

Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra

From the beginning, the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra (SKO), founded in 1945 by Karl Münchinger, has developed its own unmistakable sound and become a foundation model for many other ensembles. Under Dennis Russell Davies, the SKO's honorary conductor, the orchestra also specifically expanded its range to include contemporary music. His successor, Michael Hofstetter, strengthened the orchestra's expertise in the field of historical performance practice.

Today, more than 75 years after its foundation, the SKO sees itself as a cultural institution with a dual role. Principal Conductor Thomas Zehetmair, Artistic Partner Jörg Widmann and General and Artistic Director Markus Korszelt aim to preserve tradition while also setting standards for the future in terms of sound and programming. A rich repertoire spanning the centuries, from Baroque to composition commissions, as well as the confidence to cross genres with jazz and electronic music in exciting formats and projects close to the audience make it one of the most accomplished ensembles of its kind. The SKO is closely connected to Stuttgart and its home region through concerts, collaborations and projects and, as a musical ambassador, inspires audiences all over the world on tours and with guest appearances. Its extensive discography, featuring top-class soloists and hand-picked programmes, is a testament to the ensemble's international standing.

The orchestra presents itself both as “pure SKO” in its regular line-up of 17 strings as well as in its larger ensemble. The concert plan for the 2022 season includes guest performances across Germany and Europe and a tour of Japan. Top artists such as Kit Armstrong, Rafał Blechacz, Arabella Steinbacher, Sarah Maria Sun, Johanna Dömötör, Benjamin Schmid and Núria Rial will appear on stage with the SKO as guest performers. Principal Conductor Thomas Zehetmair and Artistic Partner Jörg Widmann, the ensemble's musical leadership duo, drive the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra to new heights in the interpretation of the wide-ranging repertoire from the early Baroque to the 21st century and also appear as soloists themselves.

The “Sternstunden”, the SKO's own concert series, relishes the opportunity to transcend genre boundaries and experiment with the programme. For example, this year the duo BartolomeyBittmann will electrify with “Dynamo Groove”, jazz pianist Gwilym Simcock and the SKO will present the world premiere of a commissioned composition, the theoretical astrophysicist Josef Gaßner will bring string theory to light accompanied by the sounds of Arvo Pärt and John Adams, the choreographer Milo Pablo Momm will become the “dancing god” to the music of Lully and Stravinsky and Sven Helbig, one of the main proponents of electronic music, will stage Local Heroes 4.0 with drone sounds and noise effects.

The Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra is constantly discovering new creative fields in the ever-changing area of digitisation. Since 2018 innovative projects featuring virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and hologram concerts have been created which broaden the classical foundation of the orchestra and offer the audience new artistic experiences.

Recent news: in its quest to be more sustainable, the SKO has become the first climate-neutral orchestra in Germany and takes on the responsibility of maintaining this standard in the future. The move to go paperless by using tablets, also a first in Germany, is almost a side note in comparison.

Since 2015 the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra has been developing participatory formats for children and young people from a wide variety of backgrounds with its "SKOhr-Labor" music education programme. Through tailor-made projects, the SKO assumes social responsibility and makes an indispensable contribution to the musical culture of future generations. For example, a prison music piece was developed with juvenile offenders from the JVA Adelsheim, for which the SKO won the prize "The Power of the Arts". The performances are scheduled for summer 2022.

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