

**Uitreiking Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds Prijs
aan Reinbert de Leeuw, 26 november 2018**

Speech Pierre Audi, regisseur en voormalig (artistiek) directeur de Nationale Opera en Holland Festival

Reinbert,

We met 32 years ago when you came with the Schoenberg Ensemble to the Almeida Festival in London. The concert you gave there changed my life. I had no idea I would be asked a year later to become artistic director of Dutch National Opera but after I was chosen and I accepted I could focus on only one certainty: how much I wanted to start an artistic relationship with you who had left me so moved and so shaken by your sensational deeply poetic musicianship. And since, I have not met anyone in my life that comes near you in your way to make music, perform and transmit Drama and mysticism in performance.

You are a towering example of why musical curiosity and generosity are at the core of advancing the cause of new work, experimentation, and the quest for discovering personal universes amongst composers . You are yourself a great composer - something you don't want to think about very much. But you are.

But it is through working together that I learned to understand you better and admire your extraordinary instinct in making ritual theatre from the simplest musical gestures. Kagel, Kurtag and Ustvolskaya don't need explaining when you perform them. Satie found his one and only soulmate. You are the definitive interpreter of Ligeti and Louis Andriessen and the one who resurrected Claude Vivier from an early sad death to a new life as one of the greatest undiscovered geniuses of the last 40 years.

No need to communicate much in words when you are there. Your performances take their time to fall into place . When they do the music flows out of you as from a volcano, with organic intensity and a devastating Impact. To witness that process was humbling, inspiring and worrying.

So many times I knew I would never want to hear a piece done by anyone else, so powerful and convincing was your interpretation. I have not had that feeling with any conductor I know.

You have talked about me with great generosity often and every time I think of how much you taught me about the responsibility of the interpreter and the performer. And those lessons I have applied over and over to my directing and my curating . I share with you the intense curiosity for personal creative universes . It's an addiction almost because discovering those gestures is so rare, so unique and so important one needs to devote a lifetime to be on the look out in order not to miss helping communicating those precious messages to the world. We both understand this very well.

In four capacities throughout my professional life we have collaborated memorably dear Reinbert. I want to thank you for the love and urgency you put into your art. You cannot be imitated but your example can remind us that notes on a page are worthless without the sacrifices and vision of the one who needs to turn those notes into the sound of someone's boundless fantasy or often bleeding soul.