

# '22

voorjaar | spring | printemps

**BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC**

# MAHLER & MENDELSSOHN

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC  
STÉPHANE DENEVE, DIR.  
VLAAMS RADIOKOOR  
BART VAN REYN, DIR.

05.02.2022

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# WELCOME

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Mahler's great *2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony* that was originally on the programme cannot, given the COVID situation, be safely performed. The Brussels Philharmonic and the Vlaams Radiokoor have chosen alternative programme, in which both ensembles can give their best, with Mahler setting the tone and Mendelssohn confirming it: faith and hope will prevail.

For when fate strikes hard, we find strength in faith. Faith that takes a different form for each person: in a God, in healing, in a hopeful future, in the meaning of life, in each other.

Such faith also gave Beethoven strength, and despite the many obstacles that came his way, he wrote in his diary: "But Fate now conquers". A gripping passage, which inspired composer

Carlos Simon in 2020 to write a work to which he gave that as a title.

There is another who gave voice to faith and hope in his music: Gustav Mahler. His *Totenfeier* is one great funeral march, but later became the opening of his 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony – a thundering work about the unwavering faith in resurrection.

Felix Mendelssohn was born a Jew and converted to Christianity, inspired by Luther and his Protestantism: the composer followed his own path as regards faith. The Bach chorale on which he based the final movement of his 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony – less well known but of masterly beauty – speaks for itself: “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott” (A mighty fortress is our God).

# ARTISTS & PROGRAMME

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Brussels Philharmonic · Vlaams Radiokoor  
Stéphane Denève, conductor  
Bart Van Reyn, conductor

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Carlos Simon, *Fate Now Conquers* (2020)

Gustav Mahler, *Totenfeier* (1888)

Felix Mendelssohn, *Warum toben die Heiden, op. 78, No. 1, Psalm 2* (1843)

Felix Mendelssohn, *Symphony No 5 in D-minor, op 107, "Reformation Symphony"*

- I. Andante — Allegro con fuoco
- II. Allegro vivace
- III. Andante
- IV. 'Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott',  
Andante con moto — Allegro  
vivace— Allegro maestoso

# DISCOVER MORE

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# PROGRAMME NOTES

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What gives us hope in troubled times? The answer is different for each person. For some, the support of family and friends helps get one's bearings, while for others, it is faith that keeps them going. This may be faith in God, or in a hopeful future or in the meaning of life. The great

composers of the past and today also faced numerous setbacks and often worked their darker moments in life into their musical works.

The compositions on the programme of today's concert by the Brussels Philharmonic and the Flemish Radio Choir are striking examples. For instance, the composer Carlos Simon drew inspiration for his *Fate Now Conquers* from Beethoven's philosophically inspired belief in music, while the hope found in religious belief is reflected in the instrumental and vocal music of Gustav Mahler and Felix Mendelssohn.

## Defying fate

The words written by Ludwig van Beethoven in his journal for 1815 are heroic in tone:

"Iliad. The Twenty-Second Book. [...] So now I meet my fate. Even so, let me not die ingloriously

without a fight, but in some great action which those men yet to come will hear about.”

This quotation from Homer’s classic epic expresses the way Beethoven dealt with his deafness, the greatest misfortune of his life. The words also served as inspiration for the American composer Carlos Simon, who in 2020 based his orchestral work *Fate Now Conquers* on it. The fact that Beethoven cites Homer is no coincidence. Composing had become, for Beethoven, the meaning of his life. By 1815, he was almost completely deaf, and he found in the supernatural calling and actions of the great heroes of Homer’s writings a model for his passion for writing music. In letters to his loved ones, he regularly quoted the philosopher Immanuel Kant: he considered composing to be a ‘categorical imperative’ that gave him the strength to persevere. Art made it possible for him to achieve ‘higher levels of perfection’ in his life. This explains Beethoven’s constant drive to

improve his music and to innovate. In his one-movement orchestral work, *Fate Now Conquers*, Carlos Simon includes numerous references to the music of Beethoven. Thus, the harmonies and modulations in the work are indebted to the second movement of the Seventh Symphony Op. 92 of his famous predecessor. The neo-Romantic work of Carlos Simon, which sometimes also draws inspiration from jazz, gives musical expression to the unpredictable ways of fate: the music is at times frenzied and agitated, at others ambiguous and moody. These contrasts depict "the uncertainty of life that hovers over us". Thanks to music, Beethoven was able to "seize fate by the throat", as he wrote in a letter in 1800. Carlos Simon echoes this message in *Fate Now Conquers*, which symbolically ends on a triumphant note.

