



**ARTISTIC PROJECT**

**VARIOUS VOICES**

**2026 - BRUSSELS**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
SIMON PACO

« Now you stand here with your allies on all sides  
It's time to speak the truth that child once knew »\*

*Let Your Heart Be Heard* (Anthem of Various Voices 2026) – **Simon Finn**

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The terms "normativity" and "norm" will be used several times in this document, not to validate dominant social norms, but rather to denounce them. The use of these words aims to highlight inequalities, not to endorse them. The use of these terms critiques this reality and sheds light on its impact on our society and, more particularly, on the LGBTQIA+ community.

The term "marginalized" will also be employed to denounce the dynamics of exclusion that exist. Although I do not adhere to this terminology, it allows us to stress that intersectional individuals, who accumulate various forms of oppression, are more vulnerable to discrimination. The use of this expression aims to showcase inequalities, including within the LGBTQIA+ community itself, which particularly affects those living at the intersection of different kinds of oppression.

# INTRODUCTION

The *Various Voices Festival*, founded in 1985, has embodied for nearly four decades the strength of LGBTQIA+ choirs. This international festival is much more than just a musical gathering. It is a place for sharing, solidarity, and celebrating diversity. Throughout its history, *Various Voices* has accompanied the struggles and victories of the queer community, while offering a platform for artistic expression to thousands of choral singers across Europe and beyond.

Music, with its capacity to transcend boundaries, is a universal language that has always united us. As a means of expression, resistance, and celebration, singing brings individuals together in harmony where differences fade away to give way to collective emotion. Its absolute opposite, silence, essential to the score, is equally present in our lives, particularly in the lives of those who step outside normativity. Imposed muteness, where we are asked not to make waves, where we must go back into our closets or shells, where our voices might not be heard. However, this silence is broken when music rises and voices unite to shatter these invisible chains.

The *Various Voices Festival*, which has traversed Europe since 1985, will echo resoundingly in the streets of the EU capital, Brussels, in 2026. More than just a musical gathering, this event marks a powerful moment where the European LGBTQIA+ choir community takes possession of public space to assert its presence and pride. Each performance and each song will be a message sent to all of Europe: our hearts beat, our voices rise, and our struggle for recognition continues. We will make our hearts heard.

Beyond the many nationalities, this festival highlights the diversity of our identities, the connections that unite us, and the energy of our group. The themes explored during these days will immerse us in our history, as well as in our future aspirations. Unifying generations and cultures, *Various Voices 2026* will be a space of sharing where plurality will be celebrated in all its splendour.

The festival is not just a cry of resistance; it is above all a symphony of joy and solidarity. Each song is a moment of openness to others, a celebration of living together where diversity is our greatest strength. Our voices, powerful and united, transcend barriers and tell stories of shared happiness, vibrant emotions, and a collective celebration that awakens the heart. Prepare to break the silence with your songs that will resonate under the stars.

For this festival, we want to journey through our history, but also through different universes. Each day will be assigned a theme that illustrates our community, Belgium, and *Various Voices*. To bring this to life, we invite you to participate in the creation of each show. All practical details can be found on page 11 of this document.

Dear artists (performers, singers, dancers, etc.), you will find a note on page 11 of this document explaining what we are looking for in the events and the necessary details for submitting your application.

# CABARET

## Opening Ceremony

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

BOZAR – Henry Le Bœuf Hall

« Der Cabaret ist ein Widerstandsraum, wo man ernste Themen unterhaltsam behandeln kann. »  
« The cabaret is a space of resistance where serious topics can be treated in an entertaining way. »

Bertold Brecht (1898 – 1956) : German playwright, director and poet.

The cabaret is a place of transgression where body, politics and art meet. Since its emergence in the 19th century, it has been an intimate refuge for marginalized artists, particularly those from the LGBTQIA+ community. These secret gardens, often provocative and unrestrained, have become sanctuaries for those who do not conform to the norm.

