

The Mahler Chamber Orchestra takes on a residence in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

Date: 03-17-2009 11:07 PM CET

Category: [Arts & Culture](#)

Press release from: [Mahler Chamber Orchestra e.V.](#)



From May 2009, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO) will be orchestra-in-residence in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). The concert halls in Dortmund, Essen and Cologne will be the venues of the residence, which will be sponsored by the Art Foundation NRW (Kunststiftung NRW) and the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Together with the concert halls and the Orchesterzentrum NRW in Dortmund, the MCO is planning top-notch operas and concerts and professional training programmes to take place over the next three years. The residence will open with a concert version of Weber's opera *Der Freischütz*, conducted by Thomas Hengelbrock, at the KONZERTHAUS DORTMUND.

The coming three years will see the MCO, already well known to the audiences of NRW, returning often to the region to work with its Principal Conductor Daniel Harding and other renowned conductors and soloists such as Seiji Ozawa, George Benjamin, Waltraud Meier and Janine Jansen. During these stays, the orchestra will rehearse and perform symphonic programmes, operas and chamber music concerts. International concert tours will follow the performances in NRW; in this way, the MCO will play an important role as cultural ambassador of the NRW art scene, and will represent the brand MCO Residence NRW throughout the world.

Travel plans have already been made: the residence's first project, the concert version of Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* at the KONZERTHAUS DORTMUND, will be performed later in 2009 at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and at the LUCERNE FESTIVAL. The Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, a partner of the project, is presenting *Der Freischütz* as part of its Pflingstfestspiele 2009, in a production directed by Robert Wilson. The MCO's autumn project is equally ambitious: a concert version of the second act of *Tristan und Isolde*, to be performed in Dortmund and Cologne and later at the Alte Oper Frankfurt, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris and at the MCO's Italian residence in Ferrara. A concert programme under the baton of Seiji Ozawa will lead the MCO to Ferrara, Paris and Abu Dhabi; a Mozart-only concert with Andrew Manze and Janine Jansen in June 2010 can be heard in Essen and also in Vienna.

The MCO's plans for the next few years are not limited to concerts and operas, but also include an extensive education programme. This will be realised primarily through cooperation with the Orchesterzentrum NRW in Dortmund. The activities will include individual workshops for music students held by MCO musicians and joint concerts with the students. Especially talented young players will have the opportunity to take part in MCO projects outside of the NRW residence. Work is already going on for the first project, a performance of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* in October 2009. Additional outreach projects alongside this cooperation with the Orchesterzentrum include open rehearsals and behind-the-scenes tours.

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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