



**EVERY SONG TELLS A
STORY: BARITONE HENK
NEVEN LAUNCHES
DEBUT SOLO RECITAL CD**

**AND RECEIVES DUTCH
MUSIC PRIZE IN
ROTTERDAM**

16 APRIL 2011



16 April will be a big day for Dutch baritone Henk Neven: he will receive the coveted Dutch Music Prize at the De Doelen Hall in Rotterdam and also launch his debut recital CD, *Auf Einer Burg*, on the Onyx Classics label.

Neven joins a roster of acclaimed musicians and ensembles recorded by the highly regarded 'boutique' label, Onyx Classics (www.onyxclassics.com), whose reputation for creativity and quality results from artist-led recordings that are uniquely expressive and personal. Henk Neven has chosen songs by Carl Loewe that revive his own special childhood fantasies of fairy tales and mythical landscapes, plus the intensely beautiful love songs of Robert Schumann. He is accompanied by pianist Hans Eijsackers. The recording has been supported by the Borletti-Buitoni Trust as part of the Fellowship awarded to Neven in 2009. The Trust is internationally recognized for assisting talented young musicians in the creative development of their careers, not just financially, but with a network of support and promotion.

The Dutch Music Prize ('Nederlandse Muziekprijs') is the highest honor that the Ministry of Culture can award to a classical musician and is awarded on the advice of the Dutch Music Prize Advisory Board, part of the Dutch Fund for the Performing Arts. Just as other recipients of this prestigious prize did, Henk Neven successfully followed a study path with the main emphasis being on the musical development of the artist. Candidates for the prize have the opportunity to train with the best musicians in the world. The Prize presentation concert at which Henk Neven performs is Bach's Kreuzstab Kantate BWV 56 with the Orkest van de Achttiende de Eeuw conducted by Frans Brüggen.

Notes to editors:

- Henk Neven's personal comments on his chosen repertoire for Auf Einer Burg:

When I was a young boy, my parents would take me and my sister and brothers on holiday to Germany or France. We visited castles, churches and ruins. To me, this roaming around monuments was an enormously exciting activity. These **time**-ravaged buildings in surroundings of almost mythical allure fired my **imagination** and cast my mind back to times gone by. I wandered a world inhabited by fair maidens, knights and minstrels.

Years later, I heard Carl Loewe's Ballads. They brought a joy of recognition and reawakened my childhood fantasies. These ballads (not just the limited selection on this CD, but many songs from Loewe's extensive oeuvre) touch me because these fantasies are so vividly expressed, as if they were brief film scenes with dramatic twists. The singer cannot but become a **storyteller**, a minstrel: a grateful and challenging role that I am pleased to take on.

At the moment of writing, Loewe's songs and ballads look back into the past before making a long journey forward. Time ticks mercilessly on. 'Herr Oluf' extends his hand to his own mortality in the person of the Erl-king's daughter; 'Der Pilger' (Charles V) casts off his earthly splendour to die peacefully in a monastery; 'Die Uhr' faithfully accompanies the passing of our time; 'Der sel'tne Beter' is confronted with the limited time his beloved daughter has been given; in 'Süßes Begräbnis' the end of a young shepherdess is celebrated. **Transience** is everywhere.

What touches me is that, for Loewe and his poets, transience conveys not so much a gloomy or sad mood, but rather an enriching of the **moment** we live in. To me, this is the connection with Schumann's *Liederkreis* op.39. The cycle starts in a melancholic, nostalgic tone (Aus der Heimat hinter den Blitzen rot,/da kommen die Wolken her,/aber Vater und Mutter sind lange tot,/es kennt mich dort keiner mehr): a remarkable beginning for a cycle of love songs. I believe Schumann was able to write such intense love songs precisely because he was always aware of his limited time. That restriction ultimately brings its bonus in profundity.

- **Biography:**

Henk Neven studied with Maarten Koningsberger and Margreet Honig at the Conservatory of Amsterdam where he graduated in 2003 and also received a diploma from the New Opera Academy in 2002. He has taken part in masterclasses with Graham Johnson, Graham Clark, Rudolf Jansen, Hartmut Höll, Jard van Nes and is now regularly coached by Margreet Honig and Robert Holl.

