

The young British conductor Edward Gardner replaces Seiji Ozawa in the upcoming concerts in Cologne, Dortmund and Ferrara in February

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Following the unfortunate news of Seiji Ozawa's illness and his subsequent cancellation of all appearances in the first half of this year, British conductor Edward Gardner has now been confirmed as his replacement for the concerts in Cologne, Dortmund and Ferrara. The young music director of the English National Opera, considered one of the most promising young talents of his generation, gives his debut with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO) in this set of concerts.

The 35-year-old conductor has long held a place on the ensemble's list of ideal partners, along with several other conductors of his generation, including Robin Ticciati, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Tugan Sokhiev. The ensemble will play Four Sea Interludes from Benjamin Britten's opera Peter Grimes, Béla Bartók's Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, and Suite No. 2 from Sergei Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet under Gardner's direction.

Edward Gardner has been music director of the English National Opera (ENO) since 2007, and his short tenure has seen several noteworthy and acclaimed productions. In 2008 he won the Royal Philharmonic Society Award in the conducting category, and in 2009 he was honoured with the Olivier Award for outstanding achievement in opera. Edward Gardner is a successful opera conductor outside of the ENO as well. He has worked closely with the Paris opera since 2004/5, last appearing there in the 2007/8 season with Stravinsky's The Rake's Progress. Future guest appearances will include debuts at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York's Metropolitan Opera, and the Scala in Milan. In England, Gardner conducts regularly with the Hallé Orchestra, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. He has worked with the BBC Symphony Orchestra every year since their appearance together at the Aldeburgh Festival in 2005, giving his debut at the BBC Proms with the ensemble in 2008. Internationally, he has worked with orchestras such as the Bamberger Symphoniker, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and many others.

The MCO is just one of several high-profile orchestras with which Edward Gardner will give his debut this season. He will also appear with the NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo and the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, among others. Future engagements are also planned with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest.

"The musicians of the MCO and the entire management wish Maestro Ozawa all the best at this time. We sincerely hope that he will soon be on the road to recovery," stated Andreas Richter, General Manager of the MCO.

The Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO), with its unusual structure, internationality and outstanding quality, is an ensemble unique to the present time. Its organisation and method of operation make it a model for the future of the European orchestral landscape. Composed of around 40 musicians from 20 different nations, and independent of external sponsorship, the MCO plays operas and concerts all over the world, in cities as well as at exclusive festivals from the North Pole to the Red Sea. The orchestra was founded in 1997 by the musicians themselves and Claudio Abbado, and the two have been reaching milestones of European musical life together ever since.

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