

Philharmonia

STRICTLY EMBARGOED
until 6pm on Thursday 17th September 2026

Philharmonia Orchestra appoints Manfred Honeck as next Principal Conductor



Credit: Todd Rosenberg

<https://youtu.be/RJtsvhuow9c>

The Philharmonia Orchestra announces the appointment of Manfred Honeck as its next Principal Conductor, taking up the post from September 2028.

One of the world's most sought-after conductors, Honeck is renowned for interpretations that combine a deep understanding of musical tradition with freshness, freedom and an exceptional attention to orchestral sound. Born in Austria and trained in Vienna, he began his musical life as a violist in the Vienna Philharmonic and Vienna State Opera Orchestra, an experience that continues to shape his approach to the great central European repertoire. He is now entering his 19th season as Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, a partnership that has earned international acclaim through major performances and tours, as well as an extensive discography including a Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance.

His contract in Pittsburgh was recently extended for a further five years, making him the longest serving Music Director in the orchestra's history. Alongside his Philharmonia appointment, it is also announced today that Manfred Honeck will become Festival Director of an annual orchestral festival with the San Francisco Symphony.

Honeck has already developed a strong musical rapport with the Philharmonia and its musicians, reflecting a shared affinity for the Orchestra's distinctive sound, its European musical heritage and the Austro-Germanic repertoire at the heart of its history.

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Honeck's initial contract with the Philharmonia is for a five year period, during which he will spend a minimum of eight weeks each year working with the Orchestra.

Manfred Honeck, Principal Conductor Designate, Philharmonia Orchestra, says; *"Since its inception as one of the world's great orchestras, the Philharmonia has built a distinguished history of innovation and interpretation of the composers close to my heart. It is an honour for me to contribute to shaping the Philharmonia's unique sound identity and to share it with audiences globally at major international venues, as well as in local communities. London is a capital of classical music and a melting pot of cultures. I look forward to playing my part in enticing audiences to experience the full spectrum of traditional and innovative orchestral music we can offer".*

He will become only the seventh Principal Conductor in the Philharmonia's 80-year history, joining an extraordinary lineage of conductors who have shaped the Orchestra's distinctive sound across generations. From its first Principal Conductor, Otto Klemperer, through Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Christoph von Dohnányi and Esa-Pekka Salonen, to Santtu-Matias Rouvali today, each of them has contributed to creating the distinctive Philharmonia sound. Alongside them, figures including Herbert von Karajan, who played a formative role in the Orchestra's earliest years, helped establish a European performing tradition that has been central to the Philharmonia throughout its history.

Honeck succeeds Santtu-Matias Rouvali, who has been Principal Conductor since 2021. Rouvali made an instant impact during his debut with the orchestra in 2013 which led to his appointment as Principal Guest Conductor in 2018. By the conclusion of his tenure in Summer 2028, Rouvali and the Philharmonia will have shared ten years of remarkable music-making, building a relationship characterised by trust, spontaneity and musical dynamism. Highlights of their partnership include the launch of the Orchestra's own record label, Philharmonia Records, with recordings of Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony, Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* and Shostakovich's First Symphony receiving five-star reviews and being named *Orchestral Choice* by *BBC Music Magazine*. Rouvali also took the Philharmonia back to some of Europe's most prestigious stages, including the Concertgebouw and the Musikverein – the latter as part of his residency at the hall, alongside major tours across Europe and Asia. In 2025, he led the Orchestra's 80th anniversary US tour, culminating in a birthday performance at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra says; *"My time as Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia continues to be incredibly special to me. Over these years we have built a very close musical relationship, and I am so proud of everything we have achieved together.*

I'm very happy to welcome Manfred Honeck as the Orchestra's next Principal Conductor. He is a wonderful musician, and I know the Philharmonia will be in very good hands. There is still so much music to make together over the next two seasons, and I look forward to continuing my relationship with the Orchestra well into the future."

Rouvali remains Principal Conductor for the next two seasons, with a substantial programme of performances in London and beyond, and his close relationship with the Philharmonia will continue beyond the conclusion of his tenure.

Thorben Dittes, Chief Executive of the Philharmonia Orchestra says; *"Manfred Honeck is an extraordinary musician with a truly global career. His appointment marks a new chapter for the Philharmonia, building on the Orchestra's strong European musical tradition and its deep affinity with the Austro-German repertoire.*

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We look forward to becoming the European anchor for Manfred Honeck's music-making, while building on the innovation and forward momentum created with Esa-Pekka and Santtu.

There is already a very special musical connection between Honeck and our players, and we are very excited to see what they will create together and to share it with our audiences.

At the same time, we have two more important seasons ahead with Santtu, building on the remarkable music-making and close relationship we have shared over his tenure so far."

Honeck's next performance with the Philharmonia comes this November, when he returns to the Royal Festival Hall with his longstanding musical collaborator, pianist Emanuel Ax, for Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 25. The programme also includes Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* Overture and Honeck's own arrangement of the symphonic suite of Strauss's *Elektra* (Thursday 12 November).

Honeck's appointment follows an extensive international search led by a committee comprising Philharmonia musicians, Board members and senior management, alongside leading figures from across the classical music sector. As a self-governing orchestra, the Philharmonia's players were at the heart of the process, with musicians from across the Orchestra involved in considering its future artistic leadership. Honeck's appointment reflects both the strength of his artistic vision and the special musical connection that has developed between conductor and Orchestra through their performances together.

