



## Wolfgang Sawallisch

Conductor Laureate

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### *2009-2010 Season*

Wolfgang Sawallisch became conductor laureate of The Philadelphia Orchestra in September 2003, following the culmination of his celebrated, decade-long tenure as the Orchestra's sixth music director. Acclaimed as one of the greatest living exponents of the Germanic musical tradition, Mr. Sawallisch enriched and expanded upon the Orchestra's century-old tradition of excellence, leaving an enduring legacy of artistic achievements with the ensemble.

As music director, Mr. Sawallisch encouraged the exploration of new ways to present music to American audiences. In April 1997 he led the Philadelphians in the first live internet concert "cybercast" made by a major American orchestra, attracting listeners from more than 40 countries around the world. He presented season-long focuses on the works of Schumann, Haydn, Beethoven, and Brahms, and an ongoing overview of the works of Richard Strauss (including a concert presentation of the opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*). Through a series of commissions, Mr. Sawallisch re-affirmed the Orchestra's commitment to new music; and his vision for the Orchestra's 100th Anniversary Season in 1999-2000, made up exclusively of music written since the ensemble's creation in 1900, resulted in record ticket sales and critical praise.

During his tenure, Mr. Sawallisch led The Philadelphia Orchestra each year in concerts outside Philadelphia, helping to build upon the ensemble's long tradition of touring. He appeared annually with the Orchestra in a series of concerts at Carnegie Hall and conducted the Orchestra in major concert halls throughout the world on eight international tours (three to Europe, four to Asia, and one to Central and South America).

Mr. Sawallisch was an outspoken advocate for the construction of The Philadelphia Orchestra's new home at The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. He actively participated in planning for the new concert hall's acoustics and its operations, and he conducted the Orchestra's first performances in Kimmel's Verizon Hall.

In May 2003, as a testament to Mr. Sawallisch's tenure in Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Orchestra, through its Media Institute, released a three-disc set of live recordings with Mr. Sawallisch conducting works by Robert Schumann (including the complete symphonies). The recordings, drawn from performances given during Mr. Sawallisch's final season as music director, are the first recordings made in Verizon Hall at The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, and stand as a tribute to Mr. Sawallisch's decade-long partnership with the Orchestra. The three-disc set was nominated for Grammy awards in the categories of Best Classical Album and Best Orchestral Performance.

Wolfgang Sawallisch was born in Munich and graduated from that city's Academy of Music. He began his conducting career in 1947 at the Opera Theater of Augsburg, where he served as vocal coach, chorus

master, and conductor of ballet, opera, and concert music. In 1953 he became the youngest conductor to lead the Berlin Philharmonic. He next held successive music directorships in Aachen, Wiesbaden, and Cologne and appeared annually at the prestigious Bayreuth Festival. He was music director of the Vienna Symphony from 1960 to 1970 and also served as music director of the Hamburg Philharmonic from 1961 to 1973. He served as artistic director of Geneva's Orchestre de la Suisse Romande from 1973 to 1980. In 1971 he was appointed music director of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, beginning an exceptionally fruitful and long lasting relationship with that company. Working in Munich for more than two decades, he served concurrently as the Opera's general manager during his last 10 years there before coming to Philadelphia.

As a guest conductor, Mr. Sawallisch led yearly concerts with the Vienna Symphony and Tokyo's NHK Orchestra. Other guest appearances in recent years include performances with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Orchestre de Paris, the Israel Philharmonic, London's Philharmonia, and the Czech Philharmonic.

Mr. Sawallisch's extensive discography includes a wide range of orchestral and opera recordings, both with The Philadelphia Orchestra and with a number of European ensembles. In addition to the three-disc Schumann set released in May 2003, his Philadelphia compact discs include works by Bruckner, Dvořák, Hindemith, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner, as well as a special disc of orchestral transcriptions by Leopold Stokowski and a four-disc cycle of the orchestral works of Richard Strauss.

Mr. Sawallisch is highly regarded as a chamber musician and accompanist. He has collaborated and recorded with such vocalists as Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Nicolai Gedda, Thomas Hampson, Hermann Prey, Peter Schreier, and Margaret Price, as well as with the Munich Residenz Quartet, cellist Heinrich Schiff, and violinists Sarah Chang and Frank Peter Zimmermann.

Mr. Sawallisch's artistry has been recognized throughout his career with many awards and citations. He was given the Toscanini Gold Baton in recognition of his 35-year association with La Scala in Milan. His honorary degrees include doctorates from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, and Villanova University. He is a recipient of the Pennsylvania Governor's Distinguished Artist Award, as well as the Avatar Award for Artistic Excellence, created by the Arts and Business Council of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

February 2009