



## David Whelton OBE MANAGING DIRECTOR REFLECTS ON 29 YEARS



Like many people reading this article, I was brought up on Philharmonia recordings and I attended many concerts with the Philharmonia at the Royal Festival Hall in the Riccardo Muti era. But one of my unforgettable memories is of the Klemperer Beethoven cycle in the Royal Festival Hall in 1970 which I saw on TV with Caroline, who later became my wife.

I first worked with the Philharmonia in 1984 at the Leeds Festival and the following year in Harrogate. When I joined the Arts Council in 1986, I found myself responsible for funding the Orchestra - not the easiest task given London's orchestral politics at the time.

When I was appointed Managing Director of the Philharmonia in 1997 I began what has been a great musical adventure full of drama and extraordinary personalities, but so many unforgettable moments too.

My first concert as Managing Director was with Carlo Maria Giulini and my last Royal Festival Hall concert was conducted by Christoph von Dohnányi with Martin Helmchen as soloist giving two of my favourite works: Beethoven's 4th Piano Concerto and 6th Symphony. I cannot think of a better way to conclude my time with the Orchestra. Of course it was unforgettable for another reason, as it was the night the UK voted for Brexit!

When I joined the Philharmonia Orchestra, I had one clear objective, to ensure that the Orchestra's contribution to British musical life was indispensable. It seemed to me that at a time when the number of London orchestras was once again a matter of public interest, if we did not achieve this, and deliver clear public

benefit, the Philharmonia Orchestra's future would always be open to question.

London's orchestras are owned by their players who demand a full schedule, first class conductors and soloists, good halls, varied repertoire and competitive remuneration. To balance these objectives was challenging and remains so today.

London's orchestras operate in a different marketplace from most other symphony orchestras. A substantial proportion of their income is derived from commercial work, engagements and touring rather than subsidy. It is a very competitive environment and, in my time, has changed out of all recognition.

In the early 1990s, the Philharmonia Orchestra undertook 200+ classical recording sessions a year. Today it is in the region of 15-20. But, in turn, this created the opportunity to establish the Philharmonia's regional programme which, together with its Regional Residencies, now lies at the heart of its work and amounts to some 60 concerts each year.

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London orchestras are uniquely flexible and it is this which has enabled the Philharmonia Orchestra to harness the opportunities created by the digital revolution to find new ways of communicating with audiences. The Philharmonia's digital installations now travel the world and the advent of Virtual Reality has taken this to a new dimension.

The touring scene has also changed out of all recognition. Gone are the days of long tours covering their costs; the early 1990s recession and financial crash of 2008 forced promoters to rethink their relationship with both audiences and orchestras. In the case of the Philharmonia, I developed more focussed, long-term relationships with promoters across the world. The relationship with the Konzerthaus in Dortmund was an example of a promoter embracing the Philharmonia's digital and audience development programme, to great effect. Out of a very difficult financial situation new initiatives were born, which created a new future for the Orchestra.

Repertoire is now the motive for ticket purchases; the days of the legendary Maestros which drew crowds have long gone. As I plan concert programmes, I always ask myself if this concert is really necessary; we cannot afford routine! The live concert remains a unique collective experience; committed performances of energy and refinement, underpinned by great musicianship, are what really matter. It is great performances that bring halls to life and that will continue to attract audiences.

The Arts Council has changed considerably over the last 30 years. It never understood London's orchestras, their strengths and weaknesses, as made clear in a succession of futile reviews. It failed to understand the role of the BBC orchestras too. For me, this all changed with the appointment of Gerry Robinson as Chair of the ACE. He had the confidence to support the Stabilisation Programme, led by Hilary Boulding, which transformed the Arts Council's relationship with the sector. The programme's emphasis on finding the investment required to build sustainable institutions, with realistic artistic ambitions meeting a clearly defined need, was long overdue. It was this that created the buoyant orchestral life that we enjoy today.

