“I demand from the orchestra what I myself am endeavouring to achieve: the best instrumental and technical quality of performance constantly involved in searching for new approaches to interpretation. I believe it is achievable and the LCO is worthy of its deserved place among the top ten chamber orchestras in Europe."

Sergej Krylov

LITHUANIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Founded in 1960 by Prof. Saulius Sondeckis (Artistic Director and Chief Conductor, 1960–2004) the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra (LCO) is recognised as one of the finest and most internationally acclaimed Lithuanian orchestras. On 23rd April 1960 the LCO began rehearsing as a new formation and was invited to its first public concert on 30th October the same year to gain instant recognition among the audiences and critics both at home and away.

Today the LCO not only maintains the high standard of artistic excellence and explores new creative resources and presents original programmes each year. “The Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra is like the finest quality instrument, having the distinctive sound and traditions of performance. I rank this orchestra among the leaders of the genre. Fifty years is a long history. Not so many orchestras in Europe can pride themselves on such a glorious past,” says violinist Sergej Krylov who was appointed the artistic director of the LCO in December 2008, after several successful appearances at the National Philharmonic in Vilnius. His broad purview and contacts in the musical world, as well as polished musicianship and professional experience raised the orchestra to the next professional level. The critics have not spared accolades in describing a dynamic musical partnership between the orchestra and its new leader: “a harmonious and conspiring relationship with the orchestra,” “an absolute attunement between the violinist-conductor and the orchestra,” “the charming and aristocratic gallantry, without improper familiarity, but with confidence in each other.”

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believe it is achievable and the LCO is worthy of its deserved place among the top ten chamber orchestras in Europe” aspires Krylov, whose ambitious plans stimulate the members of the LCO to muster up the strength and energy for new creative challenges.

Early on the LCO became the first Lithuanian orchestra to receive an official permission to tour outside the Soviet Union: in 1966, it gave two concerts in the then German Democratic Republic. The young and energetic group of Lithuania’s finest string players was instantly noticed both by musical professionals and audiences alike. An even more intense advance towards the international music scene began a decade later, in 1976, when the LCO appeared at the Echternach festival in Luxembourg to great critical acclaim. This success led to numerous engagements to perform at the world’s most prestigious concert halls and festivals.

Over the years its tour itineraries have covered the length and breadth of Europe, reached both Americas, Cuba, Egypt, the Republic of South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, Australia, China, and Japan (six times!). The LCO has become a favourite at the Festival International Echternach where it appeared seven times and was awarded the festival’s Grand Lion medal. It has been many times applauded at many major European halls such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna’s Musikverein, London’s Royal Festival Hall, Rome’s Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, Salle Pleyel in Paris and Leipzig’s Gewandhaus. On four occasions it has appeared at the reputable Salzburg and Schleswig-Holstein festivals, and several times returned to the Bachwoche Ansbach, “December Nights of Sviatoslav Richter” at the Pushkin State Museum in Moscow, Rheingau Music Festival, Ivo Pogorelich Festival, Menuhin Festival Gstaad, Salzburg Festival, Lucerne Festival, Berlin Festspiele, Ludwigsburg Festival and many others.

Among the many world celebrated masters of the baton who stood at the helm of the LCO on its numerous tours, the legendary Sir Yehudi Menuhin stands out for his special affinity and generosity towards this group of Lithuanian musicians. From the first rehearsals with the LCO in Spain in 1992 to his death in 1999, he conducted almost 60 concerts on the orchestra’s annual tours – from Bergen to Cairo. Some of these performances were committed to disc such as Handel’s Messiah, Haydn’s Die Schöpfung and Schubert’s Mass No. 4 and Mass No. 5 (together with the Kaunas State Choir and a team of international soloists; all released on Apex). A great number of distinguished soloists of various countries and generations have joined the orchestra in concerts, including violinists Gidon Kremer, Tatiana Grinenko, Igor Oistrakh, Sergei Stadler, Oleg Kagan, Vladimir Spivakov, Gil Shaham, Daniel Hope, Julian Rachlin, Vadim Repin, Sasha Rozhdestvensky, Sarah Chang, Tamaki Kawakubo, Arabella Steinbacher, and Janine Jansen; violists Yuri Bashmet and Maxim Rysanov; cellists Mstislav Rostropovich, Natalia Gutman, Natalia Shakhovskaya, Karine Georgian, David Geringas, Mark Drobinsky, Mischa Maisky, Alexander Kniazev, Danjulo Ishizaka, and Denis Shapovalov; pianists Justus Frantz, Evgeny Kissin, Tatiana Nikolayeva, Elissos Virsaladze, Alexei Liubimov, Dmitry Bashkirov, Vladimir Krainine, Sergei Babayan, Barry Douglas, Denis Matsuev, and Alexei Volodin; trumpeters Timotei Dokshizer, Guy Touvron, Reinhold Friedrich, Gábor Boldoczki, and Sergei Nakariakov; flutists Aurèle Nicolet, Jean Pierre Rampal, and Camilla Hoitenga; oboist Alexei Ogrintchouk, singers José van Dam, Elena Obraztsova, and Virgilijus Noreika, among many others.

Throughout five decades the LCO has not only performed countless programmes in close collaboration with various soloists, conductors and choirs, but also produced over a hundred recordings of diverse repertoire, with special attention to the music of Bach and Mozart. The German tours of 2000 and 2001 with the legendary British actor and reciter, Sir Peter Ustinov, as narrator resulted in the unique recording of Ludwig van Beethoven’s ballet music The Creatures of Prometheus (conducted by Karl Anton Rickenbacher and released on RCA Red Seal label), which became the bestseller of the BMG company. Several collaborations and tours with young Russian trumpet player Sergei Nakariakov led to the
recording of the album Echoes from the past featuring transcriptions of concerti by Hummel, Mozart, Weber and Saint-Saëns (Teldec Classics, 2002), which received 5 stars in the Classic CD category.

"... Thanks to the performers’ clear articulation, each sound in Joseph Haydn’s roulades became as if crystalline, clear and transparent, with delicate dynamic lining. <...> The orchestra’s ensemble quality and excellent teamwork created an impression of one performer, one body consisting of a multitude of individual cells, playing on stage..."

Along with performances of Baroque and classical masterpieces, the orchestra has frequently included new works in its programmes and recordings. It has always been an active promoter of Lithuanian music, having performed over 200 works by M.K.Čiurlionis, Balys Dvarionas, Stasys Vainiūnas, Eduardas Balsys, Julius Juzeliūnas, Teisutis Makačinas, Vytautas Barkauskas, Jonas Tamulionis, Arvydas Malcys, Algirdas Martinaitis, Mindaugas Urbaitis, Raminta Šerkšnytė, and Justė Janulytė. It has also given a number of world premieres of works by many internationally renowned composers such as Rodion Shchedrin, Edison Denisov, Sergei Slonimsky, Sofia Gubaidulina, Giya Kancheli, Alfred Schnittke, Arvo Pärt, and Pēteris Vasks. Some of these works were composed in close collaboration with and dedicated to the orchestra.

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