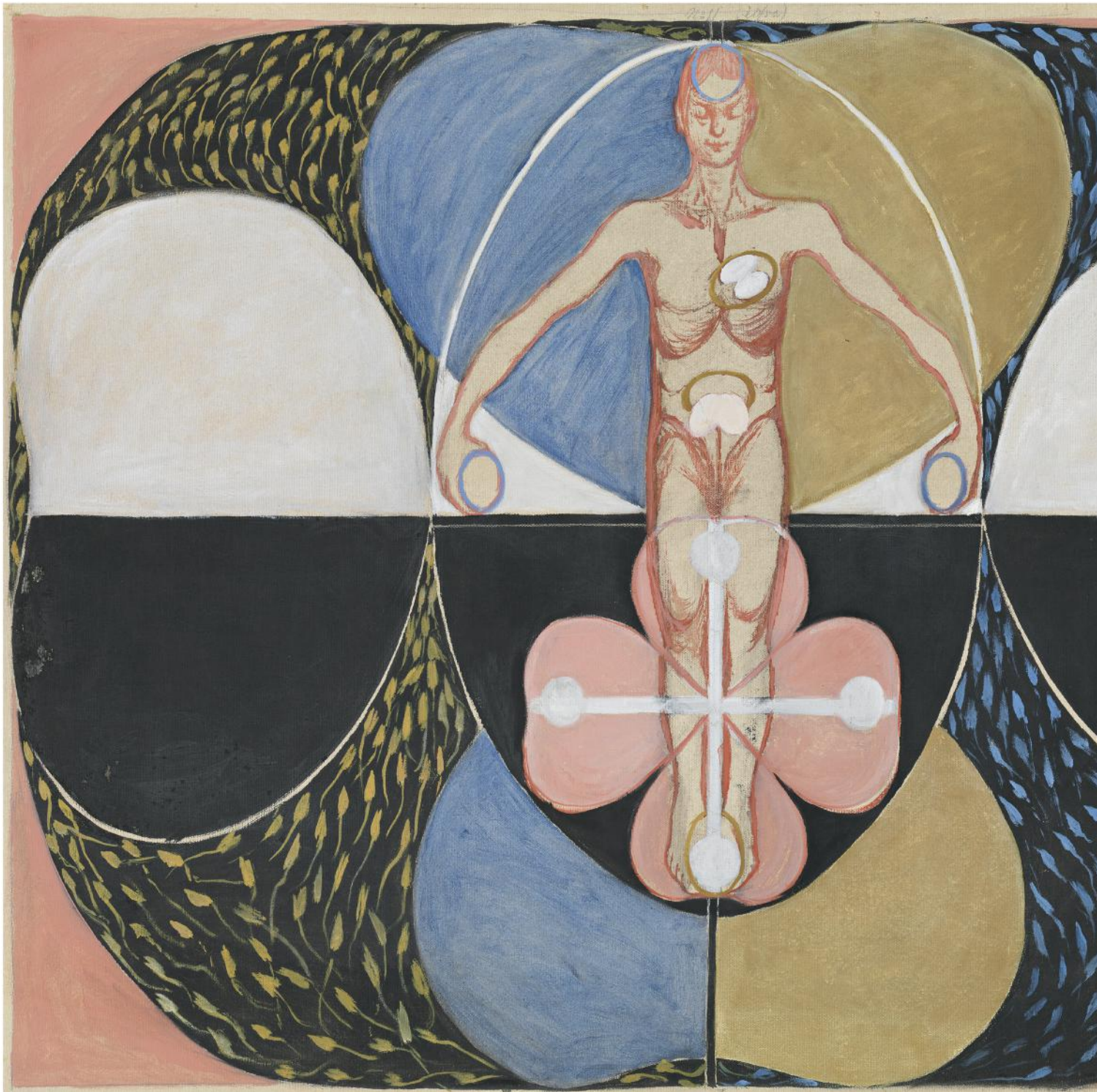


Hilma af Klint, *The Ten Largest, Group IV, No. 3, Youth*, 1907, Courtesy Hilma af Klint Foundation

# **HILMA AF KLINT**

## **at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao**

From 18th October until 2nd February 2025 the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, sponsored by Iberdrola, presents a comprehensive overview of the career of the enigmatic Swedish artist Hilma af Klint (1862-1944). The exhibition includes more than two-hundred works, from her early oeuvre with traditional themes, through automatic drawings and her most notable abstract series, including *Paintings for the Temple*, *Parsifal*, the *Atom Series*, to water colours from her final years. The selection includes several large-format works and series that have not, or only partially, been exhibited before. The exhibition was created in close collaboration with the Hilma af Klint Foundation and can only be seen in Bilbao.



