

## st. michael thorn

### SYMPHONIC WINDS

St. Michael Thorn Symphonic Winds is widely considered as one of the world's finest community concert bands. Over and over again, critics have lauded its unique velvet sound, which clearly stands out among many others.

St. Michael was established in 1863 in Thorn, a Dutch village with a flourishing cultural life. The orchestra is highly active within the Netherlands and abroad, and received countless 1st prizes in both national- and international competitions. The orchestra has won the 1st prize at the Kerkrade World Music Contest (WMC) three times with the highest number of points.

The realization of unique projects with special and innovating programming makes the orchestra a true pioneer in symphonic wind music. In November 2018 the orchestra will perform with world's best percussion soloist Martin Grubinger in a spectacular opening show of TROMP in Eindhoven. Early 2019 the orchestra performs the European premiere of Johan de Meij's 5th symphony: Return to Middle Earth.

During the last two decades, they gave more than 200 performances in over 50 different concert halls and theatres, at home and abroad, reaching an audience of some 70,000 people. During that period, nearly 250 different compositions were played, nearly 20 hours of radio recordings were made and 9 music CDs were released.

## ivan meylemans

### CONDUCTOR

Chief conductor of St. Michael Thorn is Ivan Meylemans. The Belgian maestro made his first appearance with orchestra back in 1996 when he performed with the ensemble as a trombone soloist. In the following years he worked with St. Michael as a guest conductor on regular bases, which ultimately led to his appointment as chief conductor in 2013.

Ivan Meylemans is one of the most exciting and dynamic conductors to emerge in Europe recent years. From 2007 to 2012 Meylemans was chief conductor of the Chamber Orchestra Bruges (Het Kamerorkest) and he served as assistant of maestro Mariss Jansons at the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam.

"I was impressed by his technical ability, his powers of communication to the orchestra, his natural authority and the clarity of his musical ideas." (Bernard Haitink about Ivan Meylemans)

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HARMONIE  
ST. MICHAEL  
VAN THORN

# celebration of wind music

**ST. MICHAEL THORN**  
SYMPHONIC WINDS

**SATURDAY MAY 26TH 2018, 18.00 PM**  
**EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP FOR WIND ORCHESTRAS**  
BOZAR BRUSSELS



HARMONIE  
ST. MICHAEL  
VAN THORN

# celebration of wind music

Feste. Festival. Fiesta. Fest. Feast. These words derive from a common root, though the spelling may change from language to language, the meaning is universal: a social gathering for the purposes of celebration.

From the earliest days we find evidence of the festival tradition, often ritualized and religious in nature. And music always provides a common thread shared by festivals of nearly every culture and ethnicity.

Dionysiaques (Schmitt) and Feste Romane (Respighi) both refer to traditional festivals from ancient Europe, fitting perfectly in today's celebration of music in the context of the European Championship for Wind Orchestras. Wind sets everything in motion, and symbolizes an ongoing change. That is exactly what the test piece Mutations (Picqueur) is all about.

St. Michael Thorn Symphonic Winds presents to you a celebration of wind music. Do you join us?

BOZAR

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP FOR WIND ORCHESTRAS MAY 26TH 2018

## dionysiaques

**FLORENT SCHMITT (1870-1958)**

The symphonic poem Dionysiaques is considered worldwide as the pre-eminent emblematic composition of the original French wind band repertoire. Dionysiaques was composed for the famous Garde Républicaine Band. The title of the work refers to the Greek god Dionysus. The ancient Greeks worshipped Dionysus with ritual sacrifice feasts. While a goat buck was sacrificed, young men and women sang songs. This was interrupted from time to time by wine-drunk, grotesque dressed and masked youngsters, who experienced the ceremony as too serious and wanted to express their cheerfulness.

Like the Dionysus celebrations, the composition has two sides: on the one hand, an impressionistic subtlety with atmospheres as can be found in Debussy's compositions and, on the other hand, a rugged exuberance with sound explosions and rhythms that remind of Stravinsky. In addition to the musical character, it is especially as a result of the extensive instrumentation that the work takes a unique place in the repertoire for wind orchestra. The most striking aspect in this regard is the use of the total range of brass valve instruments designed by Adolphe Sax, from flugelhorn to tuba, as a counterpart of the strings in the symphony orchestra. Therefore Schmitt has placed this group of instruments at the bottom of the music score pages.

## mutations

**BART PICQUEUR (1972)**

Bart Picqueur wrote Mutations at the request of fellow composer Louis Martinus. The inspiration for the work was drawn from two monumental pillars of wind band repertoire: The Danse Funambulesque by Jules Strens and Dionysiaques, composed by Florent Schmitt. The result is an accessible contemporary work for concert band. Its double-sided structure has on the one hand a mysterious lento with a flute solo imitating Greek Pan Pipes, followed by a virtuosic dance with a recognizable groove. The cadenza that connects both movements puts the solo clarinet in the spotlight.

Mutations is based on a single concise 4 note motive (major second and minor third). As the title suggests, the musical theme is continually developed into Messiaen-like scales with accompanying chords. Picqueur has dedicated the work to his composer colleagues Louis Martinus and Hardy Mertens: 'I admire the way in which they continually strive *not to go with the flow*. I'm thoroughly convinced that their determination will triumph in the end'. Because of this, Mutations contains the fitting subtitle 'The survival of the fittest', based on Charles Darwin's theories of evolution.

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## feste romane

**OTTORINO RESPIGHI (1879-1936)**

Together with The Pines of Rome and the Fountains of Rome, Feste Romane (Roman Festivals) forms the final and most musically challenging of the tone poem trilogy that Respighi wrote for the City of Eternal Light. The composer, well known for his subtle, sensual and sometimes bombastic orchestrations, learned his craft from Rimsky-Korsakov but was also obviously strongly influenced by the French impressionists and Debussy in particular. Feste Romane is generally considered the crowning achievement of his colourful style.

Respighi described the work as a living musical rendition of visions and evocations of Roman festivals that took place during four different periods in the city's history.

### **CIRCENSES (CIRCUS MASSIMO)**

The introduction to the gladiators of ancient Rome when Nero ruled. The emperor is hailed by the public, the steel doors to the Colosseum are closed, a religious chant resounds in the background and the roar of wild animals can be heard.

### **GIUBILEO (JUBILEE)**

This part brings us to the Holy Roman Empire of olden days. Meditating pilgrims tread a long road and at the end of their arduous journey, Monte Mario, the highest of the Roman hills becomes visible. A spontaneous hymn of praise to the city erupts with the crowd singing 'Rome, Rome' followed by the churchbells ringing out their exultant greeting.

### **L'OTTOBRATA (OCTOBER FEAST)**

The third movement invites us to an 18th century Roman party. Flower garlands, vines, reverberating echoes, distant bells and suggestive lovesongs create a feast for the senses.

### **LA BEFANA (FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY)**

In this final movement Respighi conjures up the atmosphere of the 19th century Piazza Navona in Rome where a wild party is in full swing. At times all you can hear are blazing trumpets and raucous barrel organs. The town crier tries to convey the latest news amidst the deafening street noise with the dizzy local drunkard comically represented by the solo trombone. The music ends with a spectacular ritornello based on a repeated melody.