

Opera singers selected for BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2011

The Jury, Patrons and Prizes

Additional quotes - Bryn Terfel and John Fisher



Opera singers from across the globe have been selected to compete in this year's *BBC Cardiff Singer of the World*. The names and nationalities of the 20 successful competitors were announced today (Thursday, March 3) at the Commonwealth Club, London.

This year's competitors, who will perform in Cardiff from Sunday 12 June - Sunday 19 June 2011, will have the added distinction of performing in front of Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, the internationally renowned singer, who takes up her role as Patron of BBC Cardiff Singer of the World for the first time.

A strong supporter and mentor to a new generation of singers, as founder of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and the founding artistic director of the Solti Te Kanawa Accademia di Bel Canto, she will now be passing on her invaluable experiences for the first time as a jury member and Patron.

From Baku to Brussels and San Francisco to Shanghai, auditions have taken place across the world, seeking 20 outstanding singers to take part in *BBC Cardiff Singer of the World*. Six hundred opera and concert singers at the start of their careers auditioned for a place in the competition, hoping the prestige and exposure to large audiences, both in Cardiff and across the BBC's television, radio and online services, will give a unique boost to their careers.

The winner will receive £15,000 and the Cardiff Trophy. All the singers are also eligible to take part in the Song Prize competition which carries a £5,000 prize and a trophy. The Song Prize winner is also eligible to join BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists Scheme.

An important and significant date in the classical music diary, Adrian Davies, Acting Head of Programmes, English Language, BBC Cymru Wales, explains why the competition is a highlight for those watching live in St David's Hall in Cardiff and for viewers at home.

Adrian Davies, Acting Head of Programmes, English Language, BBC Cymru Wales, notes why the competition is a highlight for the competitors and for the audiences in Cardiff and at home.

"The inspirational BBC Cardiff Singer of the World represents a unique opportunity for young singers at the start of their career. By performing in this world-renowned competition, they have the opportunity to be widely heard on a variety of platforms - television, radio and online - as well as that of the concert hall. Having the chance to

Uruguay	Enzo Romano	
	Bass-baritone	31
Wales	John Pierce	
	Tenor	28

Dame Kiri Te Kanawa joins the jury for BBC Cardiff Singer of the World for the first time, and other newcomers to the jury's table are conductor Alexander Polianichko and Palermo Opera House Artistic Director Lorenzo Mariani. Marilyn Horne returns for her fifth visit, and Dennis O'Neill and Håkan Hagegård both appear for the second time.

Marilyn Horne and Håkan Hagegård also serve on the Song Prize jury, where they are joined by the eminent Swedish pianist Bengt Forsberg, making his first appearance at the competition. BBC Radio 3's Adam Gatehouse returns to the jury for the third time.

Both juries are chaired by John Fisher, former chief executive and artistic director of Welsh National Opera, who takes the chair for the third time.

For biographies, see pages 17-21

As well as serving on the jury, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa becomes the second Patron of the competition following the death last year of Dame Joan Sutherland. Dame Kiri is a passionate believer in nurturing young singing talent.

"It is a thrill and honour to be asked to be Patron and jury member for this year's BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition," said Dame Kiri.

"The event is of great significance to the opera world, giving young talented singers the

“It is an occasion which will reveal the finest qualities of the singers and I am very pleased to be a part of this extraordinary competition.”