Hilma af Klint, *The Evolution*, The WUS Seven-Pointed Star Series, Group VI, No. 11, 1908, Courtesy HaK Foundation





Hilma af Klint was 44-years-old when she broke with the academic tradition in which she had been trained. She turned to a new kind of abstract art, inspired by her deep spiritual devotion and devoted nearly a decade to her *Paintings for the Temple*, a radical attempt to find visual expression for a transcendent, spiritual reality beyond the observable world. During her life, the artist mainly exhibited the more traditional figurative paintings – naturalistic landscapes and botanical works – from her oeuvre. She rarely presented her abstract art in public and never in the mainstream art world. Instead, she tried to share it with like-minded spiritual circles, but struggled to find an enthusiastic audience. Believing that the world was not yet ready to accept her work, Hilma af Klint made efforts to save and catalogue it so that the society of the future would receive it in an orderly manner. Her art had to wait almost a century for the recognition it deserved.

The paintings of the Swedish artist had their first European showing outside her home country at the Kunstmuseum Den Haag in 1987 in the exhibition *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985*, initiated by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The fact that this exhibition presented Af Klint, then a completely unknown artist, as one of the five pioneers of abstract art – alongside Wassily Kandinsky, František Kupka, Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian – raised quite a few questions. But times have changed. Af Klint's colourful, visionary work is now embraced by both the art world and the public as was witnessed by the success of *Forms of Life*, the joint exhibition with Piet Mondrian at Kunstmuseum Den Haag last year.

***'Those granted the gift of seeing more deeply can see beyond form, and concentrate on the wondrous aspect hiding behind every form, which is called life'* Hilma af Klint**

At the start of the 20th century, a succession of discoveries, such as X-rays, the electron, radio waves and radioactivity undermined much of what science had long believed to be true. It became clear that reality extends far beyond the visible and that what we can observe is only a fraction of it. Around this time af Klint was painting fairly conventional landscapes, probably because they could be sold more easily than the abstract work that was beginning to emerge from her studios. Af Klint is often cited as one of the creators of abstract art and by the middle of the 1900s she had already established a fairly recognisable style. Her major series of large canvases from around 1908 clearly demonstrate the direction in which she was heading.

Af Klint developed her powerful body of work against the backdrop of this changing world view. She incorporated abstract elements into her work a little earlier than her contemporaries, developing a symbolically charged visual idiom that includes spirals and geometric forms in pastel colours.

This exhibition explores how her unique formal language was inspired by new ways of looking at nature. The artist's paintings and drawings of flowers, which are usually considered separately from her main bodies of work, are interesting in this respect. Af Klint

focused on nature and even made a survey drawing in which she combined them with diagrams that seem to systematise the natural world which complemented her interest in theosophy and anthroposophy and how these new movements attempted to unite the latest scientific discoveries with a spiritual life.

In addition to being an artist, Af Klint was also a medium who claimed that many of her works were commissioned by higher powers. After the death of her sister in 1880, she became interested in spirituality. While studying at the Academy in Stockholm, she met like-minded and spiritual women with whom she formed the group *De fem (The Five)* with her work becoming very personal and esoteric. These include her most famous series, *The Ten Largest (1907)*, ten monumental works each more than three metres in height, which she painted in just forty days, that represent the stages of life from childhood to old age. *The Ten Largest* were part of a collection of paintings that Af Klint made for the temple. In her will she stipulated that these works could not be displayed in public for at least twenty years after her death.

With this, and the earlier exhibitions in The Hague and London, the extraordinary work of Hilma af Klint will hopefully gain the universal recognition it deserves □



Hilma af Klint in her studio at  
Hamngatan in Stockholm  
© The Hilma af Klint Foundation,  
Bilbao 2024

**Kornél**

**TC**

**at Bayeri**

Text by Micho



Mundrucz's vision of

# OSCA

sche Staatsoper in Munich

Michael HASTED

Photos by Wilfried HOESL



*Mundrucz has set his production in modern Rome with the hero, Cavaradossi, not as a painter but as a film maker modelled on Pier Paolo Pasolini*



I had high hopes for Kornél Mundrucz's *Tosca* at Munich's Bayerische Staatsoper. We ran an interview with him in the summer edition of *International* and what he said, along with some stunning production photographs meant I was really looking forward to seeing it.

Opera, like Shakespeare, is manna from heaven to any director with even a modicum of imagination. Both usually carry universal truths which transcend time and place and therefore both lend themselves to interpretation. Mundrucz's controversial *Tosca* in Munich is a perfect example. As he said, "*Tosca* throws the doors wide open. The opera offers an immediate approach, both musically and theatrically – a crazy psychodrama on the highest emotional level." So far, so good.

