

## **With a refreshing mixture of classical and modern, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra performs at the Aldeburgh Festival under Susanna Mälkki and Pierre-Laurent Aimard**

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Directly following their appearance at the Arts Festival of North Norway, the musicians of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO) will travel to the 62nd Aldeburgh Festival. Here, they will present works by Györgi Ligeti, Joseph Haydn and Sir Harrison Birtwistle under the expert direction of Susanna Mälkki and featuring Pierre-Laurent Aimard on the piano. A second programme will be directed by Aimard and will feature works by Haydn, Stockhausen and Beethoven.

This will be the MCO's third sojourn in the picturesque city on England's east coast (the last was in 2007, also with Aimard), but it is its first appearance at the festival itself. The festival's mission is true to the spirit of its founder, Benjamin Britten, advocate for new music; premieres of new works, the presentation of fresh, unconventional interpretations of the classical repertoire, and the rediscovery of forgotten pieces remain the festival's main goals. New and noteworthy this year is the Campus for Music, whose Hoffmann Building (opened in May 2009) offers a multifunctional room with flexible acoustics in its Britten Studio.

Since 2009, the festival has been under the artistic direction of Pierre-Laurent Aimard, one of the most important interpreters of contemporary music and an old friend of the MCO. At Aimard's invitation, the MCO will present two programmes this year.

The first evening begins with contrasts: Haydn's Symphonies No. 60 in C Major "Il Distratto" and No. 101 in D Major "The Clock" will be followed by Györgi Ligeti's Ramifications and Sir Harrison Birtwistle's Slow Frieze, the last with Aimard on piano.

The young Finnish conductor Susanna Mälkki, also well-known for her engagement in the field of new music, will give her MCO debut with this concert. Born in 1969, Mälkki first made a name for herself as an instrumentalist: she was principal cello of the Symphony Orchestra Göteborg from 1995 to 1998 before trading her bow for a baton at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki.

Aimard, who last led the MCO at its Carnegie Hall debut in 2007, will take the podium to conduct the second programme, an exciting mixture of old and new: Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and Karlheinz Stockhausen's Kontra-Punkte both play on the exchange between orchestral sound and the individual instruments. Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major will crown the evening, with Aimard leading from the piano.

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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