

WIENER SYMPHONIKER

AN ORCHESTRA FOR A NEW WORLD

With a rich history steeped in tradition, the courage to stand apart and an enduring joy of discovery, the Wiener Symphoniker are the beating heart of the metropolis of classical music, Vienna. For 120 years, the orchestra has shaped the special sound of its native city, forging a link between past, present and future like no other.

That the Wiener Symphoniker were formed in 1900 of all years is no coincidence. The fresh wind of Viennese Modernism swirled around this new orchestra, which confronted the challenges of the 20th century with confidence and vision. This initially included the assured command of the city's musical past: they were the first orchestra to present all of Beethoven's symphonies in the Austrian capital as one cycle. The humanist and forward-looking legacy of Beethoven and Viennese Romanticism seems tailor-made for the Symphoniker, who are justly leaders in this repertoire to this day.

That pioneering spirit, however, is also evident in the fact that within a very short time the Wiener Symphoniker rose to become one of the most important European orchestras for the premiering of new works. They have given the world premieres of many milestones of music history, such as Anton Bruckner's *Ninth Symphony*, Arnold Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder*, Maurice Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand* and Franz Schmidt's *The Book of the Seven Seals* - concerts that opened a door onto completely new worlds of sound and made these accessible to the greater masses. The importance that the Wiener Symphoniker continue to place on collaborations with contemporary composers such as Olga Neuwirth, Wolfgang Rihm, HK Gruber, Thomas Larcher, Johannes Maria Staud, Michael Jarrell, Guillaume Connesson, Dieter Ammann and Jörg Widman has positioned them as one of the most important driving forces in contemporary music, both in Vienna and internationally. And among their chief conductors over the past 120 years - among them Bruno Walter, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Hans Swarowsky, Herbert von Karajan, Wolfgang Sawallisch and Georges Prêtre - one can also find numerous visionary figures whose impact has had a lasting influence on the future of classical music.

Notwithstanding their determination to constantly move forward, the Wiener Symphoniker have always been characterised by their extraordinary ability to stay grounded and by the closeness they enjoy with their audience. Their so-called *Volksthümlichen Concerten* ('People's Concerts') and *Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzerte* ('Workers Symphonic Concerts') ensured from the very beginning that classical music would no longer be the exclusive domain of the elite. Today, the orchestra gives concerts at unusual venues throughout all of Vienna's districts as part of its *Grätzl-Konzerte* ('neighbourhood concerts') and continues to fill every corner of the city with musical life.



As official cultural ambassadors of Vienna, the Wiener Symphoniker readily showcase the unmistakable sound of their home beyond the city walls, performing as welcome guests in the great concert halls of the world. And the world comes just as frequently to the Austrian capital. This can be seen, among other things, in the orchestra's illustrious roster of past guest conductors, which has consistently included such great names as Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, Claudio Abbado, Carlos Kleiber and Sergiu Celibidache. And as *Orchestra in Residence* of the Bregenz Festival, the Wiener Symphoniker have been delighting a colourful opera audience for decades.

