

Press Release

Datganiad i'r Wasg

OPERA'S TOP 20 INTERNATIONAL YOUNG STARS REVEALED AS BBC CARDIFF SINGER OF THE WORLD 2015 FINALISTS

Twenty of the world's most promising opera singers will compete in this year's **BBC Cardiff Singer of the World**. The names and nationalities of the 20 successful singers – who were chosen from almost 350 applicants - were announced today (Tuesday, February 24).

BBC Cardiff Singer of the World is pivotal part of the Classical Voices Season in the BBC's Year of Song and Dance and will be broadcast extensively on BBC Four and BBC Radio 3, along with BBC Two Wales, BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio Cymru, S4C and online at bbc.co.uk/cardiffsinger.

The world's eyes will be on the Welsh capital for the eight-day event, now in its 32nd year, with David Jackson leading *BBC Cardiff Singer of the World* as the competition's Artistic Director for the first time. Dame Kiri Te Kanawa is patron of the eight day competition, which is known throughout the classical music world as the premier showcase for opera and concert singers at the outset of their careers.

David Jackson said:

"We've searched the world to find this brilliant crop of talent for BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2015, and finally today we can reveal who our top 20 singers are. The standard was exceptionally high. These 20 were selected from almost 350 hopefuls, who were all wonderful singers - and each of them deserves a great future. To every singer, accompanist and venue that helped us in our search, a heartfelt thank you.

"Our final 20 are an exciting range of voice types, and an amazing array of talent. They come from all over the world, with a diverse range of backgrounds and experience. It really is a privilege to be involved in this great event, in its 32nd year, and also this year as a highlight of the BBC Year of Song and Dance."

At auditions held in cities around the world from Milan and Helsinki to New York and Toronto, 20 singers have been selected from 55 countries for a place in the competition – including representatives from Mongolia and Malta, two countries new to the competition. Nearly 350 opera and concert singers entered the competition and for the 20 singers who've been selected, the 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.

A new trio of expert judges travelled to eight cities to discover the competitors. Head of Opera at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Angela Livingstone joined casting director Isabel

Murphy from Welsh National Opera, and producer Jeremy Caulton, as they whittled down the singers for the next rounds.

Jeremy Caulton said:

"Listening to a promising young singer for the first time is always an exciting experience. All the more so, then, to hear more than forty of them drawn from around the world into a short list for the 2015 Cardiff competition.

"Towards the end of last year the audition panel travelled to seven countries to hear these singers but this doesn't at all reflect the range of nationalities we encountered. Apart from the the countries of the UK, we heard potential finalists from Italy, Germany, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Armenia, Malta, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, the United States, Canada, Guatemala, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, China, South Korea and Mongolia! And the 20 finalists eventually chosen represent no less than 15 of these countries.

"So how to choose these finalists? All of the singers we travelled to hear are, of course, equipped with fine voices and efficient techniques which alone will be their passport to a career in music. What we were looking for in addition, however, is that indefinable something which makes one sit up and pay attention in a different sort of way. Many small characteristics and technicalities combine to create this 'difference' but, however hard you try, it is well-nigh impossible to find a single word or phrase to do it justice. 'Charisma' is perhaps useful, but even this is only part of the story. So, very difficult to describe just what it is which goes straight to the heart but, luckily, something which is not difficult to recognise."

The singers, who will perform their own programmes of operatic and concert works at St David's Hall, Cardiff from Sunday 14 June – Sunday 21 June 2015, will be accompanied by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conducted by their Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård and the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera conducted by Martyn Brabbins. Judging the main prize will be the distinguished panel: Chairman, David Pountney, John Fiore, Soile Isokoski, Claron McFadden and Dennis O'Neill.

Established in 1983 by BBC Wales, *BBC Cardiff Singer of the World* was devised to identify the classical singing stars of the future, and the ambition is to deliver the lucky break all artists need to get them launched on the road to success. Past winners include the very first winner Karita Mattila, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Anja Harteros and the 2013 winner Jamie Barton.

Jamie said:

"I cannot begin to describe the feeling associated with being awarded both the Song Prize and the Cardiff Singer of the World Prize. 'When you wish upon a star...' comes to mind! Thank you for the outpouring of encouragement and excitement for me."

The winner of the main prize will receive £15,000 and the Cardiff Trophy, while the Song Prize, awarded to the best singer of Lieder and art song, carries a £5,000 prize and trophy. The rounds for the Song Prize will take place in the state-of-the-art Dora Stoutzker concert hall at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, with all the singers eligible to take part. Joining chairman, David Pountney, Soile Isokoski and Claron McFadden on the jury, will be Julius Drake and John Gilhooly.

BBC Cardiff Singer of the World is organised by BBC Wales in association with Welsh National Opera and supported by The City of Cardiff Council.

A ticket booking form to download, and details about BBC Cardiff Singer of the World, can be found at bbc.co.uk/cardiffsinger

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Pictures of the 20 singers and jury members are available on request.

Notes to Editors

The successful candidates who will compete in *BBC Cardiff Singer of the World* Sunday 14 - Sunday 21 June 2015, are:

Country	Name	Voice	Age
Belarus	Marina Pinchuk	Mezzo-soprano	32
Belarus	Nadine Koutcher	Soprano	32
Canada	Aviva Fortunata	Soprano	27
France	Anaïs Constans	Soprano	26
Germany	Sebastian Pilgrim	Bass	30
Malta	Nico Darmanin	Tenor	30
Mongolia	Amartuvshin Enkhbat	Baritone	29
Norway	Ingeborg Gillebo	Mezzo-soprano	32
Switzerland	Regula Mühlemann	Soprano	29
South Africa	Kelebogile Besong	Soprano	28
South Korea	Insu Hwang	Baritone	32
South Korea	Jaeyoon Jung	Tenor	31
South Korea	Jongmin Park	Bass	28
Turkey/Austria	Ilker Arcayürek	Tenor	30
Ukraine	Oleksiy Palchykov	Tenor	29
USA	J'nai Bridges	Mezzo-soprano	28
USA	Lauren Michelle	Soprano	32
USA	Ryan Speedo Green	Bass-baritone	29
Wales	Céline Forrest	Soprano	24

Pictures are available on request. Pictures of Jamie Barton, winner of BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2013 are available on request.

The prizes

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.

Singers

Singers were auditioned in 8 locations:- Helsinki, London, Milan, New York, Paris, Toronto, Vienna and Zurich.

Broadcast details

The competition will be broadcast on BBC Four, BBC Two Wales, BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru, S4C and online at bbc.co.uk/cardiffsinger.

The Patrons - past and present

Dame Kiri Te Kanawa became the second Patron following the late Dame Joan Sutherland who

was the competition's first patron. Keenly involved in the competition, Dame Kiri is a passionate believer in nurturing young singing talent.

BBC Year of Song and Dance

Year of Song and Dance is the BBC's biggest ever commitment to the arts, with a wealth of television and radio programmes exploring the extraordinary power of song and dance across a whole spectrum of eras and styles.

SINGERS

Turkey/Austria – Ilker Arcayürek

Tenor

Age 30

Ilker Arcayürek was born in Istanbul and raised in Vienna. In 2010 - 2013 he was a member of the International Opera Studio at Zürich Opera, where he gave his debut as Ferrando *Così fan tutte* at Zürich Opera House in 2013. Awards include third prize at the 2012 Hugo Wolf competition.

Ilker has performed throughout Switzerland, including the title role *Orlando Paladino* in Tonhalle Zürich and at KKL in Lucerne and as Don Basilio *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Verbier Festival. He became a member of the ensemble of Stadttheater Klagenfurt in the season 2013/14, where he made his debuts as Alfred *Die Fledermaus*, Tamino *Die Zauberflöte*, Chevalier de la force *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*, Prince *The Love for Three Oranges* and Italian singer *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Ilker gave his recital debut in Bonn with Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and *Liederkreis Op 24* and in 2014 sang the Beethoven *Mass in C major* with Franz Welser-Möst in Vienna.

In 2015/16 Ilker will join Staatstheater Nürnberg where roles include Rodolfo *La bohème* and Nadir *Les pêcheurs de perles*.

USA - J'nai Bridges

Mezzo-soprano

Age 28

J'nai Bridges is from Lakewood, Washington, and studied at the Manhattan School of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music, where she performed Idamante *Idomeneo*, title role in Peter Brook's *La tragédie de Carmen* and Baba the Turk *The Rake's Progress*. Prizes include the 2012 Marian Anderson award; prizes at the 2012 and 2011 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions; the 2013 Sullivan Award; 2013 Union League Award and 2011 Sara Tucker Study Grant.

She is a member of the Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center where performances in 2014/15 include Inez *Il trovatore* and Vlasta *The Passenger* with Lyric Opera of Chicago. During the 2013/14 season, she sang on the Lyric Opera of Chicago mainstage as Flower maiden *Parsifal*, Flora *La traviata* and Second Wood Nymph *Rusalka*. J'nai appeared as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Ravel's *Chansons madécasses*, and appeared on radio in WFMT 98.7's recital series. Elsewhere, she performed Adalgisa *Norma* with Knoxville Opera and the title role *Carmen* for Finger Lakes Opera. Concert appearances include Haydn's *Theresienmesse*, Rutter's *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah*, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Elgar's *Sea Pictures*.

Coming up, she performs Suzuki *Madama Butterfly* at Wolftrap Opera.

South Africa - Kelebogile Besong

Soprano

Age 28

Kelebogile Besong was born in Pretoria and studied singing at Tshwane College. Awards she has won in South Africa include first prize South African Opera Student in the SA International Opera Competition in 2006 and the 2012 Standard Bank Young Artist Award. In 2013 she was named Africa's Most Influential Woman in Business & Government (Arts).

Roles performed with Opera Africa include Musetta *La bohème*, Micaëla *Carmen* and Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro*. She appeared at the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik in 2013 in the roles of Venus *Venus and Adonis* and the Sorceress *Dido and Aeneas*. Other recent highlights are her role debut as Violetta *La traviata* at the Opéra national de Montpellier, her role debut as Contessa *Le nozze di Figaro* at Tampere Opera and a solo recital at the Operadagen Rotterdam.

In the season 2014/15 Kelebogile makes her role debut in the title role *Aida* at Malmö Opera and will sing Musetta at Grange Park Opera. Further ahead, she will tour Holland singing Contessa with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century and will appear at the Bregenz Festival as Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte* in a young artists production.

France - Anaïs Constans

Soprano

Age 26

Anaïs Constans was born in Montauban in the Tarn-et-Garonne region and graduated from the conservatoire in Toulouse and the Centre Nationale d'Artistes Lyriques in Marseille before continuing her studies with Claudine Ducret, Jean Marc Bouget and Nino Pavlenichvili. She has won prizes at several international competitions including the Public Prize and third prize at the Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse's international competition in 2013, first prize and youth prize at the 2013 Mâcon International Singing Competition, joint third prize at the 2014 Operalia competition in Los Angeles and third prize at the 2014 Competition Montserrat Caballé in Zaragoza.

Recent engagements include Le feu *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and Pisana *I due Foscari* at Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse; Miss Ellen *Lakmé* at Opéra Théâtre Saint-Étienne; Pauline *La vie parisienne* at Opéra de Toulon; Musetta *La bohème* at the Gattières Festival and Lucy *The Telephone* at the Festival symphonies d'automne. Coming up, her diary for the future includes performances as Nannetta *Falstaff* at the Saint-Céré festival; La voce del cielo *Don Carlo* at Opéra National de Bordeaux; Berta *Il barbiere di Siviglia* Opéra Bastille and Der Schäfer *Tannhäuser* at Opéra Monte-Carlo.

Malta - Nico Darmanin

Tenor

Age 30

Nico Darmanin was born in Malta and studied in London, at the Royal College of Music and the National Opera Studio. He is a Samling Artist and has participated in master classes with Juan Diego Flórez and Joyce DiDonato. He has also worked with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Sir Thomas Allen at the Georg Solti Accademia, and with Mirella Freni in Modena.

In the 2013/14 season Nico made two debuts – at the Royal Opera House as Daniéli *Les vêpres siciliennes* and at Vlaamse Opera as Italian Tenor *Der Rosenkavalier*, a role he also performed

at the Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg. Other highlights included *Almaviva Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Opera Holland Park and Belfiore *Il viaggio a Reims* at the Rossini Opera Festival. This season includes Ramiro *La Cenerentola* (Scottish Opera); Ottavio *Don Giovanni* (Vlaamse Opera); Handel's *Messiah* at the Royal Festival Hall and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* at the Barbican.

