

# SPEEDMEETINGS SUBSCRIPTION FORM

COMPANY : AQUARIUS

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Describe your company in a few words :

**AQUARIUS** is a Flemish Chamber Choir – 24 to 32 singers - with a warm heart for contemporary music.

**AQUARIUS ahead of its time.** In our 21<sup>st</sup> century irreversible evolutions will shake and redraw the arts' landscape even more. In our globalized universe, all cultural expressions are permeated by each other. Classical music merges with jazz, pop and world music. Europe will disappear as a cultural leader. Music from the far and nearby past is very much alive. Contemporary music is how it has always been and should always be: innovative, shocking and directive. This clash of cultures provides dynamics never seen before and whirling, ominous yet amazing future. AQUARIUS embraces this age and participates in this exciting, confusing and gaudy shift, where old and new, classical and popular, sacred and secular, progressive and conservative are combined.

The dialogue will be based on universal themes: war/peace, misery/passion, belief/disbelief, democracy/dictatorship, sound/image. An AQUARIUS concert aspires to be more than simply an aesthetic experience.

Founded in 1995 under the name GOEYVAERTS CONSORT, this ensemble has expanded, and using a new name, its vision is to embrace all forms of contemporary music in a global musical offering that rises above all categories and specialties. We have already given hundreds of concerts and produced 12 CD's and 2 DVD's.

<https://youtu.be/eTimj-qacqw>

Which project would you like to present during your speedmeeting sessions

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## Arvo Pärt : Kanon Pokajanen :

Of all the repertoire of AQUARIUS, the Kanon Pokajanen is the work that is most performed (more than 25X). The music of Arvo Pärt (°1935) has its supporters and its critics. AQUARIUS is a supporter. AQUARIUS sang the KANON POKAJANEN in Flanders one year (1999) after its premiere in Köln. And what attracts AQUARIUS to this music also attracts a large audience. This music is not complex and intellectual, but neither does it pander to the global fascination with 'cross-over'. The fact that it reaches such a large audience worldwide shows that it fills a need. It does not reflect our hectic, exhausted society, but offers a point of rest, a moment of introspection and tranquillity.

The link between AQUARIUS and the Kanon Pokajanen was strengthened when the composer came to one of our performances in 2008. He came to work, not for pleasure. This made a great impression on all the members of AQUARIUS. For his part, he was impressed by our many years' dedication to his music. And he was very happy with our performance.

There is always an enormous response to AQUARIUS' performances of the KANON POKAJANEN. On the one hand, this has to do with an admiration for the intense and edifying performance, and on the other (and most importantly), with what the audience itself experiences. Two hours in a church gives space to questions and feelings that go far beyond the beauty of an individual concert. This KANON POKAJANEN fills the church with explosions of sound and fills the hearts of the listeners with strong emotions. This KANON POKAJANEN murmurs and sighs, and gives the listener time to find him/herself. That is the strength of good music. That is what links Arvo Pärt with Franz Schubert. That is why AQUARIUS continues to want to sing this music for an audience that continues to want to be moved by it.

Arvo Pärt's Kanon Pokajanen (Canon of Repentance, 1995-97) is based on the canon of repentance and remorse as it is found in the Old Church Slavonic manuscripts (sixth century AC).

The Canon represents the change, the transition from day to night, the Old and New Testament, prophecy and fulfilment, the now and hereafter. Applied to the human kind, it deals with the boundary between the human and the divine, the weakness and strength, suffering and redemption, death and immortality.

As Arvo Pärt himself describes the Kanon Pokajanen:

“In this composition, I have tried to depart from the language itself. I wanted the lyrics to find their own sound, their own melodic lines. And so arose music which, to my own astonishment, echoed, in essence, the old Slavonic Church music.”

<https://youtu.be/dtV03aEBRSA>

## MAGNIFICENT MAGNIFICAT

MAGNIFICENT MAGNIFICAT contains eight splendid pieces, each very different from the rest, and the listener will be surprised by their multifaceted nature. Those who consider Arvo Pärt's style to be limited and all too recognizable will have to revise their opinion. Every piece must be described individually: the one is very stormy, the other serene, a third is ethereal, a fourth transparent like the heavens, a fifth ... and so on.

AQUARIUS makes every word and every note vibrate with empathy. In five languages, and five times five different moods. A cappella music about life: the now and the hereafter. Belief made into sound. Humankind between the finite and the infinite.

This music is a refuge and a quest: it is food for the doubter and for the seeker, and for the 'new' believer who wants to embrace something that transcends the visible and material.

An appropriate homage to a composer who is loved by all singers of AQUARIUS

Morning Star (2007)

Nunc Dimittis (2001)

I am the true Vine (1996)

Magnificat (1989)

Sieben Magnificat Antiphonen (1988/91)

The Deer's Cry (2007)

Virgencita (2012)

Prayer after the Kanon (1997)

Arvo Pärt about our CD Magnificent Magnificat: "I became aware of the Belgian choir AQUARIUS through the successful recording of my Canon of Repentance Kanon Pokajanen. With the new CD Magnificent Magnificat, AQUARIUS managed to span a natural arch over very different pieces and to amaze me with fresh interpretations. My thanks to all singers of AQUARIUS and their insightful conductor Marc de Smet." (Arvo Pärt 09/09/2015))

<https://youtu.be/-qu6c16gk08>

## MUSIC FOR THE MYSTIC LAMB

Paris may have its Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci, and Rome may have its Sistine Chapel, but Flanders preserves the 'Mystic Lamb' by the van Eyck Brothers. This painting is part of the select group of artistic highlights, which are among the greatest tourist attractions of Europe.

As an enviable connoisseur of music, Prof.Dr. Peter Schmidt (Dutch version) is the ultimate guide to draw our attention on this retable. For twelve important themes from the work of art, he has selected the most beautiful songs of our European music history: from Gregorian chant to Gorecki.

Schmidt's surprising choices traverse the centuries and allow you to discover many an unknown pearl (by Ord, MacPherson, Rousseau). That Gregorian chant, and Hildegard Von Bingen are represented is, of course, because of the period to in which the painters lived. Further work of Palestrina, de Victoria, Purcell, Brahms, Bruckner, Verdi, Kodaly, Poulenc, Barber and Pärt. A daring 'Amen' that represents the altar piece in its entirety, written by the Polish eccentric Gorecki, brings this musical and pictorial journey to an end.



*A life-size replica*

The legendary altar piece is on display in the St Bavo's Cathedral (part is being restored). It would be unthinkable to move it. To make the audience's experience more intense, there is a masterful, life-size replica to be seen on the stage, behind and above the choir. It is an example of the art of high-technology reproduction.

AQUARIUS also wants to try an experiment with its audience. The programme booklet has become a work of art, containing extremely beautiful pictures of the panels and of details therefrom. While listening to each musical work, the listener has ample time to give his eyes a treat and discover the inspired heights achieved in these pictures through the skill of the brothers Jan and Hubert Van Eyck. A slowing down, in times when everything must be hip, cool and flashy.

<https://youtu.be/fP01nLqsgIc>