

JURY REPORT  
20 November 2023

TANIA  
KROSS

JOHANNES  
VERMEER  
PRIJS 2023





# Tania Kross Laureate Johannes Vermeer Award 2023 Jury Report

Since 2009 the Johannes Vermeer Award - the prestigious state prize for the arts – has been awarded every year to an artist living and/or working in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. With the award, the Dutch government draws attention to and at the same time honours special artistic talent. The laureates display exceptional artistry and are of paramount importance for their field and society. The award can be presented to artists from all disciplines: from dance to design, from fashion to music and from painting to literature.

The State Secretary for Culture and Media, Gunay Uslu, receives advice from an independent jury. The jury members are experts in their field. They take the variety of art disciplines into account in their deliberations and assessment. This year's jury consisted of Margot Dijkgraaf, Afaina de Jong, Hicham Khalidi, Bas Kusters and Marise Voskens (chairman).

In choosing the winner of this edition, the jury included not only the exceptional artistic qualities of the laureate, but also the oeuvre already built up, the expected further development and the social dimension. The criteria brought the jury to an artist from the performing arts with an impressive international career within the field, who also has his own voice for the connecting role of music. The jury unanimously chooses Tania Kross as the winner of the Johannes Vermeer Award 2023.

Mezzo-soprano Tania Kross receives the award for her leading international singing career and the innovative way in which she makes opera widely accessible and appeals to, connects and inspires a diverse audience. The jury is impressed by the way in which Kross practices her profession and the innovative way in which she builds and connects bridges. With her passion for opera music and her special artistic qualities, she knows how to move and inspire time and again. She also uses broader channels to achieve her musical goals. For example, she is a welcome guest on Dutch television, where she expresses her love for classical music. Through her professionalism and infectious enthusiasm, she unlocks an art form that seemed inaccessible to a large and contemporary audience.

The jury commented as follows, "With her approach to opera and classical music, Tania Kross embraces the genre in its entirety. Her voice has many dimensions, from subdued to exuberant. The ease with which she moves within these dimensions confirms a deep and very personal repertoire knowledge. A performance by Kross

stands out for the spontaneity and intensity of her interpretation. In doing so, she adds her own unique colour to her vocal performances, and she knows how to move others and take them with her into the surprising and enriching world of the performing arts."

Tania Kross was born in 1976 in Curacao. At the age of seventeen, she left for the Netherlands to study singing at the Conservatory in Utrecht. Already in the second year of her training, she won the first award of the Stichting Jong Muziektalent Nederland (Young Music Talent Netherlands Foundation). In 1997 and 1998 she won this award twice more. Kross has an impressive international career in opera and singing. Over the past 25 years, she has played brilliant roles in numerous productions at major opera houses and concert halls at home and abroad; from Paris, Salzburg, Vienna, Athens, Cologne and Hong Kong to Carnegie Hall in New York. In both the Stuttgart State Opera and at the Glyndebourne Festival, she played the title role of 'Carmen'. As a soloist, Kross continued to work with, among others, Dutch National Opera, Bregenzer Festspiele, De Nederlandse Reisopera, Komische Oper Berlin and Opera de Lyon. She also won many awards in her further career, including the NPS Culture Award (2000) and the Edison Audience Award (2006) for her debut CD 'Corazon'. She received a Grammy nomination (2009) for her performances in Marco Polo by Tan Dun (Dutch National Opera).

In 2013, Kross wrote history with the production of the very first opera in Papiamentu, 'Katibu di Shon'. The opera is based on the novella of the same name by Carel de Haseth, who also wrote the libretto, and was composed by Randal Corsen. It premiered in the Amsterdam Stadsschouwburg (City Theatre) under the direction of Ed Spanjaard. She has toured the country several times with her own programmes. The sixth theatre tour, From Curacao to Concertgebouw (concert hall), was shown this year and ended with a final performance in a sold-out Concertgebouw.

The jury greatly appreciates that Tania, as a passionate ambassador for opera music and the classical repertoire, shares her expertise and assists young talent. She appreciates her great social commitment, her sincere attention to young people and their talents and the connecting way in which she is committed to music education. With her commitment to Muziek Telt! (Music Counts!), the Instrument Depot and Stichting Leerorkest Nederland and Curaçao, Kross wants to give every single child and young person the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument, to make music together and to develop other skills in a playful way. Her unwavering dedication to musical education and her belief that music is for everyone are fueled by her personal experiences.

"I didn't grow up with classical music, I'm a product of education," Kross says. "A lot of people looked surprised: you come from Curacao and want to be an opera singer? Still, I've never sensed a restriction. If you have ambition, say yes and show courage, anything is possible." (*from 20 questions to Tania Kross by Ebru Umar, 8 March 2023*).

The jury in a nutshell, "Tania Kross is a gifted mezzo-soprano who knows how to touch people with her powerful voice and expression. With a clear motivation and an infectious love for her profession, she passes on her passion and, above all, invites new generations to musical development, the courage to dream and to develop themselves."



Tania's plans for the future seem limitless and still have no restrictions for her. From new musical encounters in Venezuela and professional challenges on both sides of the ocean to supporting the elderly on the island. Goal-oriented and full of conviction, she paves her way and continues to build on her dream, the realisation of - ultimately - a new large theatre in Curaçao. At the moment, she is making an effort to revive a small, monumental theatre there so that a young new generation of musicians, singers and technicians can be trained and prepared. For when the time comes. Step by step. It's all part of her 'master plan', as she mysteriously explains.

The jury can't wait for that to happen either. With great admiration for her singing skills and professional competence and in the conviction that her work will continue to move and inspire us in the future, the jury dedicates the Johannes Vermeer Award 2023 to Tania Kross.