

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra is one of the very best orchestras in the world. Ever since it was founded in 1888, it has collaborated with the greatest conductors and soloists. 'Royal' status was officially conferred on the orchestra on the occasion of its Centenary Celebration. Her Majesty Queen Máxima is the orchestra's patron.

The orchestra has cultivated a distinct, individual sound, one which is due in part to the unique acoustics of The Concertgebouw. The musicians play an equally decisive role. The orchestra is made up of over 120 players hailing from some twenty-five countries. Yet despite its size, it actually functions more like a chamber orchestra.

To date only seven chief conductors have led the Concertgebouw Orchestra, and their influence, too, has been considerable: Willem Kes (chief conductor from 1888 to 1895), Willem Mengelberg (1895–1945), Eduard van Beinum (1945–59), Bernard Haitink (1961–88), Riccardo Chailly (1988–2004) Mariss Jansons (2004–15) and Daniele Gatti (2016–18). In 2022 the orchestra announced that Klaus Mäkelä will be its eighth chief conductor, commencing in September 2027.

Collaborations with world-renowned guest conductors and specialists contribute to the orchestra's sound and great stylistic flexibility. Nikolaus Harnoncourt, for instance, was largely responsible for the orchestra's reputation with respect to eighteenth-century repertoire. Iván Fischer is honorary guest conductor since the 2021–22 season. Pierre Audi works with the orchestra as its creative partner.

The Concertgebouw Orchestra has long garnered praise for its performances of the music of Mahler and Bruckner. It also upholds a number of time-honoured concert traditions, such as the Passion performance and the Christmas Matinee. Contemporary music has played a major role from the start. Composers such as Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky all conducted the Concertgebouw Orchestra on more than one occasion. Today, the likes of John Adams, Thomas Adès and Tan Dun follow in their footsteps. Each year, the orchestra premieres multiple newly commissioned works.

In addition to some eighty concerts performed at The Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the orchestra gives approximately forty concerts at other major concert halls throughout the world, reaching roughly 250,000 concertgoers worldwide every year. The orchestra expands its reach through videos, concert streams and regular radio and television broadcasts in collaboration with AVROTROS, Mezzo.tv and Medici.tv. It has made over 1,100 LP, CD and DVD recordings to date, many of which have won international distinctions. In 2004, the orchestra launched its own in-house record label, RCO Live.

The Academy of the Concertgebouw Orchestra successfully moulds young, talented musicians into orchestral players of the highest calibre. The biennial Concertgebouworkest Young youth orchestra brings together hidden talent aged fourteen to seventeen from all over Europe. In the Ammodo Masterclass, talented young conductors are tutored by an experienced maestro while conducting the Concertgebouw Orchestra.

The Concertgebouw Orchestra is co-funded by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Municipality of Amsterdam, sponsors, funds and numerous donors all over the world. The largest portion of its income is generated by proceeds from the concerts it gives in and outside the Netherlands.