Based on the 1887 play by French playwright Victorien Sardou, the action takes place in 1800 in Rome, a city under threat from Napoleon's invasion of Italy. Mundrucz has set his production in modern Rome with the hero, Cavaradossi, not as a painter but as a film maker modelled on Pier Paolo Pasolini. The opera opens with Cavaradossi making a film which is about the short-lived Italian Social Republic, better known as Salò, the Second World War German puppet state that was the desperate last gasp of Mussolini's Fascist empire. There was no indication when exactly this production was set and the costumes did not really give a clue, although many of them, in particular those worn by the film crew crowd *artistes*, were modern day street clothes. But, not to worry, this was an opera, not a History Channel documentary.

From the opening bars of *Tosca* it is clear that one is embarking on a journey of high drama and gut-wrenching emotion. Although Puccini originally saw the opera as being a fairly simple affair with "no overblown proportions, no elaborate spectacle, nor will it call for the usual excessive amount of music" it turned out to be, by far, his most dramatic piece including, as it does, torture, attempted rape, murder, execution and finally (not really a spoiler as everybody knows it), suicide. And, like Pasolini's *Salò*, Mundrucz's *Tosca* does not beat about the bush, the blood is blood and

the pain is pain. No many laughs there then.

So, the curtain rose to reveal, not the interior of a mighty cathedral, but a grey, albeit impressive, grey box set with the film crew shooting a set-piece wedding sequence. There were lots of lights and tripods and flight cases but it was all very unfocussed. There were no hidden chapels in evidence so when political escapee Angelotti scurries in seeking refuge the only place he can hide is inside one of said flight cases. The box was subsequently unceremoniously wheeled around the stage with all the other cinematic bits and pieces until it was hard to remember which one he was in. The elements of farce were beginning to appear.

And I think here I should mention the one word that would sum up this production – upstaging. There was always something going on to distract the audience's attention from where it should have been. The beautiful *Non la sospiri, la nostra casetta* was spoiled and upstaged by the film crew running in and out moving their equipment, including Angelotti in his box. This was to set the tone for the whole production (and there was worse to come) – where the singing was secondary to the clever staging ideas, the icing more important than the cake.

Now, before I go any further I should say the singing was excellent. Freddie De Tommaso, whom I had not seen or heard before, made a powerful Cavaradossi while Lise Davidsen's *Tosca* conveyed all the emotion and pain that is necessary for the character. It was a bonus and privilege to see Bryn Terfel in his element as the demonic Scarpia. The Bayerisches Staatsorchester and Chorus of the Bayerische Staatsoper under the baton of Oksana Lyniv delivered the goods and never put a foot wrong.

The first act continued in no real direction but with many distractions including a sequence when Cavaradossi recreated the paintings of Yves Klein by daubing paint on three naked ladies and pressing them onto large sheets of paper. This, I guess represented the subjugation of women as did the later scene when a group of women lined up on stage wearing blood-stained slips.

*. . . the condemned Cavaradossi, as his alter ego Pasolini, decided to take a last wander down memory lane. He wheeled on half a dozen 16mm projectors so we could watch scenes from his films flickering onto all available surfaces . . .*









For Act II we found ourselves in Scarpia's lair described by the director as “. . . a hypermodern glass space in which the torture scene takes place. It is a room in which violence evokes a kind of art. While power tries to restrict people's freedom, it creates a new freedom on this canvas - violence as the art of power.” In fact, his room/office was more like a suite in The Dorchester in London's Park Lane or the set for Noel Coward's *Private Lives* than the grim Palazzo Farnese, headquarters of the secret police. It held as much menace and foreboding as a small portion of Beluga caviar.

The well-appointed chintzy apartment was redolent of 1970s Park Lane chic, (hardly hypermodern!) an impression enhanced by the guards who looked more like attentive chauffeurs than sadistic thugs - although I have to say I did like Spoletta, played by Tansel Akzeybek as Al Pacino in *Scarface*.

The torture scene in *Tosca* is usually represented by a few off-stage muffled screams. Not so for Mr Mundrucz who had the bright idea of having the glass fronted torture chamber rise up from below the stage so we could see it all taking place. The torture itself seemed to consist of Cavaradossi having paint flicked on him by two guards until the ultimate and unbearable daubing with a 5” brush.

