

LIONEL SOW

Lionel Sow – an architect of sound whose work makes 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. As Music Director of the Chœur de Radio France and the Choir of the National Forum of Music in Wrocław (Poland), and in collaboration with the Balthasar Neumann Choir, he is shaping the future of European choral singing with creative programs, meaningful collaborations, and forward-looking work with young talents. His choral artistry weaves many different 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 performances of Honegger's "Le Roi David" and Othman Louati's "Sanctuaires" with the Chœur de Radio France, as well as various a cappella projects with the Choir of the National Forum of Music.

At the heart of his work with the Balthasar Neumann Ensembles are several projects: during the Autumn Festival in Baden-Baden he will conduct a concert featuring works by Distler, Mendelssohn, and Bach. In December, he will present his interpretation of Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" to audiences in Fontainebleau, Neumarkt, and Hamburg. At the beginning of 2026, he will perform Bruckner's "Mass No. 2 in E minor" in Barcelona and return to the Elbphilharmonie as part of the Musikfest Hamburg with the choral program "Dance of Death and Glimmer of Hope". Further projects, including with Balthasar NOVA, will take him to Munich's Kunstkraftwerk Bergson for the "Neurope" Festival, as well as to the Halle Handel Festival with Handel's "Messiah".

Lionel Sow was born into a musical family and studied violin, singing, composition, Gregorian chant, and choral and orchestral conducting. From 2006 to 2014, he was Artistic Director of the Maîtrise Notre-Dame de Paris. In 2011, he took over the direction of the Choir of the Orchestre de Paris and in 2021 was appointed Artistic Director of the Choir of the National Forum of Music in Wrocław (Poland). From the 2025/26 season on, he will be working closely with the Balthasar Neumann Choir and Thomas Hengelbrock, leading numerous projects of the ensembles.

Lionel Sow has appeared at numerous international festivals and collaborated with conductors such as Thomas Adès, Herbert Blomstedt, Riccardo Chailly, Gustavo Dudamel, Daniel Harding, Thomas Hengelbrock, Pablo Heras-Casado, Paavo Järvi, Louis Langrée, Christian Măcelaru, Sir Roger Norrington, Kirill Petrenko, Raphaël Pichon, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Since 2017, he has been teaching choral conducting at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Lyon.

A substantial discography documents Lionel Sow's success: in addition to Yves Castagnet's "Messe Salve Regina" and Francis Poulenc's famous "Litanies à la Vierge noire", Philippe Hersant's "Vêpres de la Vierge" was also released. His most recent recording, "Dance of Death", was awarded a Diapason d'Or.

In 2025, Lionel Sow was appointed Officier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres.