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Patricia Kopatchinskaja  
Schumann Violin Concerto





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Dénes Várjon  
Schumann  
Piano Concerto



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# ROBERT SCHUMANN

Complete Symphonic Works

Vol. IV

PATRICIA KOPATCHINSKAJA  
DÉNES VÁRJON

WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln

HEINZ HOLLIGER

WDR

THE COLOGNE  
BROADCASTS

**Violin Concerto in D minor, WoO 1**

- I. *Im kräftigen, nicht zu schnellen Tempo* 16:04
- II. *Langsam* 7:01
- III. *Lebhaft, doch nicht schnell* 10:35

**Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54**

- I. *Allegro affettuoso* 13:54
- II. *Intermezzo. Andantino grazioso* 5:17
- III. *Allegro vivace* 11:04

**Robert Schumann and the Concerto Genres**

Schumann's works for solo instruments and orchestra fall into two groups: concertos in multiple movements on the one hand, and single-movement concert pieces and fantasies on the other. Both forms were common in the nineteenth century, corresponding to different aesthetic ideals. Schumann did not take them to be antitheses excluding each other: instead, he was interested in their permeability. His Piano Concerto, Op. 54, for instance, was initially conceived as a Fantasy in one movement; it was not until he had struggled to find a publisher for the work that he considered extending it into a three-movement form. The creative constellation for the Violin Concerto was a similar one, although Schumann had planned two separate works, containing different material, from the outset: the Fantasy Op. 131 and the Concerto, which was not given an opus number. Conversely, the more freely conceived concert pieces reveal traces of the sonata form, or a condensed, even fragmented, multiple-movement form. In these works, the composer carried forward his experiences with the Fourth (which chronologically was the second) Symphony, closing the circle of exchanging ideas between different genres, in the same way as his failed attempt of a piano concerto in D minor had informed the genesis of his D minor Symphony.



### From Fantasy to Concerto: Schumann's opus 54

Schumann composed his Piano Concerto in A minor in three stages with the addition of an epilogue. Stage 1: in the productive year of 1841, which also saw the composition of his Symphonies in B flat major and D minor (original version), he wrote a one-movement Fantasy within two inspirational bursts (4-20 May and 3-12 August). Following initial rehearsals on 13 August, as well as a few corrections, Schumann offered his novel work to several publishers – without success. Stage 2: further revisions between 11 and 13 January 1843, as part of his negotiations with the publishers. Later on that year, Breitkopf finally agreed to publish the work, providing that Schumann would add a second and third movement, thus completing the work according to traditional concerto format. Schumann did not fulfil this request until June/July 1845, when he composed the finale (a rondo), followed by the relatively brief slow central movement, the “Intermezzo” (stage 3). The epilogue (which came after the first performances) comprised smaller alterations and corrections in relation to instrumentation, as well as – most importantly – the transition into the finale.

The composer managed to transform his concert piece into a concerto so perfectly that the reviewer of the *Dresdner Abendzeitung* commented after the premiere: “Which movement should be declared the best – we simply do not know. They are homogenous, originating from one poetic idea, and these tones could easily document a chapter in the history of a human heart!” The reason for this perfect transformation lies, first and foremost, in the original concept which is present even in the opening bars. A strong impulse, after which the soloist opens the piece with a shining beacon, a powerful cascade of chords. The orchestra responds with a vocal theme, takes it to a half cadence, after which the soloist continues it and concludes it in the manner of a song. An energetic gesture and a song without words make up the fabric out of which Schumann's piano concerto emerges.

This constellation incorporates an inner contradiction and thus a potential sense of momentum. However, the emphatic opening does not soar upwards, but in fact descends until the final gesture opposes the downward urge – another immanent contradiction. The song-like aspect tended, in large-scale instrumental works, to be reserved for slow movements or secondary themes in fast movements; Schumann, on the other hand, employs it as the first, and ultimately only, theme. For all new characters that appear – be they fast, resolute, expansive or brief – are rooted in this song without words. It appears to harbour an endless multitude of possibilities and transformations. The first four notes act as a symbol of recognition, or as a motto: C-B-A-A, the musical letters (B being “H” in German notation) of “Chiara” – Schumann's poetic name for Clara Wieck, whom he had married in 1840.