Meanwhile, upstairs in this double-decker set, Scarpia was still trying to have his evil way with our heroine, but at least he had the decency to sit quietly on the sofa in the corner and read his newspaper while she sang her high-point aria, *Vissi d'arte*, the only song in the entire production that was not spoiled by other things happening on stage. Eventually she had had enough and discretely stabbed

the amorous bully behind one of the plush comfy armchairs while taking care not to get any blood on the upholstery – one of the most dramatic scenes in the opera totally thrown away.

Between acts two and three we were treated to a clip of the motorbike scene from Pasolini's 1962 masterpiece *Mama Roma*, although I couldn't work out why.

When the screen rose we were back in the grey box set, this time representing a prison and when left alone the condemned Cavaradossi, as his alter ego Pasolini, decided to take a last wander down memory lane. He wheeled on half a dozen 16mm projectors so we could watch scenes from his films flickering onto all available surfaces including a rather steamy (by 1960's standards) sex scene while he sang the heart-wrenching *E Lucevan le stelle* – or at least I think he did, as our attention was being directed elsewhere. This made a mockery of the opera's most moving scene.

For the opera's *denouement* we we're back in Scarpia's underground torture/execution chamber - not on the customary roof of Castel Sant'Angelo. Fine, except it made *Tosca*'s suicide absurd and implausible - but on the bright side she probably survived having only sustained a few cuts and bruises by jumping from the top of the cellar. This, as did most other elements of the production, showed contempt for the opera and was the final nail in the coffin in which this production was finally laid to rest - although Puccini would almost certainly be turning in his grave.

Kornél Mundrucz's *Tosca* was a travesty where the gimmicky production was allowed to completely over-shadow the fine music and singing and prove, once again, that you should be very careful what you wish for □



# RUBENS' GARDEN

Photo by Jeroen BROECKX



*A masterpiece in bloom  
in the centre of Antwerp*

***Following his return from Italy in 1608, Rubens introduced Antwerp to his fascination for classical and contemporary Italian architecture . . .***

The imposing portico and garden pavilion at the Rubens House in Antwerp can now be viewed again by the public. After a year and a half, the restoration is complete. A combination of protective and conservation measures has given the portico and garden pavilion back their splendour, while the meticulous treatment of the sculptural details does full justice to them once more. The restored portico is protected by a glass butterfly awning to prevent erosion of the stone and to ward off pollution. Visitors can now enter Rubens's home again in the way he intended: with a spectacular view of the portico and garden pavilion.

The garden pavilion and the portico in the style of a triumphal arch at the Rubens House were designed entirely by Peter Paul Rubens himself and are among the few traces anywhere in the world of the master as an architect. Following his return from Italy in 1608, Rubens introduced Antwerp to his fascination for classical and contemporary Italian architecture. He and his first wife Isabella Brant purchased a building and the accompanying land on the Wapper

in Antwerp in 1610 and converted it into a self-designed Italian palazetto complete with semi-circular sculpture gallery, studio and a beautiful garden.

Rubens only put his architectural ideas into practice once, but in doing so, he revealed a thorough knowledge of the subject. The improvements lent his home the air of an Italian palazzo and embodied Rubens' artistic ideals: the art of Roman Antiquity and the Italian Renaissance.

Rubens's city palace made an overwhelming impression on his contemporaries. Antwerp's municipal secretary declared in 1620 that 'His home will arouse the amazement of foreigners and the admiration of travellers'. The monumental portico and the garden pavilion began to appear in paintings by the likes of Anthony van Dyck and Jacob Jordaens shortly after they were completed. Rubens himself frequently used the structures as settings for his own paintings too.

In September 2017, scaffolding was installed around the portico and garden pavilion at the Rubens House to allow the conservation and



Photo by Ans BRYS

A photograph showing a stone column and a statue partially obscured by a lemon tree. The column is made of light-colored stone with a fluted design. The statue is a classical-style figure, possibly a woman, standing next to the column. The lemon tree is in the foreground, with green leaves and yellow lemons. The background is a light-colored wall.

*The improvements lent his home the air of an Italian palazzo and embodied Rubens's artistic ideals: the art of Roman Antiquity and the Italian Renaissance*

Photo by Jeroen BROECKX







Photo by Jeroen BROECKX

restoration work to be carried out. This was preceded by in-depth research by experts, who had been studying the two architectural elements since the 1990s. It did not take long to realize that they were in a poor condition due to the effects of the weather, and so urgent interim measures were taken, such as installing a temporary wooden roof above the portico. The condition of the portico was studied and monitored closely from that moment on.

