

Rundfunkchor Berlin

Rundfunkchor Berlin (Berlin Radio Choir)

With round about 60 concerts per season and international guest performances – thereunder a celebrated residency at the White Light Festival of New York's Lincoln Center in October 2016 as well as the first South America tour – Berlin Radio Choir is 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 Sir Simon Rattle, Christian Thielemann 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.

Berlin Radio Choir'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. Some prime examples: the interactive scenic version of Brahms's »Ein deutsches Requiem« staged by Jochen Sandig / Sasha Waltz & Guests – »human requiem« – toured to New York, Hongkong, Paris, Brussels, Athens, Hong Kong a.o. and was chosen among »The Best Classical Music 2016« of The New York Times. The music-dance-theatre »LOVER« by Christian Jost premiered in Berlin in 2014 and toured to Taipei and Hong Kong in 2016. In October 2017 the concert-performance »LUTHER dancing with the gods« by Robert Wilson with music from Bach, Nystedt and Reich will celebrate its premiere at Berlin's new Pierre Boulez Hall.

With its annual activities 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 – Berlin Radio Choir invites people of all ages and walks of life to become immersed in the world of professional choral music. Its long-term education programme *SING!* encourages singing in Berlin's elementary schools. 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 90th 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 Berlin Radio Choir. Simon Halsey was appointed Conductor Laureate and will retain his ties to the ensemble as regular guest conductor. Berlin Radio Choir is an ensemble of Rundfunk Orchester und Chöre GmbH Berlin (Shareholders: Deutschlandradio, the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Berlin and Radio Berlin-Brandenburg).

2 June 2017

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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 new Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of Berlin Radio Choir. Opening with an a cappella concert as part of Musikfest Berlin and working together with renowned conductors such as Simon Rattle, Christian Thielemann, John Eliot Gardiner or Yannick Nézet-Séguin Gijs Leenaars has had a very successful first time together with Berlin Radio Choir. In December 2017 he conducted Berlin Radio Choir singing Arthur Honeggers »Le Roi David« together with Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin at the Berlin Cathedral. Furthermore he directed a celebrated a cappella programme at the White Light Festival of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York as well as the choir's first ever tour through South America. Berlin Radio Choir visited the continent's most important musical cities and performed the Brahms and Mozart requiem as well as Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

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, Bernard Haitink and Valery Gergiev. 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.

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