

NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra

Seventy years after its foundation, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester has opened a new chapter in its history and found a contemporary artistic home with its move to the Elbphilharmonie. The glamorous opening concert for the spectacular new building by the river Elbe on 11 January 2017 was broadcast live on television, radio and online, and received considerable attention worldwide. Principal conductor Thomas Hengelbrock and the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester delivered a repertoire spanning from the Renaissance to the present day, while fully exploring the possibilities offered by the new hall. Their performance set a path for the future. As orchestra in residence, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester will play a major role in shaping the musical profile of Hamburg's new concert hall. And the spatial and acoustic potential of the Elbphilharmonie will have a significant influence on the future development of the orchestra's sound. Images and sounds from the Elbphilharmonie can now be seen and heard throughout northern Germany and far beyond, thanks in part to the NDR's own programmes.

The NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra was founded in 1945 as the orchestra of the NWDR (Northwest German Radio) as part of the cultural and intellectual rebuilding process after the Second World War. From 1956-2016 it performed as the NDR Symphony Orchestra. As its first Principal Conductor, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt shaped the orchestra's artistic profile for more than a quarter of a century; later on, a 20-year period of close collaboration with Günter Wand was similarly significant. Wand, who served as Principal Conductor from 1982 and was awarded the role of lifetime Honorary Conductor in 1987, cemented the orchestra's international reputation. In particular, his interpretations of the symphonies of Brahms and Bruckner set new standards and became known as the ensemble's artistic calling card. Christoph Eschenbach was appointed as Principal Conductor in 1998, and in 2004, Christoph von Dohnányi continued the line of renowned Principal Conductors. As an early supporter of the plan to build the Elbphilharmonie and as principal conductor of its designated orchestra in residence, Dohnányi was very influential in the parliament of Hamburg's decision in favour of the hall's construction.

Since becoming principal conductor in 2011, Thomas Hengelbrock has been in charge of continuing the orchestra's story. His work is characterised by unconventional programme planning and a delight in experimenting with his interpretations. Hengelbrock brings a fresh and inspiring musical spirit to the orchestra, and is also an enthusiastic music educator. Together with the young and dynamic Polish conductor Krzysztof Urbanski as principal guest conductor, he is shaping the profile of the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra as one of the leading concert orchestras of the 21st century.

The NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester holds its own concert series in Hamburg, Lübeck and Kiel, and plays a leading role at the large festivals in northern Germany. Its international standing is underlined by tours throughout Europe, in North and South America, plus regular tours of Asia. The orchestra is also engaged in the areas of education and youth development. Here too, the orchestra's vision reaches beyond national borders. For example, in 2015 a long-term collaboration was agreed with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, centred on a large-scale education project in China.

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