Alongside the artistic developments and metamorphoses, recollections and determined build-ups, the wordless song receives expansive passages in which it can unfold – “sung” by the clarinet with a capricious answer from the oboe, later also from the cello and the flute. Chamber music, an intimate form of joint artistry, becomes a component of large-scale form. The sphere of the song is only evoked by the soloist's cadence which Schumann wrote out in full. It resembles the



great piano postludes concluding his song-cycles, such as *Dichterliebe*, Op. 48. Thus the potential of the initial thoughts develop gradually, as if progressing in concentric circles, flowing, in the first movement, into the ground plan of the classical sonata form.

Schumann continued this process in the two movements that were to follow. The “Intermezzo” resembles a romantic game of reminiscences and associations. It corresponds to a dialogue in which the partners react to each other during phases of differing lengths. Two dialogues take place: one between piano and orchestra, and the other between cello as well as clarinet / bassoon and the soloist. In this, orchestral melody instruments lead the way whilst the piano accompanies them, throwing in responses. With clear parallels to the first movement, the four motto notes lead into the finale which, according to August Gerstmeier, comes alive through the “dance-like momentum of the waltz rhythm”. The first theme condenses the motto into a signal from which it derives its verve. The second theme, however, breaks away from the waltz rhythm, moving in duple rather than triple time which becomes a structural device: duple metre is supposed noticeably to assert itself over the triple metre. A similar phenomenon occurred in real dance when a waltz alternated with a polka or a galop. Schumann markedly stylises this technique, but, strictly speaking, introduces nothing entirely new. Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven frequently closed their concertos with standardised dances, often using minuets, but also polonaises or “Alla inghares”. Schumann referred to the dance forms popular in his day. As early as May 1835 he had explained this approach in his journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*: “Akin to political upheavals, musical ones penetrate into the smallest details. In music, the new influence can also be noticed where it is married to life in the most sensual area – in dance [...] Wit and irony also make no exception.” And that is presumably how many contemporaries considered the finale of the piano concerto – the reviewer of the *Leipziger Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, writing about the premiere, commented on its “cheeky humour”.

### **Difficult History: The Violin Concerto**

Around a decade after writing his Piano Concerto, Robert Schumann embarked on a Violin Concerto, noting it down between 21 September and 3 October 1853. He had held the post of Municipal Music Director in Düsseldorf for three years. The source of inspiration was a musician who would soon become a close family friend: Joseph Joachim, virtuoso, composer, conductor and later also conservatoire director. On 17 May 1853 he had played Beethoven’s Violin Concerto at the 31<sup>st</sup> edition of the Niederrheinisches Musikfest (under the artistic leadership of Schumann alongside two other musicians). Clara Schumann noted in her diary that Joachim had played “with perfection and deep poetry: I have never heard such violin playing”. On the following day he played her husband’s First Violin Sonata with her at the piano “so wonderfully that the entire work has made the impression as I have always imagined it. I do not want to think of any other violin now” (R. Schumann). This marked the beginning of the Schumanns’ friendship with this artist whom they had heard almost a decade previously, when the twelve-year-old prodigy had given his debut at the Leipzig Gewandhaus.



Alongside a copy of the score of the Beethoven concerto, Joachim presented Schumann with a request on 2 June: “May Beethoven’s example inspire you, from your deep artistic well, to bring a work to light for the poor violinists who, apart from chamber music, suffer a great lack of the sublime for their instrument.” Two days later, he also sent his new friends a score of his *Hamlet* overture. In July, Clara Schumann dedicated her *Three Romances for Violin and Piano* to him. Between August and October, Joachim visited Düsseldorf several times. Robert composed a Fantasy for him, and later on his Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. He included Joachim’s *Hamlet* overture in the October programme of the Music Association, and the Violin Concerto would have been premiered at the same time, had the management (who had fallen out with Schumann) not raised objections.

