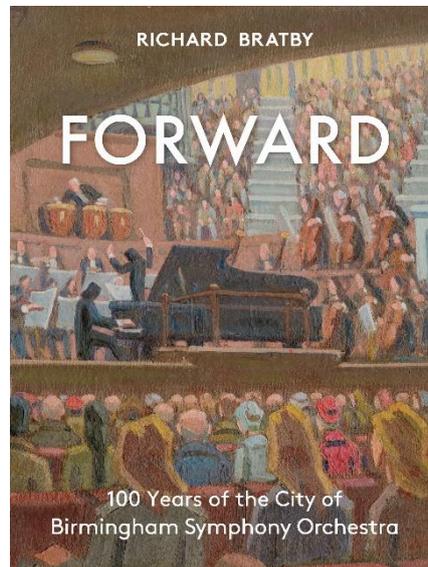


New book by Richard Bratby explores history of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in its 100th year



In its centenary year, '**Forward: 100 Years of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra**' by **Richard Bratby** celebrates a truly pioneering orchestra. The book will be published on **Thursday 28th November 2019** by Elliott & Thompson Limited in association with the CBSO, and available to purchase from www.cbso.co.uk from **Thursday 14th November** (£25 full colour hardback).

Over a century of history, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra has taken different names and forms. It has weathered war, recession and social change, evolving from a part-time municipal ensemble into a symphony orchestra with a worldwide reputation. But throughout it all, the CBSO has been Birmingham's orchestra - the musical embodiment of one of the world's great cities, in all its ambition, complexity and diversity.

The CBSO's list of 'firsts' is striking: the first major orchestra to present children's concerts, the first to appoint permanent education staff, a pioneer in its attitude to female musicians and management, and a globally recognised example of the power of the arts to drive urban renewal. Each of its conductors brought something new, from the quiet determination of Leslie Heward and the rejuvenating energy of George Weldon to the revolutionary transformation of the Simon Rattle years, and the bold new vision of Sakari Oramo, Andris Nelsons, and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla.

But the CBSO's history extends far beyond the concert platform, embracing Edward Elgar and Neville Chamberlain; Jean Sibelius and Benjamin Britten; rock bands, film scores and Bollywood legends. Through tragedies and triumphs, gruelling tours and an unwavering commitment to new music and new audiences, the orchestra has survived and thrived, taking as its watchword Birmingham's own motto: Forward. This is its story.



Forward: 100 Years of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is illustrated with archive and contemporary images, including previously unpublished material.

The CBSO marks its centenary in 2020 and launched its two-year-long celebrations last month with the opening of its 19-20 season. The celebrations take inspiration from its past and look forward to the future of classical music through a series of special programming, events, commissions and initiatives.

Highlights include: 40 centenary commissions – 20 from established composers and 20 encores from composers under the age of 30; a focus on choral masterpieces associated with Birmingham; a concert programmed and curated by 12 Youth Ambassadors; extensive touring plans; and guest artists including Nicola Benedetti, Benjamin Grosvenor and Piotr Anderszewski.

For a press release about the CBSO's 19-20 season [click here](#).
Full season details can be found at www.cbsoco.uk

For further press information about the CBSO please contact:

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Notes to Editors

About Richard Bratby

Richard Bratby writes on music for The Spectator, Gramophone and The Arts Desk and is deputy music critic of The Birmingham Post, as well as a programme note writer for the CBSO, the BBC, the Royal Opera House and the Salzburg Festival. In 1998 he joined the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra as Hall Manager of the new CBSO Centre, and went on to launch and manage the Centre Stage chamber music series and the CBSO Youth Orchestra before leaving to become a full-time writer in 2015. During his sixteen years with the orchestra he served for four years as staff representative on the CBSO Board, and was latterly Secretary and Chief Executive of the CBSO Benevolent Fund.; Born on the Wirral, Richard studied History at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, before playing as principal cello in the now-defunct Sri Lanka Philharmonic Orchestra. After a stint as a history teacher, he joined the staff of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in 1997 before upgrading to the CBSO the following year. He is married to the theatre historian Annette Rubery, and they live in Lichfield with their cat Boris.

About the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras, and the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the Midlands.

Based at Birmingham's spectacular Symphony Hall, the orchestra and its ensembles give over 150 concerts each year in the UK and worldwide, playing a wide range of music including everything from Wagner operas to world premieres, film music and family concerts. With a far-reaching education and community programme, four choruses and a Youth Orchestra, it is involved with every aspect of music-making in the Midlands. But at its heart is a team of 90 superb professional musicians, and a 99-year tradition of making the world's greatest music.

The orchestra was founded by future Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1920, and Elgar conducted its inaugural concert. But it was when it discovered the young British conductor Simon Rattle in 1980 that the CBSO became internationally famous, and showed how the arts can help

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City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra

give a new sense of direction to a whole city. Rattle's successors Sakari Oramo and Andris Nelsons cemented that global reputation, and continued to build on the CBSO's distinguished tradition as one of the UK's leading musical ambassadors.

Under the artistic leadership of Osborn Music Director* Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla the CBSO continues to do what it does best – playing great music for people in Birmingham and beyond. As it approaches its centenary in 2020, the CBSO remains one of the most vibrant cultural organisations in the UK.

*The position of Music Director is generously supported by John Osborn.