

PASSIONATE CURIOSITY AS A DRIVING ARTISTIC FORCE

Schedule and projects of the conductor Markus Stenz in 2017/18



In a recent interview with music journalist Danny Riley, Markus Stenz was asked why new music inspired such enthusiasm and intense interest on his part, and why he so passionately championed it. He gave this response: *“It all stems from my genuine curiosity for music. I think the biggest asset these composers have is that they can speak to us with total immediacy. There is nothing that is between us and their time, and that makes the living composers different from any music from the past that we conduct.”*

As the principal conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Stenz regularly programmes concerts that contrast old and new with the aim of developing “pluralistic listening routines” in our now long since pluralistic society: “To visit music from the past and maybe come up with interesting combinations, or build bridges for people to visit the past through the ears of a contemporary composers, or vice versa.” Even in the first concerts of the 2017/18 season in Amsterdam and Utrecht, he combined Wagner or Beethoven with Joey Roukens or Rob Zuidam, while on 30 September he conducted a première in the Concertgebouw with Pascal Dusapin’s double concerto “At Swim-Two-Birds”.

On **28 November**, Markus Stenz will now be conducting the **first German performance of Detlev Glanert’s “Requiem for Hieronymus Bosch”** in the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg – a fascinating oratorio-like work whose world première the German conductor directed just a year ago with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam. The myriad reactions it provoked (a live recording of the première has since been issued (RCO 17005)) show how relevant this work is for our times and attest to its emotional qualities: “This darkly colourful apocalypse was splendidly realised by the choir and orchestra under the unflagging Markus Stenz. He spun diaphanous choral textures and brought the climaxes to boil with infernal alchemy,” wrote Jenny Camilleri (bachtrack.com). And the “Financial Times” found that under Stenz’s direction, this work was “guaranteed to leave the soul shaken and stirred.” Markus Stenz and the composer Glanert share a long history of collaboration and friendship going back to their student days as pupils in the class of Hans Werner Henze in Cologne. In the Elbphilharmonie, Stenz will now conduct the new Glanert work from the podium of the Hamburger Symphoniker. The vocal parts will be sung by the EuropaChorAkademie, Aga Mikolaj (soprano), Ursula Hesse von den Steinen (mezzo-soprano), Gerhard Siegel (tenor) and Nathan Berg (bass). Incidentally, Stenz will be presenting further works by Detlev Glanert in the course of the current season in **Salt Lake City** (“Four Preludes and Serious Songs” after Brahms, 10 + 11 November 2017) and in **Helsinki** (“Fresenia” on 14 + 15 February 2018).

The Rhineland-born conductor, 52, has engagements across the world in the coming months. His second permanent position alongside Hilversum is in **Baltimore** in the US state of Maryland, where he holds the post of principal guest conductor. The Americans have long taken him to their hearts, as the “Baltimore Sun” again confirmed in May 2017: “Stenz and the BSO seemed to find a common wave length from the first time he guest-conducted in 2012. The spark has only intensified since his official appointment. And no wonder. The man has something to say with music and knows how to communicate it.” In October 2017 and in April 2018, the conductor will be again travelling for several weeks to Maryland, where, among other things, he will talk about and conduct excerpts from Wagner’s “Parsifal”

as part of the musical education programme “Off the Cuff”. In the coming spring, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's repertoire under Stenz will also include Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Violin Concerto, op. 35, (with Arabella Steinbacher as soloist) and the Symphonic Dances, op. 45, by Sergei Rachmaninov (19-21 April 2018). Markus Stenz will also be conducting a number of other US orchestras in the course of the season: the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, the Utah Symphony Orchestra, the San Diego Symphony Orchestra and the Minnesota Orchestra.

In between times, Stenz, who was general music director in Cologne for many years, can also be experienced in Germany on several occasions: in **Hanover** (21 + 22 January 2018, Staatsoper), he will conduct a concert with the Niedersächsisches Staatsorchester (Lower Saxony State Orchestra) whose programme will include Bruckner's “Romantic Symphony” alongside Hans Werner Henze's orchestral work “The Enchanted Forest (La selva incantata)” of 1991. For this work, Henze took some of the main musical material from his opera “King Stag” (König Hirsch), in which the main figure “longs to return to the woods, to nature, to the origins of his animal existence” (Henze). – Later in the year, for two concerts in **Berlin** (16 + 17 May 2018, Konzerthaus), Markus Stenz has combined repertoire from the post-Romantic era of stylistic and tonal re-orientation that has always especially fascinated him: together with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin and the pianist Herbert Schuch, he will be performing Franz Schreker's “Vorspiel zu einem Drama” (Prelude to a Drama), Busoni's “Berceuse élégiaque”, op. 2, Scriabin's “Le Poème de l'extase”, op. 42, and the Burlesque for piano and orchestra in D minor by Richard Strauss.

In **Munich**, Stenz will conduct the Austrian composer Franz Schreker's epochal stage work “Die Gezeichneten” (The Stigmatized) at three performances in May (12+15+19 May, Nationaltheater) – this work, written after the First World War, fuelled hopes of a new blossoming of opera after Richard Wagner. Stenz already undertook the musical direction of this extremely complex work in Cologne in 2013 with the director Patrick Kinmonth, scoring a great success. The magazine “Die deutsche Bühne” wrote at the time: “Markus Stenz elegantly reins in this music, which comes from so many directions and wants to depart in so many others, and by so doing extracts from it far more than just brilliant effects.” For the performances in Munich, Krzysztof Warlikowski will be in charge of the stage production. The soloists are: Tomasz Konieczny (bass-baritone), Christopher Maltman (baritone), Alastair Miles (bass) and Catherine Naglestad (soprano). A Cologne journalist incidentally once asked straight out why music fans should go to hear “Die Gezeichneten”, to which Stenz replied: “Because they will experience irresistible music that is both seductive and enigmatic; and you can't say which is more attractive.” Even in 2018, there is nothing more to add.

On 9 June 2018, **Dortmund** will then be the last venue in Germany to greet the conductor before he sets off for Seoul. As an established and award-winning Mahler expert, Markus Stenz will conduct the Symphony No. 3 in D Minor by the Austrian composer – together with the symphony orchestra of the Orchesterzentrum/NRW, choirs from Essen Cathedral (Essener Dommusik) and the mezzo-soprano Ileana Mateescu. For Stenz, Gustav Mahler is “*a composer who always makes profound experiences possible. I can't praise him enough. [...] His Third is a powerful statement. In it, Mahler takes us through the awakening of summer, past the animals in the woods, via the philosophy of Nietzsche in the fourth movement and the bell-like fifth movement, to the last movement, to which he gave the title 'What love tells me.' He meant love as agape, as an idea to unite all of humanity. And he found the perfect music for the succession of all these aspects.*”

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