

Music Chapel

The New Building

In September 2013 the foundation stone for the extension of the **Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel** is laid: a brand new building in harmony with the current architectural heritage that meets the constantly increasing needs of this unique laboratory of musical life and creativity in Europe.

At the gates of the Forêt de Soignes, the **Music Chapel** boasts exceptional facilities where young music talents and masters in residence stimulate one another. Inaugurated on 12 July 1939, the building reflects an architecture in transition between Art Deco and Modernism. The architect **Yvan Renchon** designed this building with the core activities of the institution in mind, namely to host and accommodate top level young musicians who are keen to improve and to perform under optimal conditions. In 1994, the public authorities listed the original buildings and its park. In 2004, the Music Chapel undertook a comprehensive overhaul of its artistic curriculum by increasing its instructional and cultural activities: accommodation of young musicians, reception of masters in residence, organization of 250 concerts per year, an international tour, and the release of a collection of recordings under the aegis of the Outhere group (Fuga Libera/ZigZag).

This flurry of activities has meant that the facilities of the Music Chapel had to be expanded to enable the institution to bolster its positioning on the international scene. Whereas the existing building represents 1800 m², this new extension doubles the floor space (3,500 m²): a large music studio will offer not only rehearsal and concert space, but also a professional recording studio equipped by the Outhere music production and publishing group, 2 large rehearsal and concert studios, 6 rehearsal studios, 20 residential studios and an Artists Village (restaurant, kitchen, lounge, gym and relaxation facility) that can accommodate up to 60 people.

The New Building project represents concurrently **an architectural, acoustical, landscapal, and environmental challenge**.

An architectural challenge: preserve an architectural heritage devoted to music. The architectural context of the **Music Chapel** requires the two project management firms (L'Escaut & Synergy International), the architects **Olivier Bastin** and **Sébastien Cruyt**, and the landscape architect **Jean Noël Capart** (JNC international) to adopt a respectful attitude and to engage in a real quality dialogue between the old and the new. The New Building looks like a long horizontal bar more than 80 meters long. The south façade forms a glass screen which, depending on the outdoor light conditions, can afford a glimpse of life in the corridor and rehearsal rooms, or a reflection of nature and the old building. A real "backdrop" for the main building, the New Building is connected with the old building by a base course that capitalizes on the slope of the land to create a large surface area: hosting the collective functions relating to the life of young musicians (Artists village), this base is enlivened by a patio and a large opening to the garden and the forest, while its roofs and terraces can host a large audience during events.

An acoustical challenge. The acoustics engineering **Rémy Raskin** (Capri Acoustique) is an authority in the field of concert hall acoustics. Wood is therefore omnipresent – on the floor, in wainscots, acoustic paneling and at times the ceiling – and appears in its natural texture. The building is designed in such a way that every room dedicated to music is insulated from its neighboring rooms.

A landscaping challenge. The New Building takes its place in its natural environment and really merges in the "décor" without distorting the original site. The architects have made this possible by using different techniques and architectural elements, starting with the choice of natural materials and the terracing of the land.

An environmental challenge. The materials and construction methods for the New Building have been carefully chosen to guarantee their sustainability to optimize the long-term environmental balance. The building is geared to a "low energy" type of performance.