



_BIOGRAPHY

BALTHASAR NEUMANN ENSEMBLE

The Balthasar Neumann Ensemble was formed by Thomas Hengelbrock in 1995. As one of the world's leading orchestras working in the field of historically informed performance practice on period instruments, it repeatedly opens up new perspectives on the music of different eras. Made up of top international players, it is regularly acclaimed in major concert halls and opera houses not only for its interpretations on period instruments but above all for its expressive and uncompromising playing on the very highest level. The Ensemble regularly appears with the Balthasar Neumann Choir, which was similarly founded by Thomas Hengelbrock. It is also committed to encouraging a new generation of musicians and to engaging in intercultural dialogue.

MUSIC AS COMMUNICATION

What does music have to tell us about life and about other human beings? It is this question above all that inspires the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble and its founder and principal conductor Thomas Hengelbrock in their work together. Their attention is focused on the time of the work's composition and on the instruments that were then in use. The works in the Ensemble's repertory extend from the early Baroque to the modern period and include not only well-known pieces such as Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Wagner's *Parsifal* but also largely forgotten works and others that are being heard for the very first time. The Ensemble's carefully chosen programmes often go beyond the concert itself since Thomas Hengelbrock is passionate about combining music with other art forms such as dance and literature. This interdisciplinary thinking provides a link between the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble and the man who gave it its name, the pioneering Baroque architect who in his own day created a harmonious union of architecture and other art forms.

ON THE WORLD'S STAGES

The Balthasar Neumann Ensemble makes regular guest appearances in Europe's leading concert halls, including the Dortmund Konzerthaus, the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, the Vienna Konzerthaus, BOZAR in Brussels, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris and the Luxembourg Philharmonie. It has also taken part in opera performances in Baden-Baden, Paris, Aix-en-Provence and Madrid and appeared at the Schleswig-Holstein, Lucerne and Salzburg Festivals. The Balthasar Neumann Ensemble and Balthasar Neumann Choir are also a growing presence in Spain. In Germany they may be heard in Hamburg in 2019/20 with their own concert series, one of which will be held in the venerable Laeiszhalle, where they will recreate Beethoven's legendary academy of 1808. In Freiburg they are increasing their presence through their work with the Albert Concerts.

The orchestra often works with guest conductors such as Teodor Currentzis and Pablo Heras-Casado, with whom they have undertaken several operatic projects and concert tours. Among the orchestra's and choir's recordings several have been hailed as benchmark interpretations, including Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* as well as *Lotti – Zelenka – Bach*, which received a *Gramophone Award* in 2010. More recent DVD releases include Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* with Rolando Villazón as both the director and as Nemorino, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Anna

Netrebko and Erwin Schrott and Verdi's *La traviata* with Olga Peretyatko, likewise in a production directed by Rolando Villazón.

The Balthasar Neumann Ensemble and Balthasar Neumann Choir have received many prestigious awards since they were formed over two decades ago. In addition to a *Gramophone* Award, they have also received several ECHO Klassik Awards and the Baden-Württemberg Culture Prize.

THE PROMOTION OF YOUNG MUSICIANS AND INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

Thomas Hengelbrock and his ensembles are also keen to pass on their enthusiasm for music to a younger generation. The Ensemble's concerts are accompanied by numerous activities designed to make the music more accessible, including rehearsals and workshops as well as special concerts for children. In addition, the two-year scholarship programme run by the Balthasar Neumann Academy keeps pace with outstanding music students on their journey into the world of professional work. There is a particular focus on helping young musicians in Cuba: within the framework of the Cuban-European Youth Academy (CuE), musicians from Europe and Cuba work together on orchestral projects, workshops and special transatlantic ventures. In 2018 they gave the world premiere of the oratorio *Maria* by Jan Müller-Wieland (*1966) at the Ruhrtriennale. For 2020 there are plans for a literary and musical event, *Cuba: In Search of Evidence*, created by the actress Johanna Wokalek that will be performed in Hamburg and Freiburg. Since 2017/18 Cuban musicians have also been able to apply for the Cuban-European Youth Academy's postgraduate course once they have completed their studies.

The work undertaken by the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble and Choir and their extensive musicological research is made possible thanks to the support of Evonik Industries.

Correct as of August 2019