

Zurich Chamber Orchestra

Season 2020/21

During the 1940s, music student Edmond de Stoutz began meeting regularly with a circle of friends so that they could make music together. The pleasure of pursuing their creative ideals in this informal framework, and their shared passion for the chamber-music idiom, awakened the desire to establish a chamber orchestra. The first public concert was in Zurich in 1945.

Seventy-five years later, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra is one of the leading ensembles of its kind. For over 50 years, Edmond de Stoutz was the driving force of the orchestra community. An indefatigable idealist and charismatic personality, he inspired musicians and audience alike and created a broad supporting network around the orchestra. The post-de Stoutz era was shaped by conductors Howard Griffiths, Muhai Tang and Sir Roger Norrington, who progressively established the distinctive sound and the musical orientation of the ZKO. Since 2016, with Daniel Hope as Music Director, the orchestra has for the first time dispensed for the most part with the services of a conductor, following the dynamic principle of «Play & Conduct», where the soloist directs the orchestra from his instrument.

The ZKO is an orchestra with a strong element of travel in its DNA. Just a few years after it was founded, the ZKO was giving regular concerts outside Switzerland. Invitations to international festivals like the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival, the Rheingau Music Festival, the Gstaad Menuhin Festival and Odessa Classics, guest performances in major music centres, concert tours of European countries, America, Asia and South Africa and a string of CD releases hailed by the specialist press amply document the global reputation of the Zurich Chamber Orchestra.

From its earliest days, the ZKO has cultivated a wide-ranging repertoire, from the Baroque through the Classical and Romantic eras up to the present day. A notable feature is the way the ensemble works with musicians from other fields like jazz, folk music and popular entertainment. The Zurich Chamber Orchestra sees its family concerts, outreach to children and young people, and promotion of young instrumentalists as no less important than their continuing collaboration with world-famous soloists.