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Hugh Keelan

CONDUCTOR



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BIOGRAPHY

In the spring of 2006, Maestro Hugh Keelan performed as piano soloist in Beethoven's 4th Piano Concerto with the Erie Philharmonic in addition to conducting Die Meistersinger Prelude, Till Eulenspiegel and the Afternoon of a Faun. These performances were a highlight of Maestro Keelan's tenure as Music Director of the Erie Philharmonic, following a 15-year tenure as Music Director of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, an orchestra of extraordinarily high quality calling on the finest players from New York and Philadelphia.

Born on Kingston-upon-Thames in England, Hugh Keelan has been a pianist since age 8, later also a violist. At the age of 16 Maestro Keelan conducted Beethoven's Emperor Concerto in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. He went on to study Music at Cambridge, his primary mentor being Robin Holloway, graduating with a Double First, the Hughes Prize 'for outstanding excellence', and the award of a coveted Harkness Fellowship (comparable to a Rhodes Scholarship) that allowed him to study conducting at Indiana University and Mannes College. Remaining in New York for private study with Vladimir Kin (from the Leningrad school of Mravinsky and Rabinovich,) he worked at the American Opera Center at the Juilliard School.

In the opera house Maestro Keelan worked with such luminaries as Sir Georg Solti, Sir Bernard Haitink and Sir Colin Davis.

Maestro Keelan is known and admired for his ability to connect very deeply with the performers with whom he works, and through them communicates an extraordinary power and enthusiasm to the audience. His major influences are the great conductors of the mid-20th century (Beecham, Klemperer, and De Sabata amongst others) and in our own times Carlos Kleiber.

Amongst many Guest Conducting engagements, highlights have been with the Saint Louis Symphony, La Fenice in Venice, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and the Residentie Orchestra of The Hague.

Maestro Keelan is admired as an arranger, most recently having performed his own orchestration of Szymanowski's Romance op.23 with the Erie Philharmonic and their concertmaster Ken Johnston. Generating particular interest are his series of orchestrations of Harry Burleigh's Spirituals for solo voice and orchestra. Commissioned by The Burleigh Society, these are esteemed for being true to the original unadorned power of the spirituals that Burleigh transcribed and the deep sensitivity of Burleigh's own arrangements, while channeling the urgency of our own times. These will become available through hughkeelan.com along with other arrangements and orchestrations, ranging from a Christmas/Hanukkah Holiday Medley to an orchestration of Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata.

Maestro Keelan is very proud of the deep community loyalties he has created. A sense of personal identification through professional and personal channels with the community is essential in today's world. He has performed many times with his wife, Laurie Green, in classical, operatic and Broadway repertoire---not only as conductor, but playing the role of Henry Higgins in My Fair Lady to Ms. Green's Eliza Doolittle.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

“The performance was notable first of all for the instrumental execution under the baton of Hugh Keelan, a young English conductor, who has been studying in this country. The playing was accurate and inspired, precisely attuned to Britten's musical and dramatic imagination.”

--New York Times, John Rockwell

“The performance was stylish. Schumann sounded like Schumann, and the players understood the sense of mood and gesture that grow from that style. There were heroics, poetics and declaration to give this work the respect it deserved. The orchestra's home audience could be proud of this dedication and awareness.”

--Philadelphia Enquirer, Daniel Webster

“...Maestro Hugh Keelan will remain linked- in my memory- to the attributes of vigor and velocity. Keelan, who made his St. Louis debut Saturday night at Powell Symphony Hall seemed to relish those characteristics whenever possible as he conducted a program of French and Austrian music in the final St. Louis Symphony Chamber concert of the season...Keelan's reading of Debussy's Petite Suite, on the other hand, could hardly have been more charming. Each glistening facet of Henri Busser's orchestration arose to the musical surface.”

--St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Paul A. Harris

“Perhaps the most telling moment of the concert occurred in the “Ase's Death” movement of “Peer Gynt.” The wind and brass players were watching the stick with rapt concentration. What made this seemingly small observation so impressive was that the movement is scored for strings only, an eloquent measure of the respect in which the orchestra held its guest conductor.”

--Erie Daily Times, John Chacona

“...conductor Hugh Keelan commands the full measure of these works [Roy Harris' Symphony No.7 and William Schuman's Symphony No.6] and gets the New Zealand Symphony to play them with all the gusto and bravura of a home-grown band. No doubt Harris and Schuman would be thrilled by such powerful modern advocacy of their music, presented in Koch's vivid and dynamic sound.”

-- Classics Today, Victor Carr Jr.

“... I am very impressed by the leadership he shows in these recordings...Keelan provides a firm guidance for his instrumentalists...”

-- Fanfare, Stephen Ellis

“The challenge in performing or recording any work already done by a master conductor is ever present. One could choose to perform it exactly the way it has been done before but that would make it an insincere and bad imitation of said work. After careful study and musical decision-making resulting in a sincere attempt to realize a composer's work, mixed with fine musicians doing what they do best it becomes valid and worth hearing. This recording not only does that but is pleasing to hear. As a strong Harris fan I enjoy this recording of this symphony and count it among my top favorites of all his recorded symphonies - and I have them all. I applaud this conductor and orchestra for championing the work of a composer such as Harris. Well done!”

--anonymous reviewer on Amazon.com

CURRICULUM VITAE

EXPERIENCE:

ORCHESTRAL

Music Director, Erie Philharmonic
Music Director, Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic
Guest Conductor, Grand Rapids Symphony
Guest Conductor, Baton Rouge Symphony
Guest Conductor, Vermont Symphony
Guest Conductor, Czech National Orchestra
Guest Conductor, Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra
Guest Conductor, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra
Recording for Koch International
with New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Cover Conductor, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Guest Conductor, Residentie Orchestra of The Hague
Guest Conductor, Radio Philharmonic of the Netherlands
Music Director, Thaxted Festival (England)
Guest Conductor, Venetian Carnevale, La Fenice
Music Director, New Essex (England) Chamber Orchestra

CHORAL

Music Director, Blanche Moyse Chorale

OPERATIC

Guest Conductor, Berkshire Opera Company
Principal Conductor, Cambridge (England) Opera Trust
Guest Conductor, Festival di due mondi, Spoleto, Italy
Assistant Conductor, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
Music Staff, Glyndebourne Festival Opera
Principal Conductor, Chamber Opera Theatre of New York
Music Staff, Glyndebourne Touring Opera
Coaching/Conducting Fellow, American Opera Center (Juilliard)
Associate Instructor in Opera Coaching, Indiana University

AWARDS:

Ph.D. *honoris causa* from King's College
Ph.D. *honoris causa* from University of Scranton
Keys to the City of Scranton
Harkness Fellowship to U.S.A.

EDUCATION:

Queens' College, Cambridge (England): B.A.; M.A.; 'Double First' in Music.
Foundation Scholarship; Hughes Prize "for outstanding excellence"
Indiana University: Special Conducting Student
Mannes College of Music, NYC: Special Conducting Student
Private Conducting Study with Vladimir Kin

REPERTOIRE

Maestro Keelan's repertoire encompasses the body of the standard orchestral, concerto and operatic repertoire. Complete cycles of Beethoven and Brahms are complemented by an impressive array of premiers (World, American, European) by such composers as William Alexander, Keith Amos, Bruce Broughton, Robin Holloway, Jiri Pauer, Bernard Rands, Eric Tanguy, Reza Vali and Richard Wernick.

A glimpse of the extent of Maestro's experience, prestige and repertoire can be seen from a sampling of some of the world-class soloists with whom he has collaborated: Corey Cerovsek, Stephanie Chase, Shura Cherkassky, Victor Danchenko, Mischa Dichter, Horacio Gutierrez, Andreas Haefliger, Hilary Hahn, Elizabeth Harwood, Lorin Hollander, Dick Hyman, Dylana Jenson, Jeffrey Kahane, Ani Kavafian, Soovin Kim, Anton Kuerti, Ruth Laredo, Allesandra Marc, Barbara Nissman, Ursula Oppens, Christopher O'Riley, Mark Peskanov, Santiago Rodriguez, Russell Sherman, Livia Sohn, Willy Stargell, Richard Stoltzman, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Alisa Weilerstein, Bob Wilbur.

In all, Maestro has conducted well over 600 major works. A complete listing of these and a sampling of programs to meet many needs is available on request.

Here, for example, is a small selection from just one season's repertoire:

Bartok	Concerto for Orchestra
Bizet	L'Arlésienne
Brahms	Serenade No.2
Britten	Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra
Elgar	Introduction and Allegro
Gabrieli	Canzoni (realized by Keelan)
Mendelssohn	Violin Concerto
Mozart	Serenade No. 13 in Bb, "Gran' Partita"
Schubert	Symphonies No. 6, 9
Smetana	Dances from 'The Bartered Bride'
Strauss, J II	Gipsy Baron Overture, Perpetuum Mobile
Strauss, Richard	Metamorphosen
Vaughan Williams	Tuba Concerto
Zwilich	Flute Concerto
Dvorak	Slavonic Dances

And a set of programs designed for the Millennium season:

1. A CONCERT FOR THE MILLENIUM

Bach, JS arr. Schoenberg	Prelude and Fugue in Eb BWV.552, 'St. Anne'
Ives	Symphony No.4
--	
Holst	The Planets

2. [Soprano Solo]

Bach	Brandenburg Concerto No. 1
Britten	Les Illuminations
--	
Mahler	Symphony No. 4

3. ALL-RUSSIAN

Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1
 --
Shostakovich Symphony No. 8

4. WALTZ KINGS

Strauss, Josef Sphärenklänge Waltz
Strauss, Richard München
 --
Liszt Mephisto Waltz
Stucky, Steven Dream Waltzes
Ravel La Valse

And a Brahms cycle:

Brahms and Beethoven

Beethoven Coriolanus Overture
Beethoven Violin Concerto
 --
Brahms Symphony No. 1

Brahms the Romantic

Mendelssohn Midsummer Night's Dream Overture
Schumann Piano Concerto
 --
Brahms Symphony No.2

Brahms contra Wagner

Brahms Symphony No. 3
 --
Wagner Die Walküre. Act 1

Brahms the Progressive

Bach Cantata No. 150: Nach dir, Herr verlanget mich
Schoenberg Variations for Orchestra
 --
Brahms Symphony No. 4