In winning the 2008 Fortis MeesPierson Award, the jury declared that "Neven has the potential to grow into a sensational artist". In 2009 he was awarded a Borletti-Buitoni Fellowship and joined the prestigious Radio 3 New Generation Artists Scheme. In addition to lieder and oratorio Henk Neven has sung in many operas, performing such roles as Marco Gianni Schicchi, Don Alfonso Cosí fan tutte, Don Giovanni and Leporello Don Giovanni, Count Le nozze di Figaro, Aeneas Dido and Aeneas, Schaunard La bohème (Dijon), Ben The Telephone and Mr. Gobineau The Medium by Menotti and Mars Vénus et Adonis by Desmererst (Nancy), Pollux Castor et Pollux and Frère Léon St. François d'Assise staged by Pierre Audi which was also recorded for DVD by Opus Arte (Netherlands Opera), Capriccio (Opéra National de Paris) and Morales Carmen with Daniel Barenboim (Staatsoper Berlin). He has also appeared at the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux, L'Opéra National de Montpellier, Grand Theatre de Tours, Opéra de Rouen and Het Nederlands Muziektheater, and he has sung Joseph L'Enfance du Christ with John Nelson at the Notre Dame in Paris. Neven has worked with well-known ensembles such as the Orchestra of the Beethovenhalle, Bonn, Combattimento Consort, Amsterdam, the Netherlands Bachvereniging, the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, the Radio Kamer Filharmonie, the Vlaams Radio Orkest, L'Orchestre National de France, L'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France,

Orchestre d'Opéra National de Paris, Staatskapelle Berlin, L'ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Les Concerts Spirituels and Les Talens Lyriques. He has worked with conductors such as Edo de Waart, Jaap van Zweden, Jos van Veldhoven, Jan Willem de Vriend, Hervé Niquet, Emanuel Krivine, Kenneth Montgomery, Joel Levi, Patrick Lange, Paulo Olmi, Armin Jordan, John Nelson, Ed Spanjaard, Marc Soustrot, Marc Minkovsky and Christophe Rousset.

Recent engagements include Leporello Don Giovanni at De Doelen, Rotterdam, Patrocle Iphigénie en Aulide at La Monnaie, Ottokar Der Freischütz at the Theater an der Wien, and recital debuts at the City of London Festival, Cheltenham Festival and the BBC Proms. Neven has performed in the Festival Oude Muziek in Utrecht and the Gergiev Festival in Rotterdam. In the ZaterdagMatinee series in the Concertgebouw, he has sung Vanessa (Barber), Bakchantinen (Wellesz), Jérusalem (Verdi), Flammen (Schulhoff), Roucher Andrea Chenier, La chute de la maison Usher (Debussy) and in Roméo et Juliette (Gounod).

He has given recitals with cellist Jan Bastiaan Neven and pianist Jelger Blanken as part of the concert series 'Het Debuut' (The Debut). In the Robeco summer series of the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam) he performed the title role in Don Giovanni in addition to giving a recital in the Kleine Zaal with his duo partner, pianist Hans Eijsackers. Recently Neven also performed with this pianist in the concert series 'Jonge Nederlanders' and in the 'Vocale serie' in the Concertgebouw. Neven opens the 2010-11 season with Mercurio Roméo et Juliette at De Nederlandse Opéra and returns there again in early 2011 for the role of Donald in Billy Budd. He gives recitals at the Concertgebouw, La Monnaie; the Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; and makes his debut at the Wigmore Hall, London, and the Sage, Gateshead. Henk will also record with the BBC Orchestras, including the BBC Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony, as part of the New Generation Artists programme. In November 2010, Henk recorded his first commercial album, for Onyx Classics, of Lieder by Schumann and Carl Loewe with the support of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust. The release is in April 2011. Go to <http://www.bbtrust.com/blog/schumann-with-the-spirit-of-britten/> to read more about the recording experience at Potton Hall, Suffolk in England.

- Other Borletti Buitoni Trust award-winners who have been supported in their recordings with Onyx include mezzo-soprano Christianne Stotijn and percussionist Colin Currie.

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