



SWISS FRIENDS  
FREUNDKREIS SCHWEIZ  
CERCLE D'AMIS SUISSE

## **Letter from the President**

Zurich, November 2015

Dear Friends of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (RCO),

With the festive season approaching, for many of you likely to be accompanied by classical music, please allow me to present you with a short review of the Freundeskreis / Friends / Cercle d'Amis activities in 2015, and to give you an outlook on 2016.

The first highlight of our year was the cultural trip to The Netherlands, over the weekend of May 15 and 16. Members of the FK/Cercle d'Amis visited the wonderful exhibition of works by Matisse in the Stedelijk Museum, with an introduction by Mr. Bart Rutten, head of the collections. After seeing the exhibition, members had lunch in the Museum Restaurant. In the afternoon, members were given a tour 'behind the scenes' of the Concertgebouw building, during which we saw many backstage rooms, where the day-to-day work of musicians and maestros takes place, as well as receiving explanations about the extraordinary acoustics and technical installations. Before the evening's concert, members were invited to come to the "Spiegelzaal" for drinks and an Indonesian Rijsttafel. Jan Raes, director of the RCO, gave a short introduction to the concert. In the beautiful hall of the Concertgebouw we heard conductor Jan Willem de Vriend and soloist Kristian Bezuidenhout on the fortepiano playing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Idomeneo: Ballet Music KV 367, the Piano Concerto No.9, KV271, and Franz Schubert's Symphony No.1.

The next day we had a guided bus tour through Rotterdam, followed by a lunch and visit to the Wereldmuseum. In the early afternoon, we embarked on a "Spido" boat trip for a sightseeing tour of the harbor of Rotterdam. In the evening the new Swiss ambassador in The Hague, Dr. Urs Breiter, followed his predecessors' tradition by kindly inviting us to dinner in his residence. Once again, members were treated to a wonderful performance by three musicians of the RCO, who played the Johannes Brahms-Trio for piano, horn and violin, op. 40 in E-flat major. A member of the Freundeskreis offered two new diskant horns to Laurens Woudenberg, one of the principal horn players of the RCO.

A big thank you to all whose efforts and connections made this cultural trip so very special!

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One of our main goals is providing support for talented young musicians studying in Switzerland. Thus, in the spring of 2015 we sponsored seventeen master-students from Switzerland to travel to an audition for the Academy. Sadly, none was accepted. Students who gain admission to the academy are taught by RCO musicians, and embedded in the orchestra for a year.

Mr. and Mrs. David Koetser at the Koetser Gallery in the heart of Zürich kindly hosted our annual general meeting on May 26. Being surrounded by beautiful Old Master paintings gave the AGM a very special ambiance. Our president, Mr. Erik Brenninkmeijer, led through the meeting, followed by Anna Steenhuis, who played on her violin for attending members. Anna auditioned at the Academy of the RCO in March of this year, but was unfortunately not accepted. Bank J. Safra Sarasin, the main sponsor of the Freundeskreis, once again donated the apéro riche.

On a midsummer afternoon, one of our members invited to “Concerto and Coffee” at his barn. As always, we had some excellent musicians from the RCO playing the trombone, trumpet and horn against the backdrop of an antique gas station, surrounded by vintage cars. In the intermissions, members of the Freundeskreis served coffee, tea and soft drinks with delicious cakes and cookies.

As last year, at the end of August a member once again organised a private event at their home. A musical performance by a trio of RCO musicians, followed by cocktails, helped us to reach out to a wider circle of music lovers and new members. This is part of an intensive and successful drive to interest people of all ages for the RCO, and our work.

In keeping with tradition, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra played two concerts at the 2015 Lucerne Festival. In the morning of August 28, our members were invited to attend the rehearsal in the concert hall of the KKL Lucerne. On the same day in the afternoon, the Freundeskreis sponsored master classes at the Musikhochschule Luzern, this time for flute, violin, viola and cello. In the evening, we enjoyed a fantastic concert with works by the composers Antonin Dvorak and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, conducted by Daniel Harding with Isabelle Faust on the solo violin. The evening concluded with a reception in Lucerne’s Palace Hotel, to which all RCO musicians were invited. Even Isabelle Faust and Daniel Harding came by to chat with the guests. This year’s gift from the Freundeskreis to the RCO was presented in Palace Hotel’s festive atmosphere: two buxus clarinets, christened “The Rhine Set”, to be played by Olivier Patey, who thanked us by playing some spirited pieces. As always, the wonderful reception would not have been possible without the generous support of Bank J. Safra Sarasin, represented by Mr. Alexander Siegenthaler: We are very grateful!

Mariss Jansons’ memorable last concert as chief conductor of the RCO took place on an evening in Amsterdam this spring.

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra started a new tradition to begin the season, the RCO Opening night. The new RCO chief conductor Daniele Gatti, with master cellist Yo-Yo Ma, inaugurated it.

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, the Netherlands Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador and Mrs. van Schreven, invited members of the Freundeskreis/ Cercle d’Amis Suisse and guests to their residence. Three musicians of the RCO played works by Phyllis Tate and Ludwig van Beethoven. After the concert, all members and guests were invited to an “Apéro Riche”. This time, Wealthon Asset Management, to whom we are very grateful, sponsored the food and drinks.

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We are currently planning our annual cultural trip to the Netherlands. On May 20 in the morning, members will listen to the orchestra rehearsing Tchaikovsky's "Pique Dame" under the baton of Maestro Mariss Jansons. We will then drive to the "Eye Film Museum", where we will see the documentary "Blood, Sweat and Strings". For those members who have not seen the Concertgebouw before, or want to see it again, there will be a guided tour to the backstage and the concert hall in the afternoon. Before the concert, members will have dinner in the Spiegelzaal, then hear works by Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky under the lead of conductor Valery Gergiev. On Saturday, the bus will take us to Scheveningen, where we will have lunch at the Hotel Kurhaus. In the afternoon, we have organized a guided tour of the Mauritshuis. After visiting the museum, members of the Freundeskreis will be invited to dinner in the residence of the Swiss ambassador to The Hague, Dr Urs Breiter, with a musical surprise from musicians of the RCO.

Looking very much forward to see you again soon,

On behalf of the board of the  
Freundeskreis / Friends / Cercle d'Amis of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra,



Erik Brenninkmeijer, President

**Agenda 2016:**

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| May 3:       | Annual General Meeting, Zurich (Koetser Gallery, Zürich)        |
| May 20-21:   | Trip to Amsterdam   |
| June 26:     | "Concert and Coffee"  |
| June 28:     | Event UN Geneva   |
| August 28:   | Lucerne Festival with RCO Concert and Freundeskreis, Main event |
| August 29:   | Lucerne Festival with RCO Concert                               |
| September 9: | RCO Opening Night Amsterdam                                     |

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