



MANFRED HONECK AND PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CRITICAL ACCLAIM

Manfred Honeck

“His [Manfred Honeck] music-making is all the argument he needs.” — *New York Classical Review*, April 8, 2016

“Mr. Honeck’s vision...was always human in scale...and the ensemble had accuracy and bristling intimacy. Honeck can clearly give the Philharmonic some heart.” — *The New York Times*, April 8, 2016

“Honeck is a conductor of superior musicianship who is able to bring life to the standard repertoire...Every episode was finely crafted and the sound that Honeck drew out of the orchestra was enormous...Honeck is, without question, a first-rate conductor.” – Eric C. Simpson, *New York Classical Review*, May 29, 2015

“Honeck struck sparks in a striking and distinctive way. The Austrian conductor is a dynamic podium figure with a kinetic style that seems to ignite an extra degree of electricity from the musicians.” – Lawrence A. Johnson, *Chicago Classical Review*, December 12, 2014



Tour

"[Honeck] and his orchestra gave the audience a musical gift." — *Weser Kurier* (Bremen), May 23, 2016

"The audience judged that the long journey had been worthwhile, responding to the performance with shouts of 'bravo' and stomping feet" — *Musik Heute*, May 21, 2016

"The opening concert with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra already provided a bright spot...Magnificent the homogeneity of the Pittsburgh strings, conductor Manfred Honeck managed the whole with extreme sensitivity." – Stefan Amzoll, *Neues Deutschland*, September 13, 2013

"The playing is so homogeneous that the violins come like cream out of the tube, and the intonation of the wind, too, is unbeatable. And in Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, under the direction of Manfred Honeck, the chief conductor from Austria, we enjoy the 'American' aspect of the sound as we would a high-class porn production: silky, firm, full of curves." – *Die Zeit*, September 12, 2013

"No question about it: the big, powerful and sometimes massive sound of the orchestral apparatus from Pittsburgh is impressive...The great contrast with the quieter and more lyrical passages in which the woodwind and above all the strings once more gave us some beautiful episodes with their earthy colors. The orchestra's chief calling-card is undoubtedly its brass, with the American trumpets pulling out all the stops." – Frank Fechter, *Klassik.com*, September 2, 2013

"One could feel the ambition which the conductor invested in the rehearsals, his efforts to allow this magnificent, convention-subverting work to shine...Honeck can rely on his technically brilliant orchestra leader, and on his heavy brass." – Ulrich Amling, *Tagesspiegel*, September 1, 2013

"The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, now back to full strength, does not allow itself in any case to be put down, and evolves its whole splendor, power and precision. And Honeck, for many years a viola player and violinist with the Vienna Philharmonic, knows exactly how he can get what from the individual groups of instruments: excesses of violence and sensuous tenderness in equal measure. The conductor, now in demand worldwide, and his musicians were in top form and wowed the audience." – Ursula Wiegand, *Der Neue Merker*, September 1, 2013

"Leaves an unforgettable impression." – Christophe Huss, *Le Devoir (Montreal)*, July 23, 2012

"What strikes us first in the orchestra of 100 musicians is the prodigious virtuosity of play, and the overwhelming power of sound." – Claude Gingras, *La Presse*, July 22, 2012

"The calibre of the playing was stunning. Brass, percussion, strings, woodwinds: I might as well list them in alphabetical order, since every element was distinguished and naturally balanced with the others. One sensed an orchestra programmed to produce, as its default setting, an ideal of beauty and strength." – Arthur Kaptainis, *Montreal Gazette*, July 22, 2012



"The first-class Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, which under Manfred Honeck's artistic direction, is well on the way to opening up new dimensions of sound." – Alain Steffen, *Tageblatt Luxemburg*, September 15, 2011

"High waves are still emanating from the Music Festival in the Philharmonie. The latest has washed up the truly fabulous Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Manfred Honeck. ... It is a positive gift from heaven for the musical ability of the musicians from Pittsburgh." – Klaus Geitel, *Berliner Morgenpost*, September 13, 2011

"What a fabulous orchestra they have in Pittsburgh! We discovered that in the wonderfully gyrating waltz, a masterpiece of orchestral virtuosity. The sound culture of the ensemble was simply captivating." – Mathias Nozzle & Bernhard Hartmann, *General-Anzeiger Bonn*, September 12, 2011

"A characterful, thoroughly engaging traversal of Mahler's Fifth Symphony. ... The horn section – led very much from the front by their excellent principal William Caballero – is one of the best in the business." – Guy Dammann, *The Guardian*, September 7, 2011

