

# Henrik Schaefer, Conductor

## Biography

*Just as Wagner desired: the orchestra is invisible and does not disturb the contact between singers and audiences in any kind. They also play with seductive portamenti that weld together all "Leitmotifs" to pure gold. Conductor Henrik Schaefer does not only know why he has to do this, but also how and that makes his interpretation so unbelievably convincing!*  
Expressen

Henrik Schaefer is a regular fixture on the podium at opera houses and symphony orchestras across the world, proving himself an engaged partner with strong musical ideas. His commitment to unknown romantic repertoire is demonstrated in concerts, opera productions and first recordings of re-discovered works by composers such as Elfrida Andrée, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Joachim Raff and August Klughardt.

The Bochum-born musician started his conducting career as an assistant to Claudio Abbado and served as Music Director of the Gothenburg Opera from 2014 until 2020, where he led lauded productions of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*, Strauss's *Daphne*, Thomas's *Hamlet* or Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. From 2004 to 2011 Henrik Schaefer was Principal Guest Conductor of the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra, and from 2007 to 2013 he was Chief Conductor of the Wermland Opera Karlstad, where he found international recognition through his performances of the complete Ring cycle using historical instruments. He already conducted extensive research into the performance practice of string instruments in the 19th century for his debut production of *Parsifal* in Karlstad.

Since the 2021/22 season Henrik Schaefer takes his passion for the romantic performance practice a step further as the new Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Stockholm Folkopera. For his first new productions of *Don Carlos* (staged by Tobias Theorell) and *Norma* (staged by Eirik Stybø), he initiated the founding of a period-instrument orchestra and wrote tailored arrangements. In the 2023/24 season Henrik Schaefer continues this approach for *La Cenerentola* played with gut strings and pianoforte; he further conducts a new music theatre piece based on Julian Barnes's novel *The Noise of Time*. In the course of the season he performs with the Polish National Symphony Orchestra and the South Denmark Philharmonic.

International guest appearances include the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Flanders Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he led productions at the Leipzig Opera (*The Marriage of Figaro*), the Hong Kong Opera (*The Flying Dutchman*), the Vienna Volksoper (*The Magic Flute*), as well as at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre (*La Traviata* with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra).

Henrik Schaefer studied viola at the Folkwang University of Arts in Essen as well as with Ulrich Koch and Kim Kashkashian in Freiburg. In 1991 he became the youngest member of the Berlin Philharmonic at 22 years of age, performing with the great conductors of the day including Carlos Kleiber, Sergiu Celibidache, Ricardo Muti, Seiji Ozawa, Lorin Maazel and Bernard Haitink. During this time he studied conducting from 1994 to 1998 at the University of Music and Theatre Leipzig with Volker Rohde. In 2000 Claudio Abbado named him as his assistant at the Berlin Philharmonic, and he increasingly supported the Maestro in performances of repertoire including *Tristan and Isolde*, *Parsifal*, *Falstaff* as well as the symphonies of Mahler and Bruckner. Following Abbado's departure from Berlin in 2003, Henrik Schaefer decided to dedicate himself totally to conducting – a decision that was quickly followed by the success of his performance of *The Rite of Spring* with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and the Leipzig Ballet (documented on DVD for the Arthaus label).

The conductor has an ongoing commitment to supporting young musicians and singers, including work at the Dutch National Opera Academy and the Hanyang University in Seoul as well as his current position as Associate Professor in Orchestra Conducting at the Royal College of Music Stockholm.

2023/24 season

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