

Simon Gaudenz | Music Director

The Jena Philharmonic Orchestra has played an important and indispensable role in the cultural life of the city of Jena and the Free State of Thuringia for decades. In addition to its status as the largest concert orchestra in Thuringia, it is increasingly developing the impact of a national and international flagship and is a highly regarded address for soloists and guest conductors of the highest international calibre.

A unique feature of the Jena Philharmonic Orchestra are the three choirs affiliated with the orchestra: the Philharmonic Choir, Madrigal Circle and Boys' Choir, emphasizing the orchestra's focus on choral symphonic music.

Opening up the orchestra's work to the city and creating a range of opportunities for a wide variety of target audiences has yielded a series of new formats in recent years. They stand for diversity, the joy of experimentation and the desire for unusual collaborations, showcasing a young, extremely committed orchestra in constant motion. In particular, the Mahler-Scartazzini cycle, which has been acknowledged enthusiastically and invited to guest performances beyond the region, as well as the experimental format DER KLANG VON JENA, have been very well received.

The musicians of the Jena Philharmonic devote themselves to music education with creativity and dedication. As such, they perform in schools and kindergardens in Jena and surrounding counties, supported by the Philharmonic Society Jena e. V. within the framework of the network "MUSIK macht schlau" (MUSIC makes you smart), sowing lasting enthusiasm for music among young audiences. For more than fifty years, the orchestra has been an important cooperation partner for the FRANZ LISZT SCHOOL of Music in Weimar in the training of young conductors and in the annual international Weimar Master Classes.

The Jena Philharmonic Orchestra allocates particular importance to the cultivation and expansion of its artistic charisma. Its intensive guest performance activities have taken the orchestra to venues such as the Alte Oper Frankfurt, the Kölner Philharmonie, the Konzerthaus Berlin, the Tonhalle Zürich, to Radio France, the Mahler Musikwochen Toblach as well as to Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Armenia and China. In winter 2018/2019, the Jena Philharmonic Orchestra completed a successful China tour. Numerous CD recordings of both well-known and unusual repertoire underscore the orchestra's high quality and versatility.

For 2024, invitations to Switzerland are on the agenda, as well as a guest performance at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, amongst others.

In 1999 and 2002, the Jena Philharmonic Orchestra won the German Music Publishers Association award for the best concert program of the season. From 2017 to 2020, the orchestra received funding from the German government in the "Excellent Orchestra Landscape Germany" program, and has been a member of the European orchestra network ONE® ("Orchestra Network for Europe") since 2005.

Founded more than eighty years ago as the Jena Municipal Symphony Orchestra, the Jena Philharmonic received its present name on September 21, 1969. Under the conductor Günter Blumhagen (1967-1980), the number of positions was increased to 85. Christian Ehwald (1981-1988), Andreas S. Weiser (1990-1998), Andrey Boreyko (1998-2004), Nicholas Milton (2004-2011) and Marc Tardue (2011-2017) followed as general music directors before Simon Gaudenz took over as conductor of the orchestra with the 2018/19 season. The home of the Jena Philharmonic is the Volkshaus, built in 1902/03, with its magnificent Ernst-Abbe Hall, hosting 17 subscription concerts and numerous special concerts each season. The orchestra also distinguishes itself by a great variety of chamber music activities. Numerous chamber music ensembles spinning off the orchestra enrich the concert series with their own programmes.

Short version

As the largest concert orchestra in Thuringia, the Jena Philharmonic is a national and international flagship of the Free State and plays an important and indispensable role in the cultural life of the city of Jena and the state.

Three choirs are directly affiliated with the orchestra, emphasizing the importance of choral symphonic music in the orchestra's work.

In recent years, numerous new concert formats have been created, addressing different target audiences, showcasing unusual collaborations and a young, committed orchestra. In addition to music education for children and cooperation with the Weimar Academy of Music, the orchestra has an intensive guest performance schedule. Particularly outstanding is the Mahler-Scartazzini cycle, with which the orchestra is frequently invited to guest performances throughout Europe and beyond.

Simon Gaudenz has been conducting the orchestra since the 2018/19 season.