In concert, Nico's repertoire includes Romantic song and operas by Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Tosti, Fauré and Debussy. He has recorded Massenet songs with Richard Bonyngne and Sullivan's *On Shore and Sea*, also under his baton.

Mongolia - Amartuvshin Enkhbat

Baritone

Age 29

Amartuvshin Enkhbat was born in Sukhbaatar and studied at the State University of Arts and Culture, Ulan Bator. He has won several awards, including second prize and audience prize at the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition; joint first prize in Operalia 2012 and second prize and two special prizes at the International Singing Contest Francisco Viñas in 2013.

He is Principal Soloist of the State Academic Opera House of Mongolia in Ulan Bator and was awarded Honored Artist of Mongolia at the age of 24.

Roles performed in Mongolia include Escamillo, Morales *Carmen*; Tonio *Pagliacci*; Amonasro *Aida*; Count di Luna *Il trovatore*; Iago *Otello*; Renato *Un ballo in maschera*; Sharples *Madama Butterfly*; Scarpia *Tosca*; Marcello *La bohème* and the title roles *Eugene Onegin*, *Aleko*, *Genghis Khan* and *Rigoletto*. He has appeared internationally as Vedenetsky guest *Sadko* in Krasnoyarsk and as Count Monterone *Rigoletto* at Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, Valencia, both in 2012. Also, Amartuvshin has sung in gala concerts throughout the world, including Paris, Moscow, New York, Beijing, Seoul and Singapore. He is looking forward to performances in Switzerland and Kazakhstan as well as at home in Mongolia.

Wales - Céline Forrest

Soprano

Age 24

Céline Forrest was born in Swansea and won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, where she is now finishing her advanced diploma, supported by the Countess of Munster Trust, the Richard Lewis Award, the Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation scholarship and the Miriam Lycette scholarship. She won the Richard Lewis/Jean Shanks Award last year and the Pavarotti Prize at the Academy, and was also granted membership of the Royal Academy Song Circle.

She has recently performed the title role *Suor Angelica* and Female Chorus *The Rape of Lucretia* for Royal Academy Opera. Performances with Welsh National Youth Opera included the lead role in *The Sleeper* in 2011. Other opera repertoire includes Donna Anna *Don Giovanni*, Marschallin *Der Rosenkavalier* and the title role *Maria Stuarda*. Céline performs as soloist with The Ariosa Singers, with whom she has travelled to Dublin, Prague, Paris, Barcelona and Tuscany.

She returns to Wales to perform as guest soloist with many choirs - recent appearances have included Haydn's *Creation* and Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*. Other concert work includes Mozart's *Requiem* with The Hallé at Bridgewater Hall and a concert at the British Embassy in Madrid last October.

Canada - Aviva Fortunata

Soprano

Age 27

Aviva Fortunata was born in Calgary, Alberta, studied at the University of Toronto and is currently a member of the Ensemble Studio at the Canadian Opera Company. Recent credits include Berta *The Barber of Seville*, Helmwig *Die Walküre* and Fiordiligi in the Ensemble Studio's performance of *Così fan tutte*, a role she also covered for Canadian Opera Company. Other cover roles at COC include Alice Ford *Falstaff*, Donna Anna *Don Giovanni*, and Ellen Orford *Peter Grimes*. Aviva has also performed Desdemona *Otello* and the Lady with a Cake Box in *Postcard from Morocco* with San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program; Donna Anna with Concert Opera Group, Centre for Opera Studies in Italy and the University of Toronto; and Poulenc's *Gloria* with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

She will continue with the Ensemble Studio in the 2015/2016 season, performing Countess *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Ensemble and as COC cover, and Anna *Maometto Secondo*.

Norway - Ingeborg Gillebo

Mezzo-soprano

Age 32

Ingeborg Gillebo was born in Lillehammer and studied at the Norwegian Academy of Music and at the Opera Academy in Copenhagen. In 2011, she reached the final of the Belvedere competition and won second prize in the Queen Sonja International Singing Competition.

In 2010, Ingeborg made her Royal Danish Opera debut as Margret *Wozzeck* and at Norwegian National Opera as Cherubino *Le nozze di Figaro*. She sang Rosina *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Costanza *L'isola disabitata* at Norwegian National Opera and Solveig *Peer Gynt* at the Peer Gynt Festival. Engagements in 2013 included Nicklausse *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Lola *Cavalleria rusticana* at Norwegian National Opera and Volve in the world premiere of Ragnar Söderlind's *The Voice from Mímisbrunnr*. 2014 included Cherubino at the Metropolitan Opera, Zerlina *Don Giovanni* at Norwegian National Opera, Mozart's *C minor Mass* with Orchestre de chambre de Paris and Sir Roger Norrington, Haydn's *Stabat Mater* in Oslo with the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and Mendelssohn's *Symphony No 2 - Lobgesang* with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra.

Ingeborg is looking forward to performances as Flower maiden *Parsifal* in Birmingham and Bayreuth; Cherubino in Zürich, Vienna and Oslo; a recital in Antwerp; and Bach and Mozart concert works.

USA - Ryan Speedo Green

Bass-baritone

Age 29

Ryan Speedo Green is a native of Suffolk, Virginia and studied at Florida State University and the Hartt School of Music. Awards include National Grand Finals winner of the 2011 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. In 2014 he received a George London Foundation Award, first prize in the Opera Index Competition, an Annenberg grant, first prize in the Gerda Lissner Foundation competition and both the Richard and Sara Tucker Grants from the Richard Tucker Foundation.

He made his Met stage debut in the 2012/13 season as the Mandarin *Turandot*, the Second Knight *Parsifal*, and completed the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program in 2014.

Additional highlights include Commendatore *Don Giovanni* with The Juilliard School, Colline *La bohème* with Central City Opera and Don Magnifico *La Cenerentola* with Opera Colorado.

In 2014 Ryan joined the Wiener Staatsoper ensemble, where roles included Sparafucile *Rigoletto*, Basilio *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and King *Aida*. He also appeared as Rambo in the Met's *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

Concert work includes the bass solo in Verdi's *Requiem* in Hartford and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the Florida Symphony.

South Korea - Insu Hwang

Baritone

Age 32

Insu Hwang was born in Seoul and studied at Yonsei University, then in Germany at the Hochschule für Musik, Karlsruhe with Donald Litaker and currently at the Hochschule für Musik, Detmold with Susan Anthony. He received a DAAD Scholarship in 2011 and a Brahms Haus Scholarship in 2012.

Insu has taken part in a number of competitions. He reached the final of the 2011 Queen Elizabeth competition and in 2013 won third prize and the Mozart special prize at the Veronica Dunne International singing competition, and 2nd prize at the Gut Immling international singing competition.

He has made numerous concert appearances with the Hof Symphony Orchestra in Bavaria, and solo recitals in Brussels and Karlsruhe. Opera roles include Guglielmo *Così fan tutte* and Count *Le nozze di Figaro*, both in Seoul; the title role in *Falstaff* in Karlsruhe; and Zar in Kurt Weill's *Der Zar lässt sich fotografieren* in Munich.

Currently Insu is a member of the Young Artist programme at the Landestheater Detmold, where he has performed the roles of Montano *Otello*, First Nazarene *Salome* and Sarastro *Die Zauberflöte*.

South Korea - Jaeyoon Jung

Tenor

Age 31

Jaeyoon Jung was born in Gangneung and studied in Seoul and at the Teatro alla Scala Academy of Lyric Opera and Conservatorio di musica Giuseppe Verdi in Milan. Recent awards include first prize at the international singing competition Giacinto Prandelli in Brescia and first prize at the international singing competition Giulietta Simionato, Acqui Terme, both in 2014.

Roles he has performed in Korea include Don Curzio *Le nozze di Figaro* and Eisenstein *Die Fledermaus*. Since moving to Italy, Jaeyoon has appeared as Edoardo di Sanval *Un giorno di regno* at Teatro Filarmonico di Verona and Dormont *La scala di seta* at La Scala, both in 2013. Also at La Scala, he performed the tenor solo in the ballet *La serata Ratmansky* and also took part in various gala concerts at the theatre. Last year, he sang Il duca di Mantova *Rigoletto* in Castello di Padernello, Brescia. Concert work includes Beethoven's *C major Mass* in Teatro comunale di Firenze in 2012 and a concert as part of the Year of Italian Culture in Chicago in 2013.

Belarus - Nadine Koutcher

Soprano

Age 32

Nadine Koutcher was born in Minsk and studied at the Minsk State Musical College and the St Petersburg Conservatory. Competition wins include the Grand Prix at the 2012 International Vocal Competition 's-Hertogenbosch, where she also won the Audience Award and the prize for the best performance of the obligatory piece.

She made her debut at the Mikhailovsky Theatre in St Petersburg in 2009 as Violetta *La traviata*, and subsequently performed roles including Princess Eudoxie *La Juive* and Oscar *Un ballo in maschera*. In 2012 Nadine joined the Perm State Opera, winning Moscow's Golden Mask for her performance as Medea in Pascal Dusapin's *Medea Material*. In 2013 she sang Doña Isabel in *The Indian Queen* in a co-production by Perm Opera, Teatro Real and ENO, conducted by Teodor Currentzis and produced by Peter Sellars, singing at Teatro Real for the first time.

In 2013 Nadine sang in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* at the Concertgebouw and in Verdi's *Requiem* in Norwich, with the London Symphony Orchestra. She recorded a CD of Rameau's music in 2012 with the MusicAeterna Orchestra and Currentzis.

Future engagements include Countess *Le nozze di Figaro* and title role *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse and Amenaide *Tancredi* at Teatro Municipal de Santiago de Chile.

Italy - Roberto Lorenzi

Bass-baritone

Age 25

Roberto Lorenzi comes from Lucca and studied at the Luigi Boccherini Institute of Musical Studies there. He has won prizes at competitions such as the Titta Ruffo and Riccardo Zandonai, and first prize in 2011 at AsLiCo's 62nd annual competition, where he was awarded the role of Don Basilio *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in Lombardy.

Currently, Roberto is a member of the Zürich International Opera Studio and debuted on the main stage as Priore *La straniera* alongside Edita Gruberova. He has since appeared there in productions of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Il matrimonio segreto*, *La fanciulla del West* and *Rigoletto*. Next season, he will join the ensemble of Zürich Opera, and will debut at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam as Priore. Prior to Zürich, he debuted at Teatro alla Scala in *La bohème* and in 2013 took part in the Young Singers project at the Salzburg Festival.

Other recent highlights include Angelotti *Tosca*, Almaviva *Le nozze di Figaro*, and the title role of *Don Giovanni*, all in Lucca, as well as Alidoro *La Cenerentola* in Pisa and Ferrando *Il trovatore* with AsLiCo. Concert performances include Verdi's *Requiem* in Pisa and Mozart's *Requiem* in Lucca.

USA - Lauren Michelle

Soprano

Age 32

Lauren Michelle was born in Los Angeles and studied at The Julliard School and UCLA. Prizes include the Leontyne Price Vocal Arts Competition, the 2015 Francisco Viñas international competition/ Extraordinary Prize for the Accademia Musicale Chigiana de Siena and recently she took third place in the Gulf Coast Regional Final of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. She has taken part in young artist programmes at Chautauqua Music Festival, the Britten-Pears Programme and Aspen Opera Theater Center.

Recently Lauren made her Carnegie Hall debut in Kurt Weill's *The Road of Promise*. Other highlights include Nella *Gianni Schicchi* in Aspen, Helena A *Midsummer Night's Dream* at Banff and her debut as Lauretta *Gianni Schicchi* at Teatro Romano di Fiesole.

In concert, she performed Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras No 5* throughout Europe; Lieder and chansons with Rencontres Musicales Internationales des Graves; Ravel's *Shéhérazade* in Los Angeles; and she has appeared with the Southeast Symphony singing Handel's *Messiah*, Poulenc's *Gloria* and Rutter's *Requiem*. Lauren has given solo recitals throughout the USA, South Africa, Italy, France and England and appeared at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in multi-disciplinary theatre performances with Company XIV.

