



Sakari Oramo appointed Artistic Partner of the Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne

Cologne, 19 November 2024. The **Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne** and its designated Gürzenich-Kapellmeister and General Music Director Andrés Orozco-Estrada is delighted to announce the appointment of **Sakari Oramo** to the **newly created post of Artistic Partner**. The Finnish conductor will present a minimum of two subscription projects per season **from September 2025** for an initial period of five seasons. His role will entail introducing new repertoire to the illustrious German ensemble's programmes and complementing the work of Andrés Orozco-Estrada, the incoming Gürzenich-Kapellmeister. Oramo, who made his debut with the Gürzenich Orchestra in March 2023, is set to return to Cologne early in the new year to direct three programmes. He will also conduct the Gürzenich Orchestra on its tour to Japan in February, including performances at Tokyo's Suntory Hall and Opera City.

"I look forward to working with this marvellous group of musicians," comments Sakari Oramo. "We had such a strong connection when we first met last year. I was particularly moved by the intense commitment and energy of their playing. The Gürzenich Orchestra receives serious financial support, notably from the City of Cologne, and is investing wisely in its development. This is a very encouraging sign of Cologne's commitment to culture. The orchestra has a great tradition that stretches back to the time of Brahms, Mahler and Richard Strauss, as well as an illustrious record in championing new music. Their work as an opera orchestra is also a huge strength. And of course, they play in the wonderful Cologne Philharmonie, which is one of the best concert halls in Europe."

Andrés Orozco-Estrada, the incoming Chief Conductor of the Gürzenich Orchestra, warmly welcomes Sakari Oramo's appointment. "I am delighted that in Sakari Oramo we have gained an outstanding artist who will further inspire the Gürzenich Orchestra," he notes. "This long-term collaboration, comprising at least two projects every season, will broaden the musical and programming base of the orchestra and be a wonderful addition to my work in Cologne."

Stefan Englert, Executive Director of the Gürzenich Orchestra, welcomes Sakari Oramo to his new post and the opportunity it brings to enrich the ensemble's repertoire. "We are so excited by this new relationship," he notes. "Sakari is one of the finest and most respected conductors of our time. He's an amazing musician and an exceptional programmer. The breadth of his repertoire complements that of the orchestra. We've always been champions of new music, as is Sakari, while being deeply immersed in the great symphonic tradition. He will bring new composers and works to our programmes, which I believe is very important for our audiences here in Germany. The Gürzenich Orchestra loves playing and taking risks in the moment of performance. We felt when Sakari came to us for the first time that he shared those values. There was an immediate connection between the orchestra and him."

The musicians of the Gürzenich Orchestra are overjoyed about their forthcoming partnership with Sakari Oramo. "We have been hoping to work closely with Sakari Oramo for a long time," comments the **orchestra's representative board**. "We look forward to the opportunity to do this regularly in the future. It happens so rarely that the chemistry between orchestra and conductor is immediately synchronous, and with Sakari Oramo we experienced this from the first moment. We are looking forward to presenting extraordinary concerts together with him and our orchestra, as well as creating unique musical experiences for our audiences."

Sakari Oramo's remit with the Gürzenich Orchestra will embrace the idea of intelligent programming and be open to the exploration of new formats. It is expected that he will introduce the German premieres of works by composers from Nordic countries and elsewhere. Both conductor and orchestra intend to extend their partnership to opera performances.

“We believe we can create compelling projects and also develop the orchestra’s flexible sound with Sakari,” comments Stefan Englert. “He is open to doing more than two projects each season, so our audience will definitely get to know him well. From his first visit, the orchestra recognised that they shared a common language with him, a way of working that multiplied their natural energy. We want to build a sustainable, long-term relationship. We’re thrilled to enter this new phase of close collaboration and that he will be with us in Cologne and on tour before the official start as Artistic Partner.”

