



_BIOGRAPHY

BALTHASAR NEUMANN CHOIR

Founded by Thomas Hengelbrock in Freiburg in 1991, the Balthasar Neumann Choir is regarded as one of the world's finest vocal ensembles. Its vibrant performances are invariably greeted with enthusiasm on the part of audiences and critics alike. The prestigious British *Gramophone* magazine voted the Balthasar Neumann Choir one of the "world's best choirs". Whether they are performing music from the seventeenth century or contemporary compositions, repertory works or rarities, Masses, operas, oratorios or pieces that cannot be tied down to a specific genre, these outstanding singers invariably demonstrate not only the highest musical standards but above all passion and a deep understanding of the music, performing not just as members of the chorus but also as soloists in their own right.

LIFE CAST IN SOUND

Like the great Baroque architect who gave them their name, the Balthasar Neumann Choir and Balthasar Neumann Ensemble that were both founded by Thomas Hengelbrock represent innovative, holistic and interdisciplinary thinking. "Music is life cast in sound": this credo determines their work together, no matter whether they are tackling Baroque music or a brand-new piece. They have successfully excavated many a work that had been buried by the sands of time, while familiar works are performed anew in their original sonorities. And time and again the music is interwoven with other forms of expression. On their CD *Nachtwache*, for example, a cappella choral works by Romantic composers are heard alongside spoken verse and prose to grant a vivid insight into the soul of the period. The texts are read by the actress Johanna Wokalek, who works regularly with the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble and Choir.

IN DEMAND ALL OVER THE WORLD

The Balthasar Neumann Choir's artistic quality, versatility and passion have set international standards, with the result that it has been invited to perform in the world's leading concert halls and at major international festivals. Working alongside Thomas Hengelbrock's Cuban-European Youth Orchestra, the Balthasar Neumann Choir gave the world premiere of the oratorio *Maria* by Jan Müller-Wieland (*1966) at the 2018 Ruhrtriennale. The Choir regularly appears at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival and the Munich Opera Festival. Tours have already taken them to China, Mexico, Japan and the United States. They have also increased their presence in Spain, notably in Madrid and Barcelona and at the Festival Internacional de Santander and the Quincena Musical de San Sebastián. In Germany both the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble and the Balthasar Neumann Choir are currently increasing their presence in Freiburg by working more closely with the Albert Concerts. In Hamburg they are performing a series of concerts of their own in 2019/20, when they will be appearing not only in the venerable Laeiszhalle but also in the city's new Elbphilharmonie.

The Balthasar Neumann Choir has also enjoyed great acclaim on operatic stages around the world from Baden-Baden and Salzburg to Aix-en-Provence and from Paris and Madrid to New York. Gluck's opera *Orpheus und Eurydike*, performed in German with the Ballet de l'Opéra National de Paris in a version choreographed by Pina Bausch, has been revived on numerous

occasions and a recording of it has been released on DVD, while Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* was likewise enthusiastically received: unusually staged by Thomas Hengelbrock, it featured Johanna Wokalek reciting texts of her own and functioning as Dido's sombre alter ego.

Together with the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble, the Choir also works with other orchestras and ensembles such as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the NHK Symphony Orchestra and – on a regular basis – the Basel Symphony Orchestra. Among the distinguished guest conductors with whom they have frequently appeared are Pablo Heras-Casado, Ivor Bolton and Howard Arman.

The Balthasar Neumann Choir has received numerous honours and awards, including the Baden-Württemberg Culture Prize, several ECHO Klassik Awards and a *Gramophone* Award.

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