



CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF
ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS

Media Release

LINDA MERRICK BECOMES FIRST CONSERVATOIRE CHIEF TO BE APPOINTED TO ABO BOARD

Professor Linda Merrick, Principal of the Royal Northern College of Music, is the first music conservatoire Principal to be appointed to the Board of the Association of British Orchestras (ABO) – the trade body which represents all UK professional and youth orchestras – at a critical time for the sector.

Gavin Reid, Chairman of the ABO Board said: “We are delighted to welcome Linda who brings a wealth of experience from the higher education sector, in addition to her deep knowledge and understanding of the challenges facing today’s performers.”

Mark Pemberton, Director of the ABO, said: “The ABO is all about the best possible representation of the collective interests of orchestras alongside the wider classical music industry throughout the UK. Linda is a hugely welcome addition to the team as we face up to the challenges faced by the creative sector during Brexit.”

Q & A with Linda Merrick

You’re the first representative of a UK conservatoire to be appointed to the ABO Board. Is that representative of closer relations between conservatoires and orchestras?

Whilst conservatoires already enjoy a very positive relationship with Britain’s orchestras, I hope my appointment to the ABO Board will help to strengthen this and provide an opportunity to share opportunities and challenges to the mutual benefit of both organisations.

How has the training changed for young musicians considering an orchestral career? What challenges do they face?

The fundamentals of orchestral training - developing excellent technical, musical and ensemble skills and a wide knowledge of orchestral repertory- have not changed, but conservatoires today are equally committed to providing training and experience for their students in education and community outreach settings and to developing the many transferable skills graduates will need as they embark on portfolio careers that may include freelance orchestral work.

What can orchestras do/continue to do to support young musicians coming into a highly competitive profession?

Opportunities for placements, audition experience and participation in education and outreach activities with professional orchestras are invaluable, as is the knowledge experienced orchestral players impart as they work with our students individually and in workshop and sectional environments. The breadth of experience RNCM students access through working across a wide

range of different professional orchestras and ensembles as part of 'RNCM The Platform' is extremely beneficial, as it enables them to explore different parts of the orchestral world and consider where they might wish to develop their future careers. I think that mentoring opportunities would be helpful for students at all levels and for recent graduates, and that online advice from orchestras on how to secure, develop and sustain an orchestral career in today's profession could also be a useful complementary tool.

How will Brexit affect UK Conservatoires?

The impact of Brexit will depend on the final arrangements put in place, but conservatoires are chiefly concerned about the following: continuing recruitment of EU students should they be unable to access tuition fee loans, be forced to pay full non-EU fees, or feel the UK is not a welcoming study destination; mobility of students, staff and visiting artists; access to EU funding associated with research or project-based activities; ease of travel within the EU for student ensemble tours, collaborative projects with EU partners etc.; the ability for UK students to work as professional musicians in mainland Europe.

Information about all ABO Board members can be found at: <http://www.abo.org.uk/about-us/board.aspx>

Biography

Linda Merrick holds the position of Principal and Professor at the Royal Northern College of Music and enjoys an international profile as a clarinet soloist, recording artist and pedagogue.

Her catalogue of over 30 solo recordings features new concertos she has commissioned by Gary Carpenter, Nigel Clarke, Martin Ellerby, John McLeod, Stephen McNeff, Edwin Roxburgh, Philip Sparke, Philip Spratley, Kit Turnbull and Guy Woolfenden for labels such as Naxos, Chandos, NMC, Guild and Metier. She has also released premiere recordings of new clarinet quintets with the Navarra and Kreutzer Quartets by composers including John McCabe, Nigel Clarke, Wilfred Josephs and Robert Crawford, with recordings of works by David Horne, Michael Finnissy and Paul Pellay to be released in 2018. In addition, Linda has commissioned and recorded over 20 works for clarinet and electronics and released two CDs featuring works with clarinet and harpsicord by Robert Keeley.

Linda has performed as a concerto soloist across America, Asia, Australia, Europe, South America, the UAE and the UK, and broadcast for BBC Radio 3, Radio France, DRS1 Switzerland, CKWR Canada and Arte TV South Korea. A founder member of the contemporary ensemble 'Sounds Positive', she has premiered over 80 chamber works for winds and piano by British composers, and released a further three CDs.

In addition to her position as RNCM Principal, Linda is Chair of Conservatoires UK and a member of the International Advisory Council for the Creative Industries Federation. She is also Vice-President of the Clarinet and Saxophone Society of Great Britain and the UK Representative for Howarth Clarinets.

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