There followed a long history away from the public eye. Joachim rehearsed the concerto with two different orchestras; in January 1854 in front of Clara and Robert Schumann in Hanover, and in autumn 1857 in Clara’s presence with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. He would never take it up again, and it was not included in the Complete Schumann Edition, prepared by Clara whom he assisted alongside Brahms. Later on, Joachim explained that this concerto could not be “placed on the same level as many other glorious creations [of Schumann’s]. [...] Unfortunately it has to be said that a certain jadedness of his mental powers is unmistakable” in this work “written during the final months before the onset of his mental illness”. When Schumann had been admitted to the asylum and during the first year after his death, they thought differently, even though – or because? – they were better informed about his condition than the publicised opinion. The shadow of illness over Schumann’s late oeuvre had become a media phenomenon, lasting until the recent past.

In the meantime, many years of critical examination of his works have resulted in another opinion. Until 1848, the composer had systematically internalised all musical genres. After that, he tested new musical and dramaturgical concepts. These were often not acknowledged as such as they do not immediately become obvious, but reveal themselves only after careful inspection. This is also true of the Violin Concerto. Externally, it appears to be structured in the same way as the Piano and the Cello Concertos: three movements, interconnected through motifs, partly in a covert, partly in an obvious manner; the short middle movement, a song without words, directly transitions into the finale. However, four crucial elements distinguish Schumann’s final concerto from its predecessors:

1. He experiments with different stylistic levels. The first theme is reminiscent of a Baroque overture; the second, on the other hand, is akin to a lyrical Romantic character piece. He explores stylistic contradictions in order gradually to remove them. The progression of the opening movement, featuring clear contrasts of solo and tutti passages, is redolent of the concerto form as it was used by composers from Vivaldi and Bach through to Mozart as a standard, and also as an alternative to the symphonic style. “Such a return to a concerto convention which, during previous decades, had increasingly been abandoned by ambitious *concertante* works, is a novelty for the concerto composer Schumann.” (Michael Struck) He makes music history his material, the subject matter of his composition, realising it as a pole of musical and dramatic tension.



2. The core motif, appearing in various guises in all movements, is not presented in the opening idea, but only later, in the lyrically vocal second theme of the first movement; he does not make it the work's motto but introduces it in such a way that its significance only emerges during the course of the concerto by way of recollection.

3. Clara Schumann and Joseph Joachim's disquiet at the concerto was ignited mainly by the last movement, a polonaise – a dance, as in the piano concerto. However, Schumann did not opt for a swift tempo, as previously, but for a calm pace: this is contrasted with the virtuoso solo violin which, at times, soars up onto a second level of expression, threatening to take on a life of its own. This form of musical contrast and tension, endangering cohesion, was also new.

4. First and foremost, however, one fundamental quality of the work thwarted the trends of the time. It also irked many music connoisseurs in Schumann's oratorios which renounced brilliant endings and closing apotheoses. Michael Struck called it "restraint": "Without doubt, the characteristic tendency towards restraint stands in stark contrast to the aesthetic expansion which was popular during the time of the Violin Concerto's creation and apparent, for instance, in Liszt's programmatic compositions, Wagner's stage works and also certain works of the young Brahms." Any such elements in Schumann's late works which opposed dominant trends of the time were, after his death, hastily dismissed as weaknesses and signs of illness: a fateful fallacy.

