

Rundfunkchor Berlin

BIOGRAPHIES

Rundfunkchor Berlin

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 and its first South America tour – 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, 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.

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. After having played guest performances in New York, Hongkong, Paris and Adelaide the production will travel to Istanbul in summer 2019. For its latest 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 the new transdisciplinary project »TIME TRAVELLERS«, based on Jonathan Dove's »The Passing of the Year«, the concert hall will be transformed into a walk-through time tunnel with a video installation, performance and music.

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 – Rundfunkchor Berlin 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 Rundfunkchor Berlin. Simon Halsey was appointed Conductor Laureate and will retain his ties to the ensemble as regular guest conductor. Rundfunkchor Berlin 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).

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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 Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of Rundfunkchor Berlin. Ever since he successfully cooperated with outstanding conductors such as Kirill Petrenko, Daniel Barenboim, Simon Rattle and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Gijs Leenaars conducts genre-crossing concert performance like »human requiem« or »LUTHER dancing with the gods« and provides CD recordings of a cappella repertoire and choral-symphonic works. In the season 2019/20 he will be in charge of the Festival of Choral Cultures as well as the transdisciplinary project »TIME TRAVELLERS«. Furthermore he will conduct Bruckner's Mass in E minor at the special concert to mark the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in Berlin's Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, also to be recorded on CD.

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.

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