

Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra

The Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra came into being in the autumn of 1993 and debuted on January 1, 1994 with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Its history begins much earlier, however. In March 1987, conductor Thomas Fey founded an ensemble for early music, the Schlierbach Chamber Orchestra, while still a student. It was composed of especially talented and ambitious young musicians from all over Germany. The orchestra's unusually exciting and differentiated performing style of strongly bore the mark of detailed instruction in "historical performance practice" with Nikolaus Harnoncourt in Salzburg. "A great musical ensemble on the way to an illustrious future," wrote the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper after one of the several hundred concerts in the following years.

In the course of meticulously, in effect chronologically working through the literature for orchestra, Thomas Fey and his musicians occupied themselves at first with Handel (the great oratorios, among other things) and Mozart. Starting on the 200th anniversary of the year of Mozart's death, 1991, they dedicated the "Heidelberger Mozartwochen" festival to him. When they finally reached the great symphonies of Viennese Classicism – works which go beyond the scope of a chamber orchestra – they decided to found the Heidelberg Symphony. This new symphony orchestra celebrated its first success with a highly acclaimed Beethoven cycle and at the same time began regularly working together with renowned soloists, including Rudolf Buchbinder, Thomas Zehetmair, Cyprien Katsaris, Bernd Glemser and Nelson Freire. Guest appearances in many countries of Europe and South America followed, as well as recordings for radio, television and CD. Now, the repertoire of the Heidelberg Symphony also includes – along with a large number of compositions of the Viennese Classical period – works of the nineteenth century, with the emphasis on early German Romanticism up to Johann Strauß.

Their CD recordings for the hänssler CLASSIC label have drawn particular notice in the past few years. Displaying rare unanimity, international music publications praised the orchestra's brilliant as well as unusual interpretations, including several CD's of symphonies by Ludwig van Beethoven and Joseph Haydn, or of piano concertos and symphonies by Mozart. A recording of Beethoven's Symphonies No. 4 and 6 was nominated for the Cannes Classical Award, the most important international distinction in Classical music apart from the Grammy.