

Dossier
Created 2023
Premiere 1 February 2023, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen (BE)

Grandpa Puss; or how God disappeared

Lisaboa Houbrechts | laGeste



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“It is a dark tale. It opens wounds and sewers. It is about how children are trapped in a chain of violence. The urge to break that chain can release a tremendous life force and imagination.”
Lisaboa Houbrechts

Lisaboa Houbrechts writes and stages a family epic that spans three generations. She looks back at the times of her grandparents, her parents and her own generation. She goes in search of how the small is interwoven with the large, the intimate with the political, and the past with the present. The main character is a twelve-year-old girl who stands at the end of a long history and dives into the hidden traumas of the past. Lisaboa Houbrechts elaborates the fictional story in images, text, dance and music.

The twelve-year-old Granddaughter of All Granddaughters looks back into her grandfather's past. His childhood, the war, sexual abuse in the fraternity school and the cruel marriage with Grandma Puss.

The Granddaughter of All Granddaughters is magical. She struggles through the pool of memories to visit the children of the past. The violence done to children determines the violence of tomorrow.



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Grandpa Puss; or how God disappeared tells the story of a family breakdown in which Grandpa Puss and his son sacrifice their faith and nail Jesus to the Cross. This to the despair of Grandma Puss who wants to keep her family pious and pure in a world that is becoming more and more secular in the 1970s.

In a profound collage of intense images, texts and music, Lisaboa Houbrechts interweaves fragments of Bach's St John Passion with her own texts and she connects Bach with folk music. She tries to shape the ineffable; how the death of Jesus is linked to the secret suffering of those marked by trauma.

For this grand narrative, Lisaboa Houbrechts works with players, singers and musicians of all ages. From children to young adult performers to some established theatre monuments. She builds a house of magic and poetry in which the children of today play with the young versions of their parents and grandparents.

Lisaboa Houbrechts: "It is a dark tale. It opens wounds and sewers. It is about how children are trapped in a chain of violence. The urge to break that chain can release a tremendous life force and imagination, but it can also implode into a cycle of destruction. The space between theatre and opera is the perfect form to bring this most intimate to a radical expression."



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CREDITS & BIOGRAPHY

text & direction [Lisaboa Houbrechts](#)

arias, chorals and recitatives J. S. Bach

musical direction & arrangements Pedro Beriso

with Alberto Martinez, Boule Mpanya, Elisa Soster, Elsie de Brauw, Pieter Ampe, Philippe Thuriot, Stefaan Degand, Wolf De Graeve, Zofia Hanna and 4 children.

arrangements for accordion & tenor Philippe Thuriot

composition & realization music score Bert & Stijn Cools (granvat)

scenography & puppets Filip Peeters

costumes Oumar Dicko

lightdesign Fabiana Piccioli

dramaturgy Hildegard De Vuyst

musical dramaturgy Piet De Volder

orchestra (recording) Orkest Opera Ballet Vlaanderen

light technician Bennert Vancottem

sound technician Brecht Beuselinck

realization costumes Oumar Dicko in collaboration with costumes atelier Toneelhuis (Kathleen Van Mechelen, Kasia Mielczarek, Liezelot Osselaer, Monique Van Hassel)

realization set & puppets Filip Peeters in collaboration with atelier FroeFroe (Marc Maillard)

stage director assistant Lieselot Siddiki

spreiding Sepehr Sharifzadeh / laGeste

production laGeste (BE)

co-production Opera Ballet Vlaanderen (BE), Toneelhuis (BE), Le Phénix Scène nationale de Valenciennes (FR), MC 93 (FR), Opéra de Lille (FR) and Holland Festival (NL)

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All other biographies you can find [here](#) at 'bio'.

IN THE PRESS

"Taking head on a burning topicality, she sketches a poem full of tension and roughness. The proposal is dense, demanding to the point of aridity. The gesture is incredibly masterful. It cannot leave one unmoved and confirms the great talent of a rare artist, a virtuoso, clearly one to follow.."

l'oeil d'Olivier - Olivier Frégaville 02.03.23

"Lisaboa Houbrechts shows the unbearable, in a poetic manner infused with visual and musical beauty."

*Knack ****- Els Van Steenberghe 14.02.2023*

"Nothing remains untouched in Lisaboa Houbrechts' new performance. Not the body, not the soul, not Bach's St John Passion. With *Grandpa Puss*, Houbrechts proves that she is not afraid to burn her fingers on icons."

*De Morgen ****- Evelyne Coussens 03.03.2023*

"... in *Grandpa Puss; or how God disappeared*, the Flemish artist intertwines music and classical singing performed live, acting, dance and scenographic movements to generate a baroque universe capable of embracing the most antagonistic aspects of the human soul in a single movement."

Les Inrockuptibles - Fabienne Arvers 02.03.23

More press you can read [here](#) at 'in the presse'

PRACTICAL INFO

duration 1h45 (no interval)

language Dutch, French, German (with subtitles in Dutch, French or English)

people on tour 19 people: 13 cast (4 of whom are children of ages 9-12) and 6 crew

stage size minimal surface 14m deep behind the proscenium arch x 16m wide,
minimal free height 15m, black wooden floor

you can find the technical reader [here](#).

AGENDA

The premiere took place on the first of February '23 in the Ghent Opera.

You can find the past agenda [here](#).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Presentation text, credits, biographies, photos, trailer, interviews, video and radio interviews and written press can be found [here](#).

High-resolution photos and the trailer can be downloaded via this [link](#).

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BODY

The logo for laGeste, featuring the word 'laGeste' in a stylized, handwritten blue font.

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