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## **A new look on *Peer Gynt* Bieito and Knausgård see the story from Solveig's point of view**

The character of Solveig takes centre stage when director Calixto Bieito creates a new production inspired by Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, together with author Karl Ove Knausgård.

The performance is called [Waiting](#) and the world premiere will open the Bergen International Festival in Norway on 22 May 2019.

Norwegian novelist [Karl Ove Knausgård](#) has created a modern Solveig in a poetic novella, and this forms the backdrop for the performance. Catalan director [Calixto Bieito](#) returns to the festival a decade after overturning Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and *Brand*.

The role of Solveig is played by Norwegian soprano [Mari Eriksmoen](#), who together with the [Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra](#) and singers from [Edvard Grieg Choir](#) will perform Edvard Grieg's music under the baton of [Eivind Gullberg Jensen](#).

### **Abandoned and forever waiting**

'The theme of *Waiting* is the inescapable of the loneliness of the human being, and the little details and stories that make up our existence,' says director Calixto Bieito.

He has been interested in the character of Solveig for a long time.

'When I staged *Peer Gynt* and some years later the opera *Hanjo* I was totally fascinated by two female characters: Solveig and Hanako, a geisha, both of them abandoned by a man and in an eternal wait. I was intrigued by their disappointment, their despair, their love and tenacity, and by the deep perseverance of the two women. The idea for this production was born many years ago and out of infinite love for these two characters, these two real people of flesh and blood in my mind,' he says.

### **First time writing for the stage**

For Karl Ove Knausgård, this work is a new experience.

'I've never written for the stage before, nor did I ever think I would. However, when the Bergen International Festival asked if I would write a text for a performance directed by Calixto Bieito, I immediately said yes, partly because Calixto Bieito is one of the world's best stage directors, and partly because the subject he was interested in fascinated me,' he says.

The author has explored what it means to wait.

'The basis was the character of Solveig in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, the one who does not journey out, but who remains. Solveig is self-extinguishing, she lives for others, something we usually think of as passive, while the man she is waiting for, the one who journeys out, is active. But she is the one who is giving – while he takes. What does it mean to give? What does it mean to wait? What does this do to our way of being in the world? Based on these questions I wrote a story about three generations of women in our time,' he says.

Bieito emphasised that Knausgård should write the way he normally does.

'I took him at his word, and therefore I am very excited about the performance in May: What will happen in the transformation from text to stage?' Knausgård wonders.

## A new perspective on Solveig

After the world premiere, the international co-production will continue to a number of cities in the Nordic region and Europe.

Chief executive and artistic director of the Bergen International Festival, Anders Beyer, looks forward to the performance with great expectation.

'I am proud that we have put together a strong creative team with great artists, who can offer the audience a new perspective on the female figure Solveig. We are also very pleased to have brought together several art institutions in the Nordic region and Europe as co-producers for this commissioned work. *Waiting* is among the most complex and comprehensive performances we have put on during my time as Festival director,' says Anders Beyer.

## Waiting

Grieghallen 22 and 23 May 2019

A co-production with [Tivoli Summer Classical](#), [Teatro Arriaga de Bilbao](#), [Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra](#), [Iceland Symphony Orchestra](#) and [Vilnius Festival](#)

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For more information, please contact interim communications manager Silje Vestvik:  
[siljev@fib.no](mailto: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.
- In 2019, the Bergen International Festival takes place from 22 May til 05 June. The full programme will be launched in February.

