

Sarah Defrise, soprano

Elected *Young Musician of the Year* in 2022 by the Belgian Union Press, the Belgian soprano Sarah Defrise has quickly established herself as one of the most fascinating young vocal artists enjoying close working relationships with a wide range of contemporary composers. "*Extraordinary, both in her vocal rendition and quasi-cinematographic performance*" (Resmusica), "*Sarah Defrise excels, generating a multitude of sound characters: rage, resentment, incomprehension, intensity and truth: Her voice can convey it all.*" (Opera Online).

Her success as the *Teenager*, in Jean-Luc Fafchamps *Is this the end?* at la Monnaie De Munt (Brussels) in 2021 marked the beginning of her international career. Important appearances and opera debuts followed, with a particular focus on modern repertoire and world premieres. She made her critically acclaimed debut at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin and the Grand Théâtre de Genève in the world premiere of *Sleepless* in the role *The Girl* written for her by Peter Eötvös. She premiered the title role in *Pelléas et Mélisande* by Nicholas Stücklin at the Nouvel Opéra Fribourg and sang the *Little Chinese* in Eötvös's *Der Goldene Drache* at the Grand Théâtre de Genève and the Nouvel Opéra Fribourg. She made her debuts as *Zdenka (Arabella)* at the Teatro Real Madrid in Christof Loy's production. Her performance is unanimously praised by the press for her "*perfect phrasing and beautiful lyrical voice*" (Opernmagazin). She sang in Jean-Luc Fafchamps' trilogy *Here's the woman* at La Monnaie and returned to the house as Naomi for Bernard Foccroulle's new opera *Cassandra*, which has been revived at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in 2025. Other debuts included *Zerlina (Don Giovanni)* at the Opéra Royal de Wallonie, *Jungfrau* (Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*) at the MusikTheater an der Wien and *Suzanne* (Offenbach's *Robinson Crusoe*) at the Komische Oper Berlin. In 2026, Sarah Defrise made her debut (in the role of Vampi) in the critically acclaimed world premiere of Olga Neuwirth's and Elfriede Jelinek's opera *Monster's Paradise* (staging: Tobias Kratzer) at the Hamburgische Staatsoper. Performing the Swiss premiere, she made her debut at the Opernhaus Zurich.

On the concert stage, Sarah was invited to sing the soprano solo in Górecki's 3rd Symphony with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège and conductor Karel Deseure. As a prominent performer of Ligeti's vocal music, she was invited as principal guest singer to perform at the Ligeti 100 Festival in 2023 in Budapest where she performed *Aventures/Nouvelles Aventures* with UMZE Ensemble, *Mysteries of the Macabre* and Ligeti's *Requiem* at Müpa with Concerto Budapest Orchestra. She also premiered Stefan Prins's *Skin Deep #1* with Ensemble Ascolta at the Philharmonie Essen.

In the season 2026/27, Sarah Defrise will sing Ophelia 1 in the world premiere of Sarah Nemtsov's opera *Ophelias Flügel* at the Bühnen Bern and perform Antonis Anissegos/Michael Wertmüller's *Die 5. Jahreszeit - Fat Tuesday* with the Opernkompanie Novoflot at the Theater im Delphi Berlin.

Sarah is the author and performer of the solo-comedy-show *I Hate New Music!* which she presented last season in a co-production with the Nouvel Opéra de Fribourg, La Monnaie and Théâtre des Martyrs. "*A perfect match between humor and vocal virtuosity*" (La Liberté).

She also recorded the album *For Cathy* (Sub Rosa), an a-Capella tribute to American Cathy Berberian, which includes pieces by Berio, Cage, Bussotti, Pousseur, Defrise herself and, of course, Cathy Berberian. Hailed by the press, Field Notes writes: "*The Belgian soprano delivers exactly what is says on the cover: haunting, virtuoso tributes (...) Defrise interprets a wide repertoire, which makes this album all the more a real treasure trove.*" As part of her PhD dissertation (Music and Musicology at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel), Sarah recorded the complete songs of Belgian composer Joseph Jongen.

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