

Münchener Kammerorchester – MKO

Renowned for its exceptionally creative programming and the homogeneity of timbre that can only come from a long history of making music together – seventy years after its foundation in the aftermath of war the MKO is blazing a trail for orchestras in Germany and beyond. In the last few years the orchestra has increased its subscription ticketholders by over fifty percent, notwithstanding the ambitious content of its programmes.

Since the beginning of the 2016/17 season, Bremen-born Clemens Schuldt is the new principle conductor. He also heads the artistic planning committee, which has, besides himself, both concertmasters, one member nominated by the orchestra and two from the management team. Under his leadership the MKO will continue to present daring, associative programmes combining works from the past and the present.

With no aesthetic preconceptions and a love of experimentation Schuldt and the orchestra will continue to place their trust in the sheer impact and emotional intensity of contemporary music. Concepts such as Eastwards, Drama, Childhood, Isolation, Reformation, ›Vorwiegend Heiter‹ and Warmth have set the ensemble's course in recent seasons; in 2020/21 the focus will be on the idea of ›Neighbours‹.

Since 1995, when Christoph Poppen took over as artistic director and established the orchestra's unmistakable dramaturgical profile, the MKO has premiered over eighty new works by composers including Iannis Xenakis, Wolfgang Rihm, Tan Dun, Chaya Czernowin, Georg Friedrich Haas, Pascal Dusapin, Salvatore Sciarrino and Jörg Widmann. Composers such as Beat Furrer, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Thomas Larcher, Milica Djordjević, Clara Iannotta, Samir Odeh-Tamimi, Mark Andre, Stefano Gervasoni, Márton Illés, Miroslav Srnka, Lisa Streich, Johannes Maria Staud and Tigran Mansurian have fulfilled commissions from the MKO.

In addition to the Thursday evenings at the Prinzregententheater, the orchestra's main concert venue, the MKO has, since 2003, presented its ›Nachtmusik der Moderne‹ in the Rotunda in Munich's Pinakothek der Moderne to packed houses of discerning listeners. Each of these concerts is devoted to the work of a single composer from the twentieth or twenty-first century.

In 2015, the presentation of the MKO Songbook at the Schwere Reiter performance space in Munich established a new format, which turns the spotlight on MKO commissions and works by Munich's own composers.

The core of the ensemble consists of twenty-eight string players, all full members of the MKO. In collaboration with a fixed pool of elite principal wind players from Europe's leading orchestras, the MKO performs as a slender symphony orchestra that can also make its mark with major works by Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and others.

An important component in both the orchestra's subscription series and invitation concerts elsewhere are the programmes directed by either one of the orchestra's two concertmasters. On those evenings the unconditional commitment and shared sense of responsibility of all the musicians can come across with particular intensity.

Founded in 1950 by Christoph Stepp, four decades in the life of the MKO from 1956 onwards were shaped by Hans Stadlmair. After ten years at the helm (1995–2006), Christoph Poppen was succeeded by Alexander Liebreich as Artistic Director of the MKO.

The orchestra gratefully acknowledges funding from the City of Munich, the State of Bavaria and the Region of Upper Bavaria. Since 2006/7 European Computer Telecoms AG (ECT) has, with great generosity, been the orchestra's main sponsor.

The MKO is a modern, flexible ensemble that has developed a wide range of activities in addition to its various subscription series. Each year the orchestra presents around sixty concerts in major venues across the world. Past tours have taken the orchestra to Asia, Spain, Scandinavia, South America and more. The MKO has also undertaken several tours in collaboration with the Goethe Institut, including a concert tour to Moscow and its ground-breaking workshops and concert in North Korea in autumn 2012, when the orchestra performed side by side with North Korean music students. Also the residence of the orchestra in Cartagena took place on behalf of the Goethe Institut.

The MKO has recorded works by Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Sofia Gubaidulina, Giacinto Scelsi, Thomas Larcher, Valentin Silvestrov, Isang Yun, Joseph Haydn and Toshio Hosokawa with ECM Records. In March 2017 the long cooperation was continued with the release of Tigran Mansurian's Requiem, a commission by MKO and RIAS Kammerchor.

MKO recordings with Sony Classical include a CD with Rossini overtures and the Fauré Requiem with the Bavarian Radio Choir (ECHO Klassik winner, 2012), Mozart's Mass in C Minor and, in May 2014, the Mozart Requiem. In 2015 Sony Classical released no less than three CDs with the MKO: flautist Magali Mosnier playing works by Mozart; oboe concertos by Hummel and Haydn played by François Leleux (ECHO Klassik winner, 2016); and an orchestral CD, conducted by Alexander Liebreich, with Mendelssohn's incidental music for A Midsummer Night's Dream and his Symphony no. 4.

Further recordings are available amongst others also with Deutsche Grammophon, Neos, Hänssler Classic, Pentatone and Tudor.