**Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam**

The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra is one of the very best orchestras in the world. Time and time again, critics have lauded its unique sound. The RCO’s string section has been called ‘velvety’, the sound of the brass ‘golden’, the timbre of the woodwinds ‘distinctly personal’ and the percussion have an international reputation. While the exceptional acoustics of the Concertgebouw play an important role in this respect, no other orchestra sounds like the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in the Main Hall. Equally important is the quality of the musicians themselves and the influence exerted on the orchestra by its chief conductors, of which there have been only seven since the orchestra was founded in 1888: Willem Kes (chief conductor from 1888 to 1895), Willem Mengelberg (1895–1945), Eduard van Beinum (1945–1959), Bernard Haitink (1961–1988), Riccardo Chailly (1988–2004),Mariss Jansons (2004-2015) and Daniele Gatti (September 2016 - August 2018).

Leading composers such as Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss and Igor Strawinsky conducted the orchestra on more than one occasion. The orchestra still regularly collaborates with contemporary composers, including John Adams, George Benjamin, Tan Dun and Thomas Adès.

The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra is made up of 120 players hailing from over 20 countries. Despite its size, the orchestra actually functions more like a chamber orchestra in terms of the sensitivity with which its members listen to, and work in tandem with, one another. Indeed, this requires both a high individual calibre and a great sense of mutual trust and confidence.

In addition to some ninety concerts performed at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra gives forty concerts at leading concert halls throughout the world each year. Thanks to regular radio and television broadcasts, that exposure is further increased. The orchestra has made over 1,100 LP, CD and DVD recordings to date, many of which have won international distinctions. Since 2004, the Concertgebouw Orchestra boasts its own in-house label, RCO Live. The RCO Academy successfully trains talented young orchestra musicians. In November 2018 RCO Young was launched: a youth orchestra for ‘hidden talent’ from all over Europe.

In celebration of its 125th anniversary, in 2013 the orchestra undertook a world tour, visiting six continents in a single year. Between 2016 and 2018, the RCO visited all 28 member states of the European Union (*RCO meets Europe*), performing one work together with a local youth orchestra in each country (*Side by Side*).