In 2012, several experts from the heritage sector were brought together in a steering committee to explore the options for restoration. Studies and restoration trials were carried out, following which the specialists opted for a combination of protective and conservation measures. The goal was to conserve and restore the structures, while preserving the maximum amount of material and enhancing their visual legibility. Missing parts of sculptures would not be replaced and structural improvements would only be carried out where strictly necessary for conservation. Despite a loss of form and wear and tear, the portico and pavilion remained sufficiently legible.

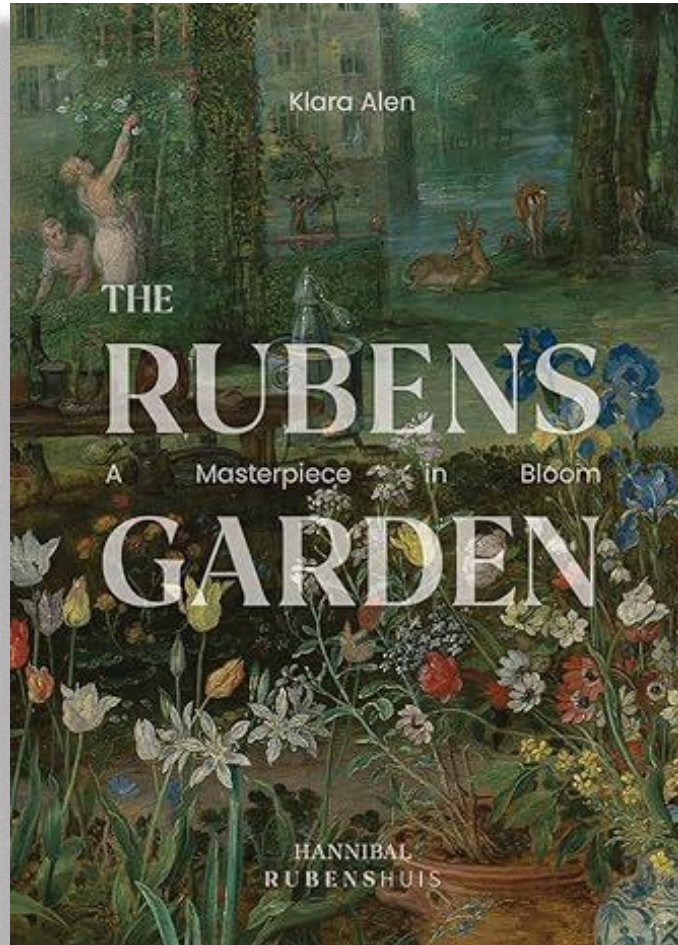
The Flemish Community approved the project specifications and restoration began on 18th September 2017. The temporary roof was dismantled and the bronze vases and the statues of Mercury and Minerva were removed so cleaning could commence. A team of four specialist stone restorers meticulously tackled the sculpted elements, spending a

year treating one flaking stone after another. The garden pavilion is now a harmonious ensemble again of light-coloured plasterwork and sandstone and darker blue stone. The portico, with its different types of stone, has regained its grandeur. The final stage was to install the glass structure that will protect the portico against precipitation and prevent

further loss of form and contamination. A giant crane lifted the various parts of the construction one by one over the museum façade from the Wapper, resulting in some spectacular images. The canopy itself was assembled in the museum courtyard. The 30-tonne construction comprises a canopy made of triple-laminated glass sheets 6 cm thick, which are held in place by stainless steel frames, weighed down by lead across their entire length and anchored in the columns. The bronze statues and vases stand on top of the canopy.

After a year and a half, the restoration is complete. Visitors can now enter Rubens' home again in the way he intended: with a spectacular view of the portico and garden pavilion □

Belgian publisher Hannibal Books has produced a splendid 156 page book to coincide with the refurbishment. Written by Klara Alen with reproductions of old drawings and paintings and many new photographs it is available in Dutch and English.



The 20th Anniversary UK Tour of Alan Bennett's

# THE HISTORY BOYS

Simon BISHOP of StageTalk Magazine went to the premiere at the Theatre Royal in Bath

Photos by Marc BRENNER









*The History Boys* is 20 years old this year. This latest UK-touring iteration of the Tony and Laurence Olivier award-winning play, directed by Seán Linnen, feels as fresh as the day it was conceived by Alan Bennett, perhaps even upping its pulse more with the injection of well-known eighties pop riffs at scene change-overs. A terrific cast pushes this tale of clashing attitudes to education and sexual fluidity along at a pace that has a captivated audience hanging on to every word.

A clever rotating scene by designer Grace Smart reveals both an interior classroom and the exterior of Cutlers' Grammar School. In a televised interview with theatre director and film producer Nicholas Hytner ten years ago, Bennett explained he liked writing about life within institutions, where eccentric behaviour could thrive.