As early as the 1920s, performances by queer artists in famous cabarets helped LGBTQIA+ individuals carve out a space within the artistic scene. These venues were not only places of entertainment where taboos were broken but also spaces of resistance, where conventions were challenged, and where gender and sexuality were played with freely.

The cabaret, with its dim lights and intimate atmosphere, has always represented a place where queers could express themselves without compromise. It is a space where the freedom to transgress codes is not only tolerated but celebrated. For the opening ceremony, this ambiance will be recreated with enchanting choreography and vibrant performances, reminding us that these venues are much more than artistic stages: they are our poetic refuge of fun.

For this ceremony, choirs are invited to participate with sensuality, flamboyant costumes, and subversive songs, immersing us in this unique universe within a setting that celebrates the freedom to be oneself. The cabaret is a space where social conventions are swept aside in favour of authentic and bold expression. Singing in such a setting is a way to break free and have total enjoyment, in complete complicity.

For one night, the cabaret becomes a space of rebirth, conviviality, and rebellion, where dreams, imagination, and non-conformity come together to celebrate with spontaneity; an explosion of colourful creativity.

# THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES

## surrealism

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Royal Circus of Brussels

« La résistance est la condition de la création. »

« Resistance is the condition of creation. »

Claude Cahun (1894 – 1954) : French non-binary actor-ess, photographer and visual artist.

Surrealism, which emerged in the early 20th century, is an artistic movement that celebrates the irrational and the liberation from conventions. Well-established in Belgium with figures such as René Magritte, Jane Graverol, and Rachel Baes, it advocates the subversion of rules and the exploration of the unconscious. Similarly, the queer movement reinvents social codes, rejecting dominant norms and imposed expectations. It is a way to free oneself from the invisible dimensions often stigmatized by society.

Freaks, once exhibited (Barnum & Bailey Circus, world expositions in London 1851 and Chicago 1893, etc.), were reduced to their marginality and subjected to the voyeurism of the crowds. Considered as objects of fascination and repulsion, they embodied a form of ultimate otherness, dehumanized and dominated by a system that used them for entertainment purposes.

The queer community, itself stigmatized by insult, opened its arms to them, seeing in their exclusion a shared experience. Queer\* and freak —these derogatory terms— have been linked by a history of rejection, as well as a common desire to rebuild themselves.

This cohesion has allowed not only for growth but also for strengthening, freeing itself from marginalization by creating a larger community made of diversity and resilience. From domination and exclusion, queer individuals and freaks reconstructed their identity, finding in this alienation a new source of power and pride. Like surrealism, born from the destruction of war, the queer movement transformed oppression into creativity, inventing other worlds and new forms of beauty.

This spirit of liberation and reconstruction will be celebrated through performances where the absurd and the imaginary intertwine. Choirs are invited to explore this surreal universe, to offer an experience where the collective unconscious expresses itself. An opportunity to let imagination and audacity invent dreamlike worlds where everything is possible. A breath that invites us to dream together and create unforgettable collective experiences.

\* Queer : originally means "strange", "uncommon" or "bizarre"

# ROYALTIES

## Monarchs of Heart

Friday, June 26, 2026

MONT DES ARTS – Outdoor Stage

« We're all born naked and the rest is drag. »

RuPaul : Drag queen, singer, host and American producer.

For decades, the LGBTQIA+ community has created its own monarchy. These iconic faces, often from the drag world, embody resistance and queer pride. From the 1960s onward, artists such as Divine, a drag pioneer, Sylvester, a disco scene icon, Stormé DeLarverie, a King and central figure in the Stonewall riots, and Diane Torr, who explored drag as a form of political performance, personified this alternative royalty, openly defying norms of gender and sexuality. Through their exuberance, these personalities have shown that the title need not be monarchic, but exists in the reclamation of systems of domination and the freedom to be oneself.

The Ballrooms in the United States in the 1980s allowed marginalized performers to assert themselves in all their splendour. These events, born within racially diverse LGBTQIA+ communities, provided a space where grandeur and dignity are celebrated. Sovereignty here is synonymous with pride and personal expression, transcending social barriers.