It is heartening to note that the Arts Council under the leadership of Alan Davey and now Darren Henley sees itself as the ally of the orchestral community. I believe that the work we all do provides the evidence required to convince the DCMS and Treasury that orchestras, and especially the Philharmonia Orchestra, play an indispensable role in the life of this country.

After nearly 29 years at the helm of the Philharmonia I still look forward to hearing the Orchestra play. The years of programme planning, scheduling, complex fee negotiation, fundraising and marketing that each concert requires makes every evening special for me. I live every note and remain acutely aware of the reactions of the audience, which is, after all, why we are here.

Finally some statistics:

- I have planned and managed over 4,600 concerts in the UK and overseas and never cancelled a single one.
- I have toured the Orchestra throughout northern and southern Europe, North America, South America, Japan, China, Korea, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and the Gulf.
- I have driven nearly 900,000 miles in the UK.

The musical world today is unrecognisable from when I started and one of the great strengths of the Philharmonia is that it relishes change and all the challenges that come with it. Today, the Philharmonia attracts some of the finest young players from across the world and the standard of playing is better than at any time in its history. There are terrific young conductors coming through, both men and women. Managers are much more adept at leading change and the quality and effectiveness of administrators has increased in leaps and bounds.

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I count it as a great privilege to have been at the heart of British musical life for so long and to grow and develop this great art form. For me, the extraordinary canon of European orchestral music remains one of our greatest gifts to the world.

I would like to thank everybody who has made this possible - the Arts Council, trustees, Friends, sponsors, composers, performers, and above all, our audiences. It has been a great team effort, and I owe a great debt to my colleagues in the office, library, the transport and personnel departments for keeping the show on the road! But above all to Caroline my wife; I could not have done it without her. I wish the Orchestra and whoever follows me every success in the future and I hope that whoever will be writing this article in 2045 will have as interesting a tale to tell.

David Whelton OBE Hon. RCM Hon. FRAM



# CHINESE NEW YEAR

22 February  
2016

Jonathan Kuhles, Director of Development, reflects on a spectacular evening of music and celebrations to mark the Chinese New Year of the Monkey.

## NEW RELEASE: SCHUBERT SYMPHONY NO. 9

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall in October 2015, as part of the Philharmonia's 70th anniversary season, this performance is conducted by Christoph von Dohnányi.

The disc was released in June, and Friends can buy a copy for just £8 plus postage and packaging. Freephone the Philharmonia Box Office on 0800 652 6717.

The Philharmonia's Honorary Conductor for Life Christoph von Dohnányi captures the grandeur and intensity of Schubert's final and greatest symphony. An early review from *Classic FM* commented: "The music is allowed to unfold seemingly without effort, but always with dramatic focus."

## 70TH ANNIVERSARY APPEAL SUCCESS

On 27 October 1945, Thomas Beecham conducted the first Philharmonia Orchestra concert at Kingsway Hall in London. 70 years on, the Orchestra continues to go from strength-to-strength both as a world class Orchestra on concert stages nationally and internationally, as well as through its inspirational education projects and pioneering digital work.

Many thanks to all those who so generously donated to the 70th Anniversary Appeal to help replenish the Orchestra's sheet music stock and also to purchase new sheet music. The Appeal has so far raised over £18,500 and Tim Cotter, our librarian, is a very happy man!

If you haven't made a donation so far but would like to, please contact Emma Kjellin, Friends Manager, on **020 7921 3918** or [emma.kjellin@philharmonia.co.uk](mailto:emma.kjellin@philharmonia.co.uk)

## LANG LANG

World renowned pianist Lang Lang performed a three-concert residency in November and December 2015 conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen at the Royal Festival Hall.