The more modern reception of the work became difficult, since the Nazis orchestrated its premiere in 1937 as a political demonstration. The background: after Joseph Joachim's death in 1907, his son Johannes sold parts of his estate, including the music of the Schumann concerto, to the Prussian State Library in Berlin on condition that the work be published no sooner than one hundred years after the composer's death. Georg Schünemann, however, was able to effect an early release of the material in 1936. The concerto was printed and Yehudi Menuhin was engaged to perform the premiere in New York. However, the Nazis intervened. They would not allow a performance abroad, and certainly not with a soloist of Jewish heritage. The premiere was therefore given on 26 November 1937 at the Berlin State Opera as part of a Nazi convention (the "Gemeinsame Jahrestagung der Reichskulturkammer und der NS-Gemeinschaft 'Kraft durch Freude'"). Robert Ley (leader of the National Socialist trade union) and Joseph Goebbels (Reich Minister of Propaganda and President of the Reich Chamber of Culture) spoke at the event. The soloist was Georg Kulenkampff and Karl Böhm conducted the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Schumann's work was presented as the "Aryan" alternative to the popular Mendelssohn concerto, in the same way as attempts were made to delete the well-liked incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the collective German music memory by commissioning new works. Nowadays, it should be possible to evaluate Schumann's final work with orchestra without the burden of historical ballast. The span of interpretations, within which Patricia Kopatchinskaja makes her own distinctive mark, points towards this in no uncertain terms.





## PATRICIA KOPATCHINSKAJA

Violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja's versatility shows itself in her diverse repertoire, ranging from baroque and classical often played on gut strings, to new commissions and re-interpretations of modern masterworks.

Highlights of the 2015/16 season include performances with Staatskapelle Berlin, a residency at the Laeiszhalle in Hamburg and a collaboration with Teodor Currentzis and Musica Aeterna with whom she will appear at Bremen Festspiele and tour across Europe. Kopatchinskaja will also tour with Camerata Salzburg under Langrée, La Chambre Philharmonique under Krivine, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, collaborate with Vladimir Jurowski and his State Academic Symphony Orchestra in Moscow and perform with the Houston Symphony and Seattle Symphony Orchestra.

In London, Kopatchinskaja appears with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Jurowski and she is the central figure of the 'Marin, Madness and Music' weekend at the Southbank Centre – where she will perform with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, *Kafka Fragments* with Anu Komsu and works by Ustvolskaya.

Kopatchinskaja performs a number of new commission premieres this season: Turnage's new piece for Violin and Cello with Sol Gabetta; Mauricio Sotelo's new composition for string orchestra, flamenco dance and percussion with The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra – where she is an Artistic Partner – as well as a new piece by Michael Hersch and the French premiere of Michael van der Aa's new Violin Concerto.

Last season's highlights included her debut with the Berliner Philharmoniker performing Péter Eötvös' *DoReMi* under the baton of the composer himself. She also performed at the closing concerts of Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, appeared with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Edinburgh International and Santander festivals and toured Switzerland with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra under Sakari Oramo.

Chamber music is immensely important to Kopatchinskaja and she performs regularly with artists such as Markus Hinterhäuser and Polina Leschenko as well as members of her own family. She is a founding member of the acclaimed *quartet-lab* – a string quartet with Isabelle van Keulen, Lilli Maijala and Pieter Wispelwey – with whom she undertakes a major European tour in autumn 2015.

A prolific recording artist, this 2015/ 2016 season will see three major releases, one with Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltica a CD of Kancheli's music, TAKE 2 on Outhere/Alpha and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with Teodor Currentzis and Musica Aeterna on the Sony label. Her release for Naïve Classique with concerti by Bartók, Ligeti and Péter Eötvös won Gramophone's Recording of the Year Award in 2013, the ECHO Klassik Award and a 2014 Grammy nomination.

## DÉNES VÁRJON

Dénes Várjon studied at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music with Sándor Falvai (piano) as well as Ferenc Rados and György Kurtág (chamber music). Parallel to his studies he was a regular participant of the international master classes with András Schiff. He finished his studies in 1991 with his Concert Diploma. Also in 1991 he won First Prize at the Géza Anda Competition in Zurich. First Prizes were awarded to him also in the Piano Competition of the Hungarian Radio and the Leó Weiner Chamber Music Competition in Budapest.

He is regular guest at the most prestigious international festivals such as Salzburger Festspiele, Mozartwoche Salzburg, Marlboro and Bard Festivals (USA), Schwetzingen Festspiele, Ittinger Pfingst-Konzerte, Lucerne Festival, Piano Series, Biennale di Venezia, Kammermusikfest Lockenhaus, Rheingau Musik Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, Kunstfest Weimar, Edinburgh Festival and many others.

