

Biography

Thomas Hengelbrock is one of the most versatile and fascinating musicians of his generation. His work covers multiple genres and periods and is always the result of a detailed engagement with the musical text and of his deep understanding of the meaning and content of the works in question. He founded two world-class ensembles, the Balthasar Neumann Choir and the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble, with which he has been internationally acclaimed for over twenty-five years. Thomas Hengelbrock is also in demand as a guest conductor and has appeared with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Vienna and Munich Philharmonics, the Orchestre de Paris, the Orchestre National de France, and the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, among others.

An enthusiastic and inspiring discoverer of lesser-known works, Thomas Hengelbrock's repertoire ranges from early music to contemporary compositions, taking in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and embracing every genre. He reintroduces largely-forgotten compositions to a wider public and sheds new light on familiar works, most notably Wagner's *Parsifal*, which he performed on original instruments. His concert programs are legendary for covering a wide range of different periods, often revealing surprising musical affinities and creatively examining and exploring specific themes.

While working as an assistant conductor Thomas Hengelbrock came into early contact with a number of leading figures in the world of contemporary music, including Witold Lutosławski, Mauricio Kagel and Antal Doráti. New music remains an important part of his activities today. Among the works he has recently premiered are Jan Müller-Wieland's oratorio *Maria* at the 2018 Ruhrtriennale and Wolfgang Rihm's *Reminiszenz* at the opening of the Elbphilharmonie in January 2017. He also works closely with the composers Jörg Widmann, Simon Wills, Lotta Wennäkoski, Qigang Chen and Erkki-Sven Tüür.

As an opera conductor Thomas Hengelbrock can be heard at the Opéra National de Paris, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, and the Berlin State Opera. He also appears regularly at the Baden-Baden, Aix-en-Provence and Salzburg Festivals. In the Autumn of 2020 he began an artistic residency with the Balthasar Neumann Ensembles at the Château de Fontainebleau.

In addition to his musical direction, he has worked as stage director in performances with the Balthasar Neumann Choir and Ensemble, most notably in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Musical-literary projects with actors such as Klaus Maria Brandauer, Johanna Wokalek and Graham Valentine form a further focus of his artistic activities. His own versions of Grieg's *Peer Gynt* and Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* combine music and literature in an innovative way, defying conventional expectations. In 2005 he worked with the choreographer Pina Bausch on a celebrated production of Gluck's *Orpheus und Eurydike* at the Paris Opéra, a production that continues to tour internationally.

Thomas Hengelbrock is always eager to transmit his love of music to others and to encourage young artists, especially through his Balthasar Neumann Academy and Cuban-European Youth Academy (CuE). He was awarded the Herbert von Karajan Music Prize in 2016 for his services to music education. In addition, he is the long-standing patron of KinderPaCT, an organisation providing palliative care to terminally ill children.

Since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, Thomas Hengelbrock has tirelessly campaigned and worked for the future of culture and of freelance musicians in Europe. In order to be able to continue working without social distancing, a health and safety protocol was developed for the Balthasar Neumann Ensembles which allowed the artists to carry out all of their European projects during the 20/21 season.

Among these pandemic projects were the only full-orchestra concert performed at the Festival of Aix-en-Provence in 2020, and the widely-acclaimed opening of the 2020 season at the Dortmund Concert Hall with Haydn's *Schöpfung*, which was the very first choral concert in Germany since the beginning of the pandemic. Furthermore, a Brahms concert weekend at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden in October 2020, with 120 musicians onstage, garnered much attention as the largest concert event during the pandemic in Germany. In December 2020 the Balthasar Neumann Ensembles were the first international, non-Swiss artists to perform several concerts in the newly-reopened Casino Basel. Livestreams from the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, and from the Mozart-Week in Salzburg in January of 2021, and live broadcasts from the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam brought further international attention.

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