

Rundfunkchor Berlin

BIOGRAPHY

Rundfunkchor Berlin

Boasting around 60 concerts a year, CD recordings, and international guest appearances, the Rundfunkchor Berlin is one of the world's most outstanding choirs. Three Grammy Awards alone represent the quality of its recordings. Its broad repertoire, flexible and richly nuanced sound, flawless precision and enthralling appeal make the professional choir into a partner of major orchestras and conductors, including Kirill Petrenko, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. In Berlin, the choir cooperates intensively with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin and their chief conductors.

The Rundfunkchor Berlin also attracts international attention with its interdisciplinary projects, which break open the classical concert format and make choral music into an innovative experience. The scenic realisation of the Brahms Requiem as a »human requiem« by Jochen Sandig and a team from Sasha Waltz & Guests has been a milestone. Guest performances have taken place so far in New York, Hong Kong, Paris, Adelaide and Istanbul, for example. In autumn 2017, in the project »LUTHER dancing with the gods«, the choir reflected on Luther's impact on and in the arts with a genre-bending concert performance together with Robert Wilson, featuring music by Bach, Nystedt and Reich. For the transdisciplinary concert installation, THE WORLD TO COME, the Rundfunkchor Berlin created a Berlin festival mass inspired by Beethoven's »Missa solemnis« in the 2020/21 season. Based on a concept by its director Tilman Hecker, here contemporary musical currents entered into dialogue with Beethoven's masterpiece. The musical journey into the world of tomorrow brought together national and international artists such as Birke J. Bertelsmeier, Colin Self, Mohammad Reza Mortazavi, Moor Mother and Planningtorock. This centrepiece of the 2020/21 season premiered at the Vollgutlager Berlin.

Through its community projects for different target groups – the huge sing-along concert in the Berlin Philharmonie, the Festival of Choral Cultures for choirs from all over the world, and the Liederbörse for Berlin schoolchildren – the Rundfunkchor Berlin intends to get as many people as possible singing. Its broad-based educational programme SING! aims to network various partners permanently in order to promote singing as a natural part of everyday life in Berlin's primary schools. The ensemble is also committed to the next generation of professional singers and conductors with its Academy and Schola as well as the International Master Class Berlin.

Founded in 1925, the Rundfunkchor Berlin celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2015. The choir has been shaped by conductors such as Helmut Koch, Dietrich Knothe, Robin Gritton and Simon Halsey.

Ein Ensemble der

 Rundfunk
Orchester
Chöre

Rundfunkchor Berlin

Since the 2015/16 season, Dutchman Gijs Leenaars has been at the helm of the ensemble as principal conductor and artistic director. Simon Halsey remains associated with the choir as an honorary and guest conductor.

The Rundfunkchor Berlin is an ensemble of the Rundfunk Orchester und Chöre gGmbH Berlin, sponsored by Deutschlandradio, the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Berlin, and Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg.

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Gijs Leenaars – Principal Conductor

*»The choir's impressive young principal conductor«
(The New York Times)*

Gijs Leenaars has been principal conductor and artistic director of the Rundfunkchor Berlin since the 2015/16 season. Since then, he has worked successfully with outstanding conductors such as Kirill Petrenko, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Gijs Leenaars conducts cross-genre concert performances such as THE WORLD TO COME, the "human requiem", or "LUTHER dancing with the gods" and is responsible for recordings of the choir's *a cappella* repertoire and choral symphonic works. In 2019, the Rundfunkchor Berlin under Leenaars' direction received the Edison Classical Music Award in the category "Choir" for its CD recording of vocal works by Johannes Brahms. The CD - which also features the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester - 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 worldwide by PENTATONE in 2020.

In the 2021/22 season, Gijs Leenaars will be inviting choirs to a sing-along concert for the first time. The concert programme will bring together great choirs from all over the world and the sing-along community of the Rundfunkchor Berlin in the Berlin Philharmonie.

Born in Nijmegen in 1978, the Dutch musician is one of the most interesting choral conductors of the younger generation. He studied piano, choral and orchestral conducting and singing in Nijmegen and Amsterdam. Immediately after graduating, he began working with the Choir of Netherlands Radio in Hilversum. From 2012 to 2015, he was the ensemble's principal conductor and worked with Mariss Jansons, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Bernard Haitink. He is also a regular guest conductor of the Collegium Vocale Gent, the Cappella Amsterdam, and the Nederlands Kamerkoor. He has worked with orchestras such as the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam orchestras such as the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, as well as the Residentie Orkest Den Haag, and the Orchestra Filarmonica di Torino.

One of his special concerns is the performance of contemporary music. Gijs Leenaars conducted the Dutch premiere of Wolfgang Rihm's "Vigilia", for example, and he worked on the choral pieces together with the Choir of Netherlands Radio for the complete recording of Kurtág's works under Reinbert de Leeuw. In his programme compilations he enjoys combining classical repertoire with rarely heard works of choral literature.

www.rundfunkchor-berlin.de

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