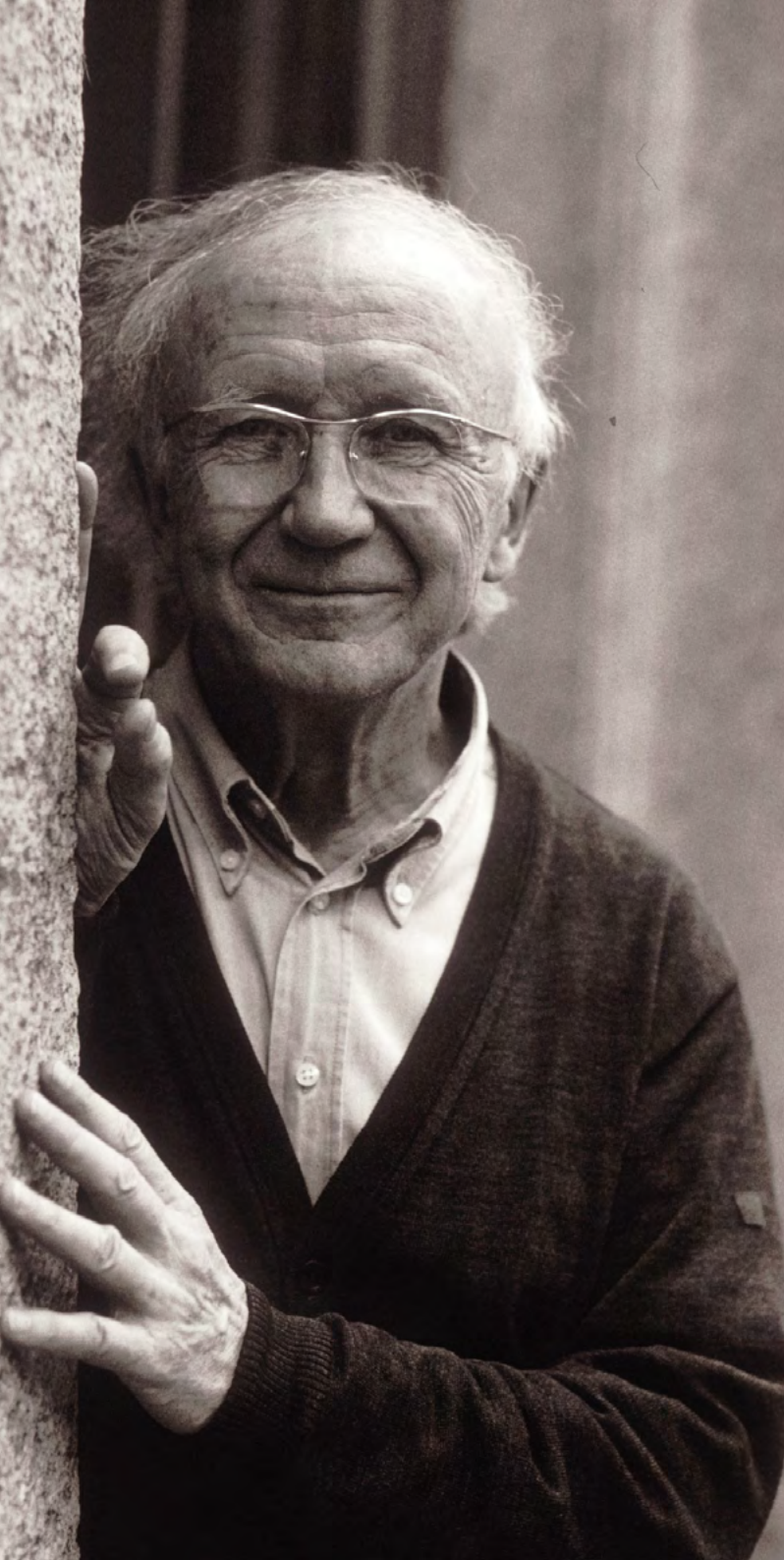
He has performed with orchestras such as Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Russian National Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra, Münchener Kammerorchester, Camerata Salzburg, Mozarteumorchester, Wiener Kammerorchester, Camerata Bern, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Scottish and Australian Chamber Orchestra, Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra and Gidon Kremer's Kremerata Baltica. He has worked with conductors like Sándor Végh, Horst Stein, Heinz Holliger, Thomas Zehetmair, Georg Solti, Ádám Fischer, Leopold Hager, Iván Fischer, Hubert Soudant, Ivor Bolton and Ola Rudner a.o.