## Belief in the resurrection

The uncertainties of life are also a central theme

in the music of the late Romantic German composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911). Yet, Mahler handled it in a completely different manner. At the centre of his oeuvre is the relationship between life and death. He weaves this relationship impressively into *Totenfeier*, a symphonic poem written in 1888, the same year as his First Symphony, 'Titan'. The title "*Totenfeier*" evokes the poetic drama of the same name by the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) about an ancient Slavic and Lithuanian feast commemorating the forefathers. *Totenfeier* is an "enormous symphonic funeral march" – as Mahler himself described it – which he reworked in 1894 (with subtle changes to the modulations, deleting various measures, adding wind instruments and percussion, etc.) to become the first movement of his Second Symphony, 'Auferstehung' ('Resurrection'). In 1889, Mahler's circumstances had changed dramatically. He suffered several emotional blows in that year due to the death of both his parents

and of his younger sister. They were most certainly in the back of his mind when in 1894 he added an explanatory note to *Totenfeier*: "At the grave of a beloved person. His struggle, his suffering and desire pass before the mind's eye. Questions obtrude: what does Death mean? – is there a continuation?" Mahler's uncertainty about this religiously-inspired idea of the afterlife is reflected in *Totenfeier* in the contrasting alternation between the stately rhythms of the funeral march and the broad lyrical melodies. The music is permeated by references to the Gregorian chant *Dies Irae* and to Baroque chorales. Ultimately, it is only when *Totenfeier* was incorporated as the first movement of his Second Symphony that Mahler finds an answer through his faith in God: the final movement of the symphony gives musical expression to the comforting idea of the resurrection.

## A hopeful future

The severe blows that Mahler experienced throughout his lifetime were for the most part absent from the life of the composer Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847). When Mendelssohn died unexpectedly in 1847, he was only 38 years old and was in the midst of a flourishing career as composer and conductor. Thanks to his prosperous background, Mendelssohn received a broad education that familiarized him with his great precursors of the Renaissance, the Baroque and the Classical periods. As a result, his music constantly evokes to his great models and indeed often adopts their style and techniques. This is the case with the *Drei Psalmen Op. 78* which he wrote in 1843 and 1844. He composed the works for the choir of the Berlin cathedral and the court of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia. *Warum toben die Heiden* (Why do the nations rage), the first of the three Psalms in this series, was written for double

a cappella choir. The text of Psalm 2 calls for the weapons in the struggle among peoples to be laid down and for faith in God that will bring a better future. Mendelssohn used many different ancient compositional techniques to make the music as expressive as possible, including textual accents, the alternation of antiphonal passages (in which the two nearly independent choirs sing in turns) and solo passages, glorious tutti (to the words "Du bist mein Sohn" [You are my son]), and a sublime four-part canon in the Gloria finale ("Ehre sei dem Vater" [Glory be to the Father]).

## An instrumental profession of faith

Writing choral works was one of Mendelssohn's greatest passions. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that for the 1830 celebration in Berlin of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Augsburg Confession" – the Protestant profession of faith presented to Emperor Charles V in June 1530 – he opted to write an instrumental symphony

rather than a vocal work. Presumably, he had in mind the symphonies of Beethoven, who had died in 1828, when making this choice. He began writing the symphony in 1829, just after the death of his great idol, but due to illness the symphony was not ready in time. The premiere took place two years later, and the symphony would be published only in 1868, 21 years after Mendelssohn's death, as his Fifth Symphony, dubbed the Reformation Symphony. The symphony evokes both Mendelssohn's Protestant faith and his boundless admiration for Johann Sebastian Bach. He thus includes references in the first, ceremonial movement to the Protestant "Dresden Amen" motif and uses many polyphonic techniques borrowed from the music of Bach. The festivities in Berlin sought to highlight the hope that faith inspires. It is for this reason that Mendelssohn gave the key movements of the symphony a particularly heroic tone and incorporated into the final movement the melody of the famous Lutheran chorale Ein

Feste Burg (A mighty fortress is our God). As in his Psalm setting Warum toben die Heiden, so in this purely instrumental work Mendelssohn emphasizes how religious faith is the 'safe haven' in which people can feel secure and emerge triumphant and carefree from any adversity or misfortune

*Commentary by Waldo Geuns*

STÉPHANE DENÈVE

MUSIC DIRECTOR BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

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[www.stephanedeneve.com](http://www.stephanedeneve.com)

Stéphane Denève is Music Director of Brussels Philharmonic, as well as Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Director of the Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire (CffOR) and will be the Principal Guest

Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra from the 2023-24 season onwards. He has previously served as Chief Conductor of Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (SWR) and Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Recognised internationally for the exceptional quality of his performances and programming, he regularly appears at major concert venues with the world's greatest orchestras and soloists. He has a special affinity for the music of his native France, and is a passionate advocate for music of the 21st century.

