



KOBRA

By the Kobra Ensemble

Just Listen Records, June 10, 2022

Digital Booklet



In Kobra, a wide variety of musical styles come together in one a cappella ensemble. The Kobra Ensemble works from the belief that things don't have to be uniform to fit together. After twelve years of singing and performing, the seven singers are now releasing their first EP. A colorful collection of music that is dear to them, full of idiosyncrasies and peculiarities: KOBRA.

Seven singers seek connection

The Kobra Ensemble is an a cappella collective that has been on the road for twelve years. Seven singers, each with a different musical background, come together through their love of polyphonic music. They prefer not to color within the lines. They are classically trained, but together they are curiously exploring all kinds of musical directions and in doing so they do not shy away from the theatrical. They prefer to sing on the widest possible range of stages, events and festivals, constantly looking for new audiences to surprise. For instance, they have previously worked with classical greats at the Concertgebouw, but also with a metal band at the Roadburn Festival.

The Kobra Ensemble is not looking for one style, nor one sound. For them, music is not about perfection, but about connection. Connecting different personalities, connecting their voices to each other, and connecting to the audience.



A debut EP

They have been singing together as the Kobra Ensemble for twelve years, but never felt the need to release music before. For a long time, the singers felt the process of recording did not fit with their belief that music is something that should happen live, in the moment, and interacting with the audience. It wasn't until working with Just Listen Records that they felt it clicked - this high-resolution audio label records acoustically, in one room, with virtually no edits or post-processing. The KOBRA EP was recorded according to this philosophy by Just Listen Records, in a small church in Oosterhout, in the middle of the pandemic. The music was recorded as it was then, with all the idiosyncrasies and peculiarities of that moment.

The Kobra Ensemble

After years of being part of the National Children's and Youth Choir, a group of young singers decided in 2010 that it was time to give free rein to their individuality and start an ensemble of their own; they needed a free, playful format with room for everyone's input. Since then, they have been exploring new musical styles and new ways to use their voices together as the Kobra Ensemble. In the setting of an ensemble, without a fixed conductor or hierarchy, all members bring their own touch to the music in equal measure. The result is a surprising multitude of colors.

The Kobra Ensemble performs songs that are close to their hearts - which can be about anything. They sing folk music from all over the world, perform classical music from the 16th century up to contemporary Dutch composers, and perform arrangements of jazz and pop music. They get excited by the varied sonal possibilities different tongues have to offer, and explore singing in Japanese, Gaelic, Dadaist gibberish amongst other languages.

The Kobra Ensemble also likes to walk the line between music and theater. With director Jorinde Keesmaat they made several music theater productions, which performed at the Grachtenfestival (NL), in Paradiso (NL) and at the Serenade! Washington D.C. Choral Festival (USA).



In addition to their own concerts, the singers frequently participate in projects by other musicians, artists, storytellers. Thus the Kobra Ensemble sang in several concert productions and CD recordings (Channel Classics) around the work of Iván Fischer. Kobra also played together with the Metropole Orchestra during the world premiere of the Requiem by metal guitarist Tom Warrior at Roadburn Festival (NL).

They perform in concert halls, but also particularly like to perform outside them, in search of new audiences and new experiences. In recent years, the Kobra Ensemble sang in Holland's most prominent concert halls, outside at pop festivals like Down the Rabbit Hole and Roadburn, but also in a swimming pool, crypt and on a raft in the water. During the pandemic they brought 'Tegen De Gevels Op' (clandestine) music for comfort in courtyards and under balconies. They were guests at Vrije Geluiden, Podium Witteman and the Top2000 a gogo, among others.

Repertoire

The debut EP KOBRA is a cross-section of the ensemble's broad repertoire, in which harmonies and timbres/colors of sound are paramount. Music with character, full of love and emotion, but never sappy.

KOBRA starts with two folk songs about love. The first song, **Kaval Sviri**, is a popular Bulgarian folk song about a flute player. A powerful song with addictive harmonies that makes you want to keep diving in. From the extroverted final chord, the Kobra Ensemble moves to the intimate

beginning of **Ezili**, a song from Haiti. In the alternation of hushed chords and exuberant rhythms, intense sadness and the celebration of love are allowed to coexist.

The **Ludions** provide a more lighthearted interlude: five small poems about remarkable creatures, romantic pain, and exotic love. Léon-Paul Fargue's Dadaist lyrics are full of child-like language and gibberish, chiefly meaningful in terms of sound. Erik Satie's original composition was arranged for the Kobra Ensemble by Gustavo Trujillo.

KOBRA ends with two lullabies, in different shapes. **Tot de Slaap** ('Until Sleep') is a piece close to Kobra's heart. The modern classical composition by Hayo Boerema has never been recorded before. The beautiful text by Ida Gerhardt is a call to surrender to the night. Finally, the fairytale-like **Hushabye Mountain** puts the listener at ease. In the flowing arrangement by the Kobra Ensemble's own Nina Rompa, there's nothing more to do but surrender and sail along to a place where you can be worry-free.

The Kobra's

Ingrid Doude van Troostwijk is Kobra's deep alto. She is the foundation upon which the Kobra Ensemble builds its harmonies. After her classical vocal training at the conservatories of The Hague and Rotterdam, she studied religious studies and political science. She now works as a strategic advisor for an Amsterdam housing corporation.

Theater maker and performer **Karlijn Hamer** searches for new ways to use the voice in music and in space. She studied at the Theatre School in Amsterdam and the Conservatory of The Hague.

KOBRA is a patchwork of music, brought together by The Kobra Ensemble's versatile musicality.



In 2022-2023 Karlijn will create two new vocal performances under the Nieuwemakersregeling, in collaboration with music theatre collective Touki Delphine.

Within the Kobra Ensemble, **Lonneke Kegels'** warm voice is used in every possible way: from subtle high soprano parts to ringing leads in Eastern European folk music. The latter she also does in her own Balkan band. After graduating from the Rotterdam Conservatory, she now works as a physio- and haptotherapist, with specific focus on the jaw joint and breathing problems.

Lea Klarenbeek often takes the alto parts with her solid and flexible voice. She quickly makes new musical styles and languages her own, which comes in handy for Kobra's music from around the world. She received her PhD from the University of Amsterdam as a political philosopher on integration and equality. As a consultant, she now seeks smart solutions to complicated social problems.

Singer and composer **Sterre Konijn** is Kobra's perfect pitch. As a solo artist she performs in various music (theater) productions. She sings from tango to contemporary classical, improvises and composes and also plays duduk and theremin. In 2021 she released her debut album 'Een' with 7 Mountain Records. She is currently working on her own compositions on texts by Dante Alighieri.

Nina Rompa is a jazz and folk singer. With her virtuoso sense of timing she manages to make music from all over the world accessible to Kobra. Graduating from the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, Nina has focused on Brazilian music with her band Cantorias, among other things. In 2020, she released her debut album with her own compositions There by JustListen.

Saskia Voorbach sings both the highest and lowest parts within Kobra with her very wide range. As a classical singer she studied at the conservatory in The Hague, and sang in opera productions of Opera Zuid and Barokopera. Saskia is also committed to Dutch music education, with specific attention to music lessons for toddlers.