Royal figures in the queer community, far more than just artists, have played a fundamental role in our struggles for equality. They have been at the forefront of the struggle for LGBTQIA+ rights, proudly carrying the banner of freedom.

By revisiting these personalities through pride songs, choirs are invited for this outdoor evening to celebrate these imperial figures of the queer scene. Through grand performances, we hope they will pay homage to the iconic artists of our history: legendary drag performers or celebrities who have flamboyantly marked our story. This rainbow royalty, adorned with extraordinary costumes and symbolic crowns, embodies strength and resilience. A vibrant tribute to those who forged the greatness of our community while celebrating their chosen family, a cornerstone of queer monarchies.

Under the spotlight, queer royalty shines brightly, embodying the grandeur of a community that also knows how to laugh at itself and party with flair. Each crown is a tribute to the joy of living together, to flamboyant humour, and to the vibrant energy that flows through our celebrations. In this royalty, every moment is an invitation to joy and love.

\* Made famous by *Paris is Burning* and *Pose* (references in popular culture), this documentary and series omit directly concerned individuals and tend to homogenize and commercialize certain aspects of this community through cultural appropriation. We do not wish to reproduce these problematic dynamics but to pay tribute to this culture that is essential to queer royalty, especially in a context that values our diversity and struggles.

# LET YOUR HEART BE HEARD

## Europe Day

Saturday, June 27, 2026

MONT DES ARTS – Outdoor Stage

« Nasze prawa nie są czymś, o co możemy prosić, są czymś, co musimy wymagać. »  
« Our rights are not something we can ask for, but something we must demand. »

Marta Lempart (speech at the *Women's March*, 2020) : Activist and Polish campaigner.

For decades, the LGBTQIA+ community has been fighting fiercely for equal rights in Europe. While some countries have made notable advances, others remain behind, failing to guarantee safety or recognition for queer individuals. Brussels, the capital of Europe, is a symbol in these ongoing struggles.

May 17, 1990, marked a historical turning point with the removal of homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses by the World Health Organization (January 2022 for trans identity). These events were decisive steps in the recognition of LGBTQIA+ rights worldwide. However, our rights are never guaranteed, and the rise of conservative/extreme right movements in Europe reminds us how fragile these advances remain. History teaches us that battles for greater equality are the result of decades of struggle, while sometimes it only takes a snap of the fingers to make everything disappear.

This outdoor evening will celebrate the victories achieved, while remaining aware that the path to true equality is still long. The choirs gathered here will sing and witness for freedom, hope, and solidarity, proudly displaying the colors of their nations and of Europe. Each will represent its country, but also the history of our community, and especially a shared future.

Brussels, a multicultural city, is the ideal place for such an event. It is a ground of diversity and dialogue, as well as a venue where the politics that affect all of Europe are played out. This gathering will provide an opportunity for queer choirs to seize a public space, transforming it into a stage for visibility, resistance, and revolt. A stage will be built on Mont des Arts, an iconic location in the capital.

Under the stars of Europe and Brussels, our voices will unite to sing ***Let Your Heart Be Heard***, the anthem specially composed by Simon Finn for *Various Voices 2026* and this evening of June 27. This moment will be powerful and unforgettable, bringing together singers from all over Europe and beyond, singing in perfect harmony in a public space. Together, without exception, we will reverberate this unique anthem, forcefully remembering that our hearts beat for a more just future, where everyone can live without fear or discrimination. Let's unite our voices and sing together!

Saturday evening will represent European multiculturalism, with choirs invited to participate with their truths, their stories, and testimonies, plunging us into a political universe that will take us beyond borders. To help us on this journey, we encourage you to sing in your original language.