Switzerland - Regula Mühlemann

Soprano

Age 29

Regula Mühlemann was born in Lucerne and studied at the Conservatory there. Roles performed in Lucerne included Barbarina *Le nozze di Figaro* and Papagena *Die Zauberflöte*. In 2012 she made her debut at the Salzburg Festival, singing the young Papagena in P v Winter's *Das Labyrinth*.

She has performed in several European houses, including Giannetta *L'elisir d'amore* at Zürich Opera and in Baden-Baden, where she has also appeared as Papagena with Sir Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic. In 2012 she sang Despina *Così fan tutte* at Teatro la Fenice and in 2013 sang Isolier *Le Comte Ory* at Theater an der Wien.

Regula has also made two movies – singing Ännchen in *Hunter's Bride* and in Gluck's *Orfeo*. This season she makes her debut at De Nederlandse Opera singing Papagena and Gretel *Hänsel und Gretel* in Torino. Future engagements include Barbarina in concert with Bryn Terfel, Zerlina *Don Giovanni* and Mozart's *Mass in C minor* in Gstaad, and concerts with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Ukraine - Oleksiy Palchykov

Tenor

Aged 29

Oleksiy Palchykov was born in Kiev and studied at the National Musical Tchaikovsky Academy. Since 2010, he has received numerous awards at international competitions including the Prix Lyrique du Cercle Carpeaux and the Prix Lyrique de L'AROP in 2014.

His debut came in 2008 singing Triquet/Lensky *Eugene Onegin* at the National Shevchenko Opera Theatre. Highlights include touring Switzerland as Alfredo *La traviata* with Kiev Musical Theater; playing three roles in *The Nose* at the 2011 Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Opéra de Lyon; Third Esquire *Parsifal* in Lyon and Shostakovich's *Jewish Songs* with the Thessaloniki Symphony Orchestra.

Oleksiy joined the Atelier Lyrique of the Opéra national de Paris in 2012, where he has performed Gernando *L'isola disabitata*, Ecclitico *Il mondo della luna*, Male Chorus *The Rape of Lucretia* and Don Ottavio *Don Giovanni*. This season, he performs Ferrando *Così fan tutte* and Pylade *Iphigénie en Tauride*. He debuted in the Opéra national de Paris as Messenger *Aida* in 2013, and in 2014 appeared in Mozart's *Requiem* in Notre-Dame de Paris and at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

In 2015-16, Oleksiy will perform Scaramouche *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Ruiz *Il trovatore* at Opéra national de Paris, and Lensky at Garsington Opera in 2016.

South Korea - Jongmin Park

Bass

Age 28

Jongmin Park was born in Seoul and studied singing at the Korea National University of Arts. He joined the Academy of La Scala where he was guided by Mirella Freni, Luciana Serra, Luigi Alva and Renato Bruson. Prizes include the International Tchaikovsky Competition, and the Birgit Nilsson Wagner award at Operalia, both in 2011.

During the 2010-2013 seasons, Jongmin was a member of the ensemble at the Hamburg State Opera, singing roles such as Sarastro *Die Zauberflöte*, Colline *La bohème* and Sparafucile *Rigoletto*. The following season, he joined Vienna State Opera and performed Sir Giorgio *I puritani*, Gremin *Eugene Onegin*, Basilio *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Bartolo *Le nozze di Figaro*, Grenvil *La traviata* and Truffaldino *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In 2014, he debuted at the Royal Opera House as Colline, and appeared at the BBC Proms and the City of London Festival.

Concert engagements have included Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the LSO, Mozart's *Vesperae solennes de Confessore* at La Scala, Verdi's *Requiem* in Seoul and Rossini's *Stabat Mater* in Tokyo. Jongmin has performed solo recitals in Munich and Frankfurt and will give one at the Musikverein in Vienna this year. Next year, he will perform Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* in Prague.

Germany - Sebastian Pilgrim

Bass

Age 30

Sebastian Pilgrim was born in Herford in north Germany and studied in Detmold and Hannover with Sabine Ritterbusch and Alessandra Althoff-Pugliese. Amongst other prizes, he received the Wolfgang Wagner Award for performances as Daland and Hagen at the 2012 International Competition for Wagner Voices.

His opera debut was as Sir John Falstaff in the International Young Opera Schloss Weikersheim 2009 production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Also in 2009, whilst still a student, he became a member of the Theater Erfurt, performing such repertoire as Tierbändiger and Athlet *Lulu* and Kaspar and Eremit *Der Freischütz*. Then he joined the ensemble at Nationaltheater Mannheim in 2013, singing leading roles such as Sarastro *Die Zauberflöte*, Fiesco *Simone Boccanegra*, King and Cook *Love for Three Oranges* and King Philip *Don Carlo*. As well as singing opera, Sebastian composes and conducts and has given several premieres of new music. He frequently performs oratorio solos, such as those in Haydn's *Creation*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.

Roles coming up at Mannheim include Fafner *Das Rheingold*, Geisterbote *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, General *The Gambler* and Cadmus *The Bassarids*.

Belarus - Marina Pinchuk

Mezzo-soprano

Age 32

Marina Pinchuk was born in Mogilev and studied there and at the Rimsky-Korsakov St Petersburg State Conservatory, where she sang Olga *Eugene Onegin*, Lyubasha *The Tsar's*

Bride, Cherubino *Le nozze di Figaro* and Smeton *Anna Bolena*. She won third prize at the 2011 Anita Cerquetti International Voice Competition in Italy.

She made her debut as Olga with the Mikhailovsky Theatre Company, where she has also sung Lyubasha, Polina *Pique Dame*, Varvara *Katya Kabanova*, Konchakovna *Prince Igor* and Flora *La traviata*. On tour in Asia in 2009, Marina performed Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and the role of Olga in Tokyo, Yokohama and Daegu, South Korea.

In 2011, Marina took part in the Accademia Rossiniana di Pesaro with Alberto Zedda, where she performed Maddalena *Il viaggio a Reims*. In 2013, she was selected to take part in the Opera Studio Centre de Perfeccionament Plácido Domingo in Valencia, performing Pisana *Il due Foscari*. Other highlights include Dunyasha *The Tsar's Bride* at the Kazan State Theatre; Fenena *Nabucco* at Theater Comunale di Bologna in 2013; and the title roles *Rinaldo* and *The Rape of Lucretia* in Valencia in 2014.

