The Chamber Orchestra of Europe (COE) was founded in 1981 by a group of young musicians who became acquainted as part of the European Community Youth Orchestra (now EUYO). There are now about 60 members of the COE, who pursue parallel careers as principals or section leaders of nationally-based orchestras, as eminent chamber musicians, and as tutors of music.

From the start, the COE’s identity was shaped by its partnerships with leading conductors and soloists. Claudio Abbado served as an important mentor in the early years. He led the COE in numerous operas and concerts featuring works by Schubert and Brahms in particular. Nikolaus Harnoncourt also had a major influence on the development of the COE through his performances and recordings of all of the Beethoven symphonies, as well as through opera productions at the Salzburg, Vienna, and Styriarte festivals. Currently the Orchestra works closely with Sir Simon Rattle, Sir András Schiff and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, who are Honorary Members following in the footsteps of the late Bernard Haitink and Nikolaus Harnoncourt.

The COE has strong links with many of the major festivals and concert halls in Europe. In partnership with the Kronberg Academy, the COE became the first-ever orchestra-in-residence at the Casals Forum in Kronberg and also at the Esterhazy Palace in Eisenstadt in 2022.

The COE works with all the major recording companies and, in nearly forty years years, has recorded over 250 works and won numerous international awards, including three Gramophone Record of the Year awards and two Grammys.

The COE created its Academy in 2009 and each year awards scholarships to talented postgraduate students and young professionals to study with the COE’s principal players when the Orchestra is ‘on tour’.

The COE is a private orchestra which receives invaluable financial support from particularly The Gatsby Charitable Foundation and a further number of Friends including Dasha Shenkman, Sir Siegmund Warburg’s Voluntary Settlement, the Rupert Hughes Will Trust, the Underwood Trust, the 35th Anniversary Friends and American Friends.