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Robert Wilson's *The Sandman* to Norway's Bergen International Festival

American theatre-maker Robert Wilson presents his version of E.T.A. Hoffmann's horror story at the Bergen International Festival next spring.

Robert Wilson directs *The Sandman*, a terrible tale from German Romanticism by E.T.A. Hoffman, often considered one of the very first horror story writers. The music is by British dramatic rock singer songwriter Anna Calvi and performed by the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus ensemble with the German star singer and actor Christian Friedel in the lead.



'I am very excited about bringing one of my recent works to Bergen: *The Sandman*, from the Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf. To me, *The Sandman* is like a colorful nightmare. I staged this ghost story from German Romanticism with a bit of irony. It is full of expressionist elements and a lot of fun at the same time, which makes it even scarier,' says Robert Wilson, known for his delicate lighting compositions and bold stage imagery.

The Sandman tells the story of Nathanael, who loses his father in a mysterious explosion. The little boy believes the tragic event must be related to the wicked Sandman from his mother's bedtime stories. The Sandman throws sand into the eyes of children who won't go to sleep until they start bleeding from their heads. This gruesome ghost story will haunt Nathanael for the rest of his life.

'The story of the Sandman is one of the first real horror stories, where everything is quite normal on the surface – until suddenly something grim emerges and sends chills down your spine. Everyone from Edgar Allan Poe to Lars von Trier and the creators of *Twin Peaks* are in Hoffmann's debt,' says Festival director Anders Beyer.

Wilson last visited the Bergen International Festival in 2017, with the performance *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

'I cannot wait to present *The Sandman* in Bergen. Robert Wilson is one of the great theatre artists of our time, with a strong, characteristic expression. Combined with Anna Calvi's music and Hoffmann's spooky story, this is a performance that stays with you for a long time,' says Beyer.

He has been working hard to get this performance to the Bergen International Festival.

'The production itself is so enormous that it's only been presented outside its originating theatre of Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus twice earlier. We can safely call this one of the signature performances of the 2019 Bergen International Festival,' says Anders Beyer, who has been Festival CEO and Artistic Director since 2012.

The Sandman

Grieghallen

01 and 02 June 2019

Produced by Unlimited Performing Arts, Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen

Pictured Christian Friedel & Yi-An Chen. Photo: Lucie Jansch.

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For more information, please contact interim communications manager Silje Vestvik: siljev@fib.no / + 47 94 31 94 39

Notes to editors:

Bergen International Festival/Festspillene i Bergen

- The Bergen International Festival is the largest of its kind in Scandinavia and presents hundreds of events in a variety of genres, with the main focus on music and stage arts.
- The first Bergen International Festival took place in 1953, inspired by a previous initiative by Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg.
- His Majesty King Harald V of Norway is the Festival's patron.

