

Mark Brown, "How would world be if women outnumbered men 10 to one?" *The Guardian*, November 16, 2016.

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How would world be if women outnumbered men 10 to one?

Debate at Manchester international festival will look at how a female-dominated society would tackle world problems



Still from *Dr Strangelove*, the final scene of which artist Yael Bartana uses as her starting point. Her production is 'a real debate in a fictional setting'. Photograph: Columbia Pictures

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In the final scene of Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film *Dr Strangelove*, the world's cleverest and most powerful people gather in a room to talk about the most pressing issue facing humanity. But there is one detail that jars with a modern audience: all of the people in the room are men.

What If Women Ruled the World? – a new production by the Israeli artist Yael Bartana – seeks to redress this balance. The "real debate in a fictional setting" will be premiered at the Manchester international festival, with women solving some of the world's gravest problems, such as climate change, military

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escalation and mass migration.

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Bartana took as her starting point the final scene of Kubrick’s satire, in which a group of male leaders talk about repopulating the earth after a nuclear holocaust.

Dr Strangelove, played by Peter Sellers, suggests that surviving political and military leaders could live in the planet’s deepest mineshafts with a population of 10 women to one man. “They would breed prodigiously, eh?” he says. “There would be much time and little to do.”

Bartana plans to use the same ratio – 20 women and two men – who will then be confronted by some of the most urgent crises of our time in a theatre production made with Vicky Featherstone, the artistic director of the Royal Court theatre in London.



📷 Israeli artist Yael Bartana. Photograph: Gareth Phillips



John McGrath, the festival’s artistic director, said: “Until last week we weren’t going to announce the show but it just felt like we had to – it is so of the moment.”

McGrath said the experts helping to solve the issues would be important figures and include leading politicians, scientists and thinkers. It will be “a real-life debate in a fictional setting. It feels like the moment that art has got to rise to the challenge and talk about what is happening in the world.”

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Next year's biennial festival of new arts commissions will be McGrath's first since replacing Alex Poots as artistic director. On Wednesday he announced details of four projects, including the opening event in Piccadilly Gardens in the centre of the city.

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Based on an idea by the artist Jeremy Deller, the plan is to have a kind of fashion runway on which Manchester residents will parade to build a self portrait of the city.

"We are very clear that it is not a fashion show," said McGrath. "We are using the mechanisms of it to throw a very different light on the city and its individuals. This is a piece about individuality."

The other commissions include a new piece by the French choreographer Boris Charmatz, 10,000 Gestures, which will feature a 25-strong dance ensemble performing without repeating a single movement.

There is also a collaboration between the playwright Simon Stephens, Underworld's Karl Hyde and Scott Graham from the physical theatre company Frantic Assembly. The three men have gone back to their home towns – Stockport, Kidderminster and Corby – and talked to men about fatherhood.

The results of those conversations will be distilled for what McGrath said would be like a "physical opera". Called Fatherland, it will be staged at the Royal Exchange theatre.

"It will be a thrilling if sometimes disturbing piece of work," said McGrath. "I think it will be an extraordinary piece of theatre and music."

Next year's festival, running from 29 June to 16 July, will be the sixth edition. The full programme will be announced on 9 March.

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/nov/16/what-if-women-ruled-world-manchester-international-festival-dr-strangelove>