

NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra

The NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra has been North Germany's musical ambassador to the world for more than 75 years. The orchestra in residence at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, its programmes significantly shape the artistic profile of its home venue on the Elbe. Sounds and images from the world-famous concert hall are familiar to audiences throughout Germany and far beyond because of NDR concert broadcasts via video streaming, radio, television and on the orchestra's online platforms. Under the guidance of its principal conductor Alan Gilbert, whose contract was recently extended until 2029, the orchestra has once again launched a diversified and innovative expansion of its programme. In various event formats ranging from symphony concerts to chamber, club and hour concerts to festivals lasting several days, works of all genres from the baroque to the present day are on the programme. Beyond these activities, however, the ensemble is also aware of its social responsibility and is particularly committed to the support of young musicians and education. In addition to its performances in Hamburg, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra can regularly be heard in Lübeck, Kiel and Wismar and assumes a leading role at the major festivals in North Germany. Its international standing becomes apparent on its tours through Europe, to North and South America and regularly to Asia, where it will return in the 2023/24 season with stops in Osaka, Nagoya and Tokyo.

Founded in 1945 on the initiative of the British military government in Hamburg, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra (initially known as the "Symphony Orchestra of the North-West German Radio", later – after the division of the radio stations in 1956 – as the "NDR Symphony Orchestra") laid the foundations for a newly emerging life of music in post-war northern Germany. The orchestra did not wait long to begin appearing in concert halls outside of Germany and soon became an integral part of the international concert scene. The stages of its artistic development are associated with the names of principal conductors who moulded the orchestra into its present form. The first, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, assured continuity for a good 25 years and fundamentally shaped the unmistakable character of the ensemble. Later, the 20 years of intensive collaboration with Günter Wand became legendary. Principal conductor from 1982 and honorary conductor for life from 1987, Wand consolidated the orchestra's international reputation. His reference interpretations of the symphonies of Johannes Brahms and Anton Bruckner in particular became the ensemble's artistic calling card. In 1998, Christoph Eschenbach was appointed to the position of principal conductor, and in 2004, Christoph von Dohnányi joined the ranks of renowned great artists on the Hamburg podium. From 2011 to 2018, Thomas Hengelbrock as principal conductor set new accents in the history of the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra with his love of interpretive experimentation and unconventional programming. From 2015 to 2020, Krzysztof Urbanski was principal guest conductor of the orchestra. Alan Gilbert has been principal conductor since the 2019/2020 season. The American-born conductor moved to Hamburg from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra; however, he has been closely associated with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra for many years as he was its principal guest conductor from 2004 to 2015.

August 2024

Changes or abridgements of the biography are only permitted in consultation with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra.