



PRESS RELEASE

Three Choirs Festival makes two new honorary appointments

The Three Choirs Festival has announced two new honorary appointments. The baritone Roderick Williams is to become President of the Three Choirs Festival Society in succession to the soprano Dame Felicity Lott, with immediate effect. David Whelton, former managing director of the Philharmonia Orchestra, which has had a residency at the festival since 2012, is to join the board of the Three Choirs Festival Association.

Roderick Williams has had a long association with the Three Choirs Festival as a soloist in recital and oratorio, in the past as a member of the vocal consort I Fagiolini and also as a composer. He won the Choral category of the British Composer Awards 2016, announced on 6 December, for 'Ave Verum Corpus Reimagined', his reflection on William Byrd's Kyrie written for the debut CD of the chamber choir Ora, conducted by Suzi Digby. Next summer's Three Choirs Festival in Worcester will see the premiere by vocal trio Voice and cellist Matthew Sharp of his *Five Madrigals*, including a setting of 'The Cellist' by Ursula Vaughan Williams.

Jeremy Wilding, Chairman of the Three Choirs Festival Society, said: 'I am delighted that Roderick Williams has agreed to become the new President of the Three Choirs Festival. This news will be very well received by the members of the Society by whom Roddy has always been uniquely loved and admired. The phrase "festival favourite" can easily be over-used by marketing departments, but in the case of Roderick Williams it could not be more appropriate.'

Responding to the invitation, Roderick Williams said:

'It is a huge honour to be invited to follow in such wonderful and august footsteps as those of Dame Felicity and her predecessor Dame Janet Baker. It gives me quite a frisson even to be considered in the same breath. That will be quite something to live up to. I am

honoured and flattered to have been considered and it would give me great pleasure to assume the role.'

Announcing that David Whelton is to become a director of the festival, Timothy Brain, Chairman of the Three Choirs Festival Association, said: 'We are absolutely delighted that David will be joining the Three Choirs board. His experience will be of immense significance as we develop our ambitious artistic programmes.'

David Whelton said: 'As Managing Director of the Philharmonia Orchestra it was a great pleasure to build a close relationship with the Three Choirs Festival which became one of the most enjoyable dates in our calendar. The concerts were outstanding, as indeed was the enthusiasm of the audience. It was also a great privilege to make music in the three great cathedrals of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester. I look forward to maintaining my relationship on a personal basis as a director of the Association.'

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Three Choirs Festival Society exists to enable devotees of the festival to support it financially and demonstrate their belief in the Three Choirs ethos. It also has a social function, bringing together regular attenders for special events where friendships can be consolidated and enthusiasm for the festival nurtured. Members enjoy benefits such as priority booking at various levels and exclusive information about festival activities via the *Society Spotlight* newsletter.

The Society was founded in 1996 and now has nearly 1000 members. Revenue from their annual membership fees makes a genuine contribution to the cost of putting on the festival every year.

The membership year encompasses one festival, running from the end of one festival to the end of the next. Those who apply for membership by 1 February are eligible for full benefits including priority booking for that year's festival.

2. The Three Choirs Festival Association is the company that produces the annual Three Choirs Festival, which rotates on a three-year cycle between the cathedral cities of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester.

3. Roderick Williams, baritone, encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform and in recital.

He enjoys relationships with all the major UK opera houses. He has also sung world premieres of operas by, among others, David Sawer, Sally Beamish, Michael van der Aa, Robert Saxton and Alexander Knaifel.

Roderick Williams has sung concert repertoire with all the BBC orchestras, and many other ensembles including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Philharmonia, London Sinfonietta, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé, Britten Sinfonia, Bournemouth Symphony and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Abroad he has worked with the Berlin Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Russian National Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome and Bach Collegium Japan amongst others. His many festival appearances include the BBC Proms (including the Last Night in 2014), Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Aldeburgh and Melbourne.

Recent opera engagements include Oronte in Charpentier's *Medée*, Don Alfonso / *Così fan Tutte* and Pollux / *Castor and Pollux* for English National Opera, Toby Kramer in Van der Aa's *Sunken Garden* in the Netherlands, Lyon and London, Van der Aa's *After Life* at Melbourne State Theatre, Sharpless in *Madam Butterfly* for the Nederlandse Reisopera, the title roles of Eugene Onegin for Garsington Opera and *Billy Budd* for Opera North. Recent and future concert engagements include concerts with the Tonkünstler Orchester at the Musikverein, Cincinnati Symphony, Music of the Baroque Chicago, Virginia Arts Festival, BBC Proms, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment as well as many recitals and concerts in the UK and worldwide.

