

The Mahler Chamber Orchestra starts off the 2009/10 season with its yearly visit to the LUCERNE FESTIVAL

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At the beginning of August, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO) returns to Lucerne, where it performs under Claudio Abbado, George Benjamin, Daniel Harding and Thomas Hengelbrock at the LUCERNE FESTIVAL SOMMER. The LUCERNE FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA (LFO), with the MCO at its core and centre, opens the festival on 12 August. The next evening, George Benjamin conducts the MCO in its usual formation. Further LFO concerts follow on 14 and 15 August as well as on 21 and 22 August. MCO Principal Conductor Daniel Harding leads the MCO in Schumann's *Paradies und die Peri* on 23 August. On 27 August, at the end of the Lucerne period, Thomas Hengelbrock conducts the MCO in a concert performance of Weber's opera *Der Freischütz*.

In the performances of the LFO, Claudio Abbado continues his Mahler cycle with Symphonies 1 and 4 as well as with the *Rückert Lieder*. Also, Prokofiev's Piano Concerto no.3 in C major will be interpreted by Chinese pianist Yuja Wang in her debut at the LUCERNE FESTIVAL.

In the first MCO concert program, festival audiences will be treated to a world-premiere and an exciting mixture of romantic and contemporary music. George Benjamin conducts a concert including one of his own works, *A Mind of Winter*. The program also features Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* and Schumann's *Symphony no.2 in C major*. Heinz Holliger performs as soloist in the programme, playing the world-premiere of an oboe concerto composed by Jörg Widmann to honour him on his 70th birthday.

The performance of Robert Schumann's first oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri* on 23 August is the realisation of a longstanding wish of Daniel Harding, who came to know and love the work through John Eliot Gardiner's recording. The oriental fairy tale was one of Schumann's most frequently performed works during his lifetime. The composition for soloists, mixed choir and orchestra is ideally suited to the motto "nature" that guides this year's LUCERNE FESTIVAL.

The third MCO concert is equally suited to the festival motto. Thomas Hengelbrock conducts a concert performance of Weber's opera *Der Freischütz*. Singers in the main roles include Juliane Banse, Lisa Larsson, Klaus Kuttler, Steve Davislim und Reinhard Dorn. A concert version of *Freischütz* was already performed in May in Dortmund as part of the MCO's NRW residence, and the opera was performed in a staging by Robert Wilson at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden during the 2009 Whitsun Festival.

As in past years, in 2009 LFO and MCO will again go on tour together. Following up on previous successful guest appearances in Japan, the USA and Austria, this year the musicians of both orchestras travel to Beijing to perform at the Grand National Theatre.

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.

Merit Vareschi
Communications Manager
Mahler Chamber Orchestra e.V.
Hasenheide 54 / D-10967 Berlin
Phone + 49.30.41 71 79-22

Fax +49.30.41 71 79-29
Mobile +49.160.90 96 91 03
m.vareschi@mahler-chamber.de
www.mahler-chamber.eu

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