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Digitally restored version of *The Underground Orchestra*

Heddy Honigmann's documentary classic back on the big screen

The documentary classic *The Underground Orchestra* (1997) is screening again in cinemas across the Netherlands in a brand new, digitally restored version from Eye Filmmuseum. In her poignant documentary, Heddy Honigmann follows several street musicians in Paris making a clandestine living on the metro. In the film, these often superb musicians – many of them refugees – talk about their struggles for a better life.

The Underground Orchestra screens in Eye and in cinemas across the country from 18 December, and will be available on the [Eye Film Player](#). The newly restored version will have its premiere on 19 November during IDFA.

Heddy Honigmann (1951–2022) made more than forty documentaries and is seen as one of the best documentary makers the world has ever produced. In all of her work, Honigmann shows how resilient human beings are. She had a great gift for open conversation, putting people at ease and allowing them to tell their life stories.

Her films, including *Metal and Melancholy* (1993) and *O amor natural* (1996), have been shown worldwide and won many awards. In 1999, Honigmann received the KNF Award (Dutch film critics' award) for *The Underground Orchestra* at the Netherlands Film Festival. She also won a Golden Calf for *Crazy* (1999). In 2013, Honigmann was granted the Living Legend Award at IDFA.

Exiled

In [The Underground Orchestra](#) (1997), Honigmann follows a number of buskers earning a living on the metro in Paris, including a pop musician and poet from Zaïre, a harpist from Venezuela, a violinist from Sarajevo, an Argentine pianist and a Malian singer. Often professional musicians, exiled from their countries and now performing for a few Francs a time.

For many of them, music is not only a means of financial survival, but also a way of dealing with fear and hopelessness. They speak candidly about political and social problems, their dreams, and the struggle for a better life. We also see them in their aboveground homes – often small, back rooms and down-at-heel boarding houses.

Restored version

The digital restoration (2025) carried out by Eye Filmmuseum is part of [A Season of Classic Films](#), an initiative of and financed by the Association des Cinemathèques Europeennes (ACE), with support from the MEDIA strand of the EU Creative Europe programme.

The Underground Orchestra (Het ondergronds orkest) – NL 1997.

Languages: Vietnamese, Spanish, Serbo-Croat, Romanian, French, Arabic and Dutch, available with Dutch or English subtitles

Running time: 113'

Kijkwijzer age recommendation: AL (all ages)

Director: Heddy Honigmann

Producer: Pieter van Huystee Film

(Co-)financiers (1997): VPRO, Mediafonds and Nederlands Filmfonds

Note for press, not for publication

Exhibitors' screening:

14 November during the Filmbeurs in the Verkadefabriek (Den Bosch)

Advance premieres at IDFA:

19 November (Eye Cinema 1), 21 November (Eye Cinema 2), 23 November (Tuschinski 3)

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