

playbill

XIII XIV XV ACT XVI

playbill opens its 2026 season on March 28 with a concert by Baby Dee, who will perform songs from across her body of work, including several dirges and recent compositions titled *Bucket of Eyeballs*. Dee has long resisted the discipline of the setlist, allowing her performances to unfold in real time and, in this spirit, the evening promises no fixed script. Songs will drift from mournful ballad to mischievous confession, from cathedral hush to carnival lament. Carried by voice and piano, she moves effortlessly between tenderness and theatricality, the sacred and the absurd.

In the 1990s, Dee summarised herself in a brief biography: 'Baby Dee is a child of light, a circus freak and a happy whore.' The description, containing both humour and honesty, captures the peculiar mixture of devotion, spectacle, vulnerability and wit that runs throughout her body of work. Yet

a more extended biography would state that Dee was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1953, with her life following an uncommon path traversing music, faith, street theatre and performance art. A transgender woman and classically trained harpist and pianist, she spent a decade as music director and organist at a Catholic church in the Bronx before the unpredictable pull of circus and sideshow life took hold. At Coney Island she appeared as a sideshow attraction and later became bandleader for the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus, touring in Europe with the Kamikaze Freak Show and performing widely as a street artist.

Her years as a travelling performer carried her across cities and continents. For a time she could be found busking on the streets of Amsterdam, balancing on a unicycle with a concert harp attached, singing to passersby with the same mixture of grace and

irreverence that still marks her performances today. Later, encouraged by collaborators such as Marc Almond and David Tibet, Dee began recording at the turn of the millennium, releasing her debut album *Little Window* in 2000, after which a string of studio albums followed. Most recently, in 2023 she collaborated with the Zeelandic singer-songwriter Broeder Dieleman on the album *Oh mijn ziel* [Oh my soul], which includes a Dutch translation of her song *Morning Fire*.

ACT XVI offers a rare encounter with Dee, who has largely stepped away from the stage in recent years. Join us to celebrate her return to the spotlight, with a special evening of songs shaped by decades of wandering, where echoes of old dear friends, circus adventures and street life meet again, guided by the sounds of robins in the distance.

PROGRAMME

8pm
Introduction to Baby Dee

8.10pm
Performance by Baby Dee
Approx. 90 min

9.30pm—Drinks

IMAGE Portrait of Baby Dee on her unicycle with harp in New York City, originally sepia toned, ca. 1996. Photo by Paul Coughlin.



COLOPHON Torpedo Theater is a long-running, thirty-seat theatre in the heart of Amsterdam's city centre. Originally founded by *Het Parool*, a Dutch national newspaper, the theatre has been committed to the spoken, written and performed word from the beginning. playbill is an event-based project invested in the presentation of experimental language and text-based artistic works on the (small) stage. It is curated by Martha Jager and Isabelle Sully, designed by Maud Vervenne and documented by Silvia Ulloa. playbill: ACT XVI has been made possible thanks to the Mondriaan Fonds. This playbill has been printed by Terry Bleu, Amsterdam.