

GÜRZENICH ORCHESTER KÖLN

Biography François-Xavier Roth

François-Xavier Roth, since 2015 Gürzenich Kapellmeister and General Music Director of the City of Cologne, is one of the most exciting and sought-after conductors of our time. With charisma and deep inner conviction, he enlivens the international scene as an advocate of classical music of every kind. His concert programmes captivate with their imagination, courage, joy of experimentation and passion for new discoveries. Together with the Gürzenich Orchestra, François-Xavier Roth cultivates its great tradition while building bridges to the music of our day with an unerring awareness of quality: numerous works by important contemporary composers (e.g. Georg Friedrich Haas, Philippe Manoury, Martin Matalon) have been premiered by the Gürzenich Orchestra under Roth's direction. The Gürzenich Orchestra's Fanfares for a new Beginning project, in which ten important composers were each commissioned to write a short wind piece during the Corona pandemic, thus sending a resounding signal of confidence in a phase of cultural standstill, was also an initiative of François-Xavier Roth.

François-Xavier Roth's concise, straightforward approach and his striving for authenticity are also appreciated internationally. Thus, the Gürzenich Kapellmeister regularly works with prominent orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, the Staatskapelle Berlin, the Concertgebouworkest Amsterdam, the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic and the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich. Since the 2017/18 season, he has also been Principal Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.

In 2003 Roth founded the orchestra Les Siècles, with which he conceives programmes that are as innovative as they are rich in contrast and performs them - depending on the repertoire - on modern and period instruments. With Les Siècles he performs throughout Europe as well as in China and Japan.

The targeted promotion of young musicians is a matter particularly close to François-Xavier Roth's heart. He directs the London Symphony Orchestra's Panufnik Young Composers Scheme, which provides a forum for up-and-coming composers. Together with the Gürzenich Orchestra, he supports talented young musicians as part of the international Momentum project and has founded an orchestra academy at the Gürzenich Orchestra.

François-Xavier Roth also wants to inspire young concert audiences for music: children's concerts and participatory concerts are an integral part of his work. He supports the music education programme Ohrenauf! of the Gürzenich Orchestra, which was awarded the Young Ears Prize in 2017 for its offerings. Roth's initiative of a Cologne citizens' orchestra enables dedicated amateur musicians to work alongside professionals.

An extensive discography, awarded with renowned prizes, documents François-Xavier Roth's creativity. He is the youngest recipient of the Honorary Prize of the German Record Critics. The Süddeutsche Zeitung found Roth's interpretative approach to Beethoven "dark, stirring, gripping", and his view of Gustav Mahler "penetrating, but never boring, of rare clarity", according to the classical music magazine concerti. With the Gürzenich Orchestra, François-Xavier Roth has recorded Gustav Mahler's 3rd and 5th Symphonies, the Symphonies No. 1 and No. 4 by Robert Schumann, Symphonic Poems by Richard Strauss and the Symphonies No. 4 and No. 7 by Anton Bruckner.

For his services as a musician, conductor and teacher, François-Xavier Roth was appointed Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur by the French President. François-Xavier Roth will assume the position of Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the SWR Symphony Orchestra for the 2025/2026 season.