And thrive it does here. Cutler's, through the lens of Bennett's own experiences at Leeds Modern School in the 1950's, is a place in thrall to the idea of gaining Oxbridge places for its talented crop of sixth formers. To this end the feverishly ambitious headmaster (Milo Twomey) employs a supply teacher, Irwin (Bill Milner) to beef up the more organically intellectual methods of Hector, a teacher who bemuses his employer with sorties into the unexpected and the esoteric to stretch his charges' imagination, with sometimes hilarious results. Simon Rouse delivers a wonderful performance as the ageing schoolmaster nearing the end of his career, whose lofty thoughts about knowledge sit awkwardly beside his so-far unfettered desire to fondle his pupils' privates. Hector's flirtation with ruin, while holding onto professional principle, is convincingly played.

Archie Christoph-Allen plays the cocksure sixth-former Dakin. Good looking, super confident, he is already attempting to bed the headmaster's secretary Fiona, whose character doesn't make an appearance in the play. Convinced by his own attractiveness and empowered by the overt attentions of younger gay fellow pupil Posner (Lewis Cornay), he embarks on a sexual conquest of the supply teacher – an extension of the idea of history being driven by those that 'make things happen'. In this he sets up a crucial conversation between himself and Irwin in which the latter at first attempts avoidance and caution. One gets the sense that

this dialogue could have been scripted explicitly to explore opposing facets of Bennett's psyche – on the one hand the withdrawn and shy man, on the other a sexually expressive individual pushing for reciprocated desire.

In a stand-out ensemble, able to use voice, song and physical theatre to great effect, Lewis Cornay's performance as the young Jewish boy Posner was notable. His fine singing voice, and very amusing cameo in his class re-enactment of a scene from the film *Brief Encounter* was memorable. His sensitive portrayal of a boy suffering unrequited love palpable.

Bennett's writing is a multi-layered treat. Seeing at once what is pathetic, hilarious, deluded, petty, sometimes principled and dismissive, all at once, Bennett's *The History Boys* given this production's high energy performance survives its increasing vintage well – barring of course the fact that Hector's indiscretions would not be tolerated for a second today.

A long play at about two and half hours in length, there was never a sense that the zest, the joy in its production ever dipped. The story's end can feel like something of a bolt-on – the jolt and resolve intended at the dénouement not quite coming across as powerfully as everything that goes before. There were moments, such as in Mrs Dorothy Lintott (Gillian Bevan), Hector's fellow history teacher's wonderful outburst about the lack of women featuring throughout history, and later when the boys were commentating on their futures, where it was difficult to hear soft voices in a large auditorium. A bit of extra help with the audio, or enhanced projection by the players could have improved the clarity of the spoken word. But these are quibbles. Overall, this is a finely-tuned piece, classic Bennett given a shot-in-the-arm revival.

The UK tour of *The History Boys* continues until the end of November 2025











# **The Ukrainian MONUMENTS MAN**

**Souwie BUIS reports on one man's fight to save  
Ukraine's art treasure from falling into the hands  
of the advancing Russian army**





Remember the 2014 film *Monuments Men* written and directed by George Clooney? Based on Robert M. Edsel's book of the same name, it follows the death-defying escapades of a group of art experts tasked with finding and saving priceless works of art before they are stolen or destroyed by the Nazis.

Leonid Marushchak, a 38-year-old historian by training, has taken on a similar task as war rages in his native Ukraine. A recent in-depth investigation by *The Guardian* newspaper into his work, reveals a level of passion and bravery that many expect to find only in books or movies. It began in March, 2022, when Marushchak became concerned about a favourite collection of 20th century studio pottery, languishing in the far-eastern town of Sloviansk. When he called the director of the museum to ask about evacuation plans, he was surprised to learn that none had been made. The Ministry of Culture had no definite plans in this regard either he discovered.

Marushchak decides to take matters into his own hands. He does not drive but hitches rides with friends and strangers to cover the 600 odd kilometres from Kyiv to Sloviansk in the east of the country. Fighting is taking place just over 20kms away when this particular monument man arrives at the town's museum of local history. With the help of a police van, organised by his friend, the Deputy Minister of Culture, Kateryna Chuyeva, he manages to rescue the Maksymchenko ceramics along with an array of taxidermized animals.

Since then Marushchak and an unlikely group of friends and fellow art lovers, have spear-headed the evacuation of artworks from dozens of museums along the frontline. They have saved tens of thousands of artefacts from drawings, letters, antique furniture and precious textiles to 180 giant medieval sculptures carved by Turkic nomads of the steppe. Describing

***Describing his tight-knit band of monument men and women as guerilla fighters, Marushchak has risked his life to save art on more than one occasion.***











his tight knit band of monument men and women as guerilla fighters, Marushchak has risked his life to save art on more than one occasion. He made numerous trips to the now infamous Bakhmut when it was under siege and to the eastern city of Lysychansk, both are now under Russian control.