He is also an accomplished recital artist who can be heard at venues and festivals including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, LSO St Luke's, the Perth Concert Hall, Oxford Lieder Festival, London Song Festival, the Musikverein, Vienna and appears regularly on Radio 3 both as a performer and a presenter. His numerous recordings include Vaughan Williams, Berkeley and Britten operas for Chandos and an extensive repertoire of English song with pianist Iain Burnside for Naxos.

Roderick Williams is also a composer and has had works premiered at the Wigmore and Barbican Halls, the Purcell Room and live on national radio.

He was Artistic Director of Leeds Lieder in April 2016 and won the RPS Singer award in May 2016.

4. David Whelton was trained as a pianist and organist. Following an early in career in education, David joined Yorkshire Arts Association and subsequently Leeds City Council directing the City's music and arts programme. In 1985 he joined the Arts Council of Great Britain where he was responsible for funding the UK's major festivals and symphony orchestras.

From 1987 to 2016 he was Managing Director of the Philharmonia Orchestra. Working with the world's greatest conductors including Riccardo Muti, Lorin Maazel, Christoph von Dohnanyi, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Sir Charles Mackerras and Vladimir Askenazy, he created one of the most vibrant and extensive orchestral programmes in the world. In the course of 29 years David presented more than 4600 concerts across five continents, as well as numerous recordings, many of which received awards.

Under his leadership, the Philharmonia has enjoyed a unique position at the heart of British musical life, at the centre of which are orchestral residencies at the Royal Festival Hall, Bedford, Leicester, Canterbury, Basingstoke and the Three Choirs Festival.

David pioneered the concept of multi-disciplinary festivals which travelled the world garnering numerous awards. Themes included *Clocks and Clouds: The Music of Gyorgy Ligeti*, and *Related Rocks*, featuring the music of Magnus Lindberg, both conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen. Recent series include *The City of Dreams: the music of Vienna, 1900-1935*; *Infernal Dance: inside the world of Bela Bartok*, *Woven Words: "music begins where words end"* celebrating the centenary of Witold Lutoslawski; *Stravinsky: Myths and Rituals*, also conducted by Salonen.

Notable other concert series included complete symphony cycles devoted to Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams (including *Pilgrim's Progress*) and William Walton (including *Gloriana*)- the last two conducted by Richard Hickox. In 1994 Nikolaus Harnoncourt conducted a remarkable Beethoven Cycle in London and Birmingham. In 2008, under Salonen's direction, the Philharmonia toured Bill Viola's video production of *Tristan and Isolde* to great international acclaim. The Philharmonia celebrated the Mahler centenary in 2011 with the largest Cycle of concerts in Europe devoted to his work, conducted by Lorin Maazel.

In parallel with this innovative programming policy, David launched the award-winning Music of Today series, featuring music of young composers which has provided a platform for the most gifted musicians of their generation. The first Artistic Director was James Macmillan followed by Julian Anderson who, in turn, was succeeded in 2011 by the current Artistic Director, Unsuk Chin.

Under David's stewardship, the Philharmonia has maintained a busy touring programme across the world. Throughout the 1990s, the Philharmonia was resident at the Theatre du Chatelet, Paris, and continues to enjoy long term relationships with the major halls in Europe, North America and Japan. In

addition to establishing this touring programme, David also formed a close association with the Three Tenors which led to two world tours and brought the work of the Orchestra to large new audiences.

David pioneered the use of digital technology to reach new audiences through digital installations. Recent examples include *RE-RITE: be the orchestra*, based on Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, which has toured Europe and China, and the *Universe of Sound*, based on Holst's The Planets presented at the Science Museum where it attracted nearly 70000 visitors. In 2012, the Philharmonia, in association with Touch Press and Music Sales, launched a ground breaking app, *The Orchestra* which was voted App of the Year by The Daily Telegraph as well as receiving accolades in Asia and North America.

David Whelton is Chairman of the Mayfield Valley Arts Trust; Patron, Performers Together; Trustee of the International Musicians Seminar Prussia Cove, the Hattori Foundation, the Philharmonia Trust and US Foundation and Chairman of the Philharmonia in Bedford Endowment Fund. He is an Honorary Member of The Royal College of Music and an Honorary Fellow of The Royal Academy of Music. David was awarded the OBE in the 2015 Queen's Birthday Honours List.