

Kazushi Ono

Conductor

'Ono drew fine-etched playing at the right febrile pace here, and riveted our attention'

The Arts Desk

Kazushi Ono's musical personality was formed by the cultures of Japan, where he was born, and Europe, where he studied. His work reflects both influences and crosses styles and forms, from Baroque to new commissions and from orchestral to opera. His passion, musical intellect and ability to communicate meaning across languages and cultures have led to longstanding relationships around the world. He is Music Director of Brussels Philharmonic and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. Ono has also been recently renewed as Artistic Director of Opera at New National Theatre Tokyo until 2029/30. He was appointed in 2018 and his contract ended in 2020, making his tenure the longest in the theatre's history.

A favourite of orchestral players, he has held positions as Music Director continuously for more than 30 years, leaving lasting musical legacies with orchestras including Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic, Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, La Monnaie, Opéra National de Lyon, Arturo Toscanini Philharmonic and Barcelona Symphony Orchestra. He has forged lasting friendships around the world and regularly guest conducts orchestras such as Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Opéra de Paris, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

Ono's wide-ranging experience of Slavic, Latin and Germanic cultures has shaped a profound musical understanding. He inherited the German tradition from his mentor Wolfgang Sawallisch and has conducted almost all the Wagner repertoire and developed his insight into bel canto from his studies with Giuseppe Patané.

His curiosity for repertoire also takes him to new music and projects. In 2023 he conducted Martin Matalon's score in screenings of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* at the Philharmonie de Paris. He often commissions composers and has collaborated several times with Mark-Anthony Turnage, including on *Silent Cities*, *Hibiki* (which won a Royal Philharmonic Society award) and *Time Flies*. Recent commissions at NNTT include *Asters* by Akira Nishimura and Dai Fujikura's *A Dream of Armageddon*. He opened La Monnaie's 2023–24 season with the premiere of Bernard Foccroulle's *Cassandra*, and soon returns to conduct *Turandot*.

He has also conducted the world premieres of Toshio Hosokawa's *Hanjo* in Aix-en-Provence, Arnulf Hermann's *Der Mieter* at Oper Frankfurt, Kaija Saariaho's *Emilie* at Opéra de Lyon and Salvatore Sciarrino's *Il suono e il tacere* with RAI in Turin, as well as new productions of Ravel's *L'heure espagnole* and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* at Glyndebourne and Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher* at Opéra de Lyon. He has worked on ambitious collaborations with boundary-breaking directors such as Dmitri Tcherniakov, Romeo Castellucci, Pierre Audi, William Kentridge and Mariusz Trelński.

Ono is a vocal advocate for the role of culture in all our lives. His tenure in Zagreb coincided with the war in Croatia and brought home the human necessity of music in difficult times. He takes an active part in the social and educational programmes of his organisations and often performs in hospitals and care homes alongside young musicians. He launched the inclusive SaLaD Music Festival in Tokyo to encourage people of all ages into the concert hall. In 2017 he was awarded 'Officier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres' by French cultural minister Françoise Nyssen, adding to the prestigious Asahi Prize in January 2015, for his contribution to the development and progress of Japanese society.