Future plans include *Die Walküre* at Teatro Campoamor, Oviedo in September.

JURY

David Pountney

Chairman: jury member, both competitions

Opera director and Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Welsh National Opera, David Pountney became internationally known through his production of *Katya Kabanova* at the 1972 Wexford Festival. Between 1975 and 1980, he was Director of Productions for Scottish Opera, where productions included a Janáček cycle in collaboration with Welsh National Opera, receiving a Janáček medal. He became ENO's Director of Productions in 1980, directing over 20 operas.

David has directed many world premieres, including three by Peter Maxwell Davies for which he also wrote the librettos, and has translated operas into English from Russian, Czech, German and Italian. From 1992 he worked regularly in Zurich, Vienna and Munich as well as in America and Japan, and in the UK has a long-standing association with Opera North. He received a Martinů medal for his productions of *Julietta* and *Greek Passion* (Opera North and Bregenz Festival). His productions have twice won an Olivier award. Recent engagements include *Prince Igor*, *The Passenger*, a new Philip Glass opera, *Spüren der Verirrten*, which won the Schickaneder Prize for best opera production in 2013, and *Die Zauberflöte* for the lake stage in Bregenz, where David was Intendant from 2003-2013. Since joining WNO in 2011, he has directed *Lulu*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Mosè in Egitto* and *Chorus!* Awards include the CBE, Chevalier in the French Ordre des Arts et Lettres, Cavalier's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland and the Ehrenkreuz des Bundes Österreich.

John Fiore

Jury member for BBC Cardiff Singer of the World main prize

John Fiore is the Music Director of The Norwegian Opera & Ballet. He was formerly Chief Conductor of the Deutsche Oper-am-Rhein (1998-2009) and was concurrently Generalmusikdirektor of the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker for eight seasons.

Highlights of this season include a debut at the Opéra National de Bordeaux (*Norma*), a new production of *Pád Arkuna (The Fall of Arkun)* at the Czech National Theater, and conducting Reinvere's *Peer Gynt* (world premiere), a double-bill of Hindemith's *Sancta Susanna/Zemlinsky's A Florentine Tragedy* (new production), *Lohengrin* and *Madama Butterfly* at the Norwegian Opera. Other recent highlights include debuts at Teatro San Carlo (*Rusalka*), Deutsche Oper

Berlin (*Turandot*), Grand Théâtre de Genève (*Andrea Chénier* and *Nabucco*), and with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

Well known among the international opera houses, M. Fiore has been a frequent guest at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and at leading European houses including the Bayerische Staatsoper, Semperoper Dresden, Oper Köln, and Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. In the United States, has long enjoyed relationships with the Chicago Lyric and San Francisco Operas.

Born in New York, Mr. Fiore began his professional musical activities at age 14 as a pianist and coach for Seattle Opera's annual production of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and later attended the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

John Gilhooly

BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Song Prize jury

Irish-born John Gilhooly became Artistic and Executive Director of Wigmore Hall, London aged 32 in early 2005, making him the youngest leader of any of the world's great concert halls. He had been Executive Director of Wigmore Hall since January 2001, and is credited with having overseen the artistic, financial and administrative transformation of the Hall over the past fourteen years. He established the highly-regarded Wigmore Hall Live record label, named as The Gramophone's record label of the year in 2011.

In July 2010, John Gilhooly was elected Chairman of the Royal Philharmonic Society, and led the Society's bicentenary celebrations throughout 2013. He is a recipient of Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Music (2006), Honorary Membership of the Royal College of Music (2012) and in 2013 was awarded an OBE by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, for his services to music.

John is a tenor and studied voice at the Dublin City College of Music and the Leinster School of Music. He appears regularly in the Evening Standard's list of the most influential people in London.

Claron McFadden

Member of both juries

American soprano Claron McFadden is particularly noted for her interpretations of modern and contemporary opera, but also specializes in early and baroque roles. Opera roles include the title role *Lulu* and The Controller in Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, both at Glyndebourne; Zerbinetta *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Dutch National Opera; and numerous projects throughout Europe, including *Dido and Aeneas* and *Les Indes galantes*.

She is particularly associated with the music of Wolfgang Rihm and Harrison Birtwistle. She performed in the world premiere of Birtwistle's *The Woman and the Hare*, which she has also recorded. Claron has collaborated several times with Jörg Widmann including *Babylon* with the Bayerische Staatsoper.

Recent engagements include *Sunken Garden* by Michel van der Aa at the Holland Festival 2014, with English National Opera and Opéra de Lyon (March 2015). Claron sang at the coronation of the King of the Netherlands, King Willem Alexander. Future engagements include *Semele* with the Residentie Orchestra, concerts with the Minquet Quartet, Stuttgarter Kammer Orchester and Irish Chamber Orchestra.

Her recordings include Birtwistle's *Paul Celan Songs*, Haydn's *Orfeo* and Gluck's *Paride ed Elena* and as Aspasia in Handel's *Alexander Balus*. Television appearances include Channel 4's *My Night with Handel*.

Claron made her debut as a theatre maker with her monodrama *Lilith*, premiered at the 2012 Holland Festival.

In 2007 Claron McFadden was awarded the Amsterdam prize of the Arts.

Soile Isokoski

Member of both juries

Soile Isokoski's first visit to Cardiff was as a competitor representing Finland in 1987, when she reached the hotly-contested final. She has gone on to become one of the most celebrated sopranos of her generation, winning the Pro-Finlandia medal in 2002 in honour of her contribution to Finnish music.

She is a familiar face on international opera and concert stages, working with conductors including Philippe Herreweghe, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Seiji Ozawa, John Eliot Gardiner, Sir Colin Davis, Zubin Mehta, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle, Bernard Haitink, Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Valery Gergiev, Pierre Boulez and James Levine, as well as giving numerous recitals. Her discography includes Strauss' *Four Last Songs* under Marek Janowski and two Sibelius CDs; Kullervo with Tommi Hakala (Diapason d'Or 2008) and Luonnotar and Orchestral songs (MIDEM classical award, BBC Music Magazine Vocal Award and Disc of the Year 2007). She was awarded the Sibelius Medal in 2007 and was honoured with the title of Austrian Kammersängerin in 2008.

