

LIONEL SOW

Lionel Sow – an architect of sound whose work allows the smallest details to grow into a greater whole; an artist who paints fantastic soundscapes with vocal colors; a musical explorer with a creative vision of renewal. As Music Director of the Chœur de Radio France and the Choir of the National Forum of Music in Wrocław (Poland), and through his collaboration with the Balthasar Neumann Choir, he is shaping the future of European choral singing with creative programming, meaningful collaborations, and forward-looking work with young talents. The French conductor's choral artistry weaves many individual voices into a harmonious whole, revealing the nuances of highs and lows, and giving sound both breadth and depth.

In the 2025/26 season, Lionel Sow will conduct Honegger's *"Le Roi David"* and the world premiere of Othman Louati's *"Sanctuaires"* with the Chœur de Radio France, as well as several a cappella projects with the Choir of the National Forum of Music in Wrocław. He will also prepare the Chœur de Radio France for performances of Berlioz's *"La damnation de Faust"* and works by Philippe Hersant, as well as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for Maxim Emelyanychev and Schumann's *"Das Paradies und die Peri"* for Philippe Jordan. In Wrocław, he will work with Giovanni Antonini on Mozart's *"Coronation Mass"*, with Christoph Eschenbach on Dvořák's *"Stabat Mater"*, and lead various a cappella projects.

At the heart of his work with the Balthasar Neumann Choir and Ensemble this season are several projects: during the Autumn Festival in Baden-Baden, he will conduct a concert featuring works by Distler, Mendelssohn, and Bach. In Fontainebleau, Neumarkt, and at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, he will present his interpretation of Bach's *"Christmas Oratorio"* alongside tenor Julian Prégardien. With the ensembles, he will perform Bruckner's *"Mass No. 2 in E minor"* and works by Palestrina and Donati in Barcelona, and return to the Elbphilharmonie as part of the Musikfest Hamburg with the choral program *"Dance of Death and Glimmer of Hope"*, featuring Joachim Król (narrator) and Iveta Apkalna (organ). Further projects, including with Balthasar NOVA, will take him in early 2026 to Munich's Kunstkraftwerk Bergson for the *"Neurope"* Festival, as well as to the Halle Handel Festival with Handel's *"Messiah"*.

Born into a musical family, Lionel Sow sang in numerous choirs as a child. Trained on the violin, he conducted vocal ensembles from a young age. He studied violin, singing, composition, Gregorian chant, and choral and orchestral conducting, and during his studies led several vocal ensembles, including the Maîtrise des Petits Chanteurs de Saint-Christophe and Les Temperamens. From 2006 to 2014, he succeeded Nicole Corti as Artistic Director of the Maîtrise Notre-Dame de Paris, where he performed not only major masterworks of sacred music but also an extensive a cappella repertoire from the Renaissance to the present day – including premieres of works by Vincent Bouchot, Édith Canat de Chizy, Yves Castagnet, Thierry Escaich, Philippe Hersant, Thomas Lacôte, Jean-Pierre Leguay, Caroline Marçot, Benoît Menut, Vincent Paulet, and Michèle Reverdy.

In 2011, Lionel Sow became Director of the Choir of the Orchestre de Paris, where he founded the Academy, the Chamber Choir, the Children's Choir, and the Youth Choir of the orchestra. In October 2021, he was appointed Artistic Director of the Choir of the National Forum of Music in Wrocław. From the 2025/26 season on, he will collaborate closely with the Balthasar Neumann Choir and Thomas Hengelbrock, leading numerous projects with their ensembles.

Lionel Sow has appeared at many international festivals and worked with conductors such as Thomas Adès, Herbert Blomstedt, Riccardo Chailly, Myung-Whun Chung, Gustavo Dudamel, Mikko Franck, Leonardo García Alarcón, Daniel Harding, Thomas Hengelbrock, Pablo Heras-Casado, Paavo Järvi, Louis Langrée, Christian Măcelaru, Sir Roger Norrington, Kirill Petrenko, Raphaël Pichon, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Michael Tilson Thomas, Simone Young, and many others. Since 2017, he has taught choral conducting at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Lyon.

A substantial discography documents Lionel Sow's achievements: among others, Yves Castagnet's "Messe Salve Regina" and Francis Poulenc's famous "Litanies à la Vierge noire" were released on the Hortus label, as well as Philippe Hersant's "Vêpres de la Vierge" on MSNDP. His most recent recording with the Choir of the National Forum of Music, "Dance of Death", features Hugo Distler's "Totentanz" alongside works by Brahms, Bach, and Reger, and was awarded a Diapason d'Or.

Among numerous other honors, Lionel Sow was appointed Officier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2025.

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