Recent engagements in Europe and Asia have included appearances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Vienna Symphony, DSO Berlin, NHK

Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Czech Philharmonic, and Rotterdam Philharmonic.

In North America he made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2012 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with whom he has appeared several times both in Boston and at Tanglewood, and he regularly conducts The Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony and Toronto Symphony. He is also a popular guest at many of the US summer music festivals, including Bravo! Vail, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Hollywood Bowl, Blossom Music Festival, and Festival Napa Valley. Summer 2018 saw his debuts at the Grand Teton Music Festival and Music Academy of the West, and in 2019 he lead a major US tour with the Brussels Philharmonic.

In December 2020 he conducted the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and pianist Igor Levit at the 2020 Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm.

He enjoys close relationships with many of the world's leading solo artists, including Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Yo-Yo Ma, Nikolaj Znaider, James Ehnes, Leif Ove Andsnes, Leonidas Kavakos, Nicholas Angelich, Lang Lang, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Gil Shaham, Emanuel Ax, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Lars Vogt, Nikolai Lugansky, Paul Lewis, Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, and Augustin Hadelich.

In the field of opera, Stéphane Denève has led productions at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Glyndebourne Festival, La Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Saito Kinen Festival,

Gran Teatro de Liceu, Dutch National Opera, La Monnaie, Deutsche Oper Am Rhein, and at the Opéra National de Paris.

As a recording artist, he has won critical acclaim for his recordings of the works of Poulenc, Debussy, Ravel, Roussel, Franck and Connesson. He is a triple winner of the Diapason d'Or of the Year, has been shortlisted for Gramophone's Artist of the Year Award, and has been awarded an International Classical Music Awards twice. His most recent releases include a live recording of Honegger's *Jeanne d'arc au bûcher* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and two discs of the works of Guillaume Connesson with the Brussels Philharmonic (the first of which was awarded the Diapason d'Or de l'année, Caecilia Award, and *Classica Magazine's* CHOC of the Year).

A graduate and prize-winner of the Paris Conservatoire, Stéphane Denève worked closely in his early career with Sir Georg Solti, Georges Prêtre and Seiji Ozawa. A gifted communicator and educator, he is committed to inspiring the next generation of musicians and listeners, and has worked regularly with young people in programmes such as those of the Tanglewood Music Center, New World Symphony, the Colburn School, and the Music Academy of the West.

**BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC**

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[www.brusselsphilharmonic.be](http://www.brusselsphilharmonic.be)

Brussels Philharmonic was founded in 1935 by the Belgian public broadcaster (National Broadcasting Institute (NIR/INR)). Since its creation, it has worked with top international conductors and soloists. The orchestra was and is known as a pioneer in performing contemporary music – a reputation that brought world-renowned composers such as Bartók, Stravinsky and Messiaen to Brussels. To this day, Brussels Philharmonic has continued this tradition, including a 21st-century work in almost every concert programme.

The orchestra's historic home port is the Flagey building in Brussels, the heart of Europe, where it rehearses and performs in Studio 4 – in acoustic terms one of the top concert halls in the world – and which serves as its home base for concerts in Belgium and the rest of the world.

The leading French conductor Stéphane Denève is the music director of Brussels Philharmonic. His passion for 21st-century music and personal mission to create dialogue between the repertoire of the past and the future is fully in keeping with the orchestra's DNA. Starting in the 2022-23 season, Kazushi Ono will take up the baton as music director of Brussels Philharmonic.

At the international level, Brussels Philharmonic has made a name for itself, with regular appearances at the major venues and festivals, such as Carnegie Hall in New York, the Philharmonie de Paris, Wiener Musikverein, Grosses Festspielhaus Salzburg, Usher Hall in Edinburgh and Cadogan Hall in London. International representation by IMG Touring has brought further tours and concerts on new stages both in Europe and beyond (e.g. Japan in 2017, North America in 2019).