James Buckle, Player President of the Orchestra says; *"The members of the Philharmonia are thrilled to have appointed Manfred Honeck as our next Principal Conductor. He represents so much of our core artistic DNA and we are confident that, working together, we will continue the upward trajectory of the orchestra, both artistically and strategically.*

In the projects that we have performed together, there has been an immediate connection between the orchestra and Manfred Honeck, with his musical ideas and ambition aligning with so much of the orchestra's history, through his sound concept, musical interpretations and our proud recording tradition.

We very much look forward to bringing this powerful chemistry to audiences in London and around the world, as the Philharmonia continues its ambition to combine its traditions and unique identity with its mission to be the orchestra of the future."

Sir Howard Davies, Chair of the Board, says; *'The Board are delighted to welcome Manfred Honeck as our new Principal Conductor. His high ambitions for the Philharmonia, nationally and internationally, match our own.'*

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About Manfred Honeck

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Manfred Honeck has firmly established himself as one of the world's leading conductors, renowned for his distinctive interpretations that have garnered international acclaim. As Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, where he is now in his 19th season, he continues to shape the Orchestra's artistic identity with a deep sense of purpose and passion. His tenure, recently extended through the 2032–2033 season, has seen the Orchestra flourish artistically while strengthening its role as a cultural ambassador for the city of Pittsburgh.

Beginning with the 2028–29 season, he will become the seventh Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, which will serve as his artistic anchor in Europe. Across the Atlantic, he will also take on the role of Festival Director of the San Francisco Symphony, starting that same season with a five-year term to create his own annual, multi-week festival exploring universal elements of the human experience.

Born in Austria, Manfred Honeck completed his musical training at the Academy of Music in Vienna. His many years as a member of the Vienna Philharmonic and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra have had a lasting influence on his work as a conductor. He began his conducting career as an assistant to Claudio Abbado and was subsequently engaged by the Zurich Opera House, where he was awarded the prestigious European Conductor's Award. Following early posts with the MDR Symphony Orchestra in Leipzig and the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, he served as Music Director of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Stockholm and as Music Director of the Staatsoper Stuttgart.

As a guest conductor, Manfred Honeck works with the world's most prestigious orchestras, including the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the Staatskapelle Dresden, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. In the United States, he has conducted all of the nation's leading orchestras: the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Cleveland Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the San Francisco Symphony. He also maintains a distinguished profile as an opera conductor: most recently, he returned to the Salzburg Festival in summer 2026, conducting *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Vienna Philharmonic.

In the 2026–27 season, he will commemorate the 200th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's death with special programmes and a new commission from Jüri Reinvere, to be presented worldwide.

Manfred Honeck holds honorary doctorates from several US universities. In 2026, he received the Julio Kilenyi Medal of Honor in recognition of his distinguished interpretations of Anton Bruckner's masterworks.

About the Philharmonia

Founded in 1945, the Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras.

Finnish conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali took up the baton as Principal Conductor in 2021, and Marin Alsop joined him as Principal Guest Conductor in 2023. They follow in illustrious footsteps: Herbert von Karajan, Otto Klemperer, Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Christoph von Dohnányi, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Esa-Pekka Salonen are some of the key figures who have shaped the renowned Philharmonia sound over eight decades.

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The Orchestra has premiered works by Richard Strauss, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Kaija Saariaho, Errollyn Wallen, Laufey and many others, and performs with many of the world's most admired soloists. The Philharmonia thrives on creative collaborations: in the 2026/27 season, pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii and cellist Sol Gabetta are Featured Artists. The Philharmonia's Emerging Artists Programme nurtures and develops the next generation of instrumentalists and composers, with a focus on increasing diversity within the classical music industry.

The Philharmonia is resident at the Southbank Centre in the heart of London, and also holds residencies in Basingstoke, Bedford, Canterbury and Leicester, at Garsington Opera and at the Three Choirs Festival. In each of these residencies, the Orchestra is deeply embedded in the community. Projects with primary and secondary schools, children in foster care, people living with dementia and their carers, young people learning instruments, and adults who face barriers to experiencing the arts, all testify to the many ways music enriches our lives.

The Philharmonia tours extensively throughout Europe and has performed in China, Colombia, Japan and the United States. In October 2025 the Orchestra celebrated its 80th birthday with a major US tour culminating in two performances at Carnegie Hall. In 2024, the Philharmonia became the first major international symphony orchestra to perform in Mauritius. The Orchestra returned in February 2026 with a 50-piece orchestra for a Festival featuring concerts of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

The Philharmonia is known for embracing innovative technology. The Orchestra's recordings include benchmark LPs, more than 150 film and videogame soundtracks, and streamed performances. The Philharmonia Records label was established in 2023 and has released live recordings of major works by Strauss, Mahler, Stravinsky and Shostakovich, with Santtu at the helm. Its recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 is travelling through interstellar space on board the Voyager spacecraft, and its immersive installations and virtual reality (VR) experiences have introduced many thousands of people to orchestral music.

The Philharmonia is a registered charity. It is proud to be supported by Arts Council England and grateful to the many generous individuals, businesses, trusts and foundations who make up its family of supporters.

[Philharmonia.co.uk](https://philharmonia.co.uk)