

Rundfunkchor Berlin

BIOGRAPHY

Gijs Leenaars – Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

“the choir’s impressive young principal conductor”
(The New York Times)

Gijs Leenaars has been the Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Rundfunkchor Berlin since the 2015-16 season. Ever since, he has successfully collaborated with outstanding conductors such as Kirill Petrenko, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and he also stands for new and creative ideas with concepts of his own. He has developed the RundfunkchorLounge, with its unique mixture of choral singing, chamber music and interviews, into a hallmark of the ensemble. Gijs Leenaars has conducted genre-crossing concert performances like THE WORLD TO COME, the “human requiem” and “LUTHER dancing with the gods”, and is responsible for recordings of a cappella repertoire and choral symphonic works. In 2019, the Rundfunkchor Berlin conducted by Leenaars received the Edison Classical Music Award in the choral category for their CD recording of vocal works by Johannes Brahms. The CD – in collaboration with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (DSO) – was released by Sony Classical. He also conducted the CD recording of Bruckner’s Mass in E minor and Stravinsky’s Mass with the Rundfunkchor Berlin and the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, which was released around the world in 2020 by the PENTATONE label. In 2022, also with Sony Classical, a CD was released with Verdi’s “Quattro pezzi sacri”, one of the centrepieces of the Rundfunkchor’s repertoire, recorded jointly with the DSO.

Born in 1978 in Nijmegen in The Netherlands, Leenaars is considered one of the most exciting choral conductors of the younger generation. He studied piano, choral and orchestral conducting, and voice in Nijmegen and Amsterdam. Directly after completing his studies, he began collaborating with the Netherlands Radio Choir in Hilversum. From 2012 to 2015 he was the ensemble’s principal conductor, working in that role with Mariss Jansons, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Bernard Haitink. He is also a regular guest conductor of the Collegium Vocale of Ghent, the Cappella Amsterdam and the Netherlands Chamber Choir. In addition, he has worked with orchestras including the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Residentie in The Hague and the Orchestra Filarmonica in Turin.

He is particularly passionate about performing contemporary music. For instance, Gijs Leenaars conducted the Dutch premiere of Wolfgang Rihm’s “Vigilia” and prepared György Kurtág’s choral works for a complete recording of Kurtág’s oeuvre with the Netherlands Radio Choir under Reinbert de Leeuw. His programming brings together classical repertoire and rarely heard works of choral literature.

Ein Ensemble der

 Rundfunk
Orchester
Chöre