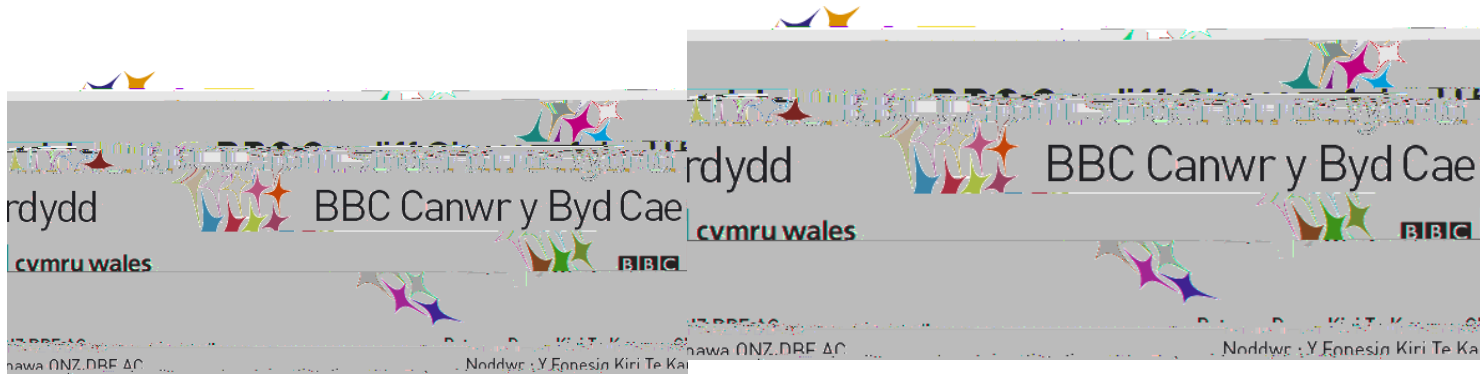
The winner of BBC Cardiff Singer of the World will receive £15,000; and the Song Prize winner £5,000. Each will also receive a trophy. The Song Prize winner also has the chance to join BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists scheme.

The hugely popular Audience Prize, worth £2,000, is renamed in memory of the legendary soprano and in recognition of her long association with the competition. For the first time the Dame Joan Sutherland trophy will be awarded.

Bryn Terfel says of Dame Joan:

"She was a favourite with Cardiff Singer audiences, mainly because of her down-to-earth attitude. With her death came a great loss to the operatic world and to young singers coming through BBC Cardiff Singer of the World, but hers was a talent that will always be cherished."

Full details about BBC Cardiff Singer of the World can be found at bbc.co.uk/cardiffsinger



Bass-baritone Bryn Terfel, who was a finalist and Song Prize winner in 1989 and went on to become a household name, explains how taking part in the competition can shape an opera singer's career:

“For an emerging opera singer, BBC Cardiff Singer of the World is a priceless opportunity. It is three steps up the ladder of that professional career you are striving for. It opens doors. I know for myself: two of the opera houses I later sang in - the Vienna Staatsoper and the Munich Opera House - saw the competition I was in and invited me to audition for them. It's such an important platform - and then, of course, there is the fact you are representing your country. Without doubt, BBC Cardiff Singer of the World is one of the most important competitions in the world.

“As a past competitor, who didn't win the competition, I know that even if you don't win - but you are in that Final - it is still something of huge significance.”

With a wide selection of renowned artists on the jury this year, with musical talent, vocal technique and stage presence at the forefront of their requirements, John Fisher, chairman of both juries, said:

“I'm delighted that we have such a distinguished and expert jury for the 2011 competition. They are esteemed around the world, but also hugely dedicated to the nurturing of young talent - one couldn't ask for a more perfect team.”

“The exposure gained from competing in BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2009 was priceless. My career only properly got under way following the competition. It is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but the advice I would give to this year’s competitors is to choose the right repertoire. I now have a great agent, with offers from opera houses around Europe, and to be honest the competition was the turning point in my career.

“In the first round I wasn’t nervous. I was just happy and proud to be there, to sing in the great hall and in front of so many people. When the final night came, my nerves very much kicked in. When John Fisher announced me as

Vazgen Ghazaryan (bass) Age 32	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 1: Monday 13 June
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Vazgen Ghazaryan won the 2004 Young Opera Singers' Competition in Yerevan, Armenia, and in 2010 won the Aurio Tomicich bass prize at the Concorso Internazionale di Musica Viotti in Italy. Now in his fourth season at Theater Erfurt, roles performed there include: the title role in Boito's *Mefistofele*, Titirel *Parsifal*, Bartolo *Le nozze di Figaro*, Banquo *Macbeth*, Basilio *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Colline *La bohème*. Vazgen has sung Sarastro *Die Zauberflöte* at venues throughout Europe, including Genoa, Stresa, Erfurt and with the Armenian State Opera.

In 2007, Vazgen sang *Zaccaria Nabucco* at the Opera Classica Festival in Bad Schwalbach and returned the following year to sing Ramfis *Aida*, a role he has also sung in Craiova, Romania. In 2006 he sang in Shostakovich's *The Nose* at Teatro São Carlos, Lisbon. Vazgen's concert repertoire includes the bass solos in Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah*. Solo recital repertoire includes Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* and Shostakovich's *Songs of our Days*.