On the eve of Lang Lang's highly anticipated three-concert series there was a Gala Evening to celebrate the lifetime achievements of Dame Fanny Waterman, DBE. Dame Fanny occupies a pre-eminent position in the piano teaching world, and founded the Leeds Piano Competition with her late husband Dr Geoffrey de Keyser and Marion Thorpe in 1961. Lang Lang is a Global Ambassador for the Leeds Piano Competition, and a great friend of Dame Fanny.

Over the three-concert series Lang Lang performed pieces by Mozart, Grieg and Prokofiev to sell-out audiences. These concerts were supported by two of our corporate supporters, Citi and Wuliangye (Principal International Partner).

On Monday 22 February 2016, the Philharmonia transformed the ornate Locarno Suite at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, a venue usually used for diplomatic dinners, speeches and conferences, into a concert hall for a special evening to celebrate the Chinese New Year of the Monkey.

The Orchestra was conducted by Maestro Long Yu, the pre-eminent Chinese conductor (Artistic Director, Beijing Music Festival and Music Director, China Philharmonic) in a specially arranged programme to celebrate the Spring Festival, the most important event in the Chinese calendar. The event was opened by H.E. Mr. Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese Ambassador, who welcomed the growing cultural links between the UK and China.



The concert began with the Spring Festival Overture, a piece synonymous with this time of year in China which set the scene for the rest of the performance. The Orchestra was joined by a series of Chinese musicians including Yi Wang, a soprano specialist in Peking Opera, who gave an incredible theatrical performance in an amazing traditional outfit (see photo).

Maestro Yu and the Philharmonia were then joined by Johnson Li, a 12-year old piano prodigy, and student of Lang Lang's, to perform Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K.466 before Yan Xu, a Bamboo flutist, brought the evening to a rousing finale with two specially arranged pieces.

The evening launches the Philharmonia's Chinese New Year concert on 9 February 2017 at the Royal Festival Hall under the baton of Long Yu and we hope you can join us for what promises to be a vibrant and enjoyable evening to celebrate the Chinese Year of the Rooster. Tickets are available online at [philharmonia.co.uk](http://philharmonia.co.uk) or directly from the Orchestra's Box Office.

The Philharmonia is very grateful to all those who supported the Chinese New Year concert on 22 February, in particular the China Recording Association (Principal Sponsor), the KT Wong Foundation, Premier Business Matchmaking and Consulting and the Orchestra's Principal International Partner, Wuliangye.



# PHILHARMONIA ICELAND TOUR

October 2015

The Philharmonia was the first British orchestra to play in Iceland, performing at Laugardalshöll with Vladimir Ashkenazy in 1984. After this tour, it became apparent that Iceland required a good concert hall and fundraising for a new hall in Reykjavik began. As part of the fundraising efforts, the Philharmonia performed a concert at the Royal Festival Hall, London, in 1985 again under the direction of Vladimir Ashkenazy, to raise funds for this cause. Among the guests at the concert were then President of Iceland Vigdís Finnbogadóttir and TRH The Prince and Princess of Wales.

Harpa Concert Hall was opened on 4 May 2011 and is now one of Reykjavik's greatest and most distinguishable landmarks. It is a cultural and social centre in the heart of the city that features stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the North Atlantic Ocean and its grand-scale award-winning architecture has attracted 5 million guests since its opening.

The Philharmonia played a great part in the building of Harpa and was welcomed back with open arms in October 2015 for its first performance in the hall. This was the Orchestra's first time back in Iceland for more than 30 years.

The Orchestra was met at the airport with its very own personalised check-in desk – a lovely start to the tour which set the tone for the rest of the trip. Many of the musicians had not visited Iceland before and were very excited at the prospect of not only performing in the magnificent Harpa Concert Hall but also discovering a little of this incredible country. The musicians certainly made the most of their free time

with groups visiting the Blue Lagoon, the Golden Circle and some even experiencing the Icelandic pony's famous tölt.

