

The Mahler Chamber Orchestra returns to Ferrara and tours Germany and Greece

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The Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO) will return once again to its Ferrara residence in the second half of October. During its two-week stay there, the orchestra will play three symphonic concerts and a chamber music concert to celebrate the beginning of the semester at the University of Ferrara.

The first concert, which will also be the season opener for the concert agency Ferrara Musica, will be conducted by the Japanese conductor Kazushi Ono, the new principal conductor of the Opéra de Lyon. Ono, who has earned an excellent reputation through his opera work, is regularly invited to conduct orchestras all over the world. His engagements have led him to many musical centres, from Israel and Boston to London and Rome via Leipzig and Vienna. The second Ferrara concert will take place under a French star. Yannick Nézet-Séguin, born in 1975 in Montreal, will conduct works by Ravel and Saint-Saëns, paying court to French modernism. Three works by Ravel, which show a progression from his early to middle styles, are at the centre of the evening's programme. Camille Saint-Saëns' *La Muse et le Poète* for cello, violin and orchestra is a rarely played gem of the orchestral repertoire. This act of inspiration will be portrayed by two MCO members, Concertmaster Gregory Ahss and Principal Cellist Konstantin Pfiz. Outside of their commitments with the MCO, both musicians appear often in chamber ensembles and as guests with internationally renowned orchestras.

The final concert of the October series in Ferrara, with Daniel Harding and soloists Christian Tetzlaff, violin, and Chiara Tonelli, flute, will also be the first concert of the next MCO tour. As part of this tour, the MCO will give its first Greek concert in Thessaloniki. Since its founding in 1997, the ensemble has played in musical centres worldwide; Greece, however, has remained one of the "blank spots" on the European map. The debut will take place on October 29th in the Concert Hall of Thessaloniki. The orchestra will travel to Athens the next day, where the concert will be repeated on two evenings in the Megaron Concert Hall, as part of the concert series "Great Orchestras — Great Conductors". Before the trip to Greece, the MCO will make a stop at the Cologne Philharmonic. In contrast to Greece, Cologne is a well known host to the MCO and Daniel Harding, and many exciting concerts have taken place there. The orchestra's most recent appearance in Cologne was as part of its ten year anniversary celebrations in November 2007.

The musical program spans the modern and the romantic: Boulez' *Mémoriale*, 1985, will be framed by Brahms' Violin Concerto and his 2nd Symphony. The MCO has been focusing on romantic works for some time, and is striving to develop a specific kind of sound for these pieces that corresponds to the orchestra's prioritization of chamber music values. Instead of using a large string section, typical for performances of romantic works, the MCO plays with ten first violins and eight second violins, which gives the sound a special transparency.

The project will be accompanied by a TV team from DEUTSCHE WELLE who produces a documentary series about the MCO, the way the orchestra is working and how the musicians of the MCO spend their life during a project. The series will include 6 episodes, each with a different focus on the tour. As off today, the daily programme EUROMAX will send the series between 24 and 28 November 2008.

The Mahler Chamber Orchestra was founded in 1997 on the initiative of Claudio Abbado and a group of musicians from the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra who wished to continue playing together even after reaching the youth orchestra's age limit. The combined principles of artistic curiosity and the broadest possible spectrum of repertoire, both at the highest possible musical level, guided the ambitious ensemble in its founding and continue to shape its work today. The ensemble's repertoire reaches from baroque to contemporary and includes everything from chamber music to symphonic programming, from operatic standards to world premieres.

Andrea Kerner
Communications Manager

Mahler Chamber Orchestra e.V.
Hasenheide 54 / D-10967 Berlin
Phone + 49.30.41 71 79-21
Fax +49.30.41 71 79-29
Mobile +49.160.90 96 91 03
a.kerner@mahler-chamber.de
www.mahler-chamber.eu

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