



History of the Munich Philharmonic

The Munich Philharmonic was founded in 1893 through the private initiative of Franz Kaim, the son of a piano manufacturer. Since then, the orchestra has left an indelible imprint on Munich's cultural life under the leadership of renowned conductors. In the orchestra's earliest years – initially under the name »Kaim Orchestra« – conductors like Hans Winderstein, Hermann Zumpe and the Bruckner pupil Ferdinand Löwe guaranteed both a high technical standard of performance and enthusiastic support of contemporary artistry. Right from the outset, their artistic concept included the effort to structure programs and prices to allow access to the concerts by all levels of society. Felix Weingartner, who directed the orchestra from 1898 to 1905, enhanced its international reputation with several tours to other countries.

Gustav Mahler directed the orchestra in 1901 and 1910 at the respective world premières of his Fourth and Eighth Symphonies. In November of 1911, the orchestra, then called the »Konzertverein Orchestra« performed the world première of Mahler's »Das Lied von der Erde« (The Song of the Earth) under Bruno Walter's direction – only six months after the composer's death in Vienna.

From 1908 to 1914, Ferdinand Löwe again took over the orchestra. In the wake of a triumphant guest appearance in Vienna on March 1, 1898 featuring Anton Bruckner's Fifth Symphony, he conducted the first large-scale Bruckner concerts and thereby founded the orchestra's Bruckner tradition, which has continued unbroken to the present day. During the administration of Siegmund von Hausegger, who guided the orchestra as its General Music Director from 1920 to 1938, the world premières of two Bruckner symphonies in their original versions took place as well as the final, definitive change of the orchestra's name to »Munich Philharmonic«. From 1938 to the summer of 1944, Austrian conductor Oswald Kabasta led the orchestra, advancing the Munich Philharmonic's Bruckner tradition and also demonstrating the already established high standards of the orchestra on a number of tours at home and abroad.

The first concert after the Second World War was opened by Eugen Jochum with the overture to Shakespeare's »A Midsummer Night's Dream« by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, whose music had been ostracized during the Nazi era. With Hans Rosbaud, the Philharmonic gained an outstanding leader in the autumn of 1945, a man who passionately advocated modern music. Rosbaud's successor - from 1949 to 1966 - was Fritz Rieger. During the era of Rudolf Kempe, who headed the orchestra from 1967 until his untimely death in 1976, the Philharmonic undertook its first tours to Japan and the former Soviet Union.

In February of 1979, Sergiu Celibidache conducted his first concert series with the Munich Philharmonic and in June of the same year he was appointed General Music Director. Concert tours took him and the orchestra through many European countries as well as to South America and Asia. The legendary Bruckner concerts made a major contribution to

the orchestra's international standing, and during the Celibidache era the orchestra was repeatedly invited to accompany the Federal Government or the Federal President as musical ambassadors.

Following the wartime destruction of its old home, the so-called »Tonhalle« on the Türkenstrasse, the orchestras spent over forty years in Munich's Herkulesaal. In 1985, the Philharmonic once again acquired its own concert hall with the Philharmonie in the Gasteig, Munich's municipal cultural center.

From September 1999 until July 2004, James Levine was Chief Conductor of the Munich Philharmonic. With him, the Munich Philharmonic undertook extended concert tours. In the spring of 2003, the Munich Philharmonic was awarded the prize for the »Best Concert Programming of the 2002/2003 Season« by the Society of German Music Publishers.

In January of 2004, the Munich Philharmonic named Zubin Mehta the first »Honorary Conductor« in the history of the orchestra. A highly successful tour under the baton of Zubin Mehta took the orchestra to South America in September 2010. For the 100th anniversary of the première of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 8 in Munich, Christian Thielemann conducted two performances of this work in October 2010. He was succeeded as chief conductor by Lorin Maazel, who held the position until his death in 2014. During his time with the Munich Philharmonic, Maazel focussed on broadening the orchestra's repertoire and on achieving more flexibility of sound.

As of the 2015-16 season, the position of chief conductor of the Munich Philharmonic is held by Valery Gergiev. Tours have taken the Munich Philharmonic to numerous European cities as well as Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan and the USA. Programme highlights conceived by Valery Gergiev include performances of symphonic cycles by Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Rachmaninov as well as new formats, such as the »MPHIL 360°« festival. Concerts are regularly broadcast via live stream and on radio and TV. In September 2016, the first CD recordings documenting the Munich Philharmonic's work were released under the orchestra's own label, »MPHIL«. From 2017 to 2019, the Munich Philharmonic and Valery Gergiev recorded all of Anton Bruckner's symphonies in the basilica of St. Florian Monastery, Anton Bruckner's final resting place. The complete recordings have been released in autumn 2020.

With »Spielfeld Klassik«, the Munich Philharmonic has developed a comprehensive music education programme for young and old. Up to 35,000 people of all ages attended the more than 150 events held each year. Concerts for children, pupils and young people, opportunities for watching rehearsals of the Philharmonic, demonstrations of musical instruments and concert subscriptions for school pupils and students provide especially children and young people with varied opportunities for listening to and learning about classical music and the day-to-day work of a large symphony orchestra. Under the motto of »MPhil vor Ort« (MPhil on Site), the Munich Philharmonic also leaves its home base – the Philharmonie Gasteig – to appear in unusual and varied locations, such as the Hofbräuhaus tavern as well as alpine meadows, clubs and industrial halls.

On 13 October 2018 the Munich Philharmonic and Valery Gergiev celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Munich Philharmonic by performing Igor Strawinsky's »Symphonie de Psaumes« and Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 8.