

Bozar

Caroline Shaw ***Guest of Honor at Bozar***



Caroline Shaw © Kait Moreno

Caroline Shaw: Guest of Honor at Bozar

Brussels, September 12 – Caroline Shaw is one of the most influential composers in contemporary classical music today, seamlessly blending baroque, pop, and modernist elements into her own unique style. At Bozar, her versatility will take center stage with a selection from her diverse repertoire, ranging from string quartets and vocal music to songs with Gabriel Kahane.

This season, Bozar dedicates a portrait to Shaw, highlighting her string quartets, vocal works, percussion pieces, and her love for early music. She will perform at Bozar three times: with the Kamus Quartet (September 30, 2024), Gabriel Kahane (March 12, 2025), and Sō Percussion (November 26, 2024). Discover Caroline Shaw, Bozar’s guest of honor!

- The American composer and musician has a strong presence on the contemporary music stage, collaborating with the likes of Kanye West, Beyoncé, and the Spanish singer–songwriter Rosalía.
- As a composer, she became the youngest–ever recipient of the **Pulitzer Prize** in 2013 for her composition Partita for 8 Voices. The jury praised the piece as “*A highly polished and inventive a cappella work uniquely embracing speech, whispers, sighs, murmurs, wordless melodies and novel vocal effects*”¹
- In February 2024, Shaw won her **fourth Grammy**, adding to her wins from 2022, 2020, and 2014. She has been nominated six times.²
- Shaw also composed the original score for [Ken Burns’ documentary Leonardo da Vinci](#), marking the first time an entirely original score has been used in one of his films. This two–part documentary will premiere on November 18 and 19 on PBS. [The album will be released on October 25, 2024.](#)

“I think it’s fantastic that I can perform my own music on stage. I’m able to interact directly with musicians, and I learn from their ideas too.”

– **Caroline Shaw**

¹ <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/caroline-shaw>

² <https://www.grammy.com/artists/caroline-shaw/18118>



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“From pop to early music and avant-garde, Caroline Shaw absorbs influences and fuses them to create a new sound. With her truly unique music, she appeals to a very diverse and broad audience. The concert by Roomful of Teeth performing Partita for 8 Voices blew me away. The Pulitzer Prize she received for this work was inevitable, given her unique gift for integrating all these styles and vocal techniques into a single score.”

– **Jeroen Vanacker**, Head of Music in Bozar

“When I was 22, I stayed in Brussels for a few months, and I fell in love with the city. Naturally, I visited Bozar a few times then, and it’s a truly special place. I’m greatly looking forward to the day that my music will resonate through this iconic building.”

– **Caroline Shaw**

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Discover Caroline Shaw and her works at Bozar – Season 2024–2025

30.09.2024	Caroline Shaw & Kamus Quartet <i>Beethoven, Desprez, Shaw</i>	A violinist by training, Caroline Shaw is particularly fond of writing for string quartet. With the Finnish Kamus Quartet , she presents a selection of her most exciting works.
08.11.2024	‘Belgian National Orchestra, Halls & Ferrández’	Spanish cellist Pablo Ferrández returns to Bozar! With the Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Matthew Halls, he performs Schumann’s Cello Concerto. Also on the programme: Caroline Shaw – Entracte .
21.11.2024	‘Roomful of Teeth’ <i>Shaw: Partita for 8 Voices</i>	In 2013, with her Partita for 8 Voices , Caroline Shaw won the Pulitzer Prize in the music category, becoming the youngest laureate in its history. Take advantage of this unique opportunity to discover this groundbreaking composition performed for the first time in Brussels by the prestigious Roomful of Teeth.
25.11.2024	Meet the artist: Caroline Shaw	Caroline Shaw talks to Klara journalist Nicky Aerts about the power of music.
26.11.2024	‘Caroline Shaw & Sō Percussion’	Percussion ensemble Sō Percussion and composer Caroline Shaw are crossing the Atlantic to present the album Rectangles and Circumstance . This opus follows <i>Narrow Sea</i> and <i>Let the Soil Play Its Simple Part</i> , two Grammy Award –winning albums from 2021.
12.03.2025	‘Caroline Shaw & Gabriel Kahane’	Caroline Shaw invites songwriter Gabriel Kahane for a unique evening in a club setting created in the Terarken hall. What these two musicians love best is blurring the boundaries between classical and pop...
29.05.2025	‘Il Gardellino & Vlaams Radiokoor’ <i>Buxtehude, Pergolesi, Shaw, Thorvaldsdottir, Van Ness</i>	In a contemporary response to Buxtehude’s <i>Membra Jesu Nostri</i> cycle of cantatas, Caroline Shaw has written <i>To The Hands</i> , questioning our role in today’s social wounds.