Before assuming his new role in September, Oramo will conduct the Gürzenich Orchestra in three projects at the Cologne Philharmonie. His first programme comprises Sibelius’ *En Saga*, Kaija Saariaho’s *Saarikoski Songs*, with Anu Komsu as soprano soloist, and Dvořák’s Symphony No.8 (Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 January 2025). He will return to conduct Robert Schumann’s Piano Concerto in A minor, with Mao Fujita as soloist, and Mahler’s Symphony No.5 (Sunday 2, Monday 3 & Tuesday 4 February), and again for the fascinating combination of Ravel’s *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, Anders Hillborg’s single-movement Piano Concerto No.2 (2023), with its dedicatee Emmanuel Ax as soloist, and Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 March). He will also lead the orchestra’s seven concert tour of Japan from Sunday 9 February to Sunday 16 February, in programmes drawn from Robert Schumann’s Piano Concerto, Bruch’s Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor, Mozart’s Piano Concerto No.23 in A major K.488, Weber’s Overture to *Oberon*, Beethoven’s Symphony No.7 and Mahler’s Symphony No.5.

“This coming period, with our concerts in Cologne and on tour, mean that we will spend a concentrated period of time together in a wide range of repertoire,” observes Sakari Oramo. “I am truly delighted to join the Gürzenich Orchestra at such an exciting time in its long and distinguished history.”

Notes for Editors

The Gürzenich Orchestra, founded in 1827 by the Concert-Gesellschaft Köln, has served as the orchestra of the City of Cologne since 1888. It secured its place in the history of music by giving the world premiere performances of, among other repertoire landmarks, Brahms’s Double Concerto, Mahler’s Symphonies Nos. 3 & 5, and Richard Strauss’s *Don Quixote* and *Till Eulenspiegel*. The ensemble has been based at the Cologne Philharmonie since 1986 and presents around fifty concerts there each season. In addition, it serves as the orchestra of Cologne Opera. Their long and fruitful partnership is reflected today in the 160 opera performances given by the Gürzenich Orchestra each season across a wide range of repertoire.

Many eminent conductors have held the position of Gürzenich-Kapellmeister, among them the composers Ferdinand Hiller and Fritz Steinbach, Hemann Abendroth, Günter Wand (who held the post for almost 30 years), James Conlon and François-Xavier Roth. The Colombian conductor and violinist Andrés Orozco-Estrada is set to begin his tenure as Gürzenich-Kapellmeister in 2025, in time for the orchestra’s bicentenary season two years later.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, the Gürzenich Orchestra and Günter Wand set down an impressive series of recordings for Le Club Français Du Disque, including Beethoven’s nine symphonies and Schoenberg’s Five Orchestral Pieces Op.16. Subsequent highlights of its large discography include albums devoted to the complete orchestral and choral works of Alexander von Zemlinsky, a cycle of Shostakovich’s symphonies, and works by, among others, Franz Schreker, Viktor Ullmann, Mahler, Richard Strauss and Bruckner.

<https://www.guerzenich-orchester.de/> - [Instagram](#)

Sakari Oramo

Chief Conductor of BBC Symphony Orchestra, Conductor Laureate of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Honorary Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, a guest conductor at the highest international level and a prolific recording artist, Sakari Oramo’s performances combine crystalline structural cohesion with authority, elegance and passion. He is a regular guest with many of the world’s leading orchestras: during the 2024-25 season, for example, he is scheduled to return to work with the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Gürzenich Orchestra, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the NDR Elbphilharmonieorchester, the Orchestre national de France and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Oramo has held numerous prestigious positions throughout his career, including as Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (1998-2008); Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra (2003-12); Principal Conductor of the West Coast Kokkola Opera 2004-18; and Chief Conductor of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra (2008-21). An accomplished violinist, he served as concertmaster of Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra before embarking on his conducting career in 1993.

www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/sakari-oramo - [Twitter](#)

For press enquiries, please contact:

Emma Curtis at Valerie Barber PR

emma@vbpr.co.uk / +44 (0)20 7586 8560 / www.vbpr.co.uk

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