

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

The orchestra was founded in 1945 by Walter Legge. As Legge was a recording producer for EMI it was widely believed that the orchestra was primarily formed for recording purposes, but that was not Legge's intention. He had been Sir Thomas Beecham's assistant at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, before World War II, and, assuming that he and Beecham would be in charge there again after the war, Legge planned to establish a first-class orchestra for opera, concerts and recordings.[1] After the war, opera resumed at Covent Garden under a different management, but Legge went ahead with his plans for a new orchestra. His contacts in the musical world during the war enabled him to secure the services of a large number of talented young musicians still serving in the armed forces in 1945. At the Philharmonia's first concert on 25 October 1945, more than sixty per cent of the players were still officially in the services. Beecham conducted the concert (for the fee of one cigar) but as he refused to be Legge's employee and Legge refused to cede control of the orchestra, Beecham instead went on to found the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.



In its early years, with financial support of the Maharaja of Mysore the orchestra engaged many prominent conductors, including Arturo Toscanini, Richard Strauss and Wilhelm Furtwängler. Herbert von Karajan was closely associated with the Philharmonia in its early years, although he never held an official title with the orchestra. At first Legge was against appointing an official principal conductor, feeling that no one conductor should have more importance to the orchestra than Legge himself. But Karajan was principal conductor in all but name. He built the orchestra into one of the finest in the world and made numerous recordings, including all the Beethoven symphonies.

In 1954, following the death of Furtwängler, Karajan was elected music director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and subsequently curtailed his work with the Philharmonia. Needing to find a new conductor for the orchestra, Legge turned to Otto Klemperer, whose career was flagging at the time. Klemperer's name became closely linked with the orchestra during an "Indian summer" of celebrated recordings. In 1959, he was named music director for life.

On 10 March 1964, Legge announced that he was going to disband the Philharmonia Orchestra. At a recording session with Klemperer, a meeting was convened where those present unanimously agreed that they would not allow the orchestra to be disbanded. Klemperer gave his immediate support, and on 17 March 1964 the members of the orchestra elected their own governing body and adopted the name New Philharmonia Orchestra. The inaugural concert of the New Philharmonia under its own auspices took place on 27 October 1964. It was a performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, conducted by Klemperer, who was now honorary president of the orchestra. From 1966 until 1972 the chairman of the orchestra was the principal flautist, Gareth Morris.

The orchestra gave many more live performances after it became self-governing than it had under Legge's management. It reacquired the rights to the name "Philharmonia Orchestra" in 1977, and has been known by that name since.

Recent decades

Klemperer retired from conducting in 1971, but was officially still the orchestra's principal conductor until his death in 1973. For the two intervening years, Lorin Maazel held the post of associate principal conductor (1971–1973), and was effectively the principal conductor. Riccardo Muti was principal conductor from 1973 to 1982. Giuseppe Sinopoli succeeded Muti, acting as principal conductor from 1984 to 1994. In 1997, Christoph von Dohnányi became principal conductor, and served until 2008, at which time he took on the title of Honorary Conductor for Life of the orchestra.

In November 2006, the orchestra announced the appointment of Esa-Pekka Salonen as the orchestra's fifth Principal Conductor, effective with the 2008-2009 season. Salonen had made his first conducting appearance with the Philharmonia in 1983, his first guest-conducting engagement outside of Scandinavia. He has since conducted the orchestra in concerts and records over a period of more than twenty years, and served as principal guest conductor of the Philharmonia from 1985 to 1994. His initial contract as principal conductor was for 3 years. In November 2010, the Philharmonia announced the extension of Salonen's contract to 2014. In September 2013, the orchestra announced the further extension of Salonen's contract through the 2016-2017 season.

MAHLER

Symphony no 2 in C minor "Resurrection"

OTTO KLEMPERER / PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA



Some critics find fault with Otto Klemperer (1885-1973) as a Mahler conductor as too "gruff" or too "stodgy," but with music he venerated he could provide what pianist Leon Fleisher describes as "a palpable sense of the transcendent." Given Klemperer's long personal history with Mahler "Resurrection" Symphony, we can expect exactly the towering and magisterial interpretation that has a whole history behind it. In his later years, as head of the Philharmonia Orchestra, Klemperer was known as a rock of integrity and moral authority in his conducting. His measured tempos and inspired literalness, his iron insistence on correct performance, brought new meanings to his readings of Beethoven, Mahler and others. This recording of Mahler's "Resurrection" symphony dates from late 1961 and early 1962, and here we encounter the "aging Klemperer," age 77, conducting the one piece of symphonic literature to which he publicly credited his most personal attachment. From 1905, when the 20 year old Klemperer conducted the offstage brass in a performance led by Oskar Fried (attended by Mahler and pronounced "very good") to 1907, when he created his own piano reduction of the score, the work was clearly in the forefront of his mind. Mahler himself aided Klemperer in attaining his first professional appointments, in Prague (1907) and Hamburg (1910). Yet for all of the above, Klemperer was of mixed views concerning Mahler as an overall symphonist. Much of the Mahler canon he conducted either rarely or never at all. It was the "Resurrection" Symphony, though, which Klemperer consistently programmed, recording it for Vox just ten years prior to the performance under discussion

here. It was this hybrid of arch-Romanticism, drama, and religious/philosophical yearning that Klemperer remained devoted to for the entire length of his professional career. Perhaps it is this quality--devotion--that has magnetized listeners with this performance ever since its issue by EMI/Angel in 1963.

Long known for his incendiary interpretation of this work, his early-1960s recording of it bristles with both energy and wisdom. Klemperer combines both the energetic approaches of later British conductors with the warmth and beauty of other Germans such as Walter to produce a spellbinding, unified view of the score. It also doesn't hurt that his singers--Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Hilde Rossl-Majdan--are in superb voice, thus giving us the best vocal performance in a Mahler second as well. This disc is a worthy memorial to a fine conductor who knew Mahler and what he wanted personally.

The strength of Klemperer's reading lies in the way the conductor never loses overall perspective and the heavenly vision of the entire symphony, while achieving maximum impact in every climax and every crucial moment. Even moments of serene silence are perfectly judged in the context of the whole. As a result, there is a sense of inevitability in the way the music culminates in the massive final apotheosis that sounds all the more transcendent, not because of the volume of the sound, but because of all that went before, starting from the towering account of the first movement.

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1-Allegro Maestoso

2-Andante moderato

3-In ruhig fließender Bewegung

4-Urlicht. Sehr feierlich, aber schlicht

5-Im Tempo des Scherzos. Wild herausfahrend

6-Wieder sehr breit

7-Ritardando...Maestoso

8-Wieder zurückaltend

9-Langsam. Misterioso

10-Etwas bewegter

11-Mit Aufschwung aber nicht eilen

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks. Because your CD or DVD-A was individually "burned" in order to realize superior sound quality to stamped, mass-produced versions, microscopic cosmetic blemishes may be visible. Please regard these tiny marks as evidence of the "human touch" in the care and individual attention that each and every HDTT disc receives during its very demanding manufacturing process.



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