Dénes Várjon is deeply committed to chamber music and is collaborating with artists such as Steven Isserlis, Joshua Bell, Evelyn Glennie, David Grimal, Lukas and Veronika Hagen, Heinz Holliger, Leonidas Kavakos, Miklós Pérenyi, András Schiff, Jörg and Carolin Widmann, Christoph Richter, Radovan Vlatkovic, Tabea Zimmermann, the Carmina, Takács, Keller and Endellion Quartets, and the Ensemble Wien-Berlin. He also appears regularly with his wife Izabella Simon in piano recitals with works for four hands and two pianos. Oboist and composer Heinz Holliger is a close longtime partner, just like clarinetist and composer Jörg Widmann.

Dénes Várjon has recorded for the Naxos, Capriccio, Sony Classical and Hungaroton labels with critical acclaim. Teldec released his CD with Sándor Veress's *Hommage à Paul Klee* (with András Schiff, Heinz Holliger and the Budapest Festival Orchestra) which received important international echoes. His chamber music releases with Carolin Widmann (ECM), Christoph Richter (ECM) and Steven Isserlis (Hyperion) were followed by his first solo album with works by Berg, Janáček and Liszt (ECM).

Dénes Várjon is professor at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest since 1994.





## HEINZ HOLLIGER

Heinz Holliger is one of the most versatile and extraordinary musical personalities of our time. He was born in Langenthal, Switzerland, and studied in Bern, Paris and Basel (oboe with Emile Cassagnaud and Pierre Pierlot, piano with Sava Savoff and Yvonne Lefébure and composition with Sándor Veress and Pierre Boulez).

After taking first prizes in the international competitions in Geneva and Munich, he began an incomparable international career as oboist that has taken him to the great musical centres on five continents. Some of the most important composers of the present day have dedicated works to Heinz Holliger.

As a conductor, he has worked for many years with worldwide leading orchestras and ensembles. The artist's many honours and prizes include the Composer's Prize of the Swiss Musician's Association, the City of Copenhagen's Léonie Sonning Prize for Music, the Art Prize of the City of Basel, the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, the City of Frankfurt's Music Prize, the Abbiati Prize at the Venice Biennale, an honorary doctorate from the University of Zürich, a Zürich Festival Prize and the Rheingau Music Prize, as well as awards for recordings; the Diapason d'Or, the Midem Classical Award, the Edison Award, the Grand Prix du Disque, among others.

Heinz Holliger is in high demand as a composer. His opera on Robert Walser's *Schneewittchen* at the Zürich Opera House received great international acclaim. Other major works are the Scardanelli Cycle and the Violin Concerto.



## WDR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA COLOGNE

The WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne was formed in 1947 as part of the then North West German Radio (NWDR) and nowadays belongs to the West German Radio (WDR). Principal conductors were Christoph von Döhnányi, Zdeněk Macal, Hiroshi Wakasugi, Gary Bertini, Hans Vonk and Semyon Bychkov. Celebrated guest conductors such as Fritz Busch, Erich Kleiber, Otto Klemperer, Karl Böhm, Herbert von Karajan, Günter Wand, Sir Georg Solti, Sir André Previn, Lorin Maazel, Claudio Abbado and Zubin Mehta have performed with the orchestra. The WDR Symphony Orchestra tours regularly in all European countries, in North and South America and in Asia. Since the season 2010/2011 Jukka-Pekka Saraste is the Chief Conductor of the orchestra.

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**WDR** THE COLOGNE BROADCASTS

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