Another speciality for which Brussels

Philharmonic has gained an international reputation is the recording of soundtracks for series, games and films, including the Oscar-winning score for '*The Artist*' (music by Ludovic Bource). In Belgium, the orchestra is a regular partner of the Film Fest Gent and of MotorMusic, and participates each year in concerts with iconic films (both blockbusters with award-winning scores and black-and-white classics with a new soundtrack).

Meanwhile, the orchestra has proved to be a pioneer in other respects as well. Besides ground-breaking initiatives such as the Tax Shelter, the establishment of a foundation for the purchase of string instruments, and more recently the partnership with Brussels Airlines, the orchestra embraces innovation in every area and all levels of its activities. The gentlemen of the orchestra are dressed by Café Costume in the custom-designed Symphonic Sporting Jacket, with technical innovations in the field of fabric

and cut, and 2021 saw the release of the orchestra's own smartphone app.

The various recordings of Brussels Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon, Palazzetto Bru Zane, Klara/Warner Classics, Film Fest Gent, Naxos, Brussels Philharmonic Recordings) have been warmly received by the international press and gaining awards such as the ECHO Klassik, Choc de Classica de l'année and Diapason d'Or de l'année.

Brussels Philharmonic is an institution of the Flemish Community.

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**BART VAN REYN**

MUSIC DIRECTOR VLAAMS RADIOKOOR

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[www.bartvanreyn.com](http://www.bartvanreyn.com)

Since the 19-20 season, Bart Van Reyn is music director of the Vlaams Radiokoor. His dynamic approach, thorough knowledge of the repertoire and great passion for the métier is fully in keeping with the distinctive DNA of the Radiokoor. Together they will work today on the history of tomorrow, as guardians of the rich vocal heritage.

One of Belgium's most sought-after conductors of the new generation, Bart Van Reyn is at home in a wide repertoire: from baroque to contemporary, both in oratorio, opera and symphonic repertoire as well as a cappella music – with the voice at the heart of it. Bart is music director of the Danish National Radio Choir since 2016, and principal guest conductor of Anima Aeterna since season 21-22. He is regularly invited for productions with internationally

renowned choirs such as Cappella Amsterdam, Netherlands Radio Choir, Netherlands Chamber Choir, MDR Rundfunkchor Leipzig, SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart, NDR Chor Hamburg, Rundfunkchor Berlin, DR Vokalensemble, The Netherlands Bach Society, Collegium Vocale Gent and the BBC Singers.

Bart is founder of Octopus, a chamber choir and a symphony chorus, and of Le Concert d'Anvers, a period instrument orchestra with a focus on 18th and early 19th century repertoire. Their first Haydn album released by Fuga Libera received critical acclaim. He also co-founded the touring opera company The Ministry of Operatic Affairs, known for their successful productions of Don Giovanni, Orfeo ed Euridice, Così fan tutte, Dido & Aeneas, and Acis & Galatea.

Alongside the many varied vocal projects, Bart Van Reyn is frequently invited by instrumental ensembles at home and abroad, including

Brussels Philharmonic, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, B'Rock, Casco Phil, Il Gardellino, NDR Radiophilharmonie, Brandenburger Symphoniker, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra. His passionate approach and expertise make Bart the ideal match for contemporary composers, resulting in his collaborations with Steve Reich, Tan Dun, James MacMillan and Kaija Saariaho.

## VLAAMS RADIOKOOR

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[www.vlaamsradiokoor.be](http://www.vlaamsradiokoor.be)

The Vlaams Radiokoor (Flemish Radio Choir) was founded in 1937 by the Belgian public broadcaster of the day. Today, the Vlaams Radiokoor is renowned for vocal music in Flanders and Europe, and is counted among the top ensembles both at home and abroad.

As of season 2019-20, Bart Van Reyn is the musical director of the Radiokoor. A shared passion for contemporary repertoire, the belief that the voice is the ultimate interpreter of our emotions, and the commitment to make our vocal heritage accessible to singers and audiences alike are what binds the ensemble together.

Based in Studio 1 in Flagey (Brussels), the 32 singers of the Vlaams Radiokoor are working on a musical project built on three major pillars. First and foremost, the Vocal Fabric productions – the laboratory of the Radiokoor. Vocal Fabric organizes concerts that test the boundaries of vocal music and are challenging, quirky and non-conformist. With great hospitality and an intense experience as the golden thread, we bring together the people on stage and those in the hall: vocal harmony is proof that people are more magnificent together than alone.

