

PRESS RELEASE

7 October 2019



Aurora Orchestra announces Dame Liz Forgan DBE as new Chair of Trustees

Aurora Orchestra is delighted to announce the appointment of **Dame Liz Forgan DBE** as its new Chair of Trustees, and **Mike Laven** as Trustee.

Following on the heels of its critically-acclaimed Orchestral Theatre staging of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* at the BBC Proms, the appointments continue an exciting period of artistic and organisational growth for the orchestra.

One of the most distinguished leaders in her field, Dame Liz brings a wealth of experience from her many past executive and non-executive roles. Having started her career as a journalist for the *Teheran Journal*, *Evening Standard* and *Guardian* newspapers, she went on to become part of the team that founded Channel 4, before joining the BBC to become Managing Director of Network Radio. From 2003–2016 she chaired the Scott Trust, the parent company of *The Guardian*, and in 2009 was appointed the first female Chair of Arts Council England. Other major roles in public life include having chaired the Heritage Lottery Fund, Churches Conservation Trust, Bristol Old Vic, and, most recently, the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. She was named Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for services to broadcasting in 2006, and is an Honorary Fellow of the British Academy.

Appointed following an extensive recruitment process conducted in partnership with Nurole.com, Dame Liz will succeed **Louis Watt**, Aurora's current Chair of Trustees, when he retires from the board at the end of his final term in December 2019. A founding member of the team that launched Aurora in 2005, Louis has steered the orchestra's board through a period of rapid artistic and organisational growth, during which the organisation has developed from dynamic startup to one of Europe's leading chamber orchestras.

Liz Forgan said: *'I have been inspired by Aurora's concerts for years and I am truly delighted to be working directly with such brilliant and inventive artists.'*

As part of its current board recruitment round, Aurora is also delighted to announce the appointment of **Mike Laven**, CEO of the global online payments platform Currencycloud, as a new Trustee. A leading figure in the London 'fintech revolution' that is driving the digital transformation of the finance industry, Mike started his career working for the United Nations in disaster relief before moving into business. He brings three decades of experience at the helm of technology firms in London and Silicon Valley, and is also on the board of RxArt, a New York non-profit that places works by contemporary artists in children's hospitals. Under his leadership Currencycloud has grown from a startup to the world's most trusted online payment platform.

Mike Laven said: *'Aurora is truly an accomplished, creative and innovative group and I'm honoured and excited to be part of its future.'*

John Harte, Chief Executive of Aurora Orchestra, said: *'We couldn't be more thrilled to welcome Liz Forgan and Mike Laven to Aurora's board. As Chair, Liz will bring unparalleled knowledge of the UK arts and broadcasting landscape, deep strategic insight, and an abiding passion for Aurora's mission and values. We can't wait to see what new heights the organisation can reach under her leadership. And as we enter this new chapter we also extend warmest thanks to her predecessor Louis Watt, who as founding Chair has overseen a decade and half of unbroken growth and artistic success.'*

Mike is one of the most respected entrepreneurs in the rapidly-developing field of finance technology, and over the course of his career has helped countless rapidly-growing companies across the globe to reach their full potential. His expertise will be invaluable as Aurora looks to broaden its reach both in the concert hall and digitally over coming seasons.

These are exciting times for Aurora, with a thriving creative team at the top of its game; a highly distinctive artistic programme; a growing national and international profile; and huge potential for further broadening our audience. We look forward very much to working with Liz and Mike to realise our ambitious plans for the future.'

Departing chair **Louis Watt** commented: *'I'm delighted that Liz and Mike will be joining the board, and have no doubt that they will help lead Aurora on to even greater artistic success. It's been a real privilege to have played a part in growing the orchestra since its founding in 2005, and wish the whole Aurora team the very best for years ahead.'*

For further press information please contact:

Rebecca Driver Media Relations

web: www.rdmr.co.uk | email: maddie@rdmr.co.uk | tel: 020 3691 7034 | mob: 07807 831 113

Notes to Editors

Aurora Orchestra

With its signature creative ethos, Aurora Orchestra combines world-class performance with adventurous programming and concert presentation. Founded in 2005 under Principal Conductor Nicholas Collon, Aurora has quickly become one of Europe's leading chamber orchestras, garnering several major awards including two Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, a German ECHO Klassik Award and a Classical:NEXT Innovation Award.

Collaborating widely across art forms and musical genres, the orchestra has worked with an exceptional breadth of artists, ranging from Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Sarah Connolly and Pierre-Laurent Aimard to Wayne McGregor, Edmund de Waal and Björk. A champion of new music, it has premiered works by composers including Julian Anderson, Benedict Mason, Anna Meredith, Nico Muhly, and Judith Weir.

By challenging expectations of what an orchestra can and should do on the concert platform, Aurora inspires audiences of all ages and backgrounds to develop a passion for orchestral music. In recent years, it has pioneered memorised performance (without the use of printed sheet music), and is thought to be the first orchestra in the modern age to perform whole symphonies in this way. Since 2016, Aurora has staged Orchestral Theatre productions which cross the boundaries of musical genres and art forms. These orchestral adventures rethink the concert format and offer bold new ways for audiences to experience orchestral music. Through an award-winning Creative Learning programme, Aurora regularly holds creative workshops and storytelling concerts for families, schools and young people, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Based in London, Aurora is Resident Orchestra at Kings Place and Associate Orchestra at Southbank Centre with residencies at St George's Bristol, The Apex (Bury St Edmunds) and Colyer-Fergusson Hall (Canterbury). Recent and forthcoming international highlights include appearances at the Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Kölner Philharmonie, Victoria Concert Hall Singapore, Melbourne Festival and Shanghai Concert Hall. Aurora has released a number of critically-acclaimed albums, including *Road Trip* and *Insomnia* on Warner Classics.

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