

## Press Release

### **Historic Reality, Search for Ideals, and New Sounds**

**In the fall of 2020, the Berliner Oratorien-Chor will be performing rarely heard choral works by Richard Strauss and Walter Braunfels, including the world premiere of “*Besinnung*”, a work begun by Strauss but only finished in 2020.**

**Berlin.** On 22 November 2020, the Berliner Oratorien-Chor will be presenting a unique and extraordinary program in the Berlin Philharmonie. The upheavals that shook Europe to the core in the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be reflected on musically - the occasion being two memorials: the end of World War II and German Reunification, 75 years ago and 30 years ago, respectively.

In 1903, Richard Strauss set the patriotic ballad of „*Taillefer*” (by Ludwig Uhland) to music while adapting it to the expectations of the imperial times. Nearly half a century and two world wars later, the now seasoned and reclusive composer started composing his last work in 1949: “*Besinnung*” (“*Reflection*” or “*Contemplation*”). The piece is based on the poem of the same title written by Herman Hesse and has remained unfinished after Strauss’ death. Conductor and composer Thomas Hennig recently obtained permission to complete the work based on the original sketches and fragments. The belated completion of master Richard Strauss’ work will be performed in a worldwide premiere that evening.

In the second half of the concert, the rarely performed “*Te Deum*” (1922) by Walter Braunfels will be heard. Born into a family of Jewish ancestry and baptized as a protestant, Braunfels converted to Catholicism after his experiences during World War I. The reality of the horrors of war and the question of a higher meaning shaped this work. With 110 performances, the “*Te Deum*” was quite a successful piece at the time. Unfortunately, due to the rise to power of the National socialists, the composer was eventually shunned, and his works became nearly forgotten. When World War II was over, Braunfels was tasked by Konrad Adenauer with rebuilding the music academy in Cologne. His creative output, however, is only recently being rediscovered.

The Berliner Oratorien-Chor hosts the Rodenkirchener Kammerchor (Cologne), and the chamber choir Fortis (Saint Petersburg, Russia) for this performance with the Berliner Symphoniker directed by Thomas Hennig. Yvonne Friedli (Soprano) and Hans-Georg Priese (Tenor) will perform the solo parts.