"Crammed with fantastic vigour. ... A sensational performance, with a well deserved standing ovation." – Stephen Crowe, *MusicOMH*, September 6, 2011

"I did leap to my feet and clapped like a mad thing at the end. I wasn't the only one, of course. There were a few of us desperate to shake off our British reserve and show our appreciation. Everyone else clapped and cheered just as enthusiastically. It was well deserved applause. The Pittsburgh Symphony journeyed here and delivered." – Jon Jacob, *Thoroughly Good Blog*, September 6, 2011

"Evidently chief conductor Manfred Honeck has no intention of playing the lion-tamer in front of his musicians, but rather make music with them in the most attractive sense." – Gerhard Kramer, *Wiener Zeitung*, September 5, 2011

"It allowed this fine orchestra to show what feats its brass could achieve, with a principal horn whose pianissimo control is simply miraculous." – Michael Church, *The Independent*, September 6, 2011

"Honeck directed his Pittsburgh players in a musical *tour de force*. This was awe-inspiring playing from a truly magnificent Pittsburgh orchestra. I have not seen an audience applaud so enthusiastically for some time." – Michael Cookson, *Seen and Heard International*, September 19, 2011

"Persuaded into two encores by the enthusiastic crowd, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra clearly delighted their Proms audience, giving them all the blood and thunder they could possibly want." – Alexandra Coghlan, *The Arts Desk*, September 5, 2011

"The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra filled the hall with sound, a big sound, rich and warm, with lush strings, ripe, fruity woodwind and downright 'rude' brass at times. Under the precise and dynamic direction of Manfred Honeck, this was a rousing and lusty start." – Frances Wilson, *Bachtrack*, September 7, 2011



“You couldn’t help but be won over by the sheer exuberant individuality of the orchestra, in every department. ... The result was a performance that was a riot of colour and incident, and at certain moments — such as the cleverly ambiguous beginning of the Finale — remarkably subtle.” – Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*, September 7, 2011

“It has long been known that Manfred Honeck has developed into one of the best Mahler interpreters of the present age, a conductor who is confident enough to abandon the modern analytical trend and redefine the Bohemian and folksy element in Mahler’s music.” – Alain Steffen *Tageblatt Luxemburg*, September 15, 2011

“The incredible mastership of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mr. Manfred Honeck, was proven by every single sound of the concert. Bewitched by such impeccable playing the audience was clapping for an encore and received two pieces that were not included in the original concert plan.” – Dovilė Jablonskaitė, *Vilniaus diena (Lithuania)*, September 3, 2011

“Manfred Honeck conducted Tchaikovsky’s *Fifth* with commanding confidence, clear gestures, no frippery, and an interpretation that remained faithful to the composition. Congratulations to ‘his’ orchestra!” – *Kurier (Austria)*, September 2, 2011

“The enthusiasm of the audience was not to be missed – the ovations were seemingly endless.” – *Kurier (Austria)*, September 4, 2011

“Manfred Honeck is hugely talented. He has at his disposal an equally talented gift of players.” – Brian Wigman, *ClassicalNet*, January 2017

“An exceptional, multicolored performance in every way.” – Richard Sasanow, *Broadway World*, February 2017

“Manfred Honeck continues to excel as one of the Philharmonic’s major guest conductors, with the ability to extract, in just a short period of rehearsal, exactly what he wants from the players.” *The New York Times*, February 2017



CD Reviews

“Enormous fun – I’ve oft raved about the PSO/Honeck partnership, and this latest installment is up to scratch. Glorious sound. A must hear.” – Graham Rickson, *The Arts Desk*, January 2017

“Manfred Honeck and his Pittsburgh players combine for a stunning album which should be an essential purchase for Strauss devotees.” – Michael Cookson, *MusicWeb International*, November 2016

“Needless to say the incredible richness of the scoring and the complexity of the composer’s harmonic vocabulary also provide a marvellous showcase for the remarkable virtuosity of the Pittsburgh musicians who unflinchingly rise to the challenge with incisive playing that generates scorching levels of visceral excitement.” – Graham Williams, *HRAudio.net*, October 2016

“A splendid showcase for Honeck’s Pittsburgh forces.” – Mark Pullinger, *Gramophone*, January 2017

“Der Rosenkavalier has always been the horn player’s opera par excellence, something the magnificent horn section of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra confirm at the opening of the suite, while a few bars later they deliver Strauss’s orgasmic whoopings with thrilling relish.” – Graham Williams, *HRAudio.net*, October 2016

