



SWISS FRIENDS
FREUNDESKREIS SCHWEIZ
CERCLE D'AMIS SUISSE

Letter from the President

Zurich, November 2016

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 2016, and to give you an outlook on 2017.

Mr. and Mrs. David Koetser kindly hosted our annual general meeting on May 3rd at their Koetser Gallery in the heart of Zürich. Being surrounded by beautiful Old Master paintings gave the AGM a very special ambiance. Jop Wehmeijer, new president of the Freundeskreis/Friends/ Cercle d'Amis, thanked past president Erik Brenninkmeijer for the work he did during the last four years. After the AGM, Corinna Canzian, a student of the Musikhochschule Lucerne, gave members and guests some introductory remarks on the pieces by J.S. Bach, P. Locatelli, S. Sciarrino and G.Knox she played on her violin. Bank J. Safra Sarasin main sponsor of the Freundeskreis, kindly offered the apéro riche.

Following the AGM, the next highlight of our year was the cultural trip to The Netherlands on the weekend of May 20 and 21. In the morning of May 20th, members attended the rehearsal of "Pique Dame in the building of the Concertgebouw, conducted by Maestro Mariss Janssons. In the afternoon, we took the boat to the EYE Film Museum, where they saw "Blood, Sweat and Strings", a compiled English film version of the popular Dutch TV series about the RCO, followed by a lunch.

In the evening, members had drinks and snacks in one of the salons of the Concertgebouw before Jan Raes, director of the RCO, gave a short introduction to the concert. In the beautiful concert_hall of the Concertgebouw, under the conductor Valery Gergiev, we heard the violin soloist Nikolaj Znaider performing Ludwig van Beethoven's violin concert, followed by Sergej Prokofjev Symphony No. 6. As a big surprise, Mr. Gergiev joined our supper of the "Indonesische Rijsttafel" in the Spiegelzaal of the Concertgebouw.

The next day the bus took us from the Apollo Hotel in Amsterdam to the Kurhaus in Scheveningen, where we had lunch at the Serre of the Kurhaus with a beautiful view of the seaside. From there, the driver of the bus dropped us in front of the parliament, the "Binnenhof" in The Hague, from where we walked to the Mauritshuis. Curator Mr. Q.Buvelot gave introductory remarks about the Old Masters in the museum. Four guides welcomed our members for a guided tour of the many fabled masterpieces.

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Urs Breiter followed his predecessors' tradition by kindly inviting us to dinner in his residence at The Hague. Once again, four musicians of the RCO played pieces Leonard Bernstein, John Johnson and Franz Anton Hoffmeister on their double basses, treating members to a wonderful performance. All members and guest were invited for a delicious walking dinner in the garden of the Swiss Ambassador's home.

One of our main goals is providing support for talented young musicians studying in Switzerland. The RCO Academy is a one-year programme during which promising young talents are taught by RCO musicians, and embedded in the orchestra for one year. In the spring of 2016, we sponsored one Academy candidate from Switzerland to travel to Amsterdam to audition with the RCO. Sadly, this student was not accepted.

On a June 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 oboe, clarinet and bassoon against the backdrop of an antique gas station, surrounded by vintage cars. In the intermissions, coffee, tea and soft drinks were served, along with delicious cakes and cookies baked by members of the Freundeskreis and guests.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Human Rights Council, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Swiss Friends RCO invited members and guest to a special concert on June 28th at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Seven musicians from the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra played the sextet by Ludwig van Beethoven and the string quartet by Erwin Schulhoff. Preceding the concert in the Assembly Hall, members and guests enjoyed a guided tour of the Palais des Nations, followed by an apéro. At dinner in a restaurant after the concert, members and guests engaged in lively conversations with the concert's RCO musicians.

In keeping with tradition, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra played two concerts at the Lucerne Festival. On Sunday, August 28, 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 for flute, violin, viola and cello. In the evening, we enjoyed a fantastic concert with works by the composers Claude Debussy, Henri Dutilleux, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Igor Strawinsky, conducted by chief conductor Daniele Gatti, with soloist Sol Gabetta playing the violoncello. The evening concluded with a reception in Lucerne's Palace Hotel, to which all members, guests of the Freundeskreis/Cercle d'Amis/ Swiss Friends and all RCO musicians were invited. Even the chief conductor, Daniele Gatti, came by to chat with the guests. This year's gift from the Freundeskreis to the RCO, a C-trumpet for Omar Tomasoni christened the Molé-son, was presented in the Palace Hotel's festive atmosphere. Omar 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!

On September 9th, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra inaugurated the new season with the RCO Opening Night. New chief conductor Daniele Gatti, with baritone Christian Gerhaher and the Youth Orchestra of the Netherlands, performed the ouverture of "Egmont" by Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert's Entr'acte No. 3 "Rosamunde", and Gustav Mahler's "Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen".

We are currently planning our annual cultural trip to the Netherlands. On the morning of May 12th, members will have a boat tour with Swiss correspondent Elsbeth Gugger, from the Swiss Radio. Mrs Gugger has lived in Amsterdam since 1992. In the afternoon, there will be a tour of the Concertgebouw. Before the concert, members will meet for an apéro and dinner in the Spiegelzaal, followed by a

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performance of works by Britten, Knussen and Elgar under the baton of conductor Ryan Wigglesworth in the concert hall of the Concertgebouw. On Saturday the 13th of May, a bus will take us to Wassenaar where we will have lunch in a restaurant. In the afternoon, we have organized a guided tour in the Museum Voorlinden in Wassenaar. 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.

As you may know, we celebrate our 10th anniversary in 2017. We shall celebrate this officially in September 2018, when we support the production of the oratorio Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher (1938) by the Swiss composer Arthur Honegger in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. This oratorio had never been performed by the RCO, and it has been a long-standing wish to play it. It consists of ten soloists, a choir and children's choir, making it a truly grand production.

With our best wishes for the holiday season, and a happy and healthy 2017,
looking very much forward to see you again soon,

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

Jop Wehmeijer, President



Agenda 2017:

May 3	Annual General Meeting, Zurich
May 12-13	Trip to Amsterdam
September 4	Lucerne Festival with RCO Concert
September 5	Lucerne Festival with RCO Concert and Freundeskreis (main event)
September 14	RCO Opening Night Amsterdam

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