

PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Biography

For more than 115 years, the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** (PSO) has been an essential part of Pittsburgh's cultural landscape. The PSO, known for its artistic excellence, is credited with a rich history of the world's finest conductors and musicians, and a strong commitment to the Pittsburgh region and its citizens. This tradition was furthered in fall 2008, when Austrian conductor Manfred Honeck assumed the position of Music Director with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. In February 2012, Honeck agreed to extend his contract for the second time, until the end of the 2020 season.

Heading the list of internationally recognized conductors to have led the PSO is Victor Herbert, Music Director between 1898 and 1904, who influenced the early development of the PSO. Preceding Herbert was Frederic Archer (1896-1899), the first Pittsburgh Orchestra Conductor. The Orchestra's solidification as an American institution took place in the late 1930s under the direction of Maestro Otto Klemperer. Conductors prior to Klemperer were Emil Paur (1904-1910), Elias Breeskin (1926-1930) and Antonio Modarelli (1930-1937). From 1938 to 1948, under the dynamic directorship of Fritz Reiner, the Orchestra embarked on a new phase of its history, making its first international tour and its first commercial recording.

The PSO's standard of excellence was maintained and enhanced through the inspired leadership of William Steinberg during his quarter-century as Music Director between 1952 and 1976. André Previn (1976-1984) led the Orchestra to new heights through tours, recordings and television, including the PBS series, *Previn and the Pittsburgh Symphony*. Lorin Maazel began his relationship with the PSO in 1984 as Music Consultant but later served as a highly regarded Music Director from 1988-1996. As Music Director from 1997-2004, Mariss Jansons furthered the artistic growth of the orchestra, and upon his departure, the PSO created an innovative leadership model with Artistic Advisor Sir Andrew Davis, Principal Guest Conductor Yan Pascal Tortelier and Endowed Guest Conductor Chair Marek Janowski. These three conductors formed the primary artistic leadership for the Orchestra until January 2007, when the PSO selected Honeck to take the reins at the start of the 2008-2009 season.

With a long and distinguished history of touring both domestically and overseas since 1900, the PSO continues to be critically acclaimed as one of the world's greatest orchestras. With more than 35 international tours, including 19 European tours, eight trips to the Far East, and two to South America, a Far East Tour in 2002 marked first-time concerts for the Orchestra in Kuala Lumpur and Australia. Reaching a global audience, the PSO was the first American orchestra to perform at the Vatican in January 2004 for the late Pope John Paul II, as part of the Pontiff's Silver Jubilee celebration. In May 2009, the PSO embarked on a four concert tour of Asia, a trip which included debut performances in Shanghai, China and Kaohsiung, Taiwan, in addition to the first stop in Beijing, China since 1987. Then in September 2009, the Orchestra toured Europe with stops in Essen and Bonn, Germany before closing the prestigious Lucerne Festival in Switzerland. International touring is made possible by the Hillman Endowment for International Performances.

Since 2006, the PSO has partnered with the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and its marketing affiliate, the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, to use international tours to open doors for economic development and foreign direct investment discussions. The partnership, unique among American orchestras, has resulted in numerous investments in the Pittsburgh region.

The Orchestra also enjoys an equally distinguished record of domestic tours, which over the years have showcased the orchestra in all of America's major cities and music centers, including frequent performances at Carnegie Hall in New York and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

The PSO has a long and illustrious history in the areas of recordings and radio concerts. As early as 1936, the PSO broadcast coast-to-coast, receiving increased national attention in 1982 through its series of network radio broadcasts by Public Radio International, produced by WQED-FM 89.3 in Pittsburgh.

Starting with the release of its first commercial recording in 1941, the PSO has made hundreds of critically acclaimed recordings. They are available on the PentaTone, EMI, Angel, CBS, Philips, MCA, New World, Nonesuch, Sony Classical and Telarc labels. The orchestra with Lorin Maazel conducting and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, won a 1992 Grammy Award for a Sony Classical disc featuring works by Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky. *Cinema Serenade*, a CD with John Williams conducting and Itzhak Perlman performing celebrated film scores, reached No. 1 on the *Billboard* crossover chart. The PSO's newest recordings include Mahler's 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th symphonies, part of a projected complete cycle of Mahler symphonies with Music Director Manfred Honeck on the Exton label, Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, also on the Exton label, and a complete Brahms cycle with Guest Conductor Marek Janowski for the PentaTone label.