Yet for places like Mariupol it is sadly too late. The city's Museum of Local History came under aerial attack by Russian forces and finally succumbed to a series of fires. According to the Ukrainian News Agency, over 3000 cultural sites have been damaged or destroyed as a result of the war. In November, 2022, Russian occupiers in Kherson, loaded five truckloads of works from the Art Museum and transported them to occupied Crimea.

For Ukrainians, their cultural heritage is deeply intertwined with the country's political history. In the 1930s, a generation of Ukrainian writers were executed in one of Stalin's purges. More recently, modernist artist, Alla Horska, who Marushchak credits with being the founder of Ukrainian identity in the 1960s, was murdered, probably by the KGB. Hers are among the works of art that Marushchak worked hard to save when Kyiv came under attack from Russian bombing at the start of the war.

Appreciating the death-defying work of Marushchak and his small team, it is to appreciate that this war is just as much about Ukrainian territory as it is about its cultural identity. The existence of which Putin and his forces seem set on obliterating. Yet the passion and bravery with which those like Marushchak have taken up the fight to preserve their country's artwork echoes a century's old struggle for Ukrainian identity that is not easily extinguished □

# SNOWAPPLE COLLECTIVE

**S**nowapple Collective is a versatile and creative company consisting of musicians, artists, performers and creatives who combine different artistic disciplines. With Amsterdam's Laurien Schreuder as founder and artistic director, it has developed into an international and interdisciplinary collective that explores and pushes the boundaries of theatrical creativity. With her eclectic mix of music genres, visual art and theatrical elements, she creates a unique experience for the audience, seamlessly integrating traditional and modern influences. In addition to her musical and theatrical productions, she also publishes poems, scripts and philosophical explorations. Her artistic scope also includes involvement in various festivals and positively charged activism. Snowapple Collective organizes residencies and workshops to inspire and engage communities in its vision, making it an inexhaustible source of creativity and innovation. The collective has the ambition to grow into an international player in the field of innovative and interdisciplinary art. Led in a collective manner with enough space for women.






For more than thirteen years, Snowapple has been a beacon of creativity and social interaction in the music and art world. What started as a musical trio - consisting of the talented singers Laurien Schreuder, Una Bergin and Laura Polence - has developed into an international and interdisciplinary collective that explores and pushes the boundaries of theatrical creativity. Snowapple Collective develops experimental, unique and idiosyncratic art with a feminist perspective, creating awareness for minority groups in an extravagant, theatrical and musical way. With great successes in Mexico and France, she is now paving the way to success in the Netherlands.

Snowapple's journey started with music, but quickly grew into a versatile artist collective that not only breaks boundaries, but also connects and inspires communities. What few people know is that the collective has Amsterdam roots. She strives to create daring, experimental and contemporary art that appeals to a broad audience without prejudice of age, culture or origin. She is committed to creating art that is deeply rooted in the reality of society: committed to current social issues, that raises questions and initiates discourse. The projects are multidisciplinary, arise from collaboration and imbued with educational and social values, which they convey to the viewer in a playful, non-teaching way.

Snowapple Collective will make its return to the Dutch stage in April, starting with the live studio recording of the new album *Cyborg Recordings* that will be released in 2025. Based on the immersive theater piece *Cyborg Experiment #1*, where the spectator is immersed in a strange but intriguing universe where music, theater and technology come together. A daring spectacle where theatrical, dance, musical, international and multi-talented artists come together to present a total theater experience. Inspired by visionaries like Donna Haraway, the piece sits somewhere between David Bowie, *The Matrix* and David Lynch. SHE, Laurien's alter ego, embodies the relationship between people and technology, a theme that is becoming increasingly relevant in our globalized and digitalized world. *Cyborg Experiment #1* will tour France, Turkey, the US, the UK and Mexico this year and next.

Snowapple's performances are often multi and interdisciplinary, immersive and completely off the beaten track. Sometimes it is a performance, short film, residency, collaboration or international festival. Jardin Rouge Festival returns annually on various dates in Mexico City, Paris and Amsterdam. Jardin Rouge creates a space of freedom and



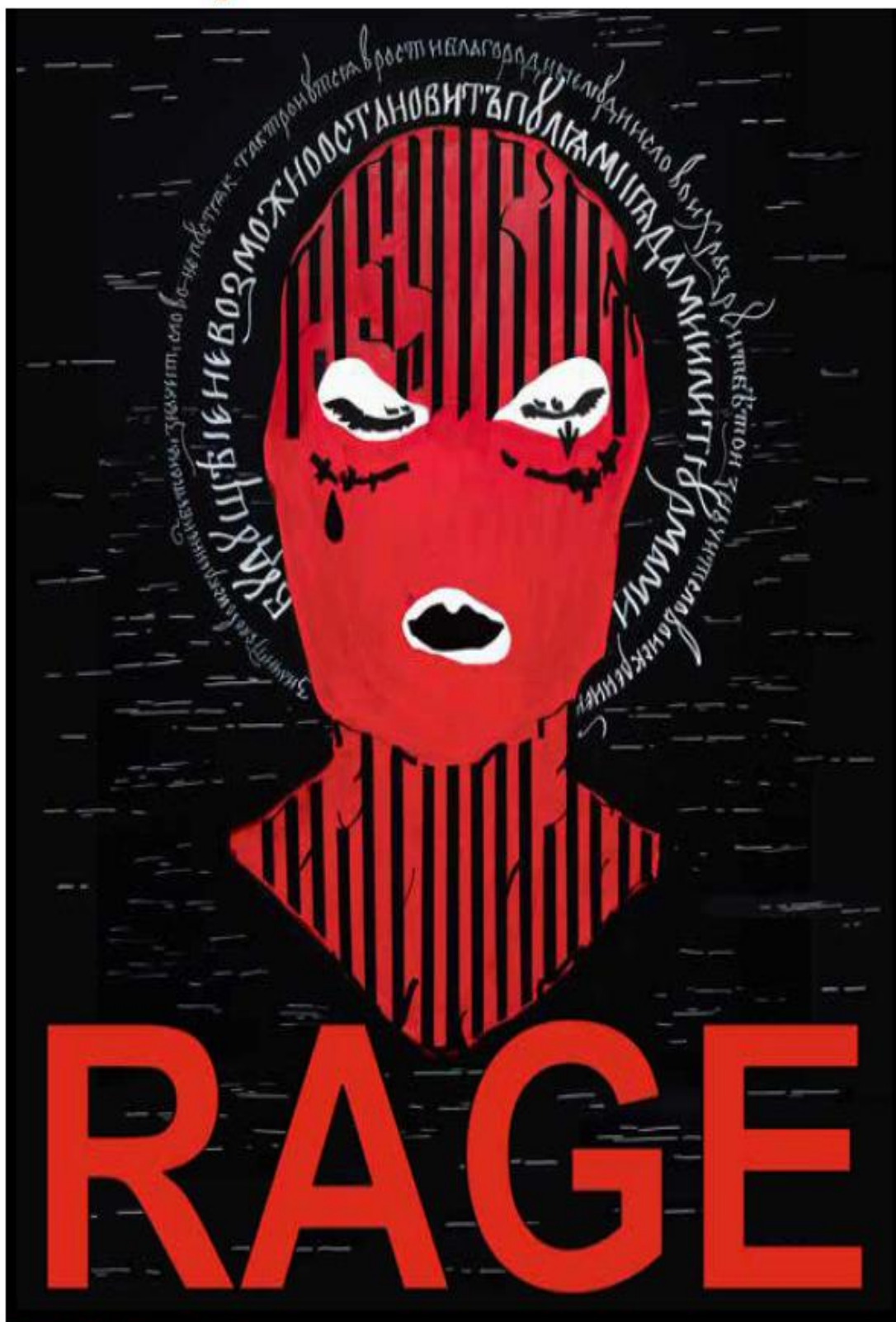


inventiveness, provoking moments in which a varied audience comes into contact with new artistic forms while going against what is known and expected. In addition to these and many other collaborations, there will also be a Snowapple Collective tent during Vurige Tongen at Ruigoord, Amsterdam in May, where they will perform the original theatre show *Cyborg Experiment #1*.

### **Casa Snowapple Mexico**

In Mexico, the collective is an important part of the feminist movement, one of their first songs *Alerta* is frequently sung during women's rights demonstrations and they have already achieved a lot of national publicity. Critics describe Snowapple's performances as "artistic rage and feminist resistance". Casa Snowapple, home base in Mexico City, symbolizes the commitment to local communities and sustainable development. This is where the collective's artistic vision and social mission come together, which they hope will be just the beginning of a series of initiatives that will make a difference worldwide. Casa Snowapple offers residencies to local and international artists, artists and creatives. The place and concept were developed and managed by women □

# Nadya Tolokonnikova | Pussy Riot



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