

## **THE MAHLER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA GIVES ITS DEBUT AT THE BEETHOVENFEST BONN UNDER THE DIRECTION OF KENT NAGANO**

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On 3 October, the musicians of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO) give their debut at the Beethovenfest Bonn under the direction of Kent Nagano. The performance, featuring works of Beethoven, Strauss and Brahms, is both the final concert of this year's festival and also the MCO's first symphony concert under the baton of the American conductor.

The Beethovenfest focuses its attention each year between the end of August and the beginning of October on the works of its namesake, but it also has the intention of introducing interesting and innovative artist personalities as well as innovative orchestra models to its audiences. The focus on Beethoven is not restricted only to playing his works - the festival programming also offers a platform for personalities who, in Beethoven's spirit, create forward-thinking and revolutionary works of art. This includes work commissions and world-premieres, but also mixed-media performances, film presentations, exhibitions, lectures and readings.

This year's festival programme is structured according to several themes. The final concert relates to the themes "Celebrated" and "In the light". The MCO's programme, created especially for the Beethovenfest 2009, juxtaposes Beethoven's late works with his romantic heir Johannes Brahms and also with the modern period as represented by the figure of Richard Strauss. The evening begins with Beethoven's Grand Fugue in B-flat major. The modernity signalled in this innovatively composed fugue comes to fulfilment in the next piece, Richard Strauss' Metamorphosen. This "Study for 23 Strings" was composed at the end of World War II and has a clearly recognisable structure despite its extremely complex polyphony. Strauss himself called it the "recurrence of my entire past life". Beethoven's dramaturgical principle of the symphony as the way from darkness into light was understood and expanded by his great admirer Johannes Brahms. It is therefore not surprising that Brahms' First Symphony, the final piece on this evening's program, was often referred to as "Beethoven's Tenth".

Kent Nagano, General Music Director of the Bavarian State Opera and Music Director of the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, conducts the MCO for the second time on this occasion, having worked with the ensemble in July 2009 in a production at the Munich Opera Festival.

The concert, which takes place on the German Unification Day, will be recorded and made available as a podcast on the festival website by the Beethovenfest's media partner Deutsche Welle. At 7:30 pm on the evening of the concert, a portrait of the orchestra called "Ganz Ohr um Halb" will introduce and explain the unique structure of the orchestra in a conversation with MCO general manager Prof. Andreas Richter. Kulturradio WDR 3 will also broadcast the entire concert live from the Beethovenhalle between 8:05 and 10:30 pm.

The next day, orchestra and conductor travel together to Madrid, where they will repeat the concert programme from Bonn at the Auditorio Nacional de Música and open the season of the concert promoter Juventudes Musicales de Madrid.

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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