



Howard Williams
Conductor

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Howard Williams, one of Britain's most experienced conductors on the international platform, has covered a formidable range of work both in the opera house and concert hall. His exceptionally large symphonic repertoire is matched in the theatre by nearly a hundred opera and ballet titles and a love of orchestral and choral collaboration.

In the UK, he has conducted the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and BBC Symphony, as well as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, Bournemouth Symphony and Sinfonietta, English Chamber Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, London Sinfonietta, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Concert Orchestra and the Ulster Orchestra. He has conducted at the BBC Proms and at the Edinburgh, Leeds, Bath and Brighton Festivals, as at festivals in Budapest, Hong Kong, and throughout France and Spain.

In Europe Williams has appeared in the concert seasons of - amongst other orchestras - the Austrian Radio Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Belgian Radio Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Symphony and Chamber Orchestras, Slovak Philharmonic, Hungarian National Philharmonic (formerly State Symphony), Hungarian Radio Symphony, Budapest Philharmonic, Orchestre Nationale de Lyon, Orchestre de Strasbourg, Orchestre Symphonique de Montpellier, Orchestre de Picardie, RTE Symphony Orchestra, Dublin and the Portuguese National Symphony Orchestra.

After studying the piano with Ronald Smith and the violin with Clarence Myerscough, Howard Williams read music at Oxford and Liverpool Universities and entered the Advanced Conducting class at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London.

His operatic career started began with his joining English National Opera as répétiteur and then Chorus Master. He went on within a short while to conduct eleven operas for ENO, including four new productions and the world première of Iain Hamilton's Anna Karenina. At the same time he conducted David Freeman's Opera Factory in its opening London seasons, firstly with the sensational new production of Birtwistle's Punch and Judy and then to première the reduced orchestration of Tippett's The knot garden, both televised by Channel 4. His subsequent premières have included his own completion of Bizet's largest opera, Ivan IV, (now recorded on the NAÏVE label), Brian Howard's Inner voices, David Ward's The snow queen, Bernard Stevens' The shadow of the glen (available on ALBANY) and the première recording of Frank Bridge's The christmas rose for PEARL. Howard has now conducted more than seventy operas in the theatre or in concert.

With the Baroque Orchestra of English Bach Festival he has conducted productions at Covent Garden of Monteverdi's L'Orfeo, Purcell's Fairy Queen and Dido and Aeneas and Handel's Oreste. With them he also took to Madrid a production with historical instruments of Rossini's Le siège de Corinthe. Williams' work in the theatre has also included guest appearances with the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden, as well as with the Dutch National Ballet, Netherlands Dance Theatre and Hamburg Ballet.

Following his appointment in 1989 as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Pécs Symphony Orchestra (now Pannon Philharmonic), Hungary, Howard Williams devoted a significant amount of his time to working with the leading orchestras in that country, including frequent appearances with the National Philharmonic,

Hungarian Symphony Orchestra and Hungarian Radio Orchestra. His work with the Pécs orchestra quickly placed it in the forefront of Hungarian orchestras, and with it he created a broad and adventurous repertoire, ranging from Stravinsky and Mahler cycles to many world premières. Williams has been awarded an Artisjus award for his services to new Hungarian music, and the Bartók Medal for services to Hungarian music abroad.

On leaving Pécs in 2000, Williams was created Permanent Guest Conductor by the orchestra. In the same year he was appointed Head of Conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, as well as becoming Artistic Director of the Oxford Orchestra da Camera. Since 2013 he has been Musical Director of the Sinfonia of Cambridge.

In the concert hall Williams has conducted world premières of works by Tippett, Holloway, Schurmann, Cowie, Smalley, Ligeti and Balassa among many others. Thus contemporary works are a normal and essential part of his programming, although his other passions such as for the symphonies of Haydn are always in evidence, as well as a large amount of the oratorio repertoire.

His six years' in Cardiff enabled Howard to explore and develop his attitude to the teaching of conductors, while at the same time training student orchestras. He frequently works with student orchestras and conductors at conservatoire and university level in the UK, Europe and the USA, and is currently Professor of Conducting at the Royal College of Music in London.

Through his close involvement with singers and singing, he has developed a strong and continuing association with choirs both with and away from the orchestra. The list of those would be too long to summarize, but includes the choirs of Austrian Radio and of Bavarian Radio, the Hungarian State Choir, French Army Male Voice Choir, Leeds Festival Chorus and BBC Singers. Resulting from the question posed by a group of singers "haven't you a choir of your own, and if not, why not?", in 2001 the London-based Choir of the 21st Century (CC21) was formed with Howard as Principal Conductor.

As teacher Howard directed the 2014 and '15 International Bartók Conducting Seminars in Szombathely, Hungary, and in 2017 joins the London Conducting Workshop. Also in London he is a professor of Conducting at the Royal College of Music.