# THE HANDOVER

## Closing Ceremony

Sunday, June 28, 2026

BOZAR – Henry Le Bœuf Hall

« La música es como un vórtice que me permite navegar a través de mis múltiples identidades. »  
« *Music is like a vortex that allows me to navigate through my multiple identities.* »

Arca : Venezuelan singer based in Spain

Since its inception in 1985, the Various Voices Festival has symbolized the vitality of LGBTQIA+ choirs for over forty years. This international festival goes beyond being just a musical event; it represents a space for meeting, support, and affirmation of the plurality of identities. Throughout its journey, Various Voices has been a witness and partner in the struggles and successes of the queer community, while providing thousands of singers across Europe and beyond with a stage for artistic expression.

In 2026, we will celebrate 41 years of Various Voices, an anniversary that marks both a turning point and also continuity. The closing ceremony will be a moment to reflect on the life of the festival and your choir, this chosen family. Share your best hits with us, not to say goodbye, but to see you soon. This celebration will also be an opportunity to pass the torch to 2030.

The choirs present are invited to perform melodies that evoke the richness of their choir's history and that of Various Voices. Be ready to sing about continuity and evolution, to glorify the life and hope of a community that is always on the move. The handover between the 2026 festival and that of 2030 will symbolize this transmission of energy, creativity, and pride. Together, let us resonate our voices one last time to honour our past and shape our future.

This final moment shared in Brussels will be a moment of communion. A collective celebration, our celebration, where music brings us together, and the emotion of spreading this cultural richness makes our hearts beat in unison.

# THE VENUES

Various Voices 2026 will take place in several iconic locations in Brussels, celebrating art, cultural richness, and diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community. In the heart of the European capital, each venue selected to host the festival is conducive to memorable moments of celebration and creativity. From the Mont des Arts to BOZAR, including the Royal Circus and C12, the festival promises to resonate like a true cry of joy and community.

Brussels, with its vibrant energy and multiculturalism, will enthusiastically welcome you for this celebration. We are delighted to invite you to gather, laugh, and share unforgettable memories. Various Voices will be a continuous celebration, where culture, humour, and emotion meet to make our souls vibrate to the rhythm of music.

## BOZAR – Henry Le Bœuf Hall

BOZAR, a true gem of *Art Nouveau* architecture, is a pillar of the Belgian and international music scene. Programming the greatest artists, it is world-renowned for its exceptional acoustics and unique ambiance. As a central venue for the festival, BOZAR will host the **opening and closing ceremonies**, underscoring its role as a cultural crossroads. Performances will be imbued with sensitivity and emotion. The emotions will be powerful, and the space will transform into a temple of creativity. Each note will resonate with intensity, amplifying the desire to celebrate life and the beauty of being together. A moment of shared emotion, as well as pure joy, where art merges with the celebration of unity.

## Royal Circus of Brussels

The Royal Circus, with its festive atmosphere, is a popular venue in Brussels. Known for its varied programming, it will host a “**Surrealist**” event. This fascinating setting, blending tradition and modernity, offers an ideal stage for bold and creative performances that reflect the avant-garde spirit of the queer community. Artists will be invited to explore the absurd and the fantastical, drawing inspiration from the riches of the surrealist movement. By celebrating imagination and diversity, the Royal Circus will become a space for meeting, sharing, and reflecting on contemporary issues concerning LGBTQIA+ culture. This “big top” will transform into a space of enchantment and dreams. Here, creativity will express itself freely in a festive atmosphere where absurdity and extravagance will merge with the joy of being together and singing in unison. A moment of magic where humour, joy, and diversity will be expressed through colourful performances, gathering hearts ready to vibrate together.

## Mont des Arts, Brussels / Place de l’Albertine

In the heart of Brussels, Mont des Arts stands as an emblematic symbol. Located between the Royal Library of Belgium and the majestic Place Royale, this vibrant square has hosted many demonstrations for social justice. The cultural richness of the area is embodied by its museums, including the one dedicated to the surrealist art of René Magritte. This historical setting, close to the Grand Place, provides a perfect venue for two significant events of the festival. By reclaiming public space, the festival will celebrate outdoors **Royalties** and **Let Your Heart Be Heard**. These events will strengthen intergenerational and multicultural ties between culture and engagement, while highlighting the importance of art in the fight for equality. Under the stars, diversity will be celebrated in a joyful atmosphere, where each performance will be an invitation to share the beauty of the collective. It will be a night of conviviality and magic, where connections between generations will be woven through songs and laughter.

