

Composing Protest: Mini-Opera as Feminist Practice

Reflections on Artistic Research through the mini-opera “Lūmen I”

This research performance presents “Lūmen I”, a mini-opera conceived as both a compositional experiment and a reflection on protest, gender, and performative agency within contemporary music theatre and opera. The work emerges from my doctoral artistic research project “Mini-opera: on the dramaturgy of protest” at the Norwegian Academy of Music, which investigates how the condensed mini-opera form can serve as a site for artistic inquiry, social critique, and feminist reflection. Inspired by the testimonies of Iranian women prisoners and the interviews collected in “White Torture” by the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, the mini-opera explores anger as a dramaturgical force, a form-building principle, and a call for freedom. In this multimedia monodrama, Norwegian soprano Silje Aker Johnsen embodies multiple women’s experiences, giving voice to layered emotional narratives situated within a prison-cell environment.

In this 30-minute session, the performance of “Lūmen I” will be framed by a brief spoken introduction and a concluding dialogue between myself and my artistic research supervisor, Professor Henrik Hellstenius. The discussion will consider how the work engages with contemporary debates on opera’s social function and the potential of artistic research to reshape musical dramaturgy and ethical representation. Together, we will reflect on how a reduced, transdisciplinary form reconfigures the relationships between composer, performer, and audience, and how feminist agency may be embedded within the structural and performative dimensions of an artwork.

The project’s central research questions concern the evolving definition of the mini-opera and its capacity to convey social and political content through compressed dramaturgical and musical means. The presentation further examines how the figure of the woman can function simultaneously as subject and analytical lens for interrogating institutional conventions of opera, as well as the composer’s dual position as artist and activist.

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The performance of this 15-minute work requires a simple stage setup using materials I can provide from the Norwegian Academy of Music: a black projection canvas, a chair, a video projector, a video camera, and my own audio equipment. I will, however, need access to a PA system and basic stage lighting. The setup will require approximately 30 minutes, assuming all elements can be arranged smoothly. A video excerpt from the first 10 minutes of the work, performed by guest artist Sophia Koerber, is available [here](#).

Research Performances



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Martyna Kosecka is a Polish composer, performer, conductor, curator, and researcher in contemporary music. Her artistic practice merges philosophy, linguistics, physics, and mythology into transdisciplinary explorations of narrative, microtonality, symbolism, and ritual. Drawing from cultural influences across Iran, Poland, and Norway, she emphasizes transcultural dialogue and collective creation. Kosecka is currently a Ph.D. Research Fellow at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo. Her doctoral project, "Mini-opera: on the dramaturgy of protest", investigates the mini-opera as a site of artistic and social critique, focusing on the ethical representation of women and the composer's role as both artist and activist. Her compositions are published by Donemus Holland and performed internationally at festivals for new music and experimental theatre.