

Tora Augestad, mezzo-soprano

The most striking thing about this extraordinary artist is how versatile she is. (...) Tora Augestad transcends conventional labels. Opernwelt

Tora Augestad's versatility inspires composers, theatre directors and conductors. By commissioning new works and through the collaboration with her various ensembles she continuously seeks new challenges and the exchange of artistic ideas. She knows how to be theatrically convincing and how to engage her vocal capabilities, which defy easy classification, in a compelling manner.

Born in Bergen in 1979, the singer/actress Tora Augestad studied classical music and jazz singing in Oslo and Stockholm, devoting herself principally to repertoire of the 20th and 21st centuries. While studying in Berlin and Munich she intensified her involvement in German music before graduating in cabaret singing from the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo.

Tora Augestad has become a regular guest in her native Norway and the rest of Europe, sharing the podium with musical partners such as the Ensemble Modern (Weill's *Three Penny Opera*), Ensemble Contrechamps (Gardner's *No Thanks*), Klangforum Wien (Grisey's *Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil*), Remix Ensemble (Berio's *Folksongs*), Finnish Chamber Orchestra (Paus' *Hate Songs*), NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra (Widmann's *Dunkle Saiten*), Gürzenich Orchestra of Cologne (Manoury's *Lab. Oratorium*), the Bamberg Symphony, the SWR Symphonieorchester (Francesco Filidei's world premiere *The Red Death*), Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*), NRK Norwegian Radio Orchestra (Hillborg's *...lontana in sonno...*), the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra (Hellstenius's *As if the law is everything*) and the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra. She performed the premiere of an opera she commissioned herself at the Bergen Festival 2015: Cecilie Ore's *Adam & Eve*.

The collaboration with the Swiss director Christoph Marthaler, which began in 2010 with the premiere of Beat Furrer's *Wüstenbuch*, has become a constant in Tora Augestad's artistic life. After the success of Marthaler's *Meine faire Dame*, a take on *My Fair Lady*, at the Theater Basel in 2012 with guest appearances in Naples, Avignon, Edinburgh and Paris, the homage to Verdi's *Lo Stimolatore Cardiaco* in Basel and the Zurich Opera House production of *Salé* with music by Handel followed. The staged Lieder recital *King Size* went on tour to cities including Hamburg, Prague, Moscow, Geneva, Turin, Rotterdam, London (Royal Opera House), Santiago de Chile, Sao Paulo and Jerusalem. The production *Last Days. An Eve* was performed at the Wiener Festwochen 2013, the Festival d'Automne Paris and at the Staatsoper Berlin. Recent productions at the Volksbühne Berlin included *Hallelujah*, *Bekannte Gefühle*, *Gemischte Gesichter* and *Tessa Blomstedt gibt nicht auf*, which was also invited to Mexico in 2016. In 2017, *Mir nåmeds uf ois* was presented at the Schauspielhaus Zurich and in 2018 the Charles Ives-tribute *Universe, Incomplete* at the RuhrTriennale followed, for which she has been nominated *Singer of the Year 2019* by Opernwelt.

In 2004, Tora Augestad founded the ensemble MUSIC FOR A WHILE, made up of high-class musicians from the Norwegian jazz scene. After the release of their CD *Weill Variations*, the singer was awarded the renowned Lotte Lenya Prize in 2008. Their album *Graces That Refrain* followed in 2012 and the CD *Canticles of Winter* in 2014. The ensemble has already appeared at the Kurt Weill Festival Dessau, Bergen International Festival, Beethovenfest Bonn, Dresden Music Festival, Handel Festival Halle, Musikfest Stuttgart and the Kissinger Sommer. Her BOA TRIO released its debut album *mOOon Over tOwns* in 2013 and has performed at the Ultima Festival Oslo, Radialsystem Berlin, Klangspuren Schwaz and Wien Modern. Her first ECM CD *Rumi Songs* was released in 2016. The solo-CD *Portraying Passion* (LAWO Classics, Oslo Philharmonic featuring works by Weill, Ives and Paus) has been nominated by the German Record Critics' Award as best recording 2019 and been chosen as star/recording of the month by Fono Forum and Opernwelt magazine. It also has been awarded the Spellemannprisen 2019, the Norwegian Grammy. In 2019, her latest CD *DIALOGUES* has been released at Grappa. In 2023, she recorded Reinbert de Leeuw's *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai* with the Oslo Philharmonic in Oslo for LAWO Classics.

In the current season 2024/25 she will join a Schönberg-Ives recital with pianist Stefan Litwin on the opening weekend of the Musikfest Berlin 2024 at the Philharmonie Berlin. She will also sing Marcus Paus' *Hate Songs* and Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* with the Norwegian Radio Symphony Orchestra KORK in Oslo as well as concerts with the BIT20 Ensemble in Bergen, the Oslo Sinfonietta in Oslo i. a..

Tora Augestad was co-artistic director of the Hardanger Music Festival in Norway between 2015-2020. She was nominated for the Nordic Council Music Prize 2015, the most important cultural prize in Scandinavia, and was awarded as *Performer of the Year* by the Norwegian Composer Society in 2018.