## C12

C12, an astonishing nightclub in the basements of Brussels Central Station, will be the closing venue for the festival's nights. Known for its electrifying ambiance, it offers a perfect setting to extend the festivities through each theme and celebrate queer culture in all its splendour. Each night, in a moment of letting go, the festival themes will echo in vibrant and engaging performances, combining music, dance, and visual art. C12, a true sanctuary of diversity, will allow participants to gather, dance, and exchange in a safe, inclusive, and festive environment. By highlighting the richness of LGBTQIA+ culture, this space will become a meeting point for all those wishing to celebrate love, freedom, and creativity.

30-minute concerts will also take place in these venues, as well as at La Madeleine (former covered market transformed into a concert hall), in Auditorium 490 at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, and in the M Hall of BOZAR. A *Village* will be created as the festival's central point (close to the other stages). Different spaces in the city will be accessible in parallel, alongside a small stage within the *Village* to offer even more opportunities to gather and sing

# PRACTICAL DETAILS

Dear choirs,

Now is your turn! Make the themes your own, embrace the universes, let your imagination overflow, and send us your applications via the following form:

[VV 2026 - CHOIRS REGISTRATION FOR THE SHOWS](#)

You will find some sources  
of inspiration here :  
<https://pin.it/1QunDmzzM>

Dear performers, singers, dancers, DJs, etc.,

We are looking for different Belgian (or resident) artists who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community to illustrate the themes addressed (included in this document):

- Several DJs for the nights at C12.
- Stage artists: Drag, Ballroom, dancers, Freaks, stripteasers, Burlesque performers, singers, circus performers, *Surrealists*, etc. for shows and nights at C12.
- Masters of Ceremonies (speaking English) for the shows.
- Designers/seamstresses for a runway at C12 during the Surrealist evening (Thursday, June 25, 2026).

Send us your applications via the following form :

[REGISTRATION FOR THE SHOWS](#)

For any questions regarding the artistic project,  
please contact us at [nephos@ecomail.be](mailto:nephos@ecomail.be)

# CONCLUSION

« Blijf doorgaan, blijf geloven en doe waar je je goed bij voelt. En als je je goed voelt, en op het punt komt dat niemand je dat meer kan afnemen, dan is dat gevoel het beste gevoel. »

« Keep moving forward, keep believing, and do what feels good to you. And when you feel good and reach the point where no one can take that away from you, then that feeling is the best feeling. »

Nikkie Tutorials : Dutch transgender beauty YouTuber.


This festival will be a celebration, a moment where music, humour, and friendship come together to celebrate the richness of the LGBTQIA+ community. By bringing together all voices, all of your voices, we will create a symphony of emotions, an explosion of shared happiness, and an extraordinary group in every sense of the word. We will collectively transform Brussels into a space of meeting, love, and solidarity where every smile, every song reminds us of the beauty of being together. A vibrant celebration of diversity and a living testament to the history of queer people.

During these five days in Brussels, the beating heart of Europe, we will sing, dance, and pay tribute to those who paved the way before us, while laying the groundwork for generations to come, with the hope for a more inclusive tomorrow. With this edition, marking 41 years of *Various Voices*, we want to enable choirs to engage more in collective creations while offering an openness to the public in respect of our values. A way to resonate beyond borders and communities. Together, in this unique moment of communion, you will sing with harmony, pride, and resilience.

Music, that universal language, transcends barriers to build a more inclusive, more supportive, and fairer Europe. In June 2026, our voices will unite to weave a link between the past and the future, resounding as a promise of unity, joy, and light. During these five days of emotions, each smile and every song will remind us of the happiness of being hand in hand. May this light and joy carry us far beyond these days, in a surge of generosity, pride, and shared love.



VARIOUS  
VOICES  
BRUSSELS  
2026!



LET YOUR  
HEART  
BE HEARD