

Dennis Russell Davies named Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor **Dennis Russell Davies** has been named Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the **Brno Philharmonic Orchestra** (Brno, Czech Republic). Davies' contract starts with the 2018-19 season and runs through 2022. The timing coincides with the initiation of the construction phase of the Janáček Cultural Centre in Brno, a state-of-the-art concert hall with a seating capacity of 1,250, which will become the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra's new home and is projected to open in 2020. For Davies, who has just concluded his 15th and final season as Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Bruckner Orchestra Linz and Linz Opera, the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra appointment marks the continuation of 48 years during which Davies has held principal positions with orchestras, opera houses and festivals that have included the Basel Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bonn Opera and Beethovenhalle Orchestra, State Opera Stuttgart, American Composers Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, Cabrillo Music Festival and Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra.

Davies made his debut with the Brno Philharmonic at the Prague Spring Festival in May 2017, performing Schnittke's *Seid nüchtern und wachet...* (Faust Cantata), for which the orchestra was joined by the Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno, and Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. Their next collaboration will take place in Brno at the Easter Festival of Sacred Music in April 2018, in a concert that will include Leoš Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*, the world premiere of a work by British composer David Matthews, and Arvo Pärt's *Te Deum*, which Davies conducted in its world premiere in 1985.

In speaking about this appointment, Dennis Russell Davies said: "I am proud to have been invited to be the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra and am very pleased to accept this invitation. The chance to explore with these fine musicians great Czech music past and present, and to bring this progressive city in contact with the many outstanding international composers and artists I have been privileged to work with over more than half a century is both an exciting and, at this point in my career, surprising development. I am intrigued by an orchestra (and a city) that understands the role it has to play in the Czech Republic and internationally, and is not afraid to be ambitious and to take risks. My American-Midwest roots make me feel close to Moravia, and my long years at home in Linz, Upper Austria, have given me a deep appreciation for our common Central European heritage. The chance to contribute to the development of the new Janáček Cultural Centre, with an appropriate hall for this fine orchestra, is a wonderful opportunity. I look forward to great music making with the Brno Philharmonic."

Petr Vokřál, Mayor of Statutory City of Brno, said: "The Brno Philharmonic is working towards becoming a world-class ensemble. I am delighted it is strengthening its ranks with Dennis Russell Davies, a figure of indisputable international repute. His previous positions, among them Stuttgart, Bonn, Vienna and the American Composers Orchestra in New York, testify to the fact that the Brno Philharmonic will be headed by a figure universally recognized for his excellence. I wish Dennis Russell Davies much success in his work, an inspiring team, and I hope he enjoys and comes to appreciate the unique atmosphere of the city of Brno, and that Brno becomes his second home."

"The Brno Philharmonic, as a leading Czech orchestra with over sixty years of history and with Janáček in its genes, is pleased to welcome a new Principal Conductor," stated Marie Kučerová, Director of the Brno Philharmonic. "Throughout its past, the orchestra has gone through the era of its key founding Czech figures such as Břetislav Bakala and František Jílek, a period of international outlook with Aldo Ceccato, Petr Altrichter and Aleksandar Markovic, and has evolved into a mature ensemble aware of its original roots and ready to take on all the challenges of today's symphonic world with self-confidence. With the breadth of his vision, his artistic and life experience, and his relationship to the orchestra and each of its musicians, Dennis Russell Davies is the ideal choice to further the artistic development of the Brno Philharmonic as it prepares for the opening of its new concert hall in 2020."

About Dennis Russell Davies

Internationally acclaimed musician Dennis Russell Davies is known for his extraordinary range of repertoire, technical brilliance and fearless music-making. A maverick in his field, he is hailed as “one of the few conductors whose unquestioned commitment to music of our age has not severed his connections to the standard repertoire.” An esteemed presence consistently at the forefront of both orchestral and operatic worlds, Davies is also an accomplished pianist, and continues to be in demand by orchestras, composers and fellow musicians worldwide for his inspiring collaborations and interpretive mastery.