His 2010/11 engagements include Hunding *Die Walküre* with the Russian National Orchestra in Moscow with Kent Nagano and Vodnik *Rusalka* at the Mikhailovsky Theatre in St Petersburg. In his spare time, Vazgen enjoys tennis, rock music and computers.

Helen Sherman (mezzo-soprano) Age 29	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 3: Wednesday 15 June Song Prize Recital 3: Monday 13 June
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Helen Sherman graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music in 2010, studying with Peter Alexander Wilson, and received the RNCM International Artists Diploma in opera studies. Previously she had studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, graduating in 2006. She won the International Opera Productions prize in the 2007 Australian Singing Competition and in 2009 was selected for representation by the Young Concert Artists Trust. At the RNCM Helen sang Varvava

Maria Radoeva (soprano) Age 26	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 1: Monday 13 June Song Prize Recital 1: Sunday 12 June
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Maria Radoeva was born in Sofia. At the National Music Academy of Sofia between 2003-2006, she studied with Liyudmila Hadjieva and Plamen Beykov, and continues her studies in Modena with Raina Kabaivanska. Maria's competition successes i

Marcela González (soprano) Age 24	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 2: Tuesday 14 June Song Prize Recital 2: Sunday 13 June
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Marcela González was born in Santiago de Chil

Meeta Raval (soprano) Age 28	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 2: Tuesday 14 June Song Prize Recital 2: Sunday 12 June
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Meeta Raval attended Wells Cathedral School and was the first Head Girl Chorister in the country. She graduated from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with a first class honours degree and was awarded a Diploma of Distinction by Royal Academy Opera. Meeta won the Dame Eva Turner Prize and the Royal Academy of Music Pavarotti Prize. She has participated in master classes with Dame Ann Murray and Mirella Freni, and completed her studies at the National Opera Studio in 2010.

Operatic roles include Contessa

Máire Flavin (mezzo-soprano) Age 28	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 4: Thursday 16 June Song Prize Recital 4: Tuesday 14 June
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Máire Flavin was born in Dublin and is studying wi

Valentina Nafornit (soprano) Age 24	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 3: Wednesday 15 June Song Prize Recital 3: Monday 13 June
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Valentina Nafornit was born in Glodeni, Republic of Moldova. She graduated from the Stefan Neaga Music College in Kishinev in 2006 and continued her training in Romania, at the voice department of the National University of Music in Bucharest, where she studied with sopranos Maria Slatinaru-Nistor and Eleonora Enchescu. The latter is teaching her on the MA programme at present. In addition, she has taken master classes with soprano Mariana Nicolesco and conductor Christian Badea.

Valentina has participated in numerous competitions. Recent prizes include the Orange Prize for Young Musicians, Romania in 2009 and the second prize in the Hariclea Darclée Voice Competition in 2010. She has appeared in concerts and recitals on the great music stages in Romania, including the Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest, and has also collaborated with the George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra.

zymon Komasa (baritone) Age 25	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 2: Tuesday 14 June Song Prize Recital 2: Sunday 12 June
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zymon Komasa was born in Poznań and studied at the Academy of Music in ód , from which he graduated with honours in 2009 in both cello and vocal studies. His teachers include Włodzimierz Zalewski and Ewa Irzykowska. zymon has also taken part in master classes, including with Helena Łazarska in Vienna and Salzburg and with Rudolf Piernay, with whom he is currently studying opera at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

He has won awards in international singing competitions, including the third prize at the Ada Sari Vocal Art Competition in Nowy Sącz in Poland, first prize at the Puccini International Singing Competition in Verona and first prize at the Halina Halska-Fijałkowska Vocal Competition in Wrocław.

zymon's opera performances include Slocum in Rossini's *La cambiale di matrimonio*, Papageno *Die Zauberflöte* and Figaro *Le nozze di Figaro*, all at Teatr Wielki in ód , and Schaunard *La bohème* at Teatro Filharmonico in Verona. His repertoire also includes Mityukha *Boris Godunov*. Szymon will sing Marullo *Rigoletto* at Teatr Wielki in Warsaw for Polish National Opera. zymon's interests include travel and fashion.

erban Vasile (baritone) Age 26	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 1: Monday 13 June
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erban Vasile was born in Bucharest and graduated from the George Enescu Music High School, Bucharest. He continued his academic studies in the Singing Department of the National University of Music under the guidance of soprano Eleonora Enăchescu, graduating in 2009. In 2008 erban won second prize in the International Singing Competition in Spoleto, Italy. In 2009 he won the Mae trii Artei Lirice competition in Bucharest and went on to debut as Marcello *La bohème* in Burgas, Bulgaria. His success at the 2010 AsLiCo Competition resulted in his debut in the contemporary opera *Lupus in fabula* by Raffaele Sargenti and the role of Dandini *La Cenerentola* at AsLiCo and Teatro di Piacenza. Also in 2010, erban won second prize in the Salicedoro International Singing Competition.

