

# Rundfunkchor Berlin

## BIOGRAPHIES

### Rundfunkchor Berlin

With round about 60 concerts per season, CD-recordings and international guest performances the Rundfunkchor Berlin is one of the world's outstanding choral ensembles. Three Grammy® Awards alone mark the success of the ensemble. The exceptional breadth of its repertoire, an unmistakable warm, richly nuanced sound, absolute precision and delight in experimentation all contribute to making it one of the chosen partners of international orchestras and conductors such as Kirill Petrenko, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle, or Yannick Nézet-Séguin. It is the permanent partner of the Berliner Philharmoniker as well as of Berlin's Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester and their Principal Conductors.

Rundfunkchor Berlin's experimental project series has attracted great worldwide attention. In collaboration with artists from diverse disciplines, the chorus breaks down the classical concert formation and adopts new modes of choral music for a new audience. The interactive scenic version of Brahms's »Ein deutsches Requiem« staged by Jochen Sandig and a team of Sasha Waltz & Guests – »human requiem« – became a milestone within the choir's experimental repertoire with guest performances in New York, Hongkong, Paris, Adelaide and Istanbul. In its project »LUTHER dancing with the gods« the choir cooperated with director Robert Wilson and reflected upon Luthers impact within the arts in an extraordinary concert performance with music by Bach, Nystedt and Reich in march of 2017. In the season 2020/21 the Rundfunkchor Berlin will present the transdisciplinary project THE WORLD TO COME based on Beethovens »Missa solemnis«. Directed by Tilman Hecker, contemporary music genres are fusing with the masterpiece by Beethoven, guiding the audience on a musical journey into the world of tomorrow. National and international Artists including Moor Mother, Mohammad Reza Mortazavi, Planningtorock, Colin Self and Birke J. Bertelsmeier, will come together to realize the heart of the new season in Berlin's Vollgutlager.

With its community projects for various target groups – the big *Sing-along Concert* in the Berlin Philharmonie, the *Festival of Choral Cultures* for international choirs and the *Liederbörse* (Song Exchange) for children and young people – Rundfunkchor Berlin invites people of all ages to become immersed in the world of singing. Its long-term education programme *SING!*, encourages singing in Berlin's elementary schools as an ongoing staple in everyday classes. With its *Academy* and *Schola* for young professional singers as well as the *Berlin International Masterclass* for highly qualified young choral conductors it supports the next generation.

Founded in 1925 the choir celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015. Since its foundation the ensemble was shaped by conductors including Helmut Koch, Dietrich Knothe, Robin Gritton and Simon Halsey. As of season 2015/16 Gijs Leenaars has taken up his post as Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of Rundfunkchor Berlin. Simon Halsey was appointed Conductor Laureate and will retain his ties to the ensemble as regular guest conductor.

Ein Ensemble der



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Rundfunkchor Berlin is an ensemble of Rundfunk-Orchester und -Chöre gGmbH Berlin (Shareholders: Deutschlandradio, the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Berlin and Radio Berlin-Brandenburg).

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Ein Ensemble der



# Rundfunkchor Berlin

## Gijs Leenaars – Principal Conductor

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

As of the 2015/16 season Gijs Leenaars has taken up his post as Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Rundfunkchor Berlin. Ever since he successfully cooperated with outstanding conductors such as Kirill Petrenko, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle or Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Gijs Leenaars conducted genre-crossing concert performances such as »human requiem« or »LUTHER dancing with the gods« and has commissioned recordings of a-cappella and choral-symphonic repertoire.

In the year 2019 the Rundfunkchor Berlin was awarded the Edison Classical Music Award in the category choir, for their CD recording of pieces by Johannes Brahms conducted by Gijs Leenaars. The CD – a cooperation with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester – was published by Sony Classical. Additionally, a CD recording of Bruckner's Mass in e minor and a mass by Stravinsky was released worldwide on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 by PENTATONE. Here Gijs Leenaars conducts the Rundfunkchor Berlin and the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin. In the season 2020/21 Gijs Leenaars will conduct the new transdisciplinary concert installation THE WORLD TO COME – based on Beethoven's »Missa solemnis«, which is the heart of the new Season.

Born in 1978 in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, Leenaars is regarded as one of the most exciting choral conductors of the younger generation. He studied the piano, choral and orchestral conducting as well as singing in Nijmegen and Amsterdam. Directly upon completing his studies he embarked on a collaboration with the Netherlands Radio Choir (Groot Omroepkoor) in Hilversum. From 2012 to 2015 he was the ensemble's Principal Conductor, working with such leading conductors as Mariss Jansons, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, or Bernard Haitink. He is a regular guest conductor of the Collegium Vocale of Ghent, Cappella Amsterdam and Netherlands Chamber Choir and has also conducted orchestras including the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, The Hague Philharmonic and Turin Philharmonic.

One of his special interests is contemporary music: Gijs Leenaars conducted the Dutch premiere of Wolfgang Rihm's »Vigilia« and prepared the choral works of György Kurtág with the Netherlands Radio Choir for a complete recording under Reinbert de Leeuw. His strikingly imaginative programming brings together the classics of the choral repertoire with seldom performed works from all periods.

Ein Ensemble der

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