The performances were a great success. Under the baton of Jakub Hrůša and with Daniil Trifonov as soloist, the programme featured Smetana's Overture to *The Bartered Bride*, a work which is known to have heralded the birth of Czech opera; and Dvořák's Symphony No. 7, a work often described as the composer's greatest. Daniil Trifonov concluded his Rachmaninov Cycle with the Piano Concerto No. 2, one of the most popular works of all time.

*Contributed by Cate Hall, Tours Manager*

Top: Peking opera singer Yi Wang © Alastair Merrill  
Above: Harpa Concert Hall © Robert Harding / Alamy Stock Photo  
Page right: The 360 Experience © British Council



## VIRTUAL REALITY

"An extraordinary glimpse into the sights and sounds of a symphony orchestra"  
*The Guardian*

This year the Philharmonia was proud to announce its latest digital project – *360 Experience* – the first major virtual reality (VR) production from a UK symphony orchestra.

In partnership with Southbank Centre and technology company Inition, the Philharmonia has created a 360-degree Virtual Reality (VR) experience. Viewers are transported backstage at the Royal Festival Hall, then on to the platform in the centre of the orchestra, as Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts a performance of Sibelius' Fifth Symphony. As you turn your head, the 3D audio and video allows you to hear the nuances of each section, including details such as the sound of the score pages turning. It is a truly 360-degree experience.

At the end of April, the Philharmonia's Digital team were delighted to be invited by the British Council to Tokyo to showcase some of the Orchestra's latest work with new technology at a showcase titled *Sound and City* in Ark Hills, in the commercial district of Akasaka. Across the two days of the event there were conference talks, question and answer sessions, music performances and exhibition style showcases.

The Philharmonia's exhibition stand was one of the most popular at the showcase. Our new Virtual Reality presentation, *360 Experience*, had its world premiere in a public setting, and was experienced by over 1,000 people.

The Orchestra's iPad app – *The Orchestra*

(which is available in Japanese as well as English) – was also showcased, as were its French horn and clarinet interactive instrument tutorials from the touring MusicLab truck, and which were shown to Japanese audiences for the first time.

The Philharmonia will be showcasing the VR *360 Experience* during our 'Digital Takeover' of the Royal Festival Hall this September (23 September – 2 October 2016) as part of a 10-day festival, *The Virtual Orchestra*. The festival will also include the Orchestra's largest digital installation, *Universe of Sound*, which has toured the world, reaching over 330,000 visitors.

For more information, go to [philharmonia.co.uk/vr](http://philharmonia.co.uk/vr)

## BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY NO. 9

To celebrate our 70th anniversary we performed a special series of concerts in September 2015 conducted by our Honorary Conductor for Life, Maestro Christoph von Dohnányi.

The Orchestra performed Beethoven's monumental Ninth Symphony in Dortmund, Berlin and Köln, returning to London for the final performance on Sunday 27 September. In addition to enjoying our birthday the performance in London also marked the 25th anniversary of the unification of Germany. The chorus's jubilant repetition of the famous *Ode to Joy* resounded through the hall.

This was the perfect opening for the final season of our Managing Director, David Whelton OBE, who will be greatly missed.

## STAFF CHANGE

In April this year we bid farewell to Francesca Morris, Individual Giving Assistant, who is now enjoying her new role at University College London.

Her duties have been taken up by Patrick Reardon-Morgan, who joins us from Welsh National Opera. Patrick read music at Cardiff University, graduating with First Class Honours in July 2015 before undertaking placements at BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and Aldeburgh Music. He has now moved to London and looks forward to meeting more Philharmonia supporters at concerts and events in the coming season.

## FOREVER: WHAT A LEGACY

The Philharmonia was very sad to learn of the passing of a number of its loyal audience members and supporters over this past season, some who had supported the Orchestra for many years.

Many supporters decide to leave the Philharmonia a gift in their Will. These gifts provide an important and ongoing source of income for the Orchestra, preserving its heritage and helping to safeguard its work for the enjoyment of future generations.

