

GÜRZENICH ORCHESTER KÖLN

Biography Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne

The Gürzenich Orchestra, firmly rooted in Cologne but open to the world, stands for groundbreaking interpretations and a diverse range of offerings beyond the concert hall. As one of Germany's leading orchestras in the concert and opera field, it has a tradition that has made music history like few others. Founded in 1827 by the Cologne Concert Society, its history can be traced back to medieval music in Cologne. Since 1888, it has been the orchestra of the city of Cologne and delights more than 100,000 visitors in around 50 concerts per season at the Cologne Philharmonic Hall. As the orchestra of the Cologne Opera, it performs in around 160 performances each season.

Andrés Orozco-Estrada is the General Music Director of the City of Cologne and Gürzenich Kapellmeister. Günter Wand (1946–1974) and Dmitrij Kitajenko are honorary conductors of the orchestra. Sakari Oramo, artistic partner of the orchestra, conducts two concert projects per season.

Outstanding works from the Romantic repertoire by Johannes Brahms, Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler were premiered with the Gürzenich Orchestra. This heritage is still present today – premieres and first performances are therefore an integral part of the programme.

Around 150 world-class musicians put their heart and soul into making the orchestra what it is: an orchestra of the highest calibre with unlimited expressive possibilities. Full of joy and without fear of contact, it also leaves the classical concert hall to inspire people creatively in the midst of society. With performances in facilities for senior citizens, kindergartens and community centres, as well as workshops and school concerts, it inspires a wide variety of audiences to enjoy music. Long-standing initiatives such as the Cologne Citizens' Orchestra and the Cologne Citizens' Choir invite people to make music together at the Cologne Philharmonic Hall.

The orchestra also has a digital presence: social media channels and the media library offer live concert streams and many exciting insights into the world of the Gürzenich Orchestra. Multiple award-winning CDs showcase the orchestra's uniqueness as a cultural ambassador for the city of Cologne to the world.

Numerous collaborations connect the Gürzenich Orchestra within the city, such as its cultural partnership with the Rote Funken carnival society and the Rheinische Musikschule music school, or the traditional 'wir helfen' charity concert in aid of disadvantaged children and young people in the Cologne area. In addition, it performs in major concert halls around the world, such as the KKL Luzern, the Elbphilharmonie, the Philharmonie Berlin, the Philharmonie de Paris, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Suntory Hall Tokyo. Since the 2023/24 season, the Gürzenich Orchestra has been one of the three resident orchestras of the Concertgebouw Brugge, alongside the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest. The exclusive partnership with the Kronberg Academy since the 2025-26 season enables the promotion of young talent at the highest level.