Recent highlights include Marschallin *Der Rosenkavalier* in London and Geneva, Donna Elvira *Don Giovanni* at Los Angeles and Vienna, Desdemona *Otello* at the Wiener Staatsoper and in Berlin, Elsa *Lohengrin* at Los Angeles and the Semperoper Dresden and *Ariadne Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Glyndebourne Festival.

Julius Drake

BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Song Prize jury

The pianist Julius Drake lives in London and specializes in the field of chamber music, working with many of the world's leading artists, both in recital and on disc.

He appears at all the major music centres: in recent seasons he has performed at the Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, Munich, Schubertiade and Salzburg festivals; Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, New York; Concertgebouw, Amsterdam and Philharmonie, Cologne; Châtelet and Musée de Louvre, Paris; La Scala, Milan; Liceu, Barcelona; Musikverein and Konzerthaus, Vienna; and Wigmore Hall and BBC Proms.

Julius Drake's many recordings include a widely-acclaimed series with Gerald Finley for Hyperion, for which the Barber Songs, Schumann Heine Lieder and Britten Songs and Proverbs have won the 2007, 2009 and 2011 Gramophone Awards; award-winning recordings with Ian Bostridge for EMI; and several recitals for the Wigmore Live label, with among others Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Matthew Polenzani, Joyce DiDonato and Alice Coote.

Julius Drake is now embarked on a major project to record the complete songs of Liszt for Hyperion: the second disc in the series, with Angelika Kirchschrager, won the BBC Music Magazine Award for 2012.

Highlights in the coming season include tours of the USA with Matthew Polenzani; Japan and Korea with Anne Sophie von Otter and Camilla Tilling; and a Schumann series at the Concertgebouw.

Dennis O'Neill

BBC Cardiff Singer of the World jury

Dennis O'Neill has appeared for all the major companies of the world, specialising in Verdi. In 2005 he was awarded the Verdi Medal by the Amici di Verdi in recognition of his work in that field.

In his long relationship with the Royal Opera House, he appeared in over 200 performances centred around the great Verdian tenor roles. In North America his many appearances have included the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera and Chicago Lyric Opera.

His extensive European career has taken him, most notably, to the Munich, Vienna, Paris, Berlin, Verona, Rome, Lisbon, Florence, Bologna, Barcelona and Milan.

He was appointed Commander of the British Empire for services to opera and many other acknowledgments include Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music and the Order of St John.

He gives master classes around the world, this season travelling to the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Japan and Italy. A visiting professor at several institutions including the RAM and the Young Artists Programme at Covent Garden, Dennis is a frequent juror at international competitions.

Dennis O'Neill was born in Pontarddulais and lives in Cardiff. He is Founder and Director of the Wales International Academy of Voice, University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

CONDUCTORS AND ORCHESTRAS

Martyn Brabbins

Conductor - Orchestra of Welsh National Opera

Martyn Brabbins is Chief Conductor of the Nagoya Philharmonic, Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic and Music Director to the Huddersfield Choral Society. He was previously Artistic Director of the Cheltenham International Festival of Music 2005-2007 and Associate Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra 1994-2005. After studying composition in London and then conducting with Ilya Musin in Leningrad, he won first prize at the 1988 Leeds Conductors' Competition. Since then he has become a frequent guest with leading orchestras across the globe.

Brabbins is known for his affinity with music of the late 19th/early 20th centuries, to which he brings a Romantic sensibility, unerring sense of pace and an extraordinary ear for detail. He is closely associated with British music, and has conducted hundreds of world premieres by leading international composers. Recent guesting highlights have included debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and at La Scala Milan, and at the First Night of the BBC Proms with the BBC Symphony (shared with Elder, Norrington and Gardner).

In July 2014 he conducted the combined forces of the Royal Scottish National and the BBC Scottish Symphony orchestras at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, and returned to the Proms with the BBC Symphony for Walton Symphony No.1. Later in 2014/15 he conducted Brahms and Strauss with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Cadogan Hall, and will conduct Vaughan Williams with the Philharmonia. He returned to the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony to conduct Walton symphonies at Suntory Hall and Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, and at New Year he tours to Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

In recent months he debuted at the Bavarian State Opera (Zemlinsky/Ravel), returned to Lyon (A Dog's Heart) and Antwerp (Blaubart), and conducted Birtwistle's Gawain at the Barbican with the BBC Symphony.

Orchestra of Welsh National Opera

The WNO Orchestra was formed in 1970. Since then, it has established itself as one of the finest orchestras in the UK, highly praised for its distinction in wide-ranging operatic repertoire, as well as for its extremely varied concert work and portfolio of recordings. Resident at Wales Millennium Centre, the Orchestra is one of two permanent, full-time ensembles at the heart of the Company, alongside the WNO Chorus. Former Music Directors of Welsh National Opera and its Orchestra include Carlo Rizzi and the late Sir Charles Mackerras. Lothar Koenigs joined Welsh National Opera as Music Director in 2009.

In addition to its substantial operatic work with the Company, in its own right the Orchestra's stature and reputation as a world-class ensemble is demonstrated by its involvement as part of the St David's Hall International Concert Series in Cardiff, as well as through many other high profile concert and festival engagements. This is enhanced further through a variety of special relationships and partnerships that widen the Company's reach.

In recent years, engagements have included the Edinburgh Festival for a concert performance of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* under Lothar Koenigs and a major collaboration with Cape Town Opera for the South African company's UK tour of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and Michael Williams's *Mandela Trilogy*, both at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff and at the London Coliseum. Other recent concerts took place in Cardiff (including the Welsh Proms), Bristol, Truro, Barnstaple, St David's for the Fishguard Festival and in London at the Royal Opera House, Barbican and also the Royal Festival Hall. With the full Company, the Orchestra toured to the Sultanate of Oman in 2013, the Savonlinna Opera Festival in Finland in Summer 2014, and performed an open air concert in Dubai on New Year's Day 2015.

Thomas Søndergård Conductor - BBC National Orchestra of Wales

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård is Principal Conductor of BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBCNOW) and also Principal Guest Conductor of Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO). He was Principal Conductor and Musical Advisor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra from 2009-2012.

