

# **The 55th edition of the MAfestival, the internationally renowned festival for early music, pays tribute to the women**

The 55th edition of the MAfestival, the leading festival for early music in Bruges, pays tribute to the women in music. Under the heading *Cherchez la femme*, the 2018 edition of the MAfestival scans early music on the lookout for the female voice. For ten days - from 3 to 12 August 2018 - female composers and musicians, but also writers, patronesses, muses and other iconic characters are at the center of the program.

The program includes more than 20 concerts, the musical cycling tour through Bruges and the surrounding area VéloBaroque, an early music market, courses, lectures, a music holiday for kids and of course the international competition *Musica Antiqua*, this year focusing on the harpsichord.

Important names as Skip Sempé, Ensemble Correspondances and Elizabeth Kenny are combined with emerging talents such as Apotropaïk and Le Consort. The ties with laureates Bertrand Cuiller, Jean Rondeau and Evgeny Sviridov are also cited. And the MAfestival combines Gregorian chant with pop in an adventurous creation by An Pierlé and Psallentes.

What originally came along as an inspiring festival theme, turned into an acutely felt social reality over the past months. Women speak out more than ever before, and they are upsetting the power relations of the patriarchy. It goes without saying that the latter is not possible without a fight.

The result is a festival with exceptional voices, of composers, performers, patrons, and muses. But also fictitious voices, articulated by men. Above all, they represent the voice of the modern woman, who more than ever breaks the silence.

## **MAfestival**

MAfestival Brugge is an internationally renowned festival for early music, boasting a daring programme and an innovative outlook on tradition. Every summer, it presents and creates a wide range of activities in the historical setting of Bruges and its surroundings. These activities include a thematic concert series, grounded in a coherent and through-provoking dramaturgy; the prestigious International Competitions *Musica Antiqua* for young baroque soloists; a series of Fringe concerts for young and promising ensembles; a specialist exhibition of historical instruments; and the musical bikeride VéloBaroque. MAfestival cares about young artists and provides them with intense guidance by drawing on its wide international network. Run by a passionate team, the festival makes a difference through its original approach, embracing and inviting creative reflection on the role of early music in our modern world.

**MAfestival**  
**3-12 August 2018**  
**Bruges**  
[www.mafestival.be](http://www.mafestival.be)

**More information and press requests:**  
**Micha Pycke | Club Paradis**  
**+32 (0)486 680 070**  
[micha@clubparadis.be](mailto:micha@clubparadis.be)

**Festival director Tomas Bischof, festival dramaturge Katharina Lindekens and the artists are available for interviews. Please send your requests to Micha Pycke.**

## **The theme for 2018: Cherchez la femme**

For centuries, composing was a male occupation. Even today the word 'composer' – like 'surgeon' or 'professor' – conjures up a male stereotype. And still. In each era, women arose who were sufficiently stubborn and eager to write music, averse to all the social, cultural and economic constraints that were imposed on them. Each of them impressive personalities, who also profiled themselves as virtuoso performers. In baroque Italy, Francesca Caccini and Barbara Strozzi thrived as singer-composers, while prioress Isabella Leonarda wrote music in a convent of Ursulines.

Harpsichordist-composer Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre was immensely popular in 18th-century Paris. And although the 19th-century keyboard muses Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn played second fiddle to a man, they both devoted their life to music (each in her own way). Mélanie Bonis, in turn, called herself 'Mel' to publish her work. And Wanda Landowska (1879-1959) was unstoppable in her mission to (re) boost the harpsichord.

That women find it increasingly easy these days to claim their place in the musical world, is due to these pioneers, who could effortlessly compete with their male colleagues. Hence, the work of female composers deserves to be appreciated for its intrinsic, gender-blind value. MAfestival rolls out the red carpet for composers from Kassia to Kaija Saariaho, and allows their music to cross-pollinate with the sounds of male predecessors, contemporaries and heirs.

**You can read the full text of the festival dramaturge Katherina Lindekens [here](#).**

## Some highlights of the festival

**Friday 3 August : Opening concert: Rinaldo**  
**20.00 - Concertgebouw, Concertzaal**  
**Ensemble Le Caravansérail o.l.v. Bertrand Cuiller**

Bertrand Cuiller and Le Caravansérail are taking the baroque scene by storm these days. They have the honour of opening the 2018 edition of the MAFestival with Händel's iconic opera Rinaldo (1711). 'Lascia ch'io pianga' is only one of the arias which made the piece immortal overnight. And in the duets, the battle between and among the sexes rages.

**Saturday 4 August: Harpsichord Happening**  
**NEW**

**18.00 Concertgebouw, Kamermuziekzaal**  
**Portraits of a lady**  
**Jacquet de la Guerre and Couperin by Carole Cerasi**

**20.30 - Concertgebouw, Kamermuziekzaal**  
**Hommage to Wanda Landowska**  
**Skip Sempé**

**22.15 - Concertgebouw, Concertzaal**  
**Paris s'éveille**  
**Nevermind / Jean Rondeau**

While Carole Cerasi and Skip Sempé explore the solo repertoire for this exquisite instrument, Jean Rondeau and Nevermind let the harpsichord shine in baroque chamber music. And the early music market (17h00 – 22h00) features various specimens for close admiration.

**Monday 6 August: Adamo ed Eva**  
**20.00 - Sint-Jacobskerk**  
**Il Gardellino o.l.v. Peter Van Heyghen**

Josef Mysliveček may be virtually unknown today, but from 1765 to 1780, this Bohemian headed all the opera charts in Italy. His theatrical instinct is also tangible in the oratorio Adamo ed Eva, of which Il Gardellino has the modern premiere in store. Whoever discovers this well-kept secret, will be mesmerized – like Mozart – by Mysliveček's irresistible melodies.

**Tuesday 7 August: Parthenope / Parthenia**  
**11.30 - Concertgebouw, Kamermuziekzaal**  
**Catalina Vicens**

Parthenope is the name of the siren with the virgin voice, who washed ashore in Naples according to legend. Under Parthenope's guidance, Catalina Vicens explores the age old association between femininity and musicality in early works for harpsichord and virginal. Kindled by her unique imagination, she travels from 16th-century Italy to 17th-century England and back.

**Wednesday 8 August: Final International Competition Musica Antiqua**  
**18.00 - Concertgebouw, Concertzaal**

Since 1964 the Flanders Festival Bruges organizes every year the famous International Competition Musica Antiqua. They are open to young, highly qualified performers from all over the world, who specialize in the historically informed performance practice.

In 2018, the International Competition Musica Antiqua focuses on the harpsichord. On this grand finale evening, five contestants enter into the arena. Under the watchful eye of an international jury, they perform compositions by François Couperin, Jean-Philippe Rameau and Johan Huys.

**Thursday 9 August: Pelléas et Mélisande**  
**20.00 - Concertgebouw, Concertzaal**  
**Lore Binon / Yves Saelens e.a.**

The enigmatic protagonist of Maeterlinck's Pelléas et Mélisande suffers from an unfathomable sadness. Claude Debussy transformed this symbolist masterpiece into a fluid and pictorial opera, meandering like musical filigree. The serene chamber version by Marius Constant is given second life, ignited by Jan Michiels, Inge Spinette, and an all-star line-up of vocalists surrounding Lore Binon.

**Friday 10 augustus: In My End is My Beginning**  
**NEW PRODUCTION**

**20.00 - Biekorf**

**Imago Mundi ensemble with Lore Binon / Bobby Mitchell / Sofie Van den Eynde / Anouk De Clercq / Jo Thielemans**

Three marriages, never-ending captivity, and a tragic sentence for high treason: the life of Mary Stuart (1542-1587) reads like an opera libretto. Lore Binon, Sofie Vanden Eynde and the ensemble Imago Mundi explore the many faces of the Queen of Scots, against the backdrop of a brand-new video by Anouk De Clercq which gauges the shifting shapes of the female identity.

**Friday 10 August: Minne**  
**NEW PRODUCTION ESPECIALLY MADE FOR THE MAFESTIVAL**  
**22.15 - Sint-Walburgakerk**  
**An Pierlé & Psallentes**

In this unique project, An Pierlé and Psallentes meet on the crossroads of their musical universes. Together they create a timeless soundscape, inspired by the love poetry of the 13th-century mystic Hadewijch. Scraps of Gregorian flirt with pristine pop songs; early polyphony merges into improvisation. What is surrender? And where can divine love catch us today?

**Saturday 11 August: Final concert: Hail! Bright Cecilia**  
**20.00 - Concertgebouw, Concertzaal**  
**Ensemble Correspondances o.l.v. Sébastien Daucé**

A strong woman who should not be absent from this festival programme is Saint-Cecilia, patron saint of music. Sébastien Daucé and his unrivalled Ensemble Correspondances interpret two of the most beautiful works from the opulent Cecilia catalogue: Marc-Antoine Charpentier's double-choir oratorio Caecilia Virgo et martyr, and Henry Purcell's iconic ode Hail! Bright Cecilia.

**Sunday 12 August: VéloBaroque**  
**Kaija Saariaho** *Près* by Arne Deforce  
**Kassia** VocaMe  
**Piaf & co** Stokman & Vos  
**Ay, Santa Maria** Ensemble ApotropaiK  
**Femmes de légende** Natacha Kudritskaya plays Mel Bonis and Erik Satie  
**Caccini/Strozzi/Leonarda** Le Consort & Eva Zaïcik

VéloBaroque combines old music with a cycling tour through Bruges' surrounding countryside. A new parcours of 30km brings adventurous concerts at unique locations.