

## Biography

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Thomas Hengelbrock is one of the most versatile and fascinating musicians of his generation. His work covers multiple genres and periods, opening up new worlds of ideas and emotions to musicians and audiences alike. Whether he is conducting Baroque operas, Romantic symphonies or contemporary works, his energetic appearances are invariably 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. In the Balthasar Neumann Choir and Ensemble he has two world-class ensembles known for their ability to recreate the original sound world of the works that they perform. Together they have been internationally acclaimed for over twenty years. Thomas Hengelbrock is also in demand as a guest conductor and has appeared with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Orchestre de Paris, the Munich Philharmonic, the Orchestre National de France and the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra among others.

Among Thomas Hengelbrock's enthusiasms is the discovery of new or neglected works, an enthusiasm he is keen to pass on to others. His repertory 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 instruments from the time of the work's first performances. His concert programmes are notable for covering a wide range of different periods, often revealing surprising musical affinities and examining a very specific theme by playing around it as if in an iridescent kaleidoscope – in the spring of 2020, for example, he will explore the subject of death and resurrection in a programme for choir and organ.

It was while working as an assistant that Thomas Hengelbrock first came into contact with a number of leading figures in the world of contemporary music, including Witold Lutosławski, Mauricio Kagel and Antal Doráti. Modern music remains an important part of his activities even today. At the final concert of the 2018 Ruhrtriennale, for example, he conducted the world premiere of Jan Müller-Wieland's oratorio *Maria*, while Wolfgang Rihm's *Reminiscenz* was heard for the first time under his direction 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 has been heard at the Opéra national de Paris, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and the Berlin State Opera. He also appears regularly at the Baden-Baden, Aix-en-Provence and Salzburg Festivals. He has additionally assumed the mantle of stage director in performances with his Balthasar Neumann Choir and Ensemble, most notably in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Musico-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 and in the process call traditional expectations into question. 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.

Like the great Baroque architect who gave his ensembles their name, Thomas Hengelbrock strives in his work to ensure that the arts interact creatively. He formed the Balthasar Neumann Choir in 1991 and the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble four years later. Both groups of musicians have long been numbered among the most successful of their kind and are internationally acclaimed thanks to their versatility, their high artistic standards and their unique sound.

Thomas Hengelbrock's knowledge and gifts as a communicator predestine him for the challenge of imparting his love of music to others. As part of the scholarship programme at the Balthasar Neumann Academy that he himself has established, outstanding students are accompanied step by step on their journey into the world of professional music-making. Young musicians from Europe and Cuba work

together at his Cuban-European Youth Academy on orchestral projects, workshops and special transatlantic ventures. He also teaches other young artists from all over the world. For his services to music education he was awarded the Herbert von Karajan Music Prize in 2016.

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