His 2014/15 season includes debuts with Sydney Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra, Berlin Konzerthaus, New Zealand and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras, DSO Berlin and returns to Seattle Symphony, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Royal Swedish Opera (*Les dialogues des Carmelites*). Major projects with his titled orchestras include Mahler's 2nd symphony (BBCNOW) and Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra (RSNO). Future guest invitations include his debuts with Norske Opera (Oslo), Deutsche Oper Berlin, Netherlands Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Toronto Symphony and returns to DSO Berlin, Sydney, Houston and Danish National Symphony Orchestras.

Highlights of recent seasons include four contrasting programmes at BBC Proms (with BBCNOW), and successful debuts with Gothenburg, Atlanta, Brussels, Oslo and Luxembourg Philharmonics, Seattle, Houston and BBC Symphonies, European touring with Junge Deutsche Philharmonie and EUYO and visits to Rotterdam Philharmonic, Aspen Festival, Danish National Symphony, CBSO, Bamberg Symphony. As part of forthcoming 2015 anniversary celebrations of both Sibelius and Nielsen he will be conducting a wide variety of

works by these two composers with many of the world's top orchestras. He collaborates regularly with internationally-acclaimed soloists such as Janine Jansen, Vilde Frang, Nina Stemme, Truls Mørk, James Ehnes, Julia Fischer and Ingrid Fliter.

Søndergård is also an experienced opera conductor and in the 2012/13 season appeared at both the Royal Danish (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) and Royal Swedish Operas (*Turandot* with Nina Stemme), following his success there with *Tosca* in 2011. In 2008 he made his highly-successful Stuttgart Staatsoper début (*Tosca*), returning in 2010 for *Luisa Miller*. He was described as 'a sensation' at his début with the Royal Danish Opera in 2005 conducting Ruders' opera *Kafka's Trial*: "*He is one of the best things that has happened to the art of opera for many years*". He has conducted productions for Royal Danish Opera both in Copenhagen and on tour in Denmark; including *Il barbero di Siviglia*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *La bohème* as well as *Rite of Spring* and *Pulcinella* for the Royal Danish Ballet.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

BBC National Orchestra of Wales is one of the UK's most versatile orchestras, with a varied range of work as both a broadcast orchestra and the national symphony orchestra of Wales. They perform live to tens of thousands of people across Wales and the UK each year; and can be regularly heard across the UK on BBC radio and television.

Generously supported by the Arts Council of Wales, BBC NOW is the Orchestra-in-Residence at Cardiff's St David's Hall, and presents a season in Swansea. They perform a busy schedule of live concerts, touring the length and breadth of Wales, as well as venues around the rest of the UK. Almost all of their performances can also be heard on the BBC, and they are regularly heard on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru.

The Orchestra is invited to perform at festivals throughout Wales and the UK each year, and appears biennially at BBC Cardiff Singer of the World. The Orchestra also appears in several concerts annually as part of the BBC Proms, where it is proud to represent Wales.

The Orchestra's home is BBC Hoddinott Hall, a world-class concert hall and recording studio based in the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay. From this base, the Orchestra continues its work as the UK's foremost soundtrack orchestra, working with programmes including *Doctor Who* for BBC Cymru Wales, *Hidden Kingdoms* for the BBC's Natural History Unit, and *The Crimson Field* for BBC One.

ACCOMPANISTS

Simon Lepper Official Accompanist

Simon Lepper was educated at King's College, Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music. He is professor of piano accompaniment at the Royal College of Music and coaches at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama.

Highlights this season and beyond include a recital at Carnegie Hall, New York with Karen Cargill; a recital tour with Stéphane Degout and recitals with Angelika Kirchschrager at La Monnaie, Brussels and at the Wigmore Hall, where future appearances also include recitals with Christopher Maltman, Elizabeth Watts, Stephan Loges, Andrew Foster-Williams, Christopher Purves and Lawrence Zazzo and a three concert project on the songs of Joseph Marx in 2013/14.

Recently, Simon has performed in Schubert and Schumann song cycles with Mark Padmore; recitals with Dame Felicity Palmer; with Angelika Kirchschrager at the Verbier Festival, Switzerland; recitals in the UK with the 2011 BBC Cardiff Singer winner Valentina Naforniță; with Sally Matthews and Karen Cargill at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam and with Stephen Genz and Lucy Crowe at the December Nights Festival in Moscow.

Recordings include Debussy and Strauss songs with Gillian Keith, Warlock songs with Andrew Kennedy, CW Orr songs with Mark Stone and contemporary works with violinist Carolin Widmann, which received a Diapason d'Or.

Llŷr Williams **Official Accompanist**

Welsh pianist, Llŷr Williams, is widely admired for his profound musical intelligence, and for the expressive and communicative nature of his interpretations. He has worked with orchestras around the world, including the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Sinfonia Cymru, I Pomeriggi Musicali, Meininger Hofkapelle, Berner Kammerorchester, Limburgs Symphony and the Mozarteum Orchestra in Salzburg. He also appears at the BBC Proms in London and has given many remarkable performances at the Edinburgh International Festival, including a sensationally received performance of Charles Ives' *Concord Sonata* in 2010. He is a regular performer in the Wigmore Hall's main piano series.

In the autumn of 2014, Llŷr embarked on a complete Beethoven Piano Sonata Cycle spread over three years, both at the Wigmore Hall and Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff; the series will also be recorded for release exclusively on digital platforms, beginning in spring 2015. His previous Beethoven cycles around the UK included an epic two-week period in August 2011 at Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh during the Festival, for which he received a prestigious South Bank Show award. Since September 2013, Llŷr has been collaborating with the Elias Quartet in a residency at Glasgow Royal Concert Halls and over the next two seasons they will be exploring Beethoven's piano sonatas and string quartets, in a series of concerts and talks.

Llŷr is the subject of two films produced for S4C: the first of which won a Welsh BAFTA for Best Music Programme, and the second featured his debut at Carnegie Hall. Llŷr's great love of lieder led him to become one of the official accompanists at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.

Born in 1976 in Pentrebychan, North Wales, Llŷr read music at The Queen's College, Oxford and went on to take up a postgraduate scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music where he won every available prize and award.