If you are interested in leaving a gift to the Philharmonia in your Will, further information can be found at [philharmonia.co.uk/support/legacies](http://philharmonia.co.uk/support/legacies), or by contacting Sarah Atkinson, Individual Giving Manager, on **020 7921 3921** or [sarah.atkinson@philharmonia.co.uk](mailto:sarah.atkinson@philharmonia.co.uk).

## STRAVINSKY: MYTHS & RITUALS *THE JOURNEY SO FAR*

**207** Minutes of STRAVINSKY

**2** Portions of Vobla (Russian dried fish)

**50** Custom made chorus tabards  
**200** Electric candles

**2** Days to source Russian bells

**3** Past concerts: *RITUALS, TALES, FAITH*

**115** Musicians

**8** Singers from the Mariinsky Theatre, Russia  
**10** Dancers

**1** Exhausted concert manager

**STRAVINSKY: MYTHS**  
 Sunday 25 September 2016, 7.30pm - Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall  
*Orpheus, Apollon musagète, Perséphone*

**STRAVINSKY: TRAGEDY**  
 Thursday 29 September 2016, 7.30pm - Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall  
*Oedipus rex, Symphony of Psalms*



# PHILHARMONIA CHAMBER PLAYERS

Richard Birchall, cello, reflects on the first season of chamber concerts at the Royal Festival Hall

It has been a great pleasure to see the first full season of the Philharmonia Chamber Players series unfold during 2015/16. All five concerts - featuring a range of string, piano and wind groups (and even an ensemble of eight cellos with soprano!) - have been of a tremendous variety and scope, and the hugely appreciative audiences continue to grow in number.

This new early-evening series has been an eye-opener for many, providing a valuable chance for both regular Philharmonia audiences, and also newcomers to enjoy a rich variety of chamber music at the Royal Festival Hall, all free of charge. It's also lovely for us as

players to be able to support our colleagues and friends. The opportunity to perform is open to all orchestral members, and a great many of the players have already taken this chance to make music together at our familiar Southbank Centre home, but in such a refreshingly different way.

Next season sees another inspiring and colourful set of programmes, beginning on 20 October 2016 and running through to June 2017. If you haven't yet attended a Philharmonia Chamber Players concert, do come along and join us soon!



# REIMAGINE INDIA

Philharmonia musicians travel to India to prepare for Darbar Festival

In December a team of musicians travelled to India as part of a project called *Universal Notes* in partnership with *Darbar*, the UK's premier Indian classical music festival. Philharmonia members Samuel Burstin (viola) and Samantha Reagan (violin), along with Matthew Barley (cellist), and composer Fraser Trainer, were immersed in an 8-day crash course in Indian classical music, working with a dozen high-profile musicians in Bangalore and Mumbai in a series of intensive workshops. This ground-breaking project aims to create a truly collaborative and original piece of music, moving beyond the typical 'fusion' piece or jam session.

This project is generously supported by the British Council and Arts Council England's *Reimagine India* fund, and will culminate in a Royal Festival Hall performance at

the opening of this year's *Darbar* Festival. Travelling from India for the final concert will be Jayanthi Kumaresh (saraswati veena), Niladri Kumar (sitar) and Rakesh Chaurasia (Hindustani flute). The Philharmonia's Gareth Sheppard (double bass) and Jennifer McLaren (E flat clarinet) also form part of the final ensemble.

*Universal Notes* has pushed all involved to take risks and work outside their comfort zones, building skills and confidence within the orchestra to do further work of this kind in the future. The project will be the subject of a documentary, to be released later this year.

*Darbar* Festival runs 16-18 September at London's Southbank Centre.

Contributed by Marina Vidor, Digital Producer

Top: Philharmonia Chamber Players © Marina Vidor / Philharmonia Orchestra  
Above: Jayanthi Kumaresh (saraswati veena) © Marina Vidor / Philharmonia Orchestra  
Below: Esa-Pekka Salonen © Nicolas Brodard



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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