He has appeared throughout Romania with orchestras including the George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestra of the National Opera House, Bucharest. erban has worked with conductors including Cristian Bădea and Ludovic Bács and singers including Alfonso Antoniozzi, Mariella Devia, Eduard Tumulcea, Luciana Serra, Ne

Olesya Petrova (mezzo-soprano)
Age 28

Andrei Bondarenko (baritone) Age 24	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 3: Wednesday 15 June Song Prize Recital 3: Monday 13 June
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Andrei Bondarenko trained at the National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music in Kiev and the Kiev Conservatory. Since 2007 he has been a soloist in the Mariinsky Academy of Young Singers in St Petersburg. Awards include third prize at the 2006 International Rimsky-Korsakov vocal competition in St Petersburg, third prize at the International Maniuszko Competition and finalist in the 2010 Operalia competition. In 2009 he took part in the Salzburg Festival Young Singers' Project, working with Michael Schade and taking master classes with Christa Ludwig, Marjana Lipovšek and Thomas Quasthoff. In 2010 he sang Grigorio *Roméo et Juliette* with Yannik Nezet-Seguín and this year The Emperor *Le Rossignol* with Ivor Bolton.

Andrei's current roles at the Mariinsky include Guglielmo *Così fan tutte* and Conte *Il nozze di Figaro*. Other repertoire includes Onegin *Eugene Onegin*, Silvio *Pagliacci*, Marullo *Rigoletto*, Robert *Iolanta*, Aeneas *Dido and Aeneas*, Papageno *Die Zauberflöte* and Belcore *L'elisir d'amore*. This year, in Vienna, Germany, Moscow, St Petersburg and at the Sydney Festival, he takes part in a new Michael Sturminger project,

Leah Crocetto (soprano) Age 31	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 4: Thursday 16 June Song Prize Recital 4: Tuesday 14 June
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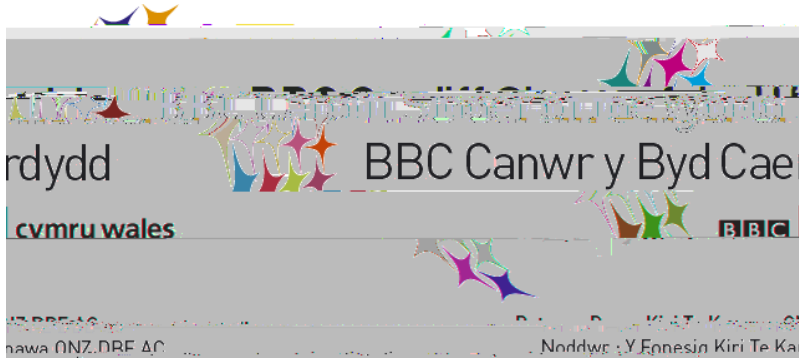
Leah Crocetto is from Adrian, Michigan, and is a third year Adler Fellow with San Francisco Opera. She was a 2010 Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan National Council Auditions; 1st Place Winner, People's Choice and Spanish Prize winner at the José Iturbi International Music Competition and winner of a Sara Tucker Career Grant.

This season includes her European debut as Leonora *Il trovatore* with Opéra National de Bordeaux and as soloist in Mahler's *Second Symphony* at the Grand Teton Festival, conducted by Donald Runnicles. At San Francisco Opera last season she covered Leonora *Il trovatore* and Desdemona *Otello* and this season includes the High Priestess *Aida* and Opera in the Park with Nicola Luisotti. She sang her first performance of the Verdi *Requiem* in her debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel and will perform it again with Columbus Symphony and Albany Symphony. Leah has an engagement at the Hollywood Bowl singing Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Rafael Frúbeck de Burgos.

