

The Mahler Chamber Orchestra and its founder Claudio Abbado play concerts in Ferrara and Reggio Emilia

Date: 04-02-2009 04:48 PM CET

Category: [Arts & Culture](#)

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

Directly after playing concerts in Bologna and Cremona with Daniel Harding, the orchestra will travel to Ferrara and Reggio Emilia to work on a new project with Claudio Abbado. Orchestra and conductor are equally at home in both cities. Claudio Abbado, the founder and current honorary president of the concert production agency Ferrara Musica, suggested that the MCO become the orchestra in residence in 1998, granting the ensemble its first home. The first auditions for what would become the MCO took place in 1996 in Ferrara, just an hour from Reggio Emilia. Since then, the orchestra receives regular invitations to play there, be it for concerts or opera productions. The most recent opera premiere, *Fidelio*, took place exactly a year previously, on 6 April 2008. There is a certain symmetry in the programming: Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* and one *Leonore Aria*, both works from his middle period, are planned for April 2009.

The evening includes also music from the twentieth century, Richard Strauss' *Four Last Songs*. These songs, settings of poems by Hermann Hesse and Josef von Eichendorff, were written in 1948 in Switzerland, where Strauss fled after the end of the war. They are not in fact the composer's last works, but they clearly reflect Strauss' contemplations of death and farewell, with regard to the war he survived as well as with coming to terms with his own mortality. Strauss did not live to hear the premiere, which took place under Wilhelm Furtwängler in May 1950. The melancholically beautiful songs quickly were taken up by renowned singers; an impressive array of different performances prove their popularity. Nina Stemme, the evening's soloist, has recorded the songs with the Royal Opera House Orchestra with Antonio Pappano in 2006.

Ms. Stemme, soprano, has sung nearly all the great opera roles from Cherubino to Brünnhilde, and is also internationally praised for her *Lieder* concerts. This will be her first concert with the MCO. She will also sing the *Recitative and Aria Abscheulicher! Wo eilst du hin? / Komm, Hoffnung, lass den letzten Stern* from *Fidelio*,

Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 belongs to the same period. The world premier, which took place in 1808 as part of a series produced by the composer himself at the Theater an der Wien, was a veritable catastrophe. The 6th *Symphony*, the 4th *Piano Concerto* and parts of the *C-Major Mass* were also premiered at this concert. Beethoven performed the solo part of the piano concerto, but during the concert spontaneously decided to take over the job of conductor as well; his increasing deafness added yet another element of risk. Small accidents on the stage were the source of great amusement in the audience, causing Beethoven to react quite strongly, and the concert dissolved into chaos.

The first reactions to the symphony were less than favourable. The piece became popular some years later, in part due to the writings of the poet and composer E.T.A. Hoffmann, whose deep familiarity and involvement with the piece's rhetorical style led him to describe it as "a wonderful composition [which] leads the listener into the spiritual realm of infinity in an ever-increasing climax."

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.

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
a.kerner@mahler-chamber.de
www.mahler-chamber.eu

[You can find this press release here](#)