The year 2018 will mark 49 seasons that Davies has held music directorships of prestigious international orchestras, while frequently guest conducting with major orchestras and opera companies worldwide. As Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Bruckner Orchester Linz and of the Linz Opera, he presided over the much-anticipated opening of the new Linz Opera house in April 2013, conducting the world premiere of Philip Glass’s opera, *The Lost*, commissioned for the occasion. He has served as Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Basel Symphony Orchestra; Chief Conductor of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, and Beethovenhalle Orchestra; and as Music Director of the Orchestre Français des Jeunes, Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Stuttgart State Opera, Bonn Opera, International Beethoven Festival, and the Cabrillo Music Festival (Santa Cruz, CA). He also was Principal Conductor/Classical Music Program Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

Upcoming guest engagements for the 2017-18 season include the La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra, RAI National Symphony Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic at Suntory Hall, Orchestra of the Teatro dell’Opera di Roma, Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, Barcelona Symphony and Catalonia National Orchestra, Easter Festival Brno, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, and the Cherubini Orchestra at the Ravenna Festival. On November 7, 2017, Davies conducts the American Composers Orchestra, which he co-founded in 1975, in its 40th Birthday Gala Concert in New York.

Davies has worked with major orchestras and opera companies around the world, including the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras, Chicago, San Francisco and Boston Symphonies, the New York Philharmonic, as well as the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony. In Europe, he has worked with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Dresden and Munich Philharmonics, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Accademia di Santa Cecilia Roma, Filarmonica della Scala Milano, Spanish National Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic and Bamberg Symphony.

Throughout his extensive career, Davies has been the music director/conductor for major opera productions in prestigious venues worldwide in Bayreuth, Chicago, Hamburg, Houston, Lisbon, Madrid, Paris, Salzburg, Vienna, the Niki kai Opera in Tokyo, and at The Metropolitan Opera.

As conductor and pianist, Mr. Davies has released over 80 recordings, earning numerous awards. These include the complete symphonies of Bruckner, Haydn, Honegger and Glass, as well as Zemlinsky’s piano arrangements for four hands of Beethoven’s *Fidelio* and Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* with Maki Namekawa.

Dennis Russell Davies was born in Toledo (Ohio) and graduated from The Juilliard School. In 2009, he was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, in 2014 the French Ministry of Culture appointed him *Commandeur des Arts et Lettres*, and in 2017 Davies received the *Österreichische Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst 1. Klasse* from the Austrian government.

About the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra

Originally formed by Leoš Janáček as the amateur Czech Symphony Orchestra in the 1870s and housed in the Besední Dům, designed and built in 1873 by Theophil Hansen, architect of Vienna's famed Musikverein, the orchestra has an illustrious history of music-making. The Brno Philharmonic Orchestra in its current configuration was established in 1956, by merging the Radio Orchestra and Brno Regional Symphony Orchestra. Currently the orchestra performs in the Besední Dům and Janáček Opera House, but a new concert hall, offering state-of-the-art acoustics and technical capabilities, as well as a seating capacity of 1,250, is being built (details below). In addition to its regular concert season, the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra hosts five major festivals: Easter Festival of Sacred Music, music played in the churches of Brno (since 1992); Špilberk International Music Festival, summer performances in the historical setting of Špilberk Castle (since 2000); Moravian Autumn, founded during a thaw in the hard-line communist period that allowed for Brno's cultural institutions to reacquire an international dimension, and today considered among the most important cultural events in the Czech Republic (since 1966); Exposition of New Music Festival, a "*progressive exposition*" that brings music and art installations to different venues throughout the gardens and urban spaces of the city (since 2012); and Mozart's Children: a festival showcasing young musicians (since 2009).

Since its first international tour in 1956, the Brno Philharmonic has performed throughout Europe, the USA and the Far East. Both at home and abroad, the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra enjoys a partnership with the internationally acclaimed Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno, which focuses on performance of oratorios and cantatas, and with the select children's choir, Kantiléna.

In 2014, continuing a tradition of making excellent music education available to young musicians, the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra founded the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra Academy, which offers a two-year program integrating study and performance to Czech and international students between the ages of 18 and 26.

New Concert Hall Brno – Janáček Cultural Centre

In February 2017, the City of Brno announced the conclusion of the qualifying round for the design team of what is currently being called the Janáček Cultural Centre. Of four candidates, the two finalists are Nagata Acoustic America, Konior Studio and Architekti Hruša & spol., Ateliér Brno, s.r.o., and America's Ove Arup & Partners (formerly ARTEC) with Brno's ArchDesign. The winner is expected to be announced in November. With the building of this state-of-the-art hall, the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra will finally have a home that will be able to accommodate its full ensemble and provide the technical and acoustic capacities for staging large symphonic works as well as the complete works of Leoš Janáček, for whom the cultural centre is to be named. Construction of the 59-million-dollar concert hall is planned to begin in 2018, with a target completion date of 2020. This cultural centre will mark a major historical milestone for both the orchestra and the city of Brno, as it has been over 100 years since a concert hall with a seating capacity of over 1,000 has been built in the Czech Republic.

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