

Münchener Kammerorchester (MKO) / Munich Chamber Orchestra

The Munich Chamber Orchestra (Münchener Kammerorchester, or MKO) is known and acclaimed throughout the world for its varied and thrilling programmes. With great curiosity and open-mindedness, stylistic diversity and a top-calibre performance level, it combines music from past centuries with works of today, relying on powers of association and excitement. It is also constantly on the lookout for innovative concert formats and new cultural synergies, thereby projecting a unique profile on the international orchestral landscape.

A new era dawns for the MKO in the 2022-23 season: for the first time in its over 70-year history the orchestra will depart from its previous organisational structure, with a position for principal conductor, and redefine itself. For the next three years it will work with three 'associated conductors' at once – a unique organisational model based neither on grass-roots democracy nor on a dominant personality. Instead, the new arrangement will further strengthen the MKO's self-reliance and creativity, sharpening its image and quality with three contrasting artistic personalities.

The associated conductors – Jörg Widmann, Enrico Onofri and Bas Wiegers – almost ideally embody the orchestra's broad spectrum and unbridled will to probe new dimensions in music from the baroque era to the present day. Jörg Widmann already worked closely with the MKO as a composer and soloist in the 1990s, while Enrico Onofri, the former concertmaster of the baroque ensemble Il Giardino Armonico, is a pioneer in period performance practice. Bas Wiegers, a baroque violinist, has also sought to explore historically informed perspectives in modern music. They will be joined by a number of musical friends with whom the orchestra has worked on a regular basis, including Isabelle Faust, Nicolas Altstaedt, Ilya Gringolts, Vilde Frang, Christian Tetzlaff and Alexander Lonquich.

Concerts headed by one of the MKO's two concertmasters, Yuki Kasai and Daniel Giglberger, will remain an important part of its activities. The core of the ensemble consists of 28 permanently employed string players from 14 countries. A stellar group of regular guests from top-tier European orchestras allows the MKO to expand its membership, allowing it to give benchmark performances of masterpieces from the classical-romantic repertoire, and to kindle its audiences' excitement for music over and over again with its energy and commitment.

Founded in 1950 by Christoph Stepp, the MKO was shaped by Hans Stadlmair for over four decades, beginning in 1956. The era of Christoph Poppen (1995-2006) was followed by ten years under the artistic direction of Alexander Liebreich. From 2016 to 2022 the orchestra's principal conductor was Clemens Shuldt. Since then its artistic direction has resided with an artistic board consisting of the two concertmasters, two additional orchestra members, its managing director and its artistic planer. The MKO is subsidised with public funds from the Free State of Bavaria, the City of Munich and the District of Upper Bavaria. Since the 2006-07 season its main official sponsor has been European Computer Telecoms EG (ECT).

The MKO places great store in the dramatic conception of its programmes and on the long-term cultivation and further development of the chamber orchestra repertoire. For decades it has been a unique and bustling workshop for the music of today. It has commissioned and/or premièred a great many new works, receiving pieces from composers of the stature of Iannis Xenakis, Wolfgang Rihm, Tan Dun, Chaya Czernowin, Georg Friedrich Haas, Pascal

Dusapin, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Thomas Larcher, Tigran Mansurian, Salvatore Sciarrino and Jörg Widmann. In recent years alone it has commissioned new works *inter alia* from Beat Furrer, Milica Djordjević, Clara Iannotta, Mark Andre, Stefano Gervasoni, Márton Illés, Miroslav Srnka and Lisa Streich, and is currently working on a violin concerto from Chaya Czernowin, a viola concerto from Dieter Ammann and a piece for string orchestra from Johannes Maria Staud. For some time it has deliberately expanded its repertoire by commissioning works that dispense with a conductor, e.g. by David Fennessy, Younghie Pagh-Paan and Samir Odeh-Tamimi.

In addition to its concert series in Munich's Prince Regent's Theatre, the MKO's 'Nachtmusiken der Moderne' (Serenades of Modernism), held in the unique atmosphere of the rotunda in the Pinakothek der Moderne (Modern Art Gallery), has long achieved cult status. The 'MKO Songbook', in Munich's Schwere Reiter Theatre, has established a format focusing on MKO-commissioned works and music by Munich composers. Chamber music of myriad types also bulks large in the orchestra's activities. Together with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, the musicians of the MKO offer the BMW Club Concerts, presenting 'their' music to young audiences in the city's club scene. Viewing music outreach as one of its core tasks, the MKO also has a range of offerings for young and old alike. Moreover, as a new institution slated for the remodelled Gasteig cultural complex in Haidhausen, the MKO is strongly committed to cultural outreach with the Gasteig's other institutions.

The MKO's networking in Munich and its collaborations with local institutions form a major emphasis in its activities. It has repeatedly entered joint projects with the Bavarian State Opera, Bavarian Theatre Academy, Munich Biennale, Villa Stuck, Haus der Kunst, DOK.fest, Schauburg Youth Theatre, Biotopia, Munich University, Munich Technical University, Adult Education Centre and Munich University of Music and Theatre.

Some 60 concerts per year have taken the MKO to renowned concert halls all over the globe, including tours of Asia, Spain, Scandinavia and South America. It has undertaken several guest performances in conjunction with the Goethe Institute; especially noteworthy was an acclaimed academy with North Korea in autumn 2012, where the orchestra had an opportunity to work with North Korean music students.

ECM Records has released recordings of the MKO playing works by Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Sofia Gubaidulina, Giacinto Scelsi, Valentin Silvestrov, Isang Yun, Joseph Haydn, Toshio Hosokawa and Tigran Mansurian. New recordings of music by Thomas Larcher are currently in preparation at ECM, as is a complete recording of Beethoven's piano concertos with the pianist Alexander Lonquich. A number of MKO recordings have been released by Sony Classical, such as Rossini overtures, the Mozart *Requiem* and Mendelssohn's incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Fourth Symphony. Others have appeared on the Warner label with the Bavarian Radio Chorus, the flautist Magali Mosnier, the oboist François Leleux and Les Vents Français. Its recordings of music by Georg Katzer, Friedrich Goldmann and Nikolaus Brass were released by NEOS.