

KENT NAGANO

Conductor

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Kent Nagano is renowned for interpretations of clarity, elegance and intelligence. He is equally at home in music of the classical, romantic and contemporary eras, introducing concert and opera audiences throughout the world to new and rediscovered music and offering fresh insights into established repertoire. In September 2006 he became Music Director of both the Bayerische Staatsoper and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

Born in California, Nagano maintains close connections with his home state and has been Music Director of the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra since 1978. His early professional years were spent in Boston, working in the opera house and as assistant conductor to Seiji Ozawa at the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He played a key role in the world premiere of Messiaen's opera *Saint François d'Assise* at the request of the composer, who became a mentor and bequeathed his piano to the conductor. Nagano's success in America led to European appointments: Music Director of the Opéra National de Lyon (1988-1998), Music Director of the Hallé Orchestra (1991-2000).

During Nagano's first two seasons in Munich he conducted world premieres of Rihm's *Das Gehege* (together with Strauss's *Salome*) and Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland* along with new productions of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, *Idomeneo*, *Eugene Onegin* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. This season he takes on new productions of *Wozzeck* and *Lohengrin*. He has toured throughout Europe with the Bayerisches Staats-orchester and their recording of Bruckner's Symphony No 4 was released earlier this year by Sony Classical.

A common thread has thus far run through Nagano's time in Montreal: Beethoven and his musical heirs including Mendelssohn, Brahms, Schumann and Wagner. Highlights have also included Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* and concert performances of *Tannhäuser* and *Tristan und Isolde*. In the summer of 2008 Nagano inaugurated the first Bel Canto Festival including performances of Bellini's *Norma* in collaboration with Accademia Nazionale Santa Cecilia in Rome. He has also championed new works by Canadian composers including a commission by Alexina Louie which features Inuit throat singers and earlier this season celebrated Messiaen's centenary with performances of *St. François d'Assise*. Nagano has taken the orchestra on a coast-to-coast tour of Canada and also to Japan and South Korea and in April 2009 an extensive tour of Europe. Their recordings together – *Beethoven : Ideals of the French Revolution* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* were released this year on Sony Classical / Analekta.

A new and important phase of Nagano's career opened when he became Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin in 2000. He has become a prominent figure in a new wave of artistic thinking in Germany, opening minds to inventive, confrontational programming. In June 2006, at the end of his tenure with the orchestra, he was given the title Honorary Conductor by members of the orchestra, only the second recipient of this honour in their 60-year history.

Kent Nagano became the first Music Director of Los Angeles Opera in 2003 having already held the position of Principal Conductor for two years. His work in other opera houses has included Shostakovich's *The Nose* (Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin), Rimsky Korsakov's *The Golden Cockerel* (Châtelet, Paris), Saariaho's *L'amour de loin* (Salzburg Festival), and Hindemith's *Cardillac* (Opéra National de Paris).

As a much sought-after guest conductor he has worked with most of the world's finest orchestras including the Vienna, Berlin and New York Philharmonic Orchestras and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He has recorded for Erato, Teldec, Pentatone and Deutsche Grammophon as well as Harmonia Mundi, winning Grammy awards for his recordings of Busoni's *Doktor Faust* with Opéra National de Lyon, and *Peter and the Wolf* with the Russian National Orchestra.