Caroline Shaw:

“I can literally get inspiration from anywhere, so I’m never short of it.”

The versatility of Caroline Shaw takes centre stage at Bozar with an anthology of her repertoire – from string quartets and vocal music to songs with Gabriel Kahane. An encounter with an American jack of all trades!

If you want to pigeonhole Caroline Shaw, you are in for a struggle. The American composer kneads pop, jazz and classical into a unique, musical language. Her versatility is widely appreciated, because both classical stars such as Anne Sofie von Otter, and pop artists like Rosalía are queueing up to collaborate with her.

You are active as a composer, violinist and singer. Those worlds seem to constantly intertwine.

Caroline Shaw: “I started playing at a very young age, and I was already creating songs in my head at the age of six. When I turned eleven, I was given a music manuscript notebook in which I began to write down all my ideas in granular detail. But I kept it hidden for a long time, even from my friends with whom I played music. I didn’t know of any female composers, and I also thought that you couldn’t combine performing with composing. Of course, I know better now, and this is probably why all these musical practices are so powerfully interwoven inside me – I never see them as separate entities.”

At Bozar you are singing in at least three projects. Surely that takes considerable effort?

Shaw: “I think it’s fantastic that I can perform my own music on stage. I’m able to interact directly with musicians, and I learn from their ideas too. So it’s correct to say that I’m deeply involved – I’m certainly not standing on the sidelines and looking on. What’s more, it’s also truly thrilling to introduce more popular genres into the classical world.”

Does the way that you compose vary? I imagine that a choral work or string quartet requires a very different approach to a collaboration with the percussion quartet Sō Percussion, or the singer–songwriter Gabriel Kahane.

Shaw: “That’s right. I mainly compose works for ensembles in isolation at my desk, but a collaboration with Sō Percussion demands a huge amount of dialogue with the musicians. Our new album Rectangles and Circumstance does not contain a single piece that I have composed entirely by myself. We wrote everything together. It’s true that I’m the songwriting lead, but the melodies, rhythms and harmonies come from all the musicians who have collaborated on the album.”

Does a collaboration with the Spanish pop phenomenon Rosalía work in a similar way?

Shaw: “Rosalía is a fantastic character. She doesn’t see herself as a composer, but I certainly regard her as such. And as an extremely good one at that. In our collaboration, she decides on the melodies and structures, and I then weave in the choral fragments. It is a balanced collaboration, without either of us having overall control.”

Where do you get your most inspiration from as a composer?

Shaw: “I can literally get inspiration from anywhere, so I’m never short of it. (laughs) For my string quartet The Evergreen, my inspiration came from a tree in a Canadian forest, for example. As I was looking at the tree, a whole host of melodic ideas and sounds came to me. Classical music is also a huge source of inspiration. I have an exceptionally long playlist, above all of early music. At the moment I’m having another one of my obsessions, this time with Das Wohltemperierte Klavier by Johann Sebastian Bach. The tiniest harmonic shift in one of the miniatures can already serve as the foundational element for a new composition.”

Do you have a favourite piece of classical music?

Shaw: “That changes constantly, to be honest. Last year, An die Musik by Schubert was probably my favourite. The final track on Rectangles and Circumstance is an arrangement of that song. Schubert’s chord progressions are so exceptional, so magical, as if they contain a world of emotion. Mozart’s The Magic Flute was also a long-term

obsession, but at the moment I can’t even bear to listen to it anymore. (laughs) It was on repeat for just a little too long.”

You write a great deal for voice and strings. Are those the instruments that lie closest to your heart?

Shaw: “I have a close bond with string instruments and so I absolutely love writing for string quartet. There is a wonderful repertoire for this line-up. It is also exceptionally enriching to write for four string players who are well attuned to one another. With an orchestra, you do of course have more options when it comes to instrument combinations and sound colours, but I find the construction process, in which every element must be fitted with great precision into the structure, less sincere as a result. But the most personal instrument is probably the voice, because my expressive possibilities with that are endless.”

What projects are you working on at the moment?

Shaw: “I’m working on far too many projects! Sometimes I find myself eagerly looking forward to my retirement. One of my biggest challenges for the coming years is an opera for the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, despite my having said that I’d never write an opera again. In addition, I have several composition commissions, and I’m constantly working with my partner Danni Lee on our pop band Ringdown. More than anything, I’d love to do another project with Rosalía. And if I’m allowed to put music to one side for a moment, I’d also like to spend more time on the flowers in my garden.”

This is the first time that you will be performing in Brussels. Are you familiar with the city at all?

Shaw: “When I was 22, I stayed in Brussels for a few months, and I fell in love with the city. Naturally, I visited Bozar a few times then, and it’s a truly special place. I’m greatly looking forward to the day that my music will resonate through this iconic building.”

Maarten Sterckx

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