“He [Manfred Honeck] then creates a vision that combines all of these elements [musical, historical and psychological perspectives] into an interpretation that is fresh and provocative. The Tchaikovsky is a perfect example.” —Henry Schlinger, *Culture Spot LA*, September 26, 2016

“From the soft, delicate opening notes to the big, strong loudest parts, the symphony will give your entire system the opportunity to shine in enthralling sound.” – Steve Bourke, *Ultra High Fidelity*, Winter 2016

“Manfred Honeck’s account of the *Pathétique* is outstanding, with quite a lot of refreshed sound and a good balance between sharp musical contours and emotion.” — Pizzicato, June 2016

“Again Honeck’s interpretation is rich in imagination and the playing of the Pittsburgh Symphony scales the heights.” – Rob Cowan, *Gramophone*, September 19, 2014

“Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra have quietly become one of the country’s hottest partnerships in repertory staples, thereby invigorating and legitimizing the very idea of a canon. Mr. Honeck’s trademark flexible tempos, along with the spectacularly refined playing he draws, enliven this Dvořák war horse.” – David Allen, *The New York Times*, October 22, 2014

“The night’s hero, for me, is the PSO’s string section, which is astonishing, especially in the low range. The entries and tuning were so in harmony, the sound so rich and deep and full of character. Honeck exploited the capabilities of his strings alongside the unbelievable acoustics of the hall by



unearthing, in the *dal niente* decrescendo, layer after layer of quietnesses that lay before silence...It is certain that Honeck and the PSO deserved every moment of applause they received for the singlemindedness and focus of the sound in the Janáček Suite." – Dan Wang, *Backtrack.com*, September 2, 2013

"This orchestra and conductor are up there with the very best in the world. This particular performance, this amazing performance, is very special indeed." – Russell Licther, *Stereotimes*, February 2015



Concert Reviews

"I adore this orchestra. It is such a jewel — every one of its facets just glows." – Yo-Yo Ma, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 6, 2011

"The concert at the center of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's annual gala crackled with excitement as Manfred Honeck and the musicians provided numerous examples of the diversity a world-class orchestra achieves." Mark Kanny, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, September 2016

"This orchestra has always been one of the great orchestras in the United States, maybe the world. ... They love to play, and that is something you can't say about every symphony orchestra. ... This is one of my favorite orchestras in the world." – André Previn, *Essential Public Radio*, March 9, 2012

"Tempos switched like the wind. Phrases once merely broadly noble were now finely etched. After an evening of three programmed works and two encores - five composers - Honeck's ambition for illuminating scores anew both startled and pleased. ... This is an orchestra to be taken seriously." – Peter Dobrin, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 26, 2012

"The orchestra sounded in great shape as it readies for the tour. The strings were rich and poetent, the winds full of character. And although the music is a sonic onslaught at times, neither brass nor percussion overplayed." – Mark Kanny, *The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, May 2016

"This was a smashing performance that had to be heard to be believed. There was thunderous applause and numerous curtain calls...If you get a chance to hear this orchestra and this conductor, grab the opportunity. Even given the bevy of superstars of past music directors, this may be the golden age of the PSO." – William Ford, *AtlantaMusicCritic.com*, July 29, 2012

"Magnificently precise playing ... an unusually fresh, memorable performance." – Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, February 28, 2012

"Mr. Honeck successfully managed this complicated ship, drawing out a rich, dynamic sound from the small orchestra and chorus." – Elizabeth Bloom, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 2016

"As a sheerly musical product the performance was excellent. Mr. Honeck, though a newcomer, showed a superb command of the piece, and the small orchestra responded on a hair trigger. Its new concertmaster, Noah Bendix-Balgley, and its principal trumpeter, George Vosburgh, were particularly fine in solos." – James R. Oestreich, *The New York Times*, December 5, 2011, review of Handel's *Messiah*

"Pittsburgh is one of the great musical cities — not just of the country, but of the world. ... And, of course, there's the great Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, which is really one of the great orchestras of the world." – Miles Hoffman, music commentator, National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, February 4, 2011

"Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* was outstanding, and so was the reception." – David Patrick Stearns, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 12, 2011



“Without extending phrases and stretching rhythms in the subjective Bernstein manner, Honeck had the western Pennsylvanians sounding positively Viennese. ... The Pittsburgh orchestra's performance of the 'Adagietto' almost floated on air in a rapt state of ecstasy, without ever losing the sense of structural balance characteristic of Honeck's approach to the symphony as a whole.” – William Littler, *Toronto Star*, June 4, 2011

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