Future plans include Liù *Turandot* at San Francisco Opera, Desdemona *Otello* at Frankfurt Opera and the Poulenc *Gloria* with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. In her spare time, Leah enjoys karaoke, travelling, wine tasting and making mp3 player playlists.

BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Concert 3:

John Pierce (tenor)
Age 28



Patron and Jury member: BBC Cardiff Singer of the World

Kiri Te Kanawa moved rapidly into the front rank of international opera after her sensational debut as the Countess *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Royal Opera House in 1971. Since then, her lyric soprano voice has become one of the most famous in the world, especially in Mozart, Richard Strauss, Verdi and Puccini. As well as performing on the greatest opera stages worldwide, Dame Kiri has made countless appearances with many great orchestras, conductors and pianists, her wide repertoire also embracing contemporary popular music. She has recorded extensively in opera, oratorio, art and popular song, on CD and DVD.

In 2004 she launched the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation, a charity which supports New Zealand singers and musicians. She is also the Founding Artistic Director of the Solti Te Kanawa Accademia di Bel Canto, a summer opera course based in Italy. In 2010 she headed BBC Radio 2's quest for a gifted singer of the future, The Kiri Prize. Always passionate about young singers, Dame Kiri regularly conducts master classes and coaching sessions throughout the world.

Dame Kiri Te Kanawa holds honorary doctorates from ten universities and is an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music. She has been awarded Dame Commander of the British Empire, the Order of Australia and the Order of New Zealand.

Jury member: both competitions

Marilyn Horne is one of America's best-loved artists and a popular performer throughout the world. Her five-decade career in opera, concert, and recital has been celebrated throughout the world for the power and artistry of her unique and dazzling mezzo-soprano coloratura, and for her revival of many forgotten Rossini, Handel, Vivaldi and Bellini operas.

She was named a Kennedy Center Honoree in 1995, and was awarded the Fidelio Gold Medal by the International Association of Opera Directors. She is in the American Classical Music Hall of Fame, and has several Grammy Awards. In 2009, Marilyn Horne was honoured with the *Opera News Award* and celebrated her 75th birthday and the 15th anniversary of the founding of her Marilyn Horne Foundation - to support young singers and the art of the song - with a star-studded gala concert at Carnegie Hall.

Miss Horne launched the Marilyn Horne Foundation in 1994. She is Vocal Program Director at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, and each season she is engaged for master class residencies at the University of Oklahoma at Norman, Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Lyric Opera of Chicago and the University of Maryland at College Park. This is Miss Horne's fifth visit to the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World jury.

Jury member: BBC Cardiff Singer of the World

Lorenzo Mariani works as a stage director of opera across the world, and has been artistic director of the Teatro Massimo in Palermo since 2005. He was born in New York and studied modern history at Harvard University before making his opera staging debut with Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* at the Teatro Comunale in Florence, a project which marked the beginning of his

Jury member: Song Prize

Bengt Forsberg is one of Sweden's leading musicians, with a varied career encompassing solo piano performance, chamber music, conducting and piano accompaniment. He has maintained a long-standing musical partnership with mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, resulting in many recordings including the songs of Grieg, which won a Gramophone Record of the Year Award for 1995. He and von Otter also collaborated in the BIS label's complete Sibelius project. Bengt Forsberg also regularly accompanies cellists Mats Lidström and Andreas Brantelid and violinist Nils-Erik Sparf.

He studied at the Royal Academy of Music in Gothenburg, Sweden, at first training to become a church organist and cantor but switching to piano by the time of his graduation in 1978. He continued his piano studies with Phyllis Sellick and Peter Feuchtwanger in London and Herman D Koppel in Copenhagen.

Bengt Forsberg is known for his wide repertoire and his constant interest in reviving neglected music, including works by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Charles Alkan, Emmanuel Chabrier, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Benjamin Godard, Léon Boëllmann, Charles Koechlin, Gabriel Pierné and Percy Grainger. He has a strong interest in French music of the 1800s and has recorded works by Saint-Saëns. He is director of the chamber music series at the All Saints' Church in Stockholm.

Jury member: Song Prize

Adam Gatehouse is Editor Live Music at BBC Radio 3, having worked there as a producer and executive producer. He instigated and produced the BBC Wigmore Hall lunchtime concerts and the lunchtime series at LSO St Luke's, working with many of the greatest artists of our time including Magdalena Koszena, Mitsuko Uchida, Steven Isserlis, the Beaux Arts Trio, Alfred Brendel, András Schiff and Ian Bostridge.

In 1999 he set up BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists scheme, in which 12 young artists or groups are selected for a two year period during which they are given studio recordings and appearances with BBC orchestras and at the BBC Proms. Graduates from the scheme include

Chairman of the jury: both competitions

BBC National Orchestra of Wales occupies a special role as both a national and broadcasting orchestra. The orchestra has won acclaim with its conducting team of Principal Conductor Thierry Fischer, Principal Guest Conductor Jac van Steen, Associate Guest Conductor François-Xavier Roth and Conductor Laureate Tadaaki Otaka. As well as the core repertoire, the orchestra undertakes adventurous programming in new or rarely-performed works. In 2008 Simon Holt took up the role of Composer-in-Association, consolidating the ensemble's commitment to contemporary music.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales is Orchestra-in-Residence at St David's Hall, Cardiff, presents a concert series at the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea, and tours throughout Wales. It performs every year at the BBC Proms and at other major UK festivals and undertakes international touring. Education and community outreach is integral to the orchestra's musical life and extends its work into schools, workplaces and communities.

The orchestra is based at its state-of-the-art recording and rehearsal base, BBC Hoddinott Hall at Wales Millennium Centre. It works closely with radio and television programme-makers and records nu5(he orc)-s bas07.4(a)09.5(c3.8(radio andcl)-8.dal tour)-e4394adal t.9(46i7Sociate94)5.6(Swa70dal

The Orchestra of Welsh National Opera was founded in 1970. Since then it has established itself as one of the finest British orchestras, with a wide-ranging operatic repertoire - from Monteverdi through Handel and Mozart to Wagner, Janáček, Maxwell Davies and MacMillan - and with its concert work and recordings.

Former Music Directors of WNO include Sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Armstrong and Tugan Sokhiev. Carlo Rizzi was Musical Director from 1992-2001, returning in 2004 to lead the company into its new home in Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff Bay, until 2007. Lothar Koenigs joined the Company as Music Director in 2009, having already established a relationship with the orchestra, with *Khovanshchina* and *Salome* in the theatre and in St David's Hall, Cardiff.

In addition to extensive touring of opera throughout the UK, in recent years the orchestra has developed its profile in the concert hall. It has featured in three symphonic concerts at St David's Hall each season as well as many concerts at major Welsh and English venues and festivals. These include the Royal Festival Hall and Barbican, London; Symphony Hall, Birmingham; Bridgewater Hall, Manchester; the BBC Proms in London and the International Eisteddfod in Llangollen, with major artists including Bryn Terfel, Angela Gheorghiu and José Carreras.

Conductor

Lawrence Foster, Welsh National Opera conductor, also currently holds the positions of Music Director of Orchestre et Opéra National de Montpellier and Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra. Lawrence Foster has appeared in major opera houses throughout the world. He works regularly at Hamburgische Staatsoper, with recent productions having included *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Der Freischütz* and *Carmen*. Future plans in Hamburg include *Pique Dame* in 2011/12 and *The Cunning Little Vixen* in 2013/14. In 2011 he returns to Opéra de Marseille for *Wozzeck* and will also conduct the world premiere of *Die Marquise von O* by René Koering for Opéra de Monte Carlo. He will make his debut with Oper Frankfurt with a production of

Ll r Williams has performed with orchestras including the BBC Symphony Orchestra,



Monday 13 June, 7.30pm, St David's Hall, Cardiff: Concert One
Tuesday 14 June, 7.30pm, St David's Hall, Cardiff: Concert Two
Wednesday 15 June, 7.30pm, St David's Hall, Cardiff: Concert Three
Thursday 16 June, 7.30pm, St David's Hall, Cardiff: Concert Four
Sunday 19 June, 5pm, St David's Hall, Cardiff: The Final

Sunday 12 June 2pm, New Theatre, Cardiff: Recital One
Sunday 12 June, 7.30pm, New Theatre, Cardiff: Recital Two
Monday 13 June, 2pm, New Theatre, Cardiff: Recital Three
Tuesday 14 June, 2pm, New Theatre, Cardiff: Recital Four
Friday 17 June, 7.30pm, St David's Hall, Cardiff: Song Prize Final

Saturday 18 June, 11am and 3pm, New Theatre, Cardiff
Saturday 18 June, 12.30pm and 4pm, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama