

# ANTON BRUCKNER MESSE F-MOLL



LENNEKE RUITEN  
IRIS VERMILLION  
SHAWN MATHEY  
FRANZ JOSEF SELIG



ORCHESTRE  
DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE  
RUNDFUNKCHOR BERLIN  
MAREK JANOWSKI



## Anton Bruckner 1824-1896

### Messe f-Moll

Mass No. 3 in F minor (1867-1893)

- |   |   |        |
|---|---|--------|
| 1 | Kyrie – Moderato  | 10. 24 |
| 2 | Gloria – Allegro – Andante, mehr Adagio (Sehr langsam)    | 11. 43 |
| 3 | Credo – Allegro – Moderato misterioso – Langsam – Allegro | 20. 19 |
| 4 | Sanctus – Moderato – Allegro                              | 2. 06  |
| 5 | Benedictus – Allegro moderato                             | 8. 57  |
| 6 | Agnus Dei – Andante                                       | 8. 40  |

**Lenneke Ruiten**, Soprano

**Iris Vermillion**, Mezzo-soprano

**Shawn Mathey**, Tenor

**Franz Josef Selig**, Bass

**Rundfunkchor Berlin**

Chorus Master: Stefan Parkman

**Orchestre de la Suisse Romande**

conducted by

**Marek Janowski**

Total playing time: 62.13

Recording venue: Victoria Hall, Geneva, Switzerland, June 2012

Executive Producer: Job Maarse

Recording Producer: Job Maarse

Balance Engineer: Erdo Groot

Recording Engineer: Roger de Schot

Editing: Jonas Häger

## Anton Bruckner: Mass in F Minor

Probably no other great master began his career in a more sceptical and timid manner than Bruckner. With these words, the great German musicologist Friedrich Blume cut to the quick in his brief and specific description of the peculiar initiation of Anton Bruckner in his development from the village school-assistant to composer, from socially secure secondary school teacher to free-lance artist. For alongside his tenure as organist in Linz, Upper Austria from 1856 to 1868, the former school assistant and high school teacher Bruckner completed a seven-year course of music theory studies with none other than Simon Sechter. Following the death of Georg Albrechtsberger, Sechter was considered “the leading authority in music theory” in Vienna. And Bruckner submitted to this authority with heart and soul, during a period of intensive self-study in Linz as well as during prolonged stays in the Austrian capital. At the end of his apprenticeship in 1861, the student asked his teacher for testimonials of the skills he had learned in the following music theory subjects: harmony, studies in single, double, triple and quadruple counterpoint, as well as in church music, canon and fugue. But that was not sufficient for Bruckner: for after 1861, he continued his studies, but now in another field and with a new teacher. This time with the Linz conductor Otto Kitzler, who for two years instructed him in the compositional tools required in the fields of instrumentation and the study of instrumental form. Thus, after the excellent basis acquired from theorist Sechter, he now undertook with absolute determination further practice-oriented training from cellist and conductor Kitzler, who had an open mind towards contemporary music, and taught the theory of composition expounded by Adolph Bernhard Marx. Bruckner became familiar with Beethoven’s piano sonatas, but also with contemporary works by Richard Wagner. Bruckner also requested Kitzler to confirm his acquired knowledge in the form of a certificate, and as part of an “acquittal” ceremony in July 1863.

And the years 1863-1864 represented a turning point in Bruckner’s oeuvre. He made his breakthrough as a composer with the first of his three great masses in 1864. His friend and mentor, Maurice von Mayfeld, wrote a brilliant review for the première of that D-minor Mass, in which he appears to have described Bruckner’s future prophetically: “December 18, 1864 can be described as the day

when Bruckner’s bright star first rose in full splendour above the horizon.” In his Symphony No. 1 (1865-66) too, Bruckner passionately threw off the shackles of his prolonged and deep-seated insecurity. It seems almost as if Bruckner could not conquer his serious self-doubt and his scepticism about his personal artistic skills before completing a formal and official course of study, before more or less receiving external confirmation. For now, in a first creative phase, full of euphoria and courage, new works began to emerge, with his Mass in E Minor following on immediately in 1866. However, the following year, Bruckner plunged into a severe emotional crisis, probably due to the tremendous exertions of recent years. In June 1867, Bruckner jotted down the following: “Dr. Fadinger in Linz has already mentioned to me that insanity could be a possible consequence. [...] Am still not allowed to play [...] anything, to study or to work.” At the time of writing this, he had already been staying at a health resort in Bad Kreuzen for several weeks, and he remained there until August 8.

Another major blow came on September 10 with the death of Simon Sechter. Immediately thereafter, on September 14, Bruckner began work on his Mass in F minor. A year later, on September 9, 1868, Bruckner completed the work; in fact, just before he moved to Vienna in October, where he – as Sechter’s successor – accepted an appointment as professor of basso continuo and counterpoint at the Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (= Conservatoire of the Society of Friends of Music). For Bruckner had now come full circle. He had achieved the goals in his life and career envisaged nearly twenty years previously in St. Florian, he had succeeded in his targeted social ascent from village school assistant to professor; and his commitment to the creative composition of large-sized works was clearly evident.

In the preface to his *Kritische Neuausgabe* (= *New Critical Edition*, 2005) of the F-minor Mass on which this recording is based, editor Paul Hawkshaw writes that there is no evidence that it was commissioned by court conductor Johann Herbeck, although there is still a close link to the Hofkapelle institution here. Despite documented rehearsals in 1868 and 1869, the première of the mass did not take place until four years later, probably due to the extreme complexity of the work. Bruckner had rehearsed the mass himself, and on 16 June 1872 he also conducted the Hofkapelle orchestra in the Hofpfarrkirche (=

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court chapel) of St. Augustin. In the *Wiener Fremdenblatt*, critic Ludwig Speidel wrote the following: "With poetic understanding, he immersed himself in the situations created by the texts of the mass, and his enormous contrapuntal art makes it easy for him to solve the toughest problems as if at play." Although Speidel was less positive about the similarities to the "theatrical sphere", in the Credo (probably at the "Resurrexit" part) he felt as if he was "right in the middle of a Christian *Wolfsschlucht*." In his Mass in F minor (as in his earlier Mass in D Minor), Bruckner clearly gears his style towards that of the symphonic orchestral mass as written by composers ranging from Haydn to Schubert, with the glorious example of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* as the major highlight. Nevertheless, both Bruckner's orchestral masses possess a strange and intrinsically ambiguous character, which Mathias Hansen attempted to describe as a "mixture of the archaic and the personal, of an as yet undeveloped style of composition." One can sense how Bruckner, supported and guided by the demands of the mass text, gradually develops the motivic and thematic material, and thus provides the basis for a new type of symphonic process; however, the consequence of this dependence on the text is also a certain restriction in his individual innovation. Thus, on the one hand, in the F-minor Mass one can distinguish orchestral characteristics relevant to the genre, such as typical types of movement, the tripartite division of the Credo, the extended final fugues in the Credo and Gloria, and the musical references to the Kyrie in the *Agnus Dei*: and on the other hand, Bruckner also makes use here of primarily symphonic style features, such as ostinato accompaniment, extensive sound refractions, onward-driving brass fanfares and triumphant conclusions to the movements.

During early research work carried out on Bruckner, this ambivalence resulted at times in crude and uncontrolled excesses. For example, the Bruckner biographer Max Auer believed that the masses represented "the entrance halls to the infinitely extending 'open-air dome' of his symphonies." Either it was assumed that he wrote the three masses specifically as preparatory works for his ensuing symphonies, or that the symphonies were the idealization and logical consequence of the religious works in absolute music – in other words, masses without a text. However, if one considers the F-minor Mass as an isolated or, rather, independent work, and not only as teleologically related to the ensuing symphonic oeuvre, then one can fairly state that Bruckner's last mass represents simultaneously the climax and the conclusion of his church music phase. This was then followed by a symphonic phase. And Bruckner came up with compositional milestones in both genres.

It cannot be denied that Bruckner concisely formulated his own style – aiming at monumentality and dramatically expanding the usual

range of expression – for the first time in his three masses. Thus we find, especially in the F-minor Mass, an enormous emotional radius, ranging from total inner contemplation to ecstatic outbreaks of jubilation. Here for the first time, Bruckner fully elaborates the characteristics of the enormous intensifications he was wont to employ, which included a further thematic development of the climaxes as well as directly ensuing plunges and dizzying descents (as in the Gloria and the Credo). Added to this is the design and application of a motivic nucleus that runs through the entire work. Apparently, Bruckner was so satisfied with the compositional results of his orchestral masses that he re-applied the same compositional process – which he had simply and very briefly outlined – in a relatively seamless manner to his symphonic works, although he always continued to improve and refine the process. The monumental style of the masses is also the trademark of the absolute music of Bruckner's symphonies. The problem of the different versions first came to the fore in his F-minor Mass, even though it had less of an impact there than in his symphonic works. For Bruckner subjected the work to various adaptations and changes that were reflected primarily in the instrumental parts. During 1877 and 1881, Bruckner mainly adapted the Credo and corrected harmonic sequences. The 1893 version is Bruckner's "final version", and constitutes – in Hawkshaw's edition – the lion's share of the score used in the recording, for which the manuscript was used as the main source. (Anyone wishing to delve deeper into the specialized subject of the versions of the F-minor Mass should read the explanatory notes in the critical edition.)

The F - m i n o r M a s s h a s t h e classic six-movement structure: Kyrie - Gloria - Credo - Sanctus - Benedictus - *Agnus Dei*. The three-part Kyrie (A - B - A) begins with an introduction by the strings, presenting the main motivic idea of the movement and of the entire mass – a descending diatonic fourth, a gesture filled with humility and reverence. Redemption is requested by means of three invocations. In the central section of the "Christe eleison", the soprano and bass soloists become the focus of attention, with their individual calls of "Christe". Highlights between soloists and chorus are achieved through sequencing, rhythmic compression, chromaticism and dialogue structure, after which the second Kyrie concludes the movement, with increased expressive powers. By re-using various motifs in all three sections of the Kyrie, Bruckner achieved a clear "inner-association" between each part.

The Gloria is divided into four sections, as usual, in which two C-major sections frame the D-minor section, "Qui tollis": the movement is then concluded by a fugue based on "In gloria Dei Patris". This movement is full of contrasts and presents comprehensive

emotions – ranging from the radiant praising of the Lord in the totally homophonic choral movement, with the implementation of Gregorian "clichés", to the remorse of the "Qui tollis", in which Bruckner explores the harmonic possibilities with great expression. Here, religious images are painted in a multi-faceted musical manner, primarily thanks to the use of music-rhetorical figures. The ensuing "Quoniam tu solus" is introduced by the solo soprano in imitation of the "Gratias". Finally, the gigantic fugue on the text "In gloria Dei Patris" (= To the glory of God the Father) concludes the work. A true tour de force for the choir: almost nonstop, Bruckner rushes the four-bar main theme through the course of the movement; in inversions and close stretti, he presents his increasingly condensed contrapuntal skills, until finally the movement ends in triple forte unison.

The beginning of the Credo, with its ascending third, revisits the beginning of the Gloria. The central message of "Credo" (= I believe) elevates the movement to the core part of the mass. Here Bruckner can put his own stamp on the work, can prove himself to be a believer and a devout religious person. The slow middle movement ("Et incarnatus est") in E major (related as a mediant to the C major of the Credo) depicts the incarnation of God in a truly visionary manner, in an almost unworldly mood. The solo violin surrounds the singing of the solo tenor in an ethereal manner, above pulsing woodwind chords. The "Crucifixus" grows visibly darker, following the text in detail, the antiphonal singing of solo bass and chorus is gradually diminished and slowed down, finally concentrating on the word "passus", and is brought to an end by a final eerie flourish of the trombones. With stark elemental force above the ostinato figures in the strings, chords in the brass, and drum rolls, the "Et resurrexit" in E major closes in on the listeners. Aided by cries of "Iudicare" from the choir, brass fanfares refer to the horrors of the Day of Judgment. At the "Et in spiritum sanctum", the recapitulation proper begins. After the pompous commitment to the Catholic Church (et unam sanctam Catholicam), again presented by the choir in unison, Bruckner once again calls on all contrapuntal means in another fugue. To the text "Et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen", he wrote a tremendous final intensification. In between the each entry of the theme, he has the choir twice burst out in the tremendous cry of "Credo", thus once again focusing attention on his individual "I believe".

The Sanctus in F major "initially strikes a tone of enraptured and enlightening sanctity and transcendence" (Wald-Fuhrmann). A mildly transfigured mood prevails, until in the "Dominus Deus Sabaoth" the unison choir, accompanied by powerful string figures, for the first time steps out of its iridescent framework, before the shortest movement of the mass intensifies into effusive eruptions in the "pleni sunt coeli et

terra” and the solo soprano enters radiantly with “Hosanna in excelsis.”

The Benedictus begins with a soulful and highly lyrical cello melody (reminiscent of the song themes of the symphonies), delicate string figures entwine the mysterious “chanting” of the choir, and a wonderful climax is achieved here in the luminous ascent of the solo soprano.

The conceptual and compositional circle of the work is completed by the Agnus Dei. The F-minor movement begins humbly, slowly intensifying in the outcries of “Miserere”. The descending fourth – already familiar as the opening motif in the Kyrie – becomes the focus of the musical activity: Bruckner deploys the fourth interval in various forms to almost manic effect. Pianissimo sections of the a cappella choir alternate with almost desperate pleas for peace. The final “Dona nobis pacem,” returning in the major key, has a reconciling effect. Bruckner now deploys further motivic references to previous movements: the diatonic rising third from the beginning of the Credo resurfaces. And the climax of the Agnus Dei is achieved, above wave-like intensifications: the *fortissimo* entrance of the main subject of the Gloria fugue in C minor. The movement now branches out into F major. The mass is concluded with the descending fourth in the solo oboe. The fervent plea for peace has been heard.

Franz Steiger

English translation: Fiona J. Stroker-Gale

## Lenneke Ruiten

Dutch soprano Lenneke Ruiten studied voice with Maria Rondel and Meinard Kraak in the Hague and opera at the Bavarian Theatre Academy in Munich. She also had classes with Elly Ameling, Robert Holl, Hans Hotter, Robert Tear and Walter Berry. In 2002 Lenneke won five prizes at the International Vocal Competition in 's-Hertogenbosch, including the first prize and the audience prize.

On the opera stage Lenneke Ruiten made her debut as Susanna (Le Nozze di Figaro) in Munich. At the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival she sang Blondchen (Die Entführung). In the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam she performed Elisa (Il re pastore) and Mme Herz (Der Schauspieldirektor).

In 2011 she made her debut at the Salzburger Festspiele in Frau ohne Schatten under Christian Thielemann. In 2011/12 Lenneke sang at the Landestheater Salzburg in the opera-production Musica Speranza.

Lenneke is also in great demand as a concert soloist. She has worked with orchestras and ensembles such as the Wiener Philharmoniker, The English Baroque Soloists, The Monteverdi Choir, Staatskapelle Dresden,

The Mozarteum Orchester Salzburg, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Wiener Akademie with conductors including John Eliot Gardiner, Christian Thielemann, Marek Janowski, Ton Koopman, Helmut Rilling, Frans Brüggen and has performed in major festivals of Europe such as Salzburger Festspiele, BBC Proms, Bachfest Leipzig, Prague Spring Festival, Brighton and Aldeburgh Festival, Holland Festival, Lucerne Festival.

In addition to opera and concert singing, Lenneke has a special passion for Lieder. She works with the pianists Thom Janssen and Rudolf Jansen. She sang recitals in the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Wigmore Hall Londen and Kaisersaal Frankfurt.

## Iris Vermillion

In 2008, Iris Vermillion was awarded the German theatre prize “Der Faust” for her outstanding success in the new production of *Penthesilea* at the Dresden Semperoper. The mezzo-soprano is a much sought-after guest at prominent opera-houses, such as the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Bavarian State Opera, the Vienna State Opera, the Semperoper Dresden, and La Scala in Milan. Her repertoire includes such roles as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Fricka and Waltraute in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, as well as Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde*.

In addition to numerous concerts in Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Vienna, Tokyo, Madrid, and Barcelona, Iris Vermillion also performs at the Salzburg Festival. She is in particular demand for performances of Mahler’s symphonies and song cycles. Prominent conductors with whom she has worked include Claudio Abbado, Gerd Albrecht, Vladimir Jurowski, Daniel Baren-boim, Christian Thielemann, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, René Jacobs, Marek Janowski, Georges Prêtre, Donald Runnicles, and Giuseppe Sinopoli. She receives regular invitations to perform with major orchestras, such as the Berlin and Munich Philharmonic Orchestras, the Bavarian Radio Orchestra, the Gewandhaus Leipzig, the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, the Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam, the Orchestre de Paris, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, as well as the Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras.

## Shawn Mathey

Tenor Shawn Mathey performs in the most important and distinguished opera companies and music festivals in the world including the Paris Opera, the Opernhaus Zurich, the Salzburg Festival, Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Theater an der Wien, and the Frankfurt

Opera, among many others.

Mr. Mathey made auspicious debuts with the San Francisco Opera as Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni, the Dallas Opera as Tamino in Die Zauberflöte, the Lisbon Opera as Ferrando in *Così Fan Tutte* and the Teatro dell’Opera in Rome as Lysander in Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

In the recent past Shawn Mathey made his debut with the Lyric Opera of Chicago in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, followed by Don Giovanni with the Zurich Opera and the Cleveland Orchestra with Franz Welser-Möst conducting.

Mr. Mathey has enjoyed a particularly long and gratifying relationship with Frankfurt Opera. With this company, he has sung such varied repertoire as the Painter in Lulu, Lurcanio in Handel’s *Ariodante*, Eginhard in Schubert’s *Fierrabras*, staged performances of Schubert’s song cycle, Die schöne Müllerin, Fenton in *Falstaff*, as well as Ferrando, Don Ottavio, Tamino, and Belmonte.

In concert, he made his Carnegie Hall debut as the Gondolier in Donizetti’s rarely heard *Marino Faliero* with Eve Queler conducting the Opera Orchestra of New York. For his Avery Fisher Hall debut with the American Symphony Orchestra he sang the role of Lyonnell in Chausson’s *Le Roi Arthus*, and the New York Times wrote: “Shawn Mathey sang engagingly as Lancelot’s squire, Lionel.” Mr. Mathey received his training at the prestigious Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, PA.

## Franz-Josef Selig

Over the past twenty years, Franz-Josef Selig has established himself internationally as one of the most well-known performers of serious bass parts – in particular, of Gurnemanz, King Marke, Sarastro, Osmin, Daland, Fiesco and Fasolt.

He first studied church music at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Cologne, before taking voice classes from Claudio Nicolai. From 1989-1995, he was a member of the Aalto Theatre ensemble in Essen. Since then, he has been a free-lance singer, performing at all the world’s major opera-houses, such as the Vienna State Opera, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, La Scala in Milan, Staatsoper Hamburg, Opéra de la Bastille, Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Théâtre de la Monnaie Brussels, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich. He sang with the RSB in 2005 and 2009 in Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, and in 2010 in the composer’s *Missa solemnis*.

Recently, he was engaged to sing Fasolt in the new Ring cycle at the New York Met. Other recent appearances have included performances at the Salzburg Festival (where he sang Bartolo for the third time in *Le nozze*

*di Figaro*, under Daniel Harding), the Liceu Barcelona (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail* under Ivor Bolton/Christof Loy) and the Staatsoper Wien (King Mark in *Tristan and Isolde* under Sir Simon Rattle), where he also sang in *Parsifal* and *Die Zauberflöte* in 2011.

Franz-Josef Selig performs regularly with prominent conductors, such as: Sir Colin Davis, Mariss Jansons, Marek Janowski, Sir Simon Rattle, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Kent Nagano, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Christian Thielemann, Herbert Blomstedt, Sylvain Cambreling, and Christoph Eschenbach. Despite his world-wide concert and opera engagements, Franz-Josef Selig still finds time for recitals. A favourite project of the singer is his vocal ensemble "Liedertafel", together with Markus Schäfer, Christian Elsner, and Michael Volle, as well as Gerold Huber as pianist. His affinity with ancient music is demonstrated by his performances with Nikolaus Harnoncourt and the Concentus Musicus Wien, with Philippe Herreweghe, René Jacobs, and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.

## Marek Janowski

**M**arek Janowski has been Artistic Director of the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin since 2002 and in 2005 he was also appointed Musical Director of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva. He is in demand as a guest conductor throughout the world, working on a regular basis in the USA with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (where he holds the Otto Klemperer Guest Conducting Chair), the Boston and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and in Europe with the Orchestre de Paris, the Orchester der Tonhalle Zürich, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen and the NDR-Sinfonieorchester Hamburg. Born in 1939 in Warsaw and educated in Germany, Marek Janowski's artistic path led him from Assistant positions in Aachen, Cologne, Düsseldorf and Hamburg to his appointment as General Music Director in Freiburg im Breisgau (1973-75) and Dortmund (1975-79). Whilst in Dortmund, his reputation grew rapidly and he became greatly involved in the international opera scene. There is not one world-renowned opera house where he has not been a regular guest since the late '70s, from the Metropolitan Opera New York to the Bayerischer Staatsoper Munich; from Chicago and San Francisco to Hamburg; from Vienna and Berlin to Paris. Marek Janowski stepped back from the opera scene in the 1990's in order to concentrate on orchestral work and was thus able to continue the great German conducting tradition in the symphonic repertoire. He now enjoys an outstanding reputation amongst

the great orchestras of Europe and North America. He is recognised for his ability to create orchestras of international standing as well as for his innovative programmes and for bringing a fresh and individual interpretation to familiar repertoire. Between 1984 and 2000, as Musical Director of the Orchestre Philharmonique as Musical Director of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France

## Orchestre de la Suisse Romande

**T**he Orchestre de la Suisse Romande is an internationally renowned symphonic ensemble founded in 1918. Its history is intimately linked to Ernest Ansermet. Over the years, it has built its reputation on the basis of its historic recordings and its interpretation of French and Russian music of the 20th century.

A former math teacher, Ernest Ansermet, launched the OSR during his collaboration with the Ballets Russes of Sergei Diaghilev. Initially comprised of 62 musicians contracted for six months per year, the OSR performed in Geneva, Lausanne and in other cities in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. It survived the Great Depression of 1929 and, in 1934, the unexpected (and fortunately temporary) withdrawal of support by the Société suisse de radiodiffusion. In 1937, while scouting a summer home for the OSR, Ansermet became the instigator of the Lucerne Festival. He single-handedly held the reins of his ensemble for almost 50 years. Amongst his successors, we can cite Armin Jordan, who was perceived as his spiritual heir, and Marek Janowski.

The OSR's collaboration with the Radio Suisse Romande, which began in the 1930s, helped it to become known quickly, as did its recordings with the Decca label starting in the 1940s, a collaboration that would produce more than 100 albums under its founder. At a rate of 5 to 6 vinyl records per year, these recordings were often made at night immediately after concert or opera performances. Ever since, the OSR has collaborated with numerous labels, most recently with PentaTone for the complete symphonies of Anton Bruckner. Also of note is the new collaboration with Chandos.

The OSR's tours have contributed to increasing its renown ever since they began in the 1940s (Edinburgh Festival in 1949). The OSR initially travelled within Europe and then on the West Coast of the United States in 1966, the Universal Exposition in Montréal and New York in 1967, and finally Asia in 1968.

From its earliest days, the OSR has promoted contemporary music. The list of the names of composers whose works it has premiered is long and impressive: Benjamin Britten, Claude Debussy, Arthur Honegger, Frank Martin, Darius Milhaud, Igor Stravinsky and then later William Blank, Michael Jarrell, Heinz Holliger and Peter Eötvös.

Today, the OSR comprises 113 full-time musicians. It appears regularly around the world, continuously making debut appearances in new venues (for example, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam in 2006, the Teatro alla Scala in Milan in 2010, the Philharmonic in St. Petersburg in 2012). In addition to its symphonic activities, the OSR has also traditionally participated in opera performances at the Grand Théâtre of Geneva, and organizes an entire program for young audiences.

The arrival of Neeme Järvi is the beginning of a new chapter in its history. It shall be defined by the Estonian master's personality, his legendary musical flair, and his wide-ranging taste for repertoire.