In addition, the choir works regularly with renowned instrumental ensembles from Belgium and abroad, such as the Brussels Philharmonic, the Orchestre de chambre de Paris, Les Siècles, the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. In this way, the Radiokoor has gradually built up its presence on various international stages.

Lastly, the Vlaams Radiokoor is and remains a living portal for repertoire, knowledge, experience and voices. It makes our vocal heritage accessible to singers and the audience, while also investing in the creation of new vocal works. The choir thus shares its programme, technique and expertise with music lovers, amateurs and professionals.

The Vlaams Radiokoor also retains its unique status as a radio choir: a great many concert productions are recorded, and hence the choir

has built up a unique collection of live recordings. The collection is constantly supplemented with a selection of studio recordings, thus preserving the vocal heritage for the future.

The Vlaams Radiokoor is an institution of the Flemish Community.

MUSICIANS

**BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC**

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(1) principal / (2) soloist

concertmaster

Henry Raudales

violon I

Nadja Nevolovitsch (1), Bart Lemmens (2)

Sylvie Bagara, Olivia Bergeot,

Annelies Broeckhoven, Stefan Claeys,

Cristina Constantinescu, Justine Rigutto,

Kristina Rimkeviciute, Elizaveta Rybentseva,

Anton Skakun, Alissa Vaitsner, Gillis Veldeman

violon II

Mari Hagiwara (1), Andrew Burgan,

Véronique Burstin, Aline Janeczek,

Mireille Kovac, Eléonore Malaboef,

Sayoko Mundy, Naoko Ogura,

Eline Pauwels, Julien Poli,

Stefanie Van Backlé, Bram Van Eenoo

viola

Mihai Cocea (1), Griet François (2),

Philippe Allard, Marina Barskaya,

Hélène Koerver, Agnieszka Kosakowska,  
Barbara Peynsaert, Stephan Uelpenich,  
Olfje van der Klein, Patricia Van Reusel

cello

Kristaps Bergs (1), Kirsten Andersen,  
Barbara Gerarts, Julius Himmler,  
Bénédicte Legrand, Emmanuel Tondus,  
Elke Wynants

double bass

Jan Buysschaert (1), Bram Decroix,  
Thomas Fiorini, Daniele Giampaolo,  
Benjamin Heymans, Simon Luce

flute

Wouter Van den Eynde (1), Jill Jeschek (2),  
Sarah Miller

oboe

Joris Van den Hauwe (1),  
Lode Cartrysse (2), Maarten Wijnen

clarinet

Maura Marinucci (1), Danny Corstjens (2),  
Midori Mori (2)

bassoon

Marceau Lefèvre (1), Jonas Coomans (2),  
Alexander Kuksa

horn

Hans van der Zanden (1), Mieke Ailliet (2),  
Claudia Rigoni, Luc Van den Hove

trumpet

Steven Bossuyt (1), Ward Hoornaert (1),  
Rik Ghesquière, Luc Sirjacques

trombone

David Rey (1), Tim Van Medegael (2),  
Daniel Foeteler

tuba

Jean Xhonneux (2)

timpani

Gert François (1)

percussion

Gert D'haese (2), Titus Franken (2),  
Stijn Schoofs

harp

Eline Groslot (2)

MUSICIANS

VLAAMS RADIOKOOR

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soprano

Julie Calbète, Jolien De Gendt, Karen Lemaire,  
Kelly Poukens, Evi Roelants, Charlotte Schoeters,  
Barbara Somers, Sarah Van Mol

alto

Antonia Freyn, Eva Goudie – Falckenbach, Estelle  
Lefort, Anna Nuytten, Kerlijne Van Nevel,  
Velichka Minkova, Maria Gil Munoz,  
Noëlle Schepens

tenor

Gunter Claessens, Lars Corijn, Adriaan De Koster,  
Paul Foubert, Ivan Goossens, Etienne Hekkers,  
Paul Schils, Roel Willems

bass

Conor Biggs, Vincent De Soomer, Lieven Deroo,  
Paul Mertens, Samuel Namotte,  
Philippe Souvagie, Andres Soler Castano,  
Harry van der Kamp

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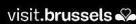
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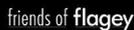
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