



A History of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

For more than 120 years, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra has been an essential part of Pittsburgh's cultural landscape. The symphony, 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.

Heading the list of internationally recognized conductors to have led the Pittsburgh Symphony is Victor Herbert, music director between 1898 and 1904, who influenced the early development of the symphony. 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 orchestra'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*. Lorin Maazel began his relationship with the Pittsburgh Symphony in 1984 as music consultant but later served as a highly regarded music director from 1988 to 1996. As music director from 1997 to 2004, Mariss Jansons furthered the artistic growth of the orchestra, and upon his departure, the Pittsburgh Symphony 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 symphony orchestra selected Honeck to take the reins at the start of the 2008-2009 season. In February 2012, Honeck agreed to extend his contract with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra through the 2019-2020 season.

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra has been at the forefront of championing new American works, and gave the first performance of Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 1 "Jeremiah" in 1944 and John Adams' *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* in 1986. The Pittsburgh Symphony has a long and illustrious history in the areas of recordings and radio concerts. As early as 1936, the Pittsburgh Symphony broadcast on the airwaves coast-to-coast. The orchestra has received increased national attention since 1982 through network radio broadcasts on Public Radio International, produced by Classical WQED-FM 89.3, made possible by the musicians of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

With a long and distinguished history of touring both domestically and overseas since 1900, the Pittsburgh Symphony continues to be critically acclaimed as one of the world's greatest orchestras. With more than 36 international tours, including 20 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 Pittsburgh Symphony 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. Sir Gilbert Levine conducted that performance. In May 2009, the symphony 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 symphony toured Europe with stops in Essen and Bonn, Germany, before closing the prestigious Lucerne Festival in Switzerland.



Following their successful European tour in 2010, the Pittsburgh Symphony and Honeck returned for tours of major European music festivals in 2011 and 2013 and European tours with stops in many different countries in 2012. The symphony returns for another European tour in 2016, with stops in Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and Austria.

Since 2006, the Pittsburgh Symphony 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.

International touring is made possible by the Hillman Endowment for International Performances.

The Pittsburgh Symphony 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. Recent domestic travel includes appearances at the final Spring for Music Festival in Carnegie Hall and at Chapel Hill, North Carolina in 2014.

Starting with the release of its first commercial recording in 1941, the symphony 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 symphony's recordings during Honeck's tenure include Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, and Mahler's 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th symphonies, part of Mahler symphonies with Honeck on the Exton label, as well as a complete Brahms cycle with Guest Conductor Marek Janowski for the PentaTone label and "In Truth: Lucas Richman," from Albany Records. The Pittsburgh Symphony's Exton recording of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 4, conducted by Honeck and featuring soprano Sunhae Im, won a prestigious 2012 International Classical Music Award (ICMA) for symphonic music.

The Pittsburgh Symphony and Honeck have partnered with Reference Recordings FRESH! label in recent years to produce "Pittsburgh Live!," a series of multi-channel hybrid SACD releases. The first three releases — "Strauss Tone Poems," "Bruckner 4" and "Dvořák/Janaček" received numerous critical accolades, including a Grammy® Award nominations for "Dvořák/Janaček" and "Bruckner 4." Of the "Dvořák/Janaček" release, critic Alain Steffen of *Pizzicato* said, "This is one of the most gripping performances of Dvořák's 8th Symphony that I ever heard. Honeck and Pittsburgh excel themselves and definitely team up to one of those great partnerships like Solti and Chicago, Ozawa and Boston, Bernstein and New York, Szell and Cleveland, Tilson-Thomas and San Francisco." The fourth in the series, "Beethoven 5 & 7" was released in November 2015.

The 2015-2016 season marks the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's 120th anniversary.

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