"Concrete room" becomes a beautiful rehearsal and concert hall



January 10, 2026 Ludwig Van Mechelen . Photos: (c) Simon Van Rompay

For ages, the BNO rehearsed in a somewhat dressed-up concrete space, or had to constantly move to a place where the music the orchestra members were practicing could be heard and enjoyed.

That's all a thing of the past now. Rehearsals are now something that takes place in that transformed concrete structure, a true Henry Le Bœuf hall.

Hidden room

Rehearsing has recently become a pleasure instead of an annoying chore for the musicians, conductors, and soloists with the Belgian National Orchestra, whether permanently or temporarily. They no longer have to trek from hall to hall to rehearse properly, nor do they have to reluctantly huddle together in that utterly outdated hall to rehearse this or that symphony. The frustration and unnecessary travel back and forth, laden with baggage, are a thing of the past. The BNO now has a rehearsal space that others can envy. How could a hidden, useless space beneath the BNO offices and in the Ravenstein Gallery complex—the passageway from Brussels Central Station to Bozar—become a venue you enjoy going to, where rehearsing is no longer about work, but pure music-making, and where time is no longer an issue? It's because someone came up with an idea that was developed by highly skilled people from start to finish, from architects and engineers to craftsmen of all kinds.

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And—fortunately—once again, taxpayers' and sponsors' money was put to good use.

No day like another

Friday, January 9, 2026, a day like any other, except for the BNO and everyone associated with it, such as the musicians, of course, but also those who set up chairs, music stands, and scores, roll the piano back and forth, see that the musicians' well-being is taken care of with food and drink before, during, and after rehearsals, that everything is neat and tidy, that the restrooms are sparkling, that there's no dust on the stairs, that the musicians can change in comfortable conditions and go over their scores, and so on.

On Friday, January 9th, that once-useless concrete space was inaugurated by the gentlemen and ladies who lead the BNO, who finance it, and who organize everything. Together with the established partners of Bozar and La Monnaie – the three national musical institutions housed in Brussels – the musical scene in Brussels, throughout the country, and abroad will receive new impetus, renewed encouragement, and motivation to "go for it." After all, it is crucial to work (is making music work?...) in a pleasant environment. Having to perform work, of any kind, in ugly gray concrete spaces or any other unpleasant buildings is never an incentive to improve morale; quite the opposite.

Here we don't rehearse, we make music, always

The responsible minister, now Jan Jambon (his predecessor co-authored the commission), officially inaugurated the renovated, acoustically superb "Atelier BNO," together with the BNO's director, Bob Permentier. The press was invited to attend the inauguration, and glasses were immediately raised to the new year. A New Year's reception is always enjoyable, but when you're allowed to savor the first notes in such a hall, you're more inclined to enjoy more music than just the drinks and snacks. A wind quintet opened the festive session, delivering a truly eloquent speech without words. A hall whose stage is a replica of the hall where the BNO performs most often—no program goes ahead without the orchestra being hosted in the Henry Le Bœuf Hall, and it was therefore an ideal opportunity to recreate the rehearsal floor as faithfully as possible to the main concert hall. Acoustically, it's a dream, but it's also a feast for the eyes, and the space can immediately be used for chamber music concerts. Because this space is much more than just a rehearsal room, it's been named Atelier BNO. And rest assured, many more chamber music concerts and perhaps open rehearsals by the BNO will take place here, and tickets will be snapped up quickly.

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Watch some atmospheric images of the inauguration and get the urge to be there as a listener, or, who knows, perhaps as a member of the BNO, soloist, conductor, or orchestra employee, to spend more than one time there, to make music, and not to rehearse anymore just because you have to.

Welcome to ***Atelier BNO*** !



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Simon Van Rompay

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Ludwig Van Mechelen

In his youth, Ludwig dreamed of a violin career. A fall changed his

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