



Martijn Dendievel appointed as new Chief Conductor of Flanders Symphony Orchestra



The Flanders Symphony Orchestra (Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen) is delighted to announce the appointment of Martijn Dendievel as Chief Conductor. The 28-year-old Flemish musician, a rising star in high demand, is set to assume his new role in January 2026. He will strive to advance the Ghent-based orchestra's artistic development and further strengthen its goal of becoming a leading international ensemble. Dendievel intends to craft diverse programmes and use them, together with his local profile, to expand Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen's audience.

"Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen is so important to me in so many ways," notes Dendievel. "It is a great honour that the orchestra's players have put their trust in me. I have experienced their tremendous energy and spirit since I was a child. We will build on the work of my predecessors and cultivate the beautiful transparent sound that makes them so unique. At the same time the orchestra is in a transition period, looking to anchor themselves strongly locally and grow internationally. There are so many things we can do to make people feel involved in the

concert experience without losing the best traditions of the symphony orchestra."

It would be difficult to overstate Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen's importance to Martijn Dendievel. He studied cello with one of its members and decided to become a conductor at the age of ten while watching the orchestra perform Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No.1. The work's first timpani entry commanded his attention, not simply because it was sudden and loud but because it was cued with a gentle wrist flick from the conductor. "How the players responded to that timpani blow and the way the conductor channelled their energy to support the soloist was mind-blowing for me," he recalls. "That's when I said, 'This is what I want to do'. It seems like a movie story, but it's true! It all started with that one moment."

As part of his training, Dendievel worked since 2018 with Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen and learned invaluable lessons as an assistant conductor. His rapport with the orchestra, strengthened by his appointment as its Associate Conductor in 2022, draws inspiration from the open-minded outlook of its players and their readiness to explore fresh ideas. "It is a special thing," he comments. "I think this is only possible because of their mentality as a group of musicians. Their friendliness to guests and the friendships that exist within the orchestra are quite extraordinary. The way they meet for particular projects, driven by the excitement of a fresh start each time, makes every concert feel special."

Jos Roeden, General Director of Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen, sees Martijn Dendievel's appointment as the ideal outcome of the orchestra's talent development policy. "Not yet in his thirties, Martijn brings a wealth of experience back to the orchestra that, from the start of his career, gave him every opportunity to develop," he comments. "He knows the orchestra like no other and has a clear vision of what is needed for its musicians to grow."

Under the direction of its current Chief Conductor, Kristiina Poska, Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen has attracted critical acclaim and invitations to appear at leading venues in Amsterdam, London, Edinburgh and Paris. "Our regular concert series in Ghent, Antwerp and Bruges can count on appreciation from a loyal audience," observes Roeden. "We see great potential for future growth at the local and national level under Martijn Dendievel's direction. It is a strong story for the audience in Flanders to have a young man from their own region, who's creating genuine international excitement, back with 'their' Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen. He is the first Belgian to be appointed as chief conductor at a major orchestra in Belgium for twenty years, and he also happens to be the best person for the job, regardless of his nationality. It is a great prospect for the orchestra to be able to move with his growth curve and expand our international network and recognition."

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Notes for Editors

Martijn Dendievel, born in Oostende in 1995, hails from a family of musicians. He began playing violin at the age of three, switched to cello four years later and received formative lessons at the Conservatorium Brugge and Royal Conservatory in Brussels. He progressed to study conducting at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar, during which time he won the 2021 German Conductors' Award, was prizewinner of the LSO Donatella Flick Competition, and took part in the first Conductors' Academy of the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich. In June 2022, he became a prize-winner at the inaugural International Conducting Competition Rotterdam.

Dendievel made his international breakthrough as a guest with, among others, the Copenhagen Philharmonic, the Tonkünstler Orchestra Vienna and Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano. He is a regular guest conductor with the Orchestra del Teatro Comunale Bologna, the WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln and Sinfonia Varsovia, and has also lead orchestras such as Bamberg Symphony, Dresdner Philharmonie, Brussels Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liege, Antwerp Symphony, Belgian National Orchestra, MDR Orchester Leipzig, Concerto Koeln, Philzuid and PHION. He was appointed Chief Conductor of the Hofer Symphoniker and will begin his tenure there at the start of the 2024-25 season.

Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen is one of Belgium's leading orchestras. Composed of highly committed and passionate musicians, and led by renowned conductors, Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen both commissions and performs new compositions as well as presenting electrifying renditions of the main symphonic repertoire from the classical period onwards.

Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen fulfils an exemplary role in creating opportunities for young and talented musicians, composers, soloists and conductors. It also makes music from past and present accessible to the widest and most diverse audience possible in Flanders and beyond. In addition to its concert series in Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent, Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen is a welcome guest at national and international venues.