



STEPHEN LAYTON  
M B E

C o n d u c t o r

Awarded with an MBE for services to classical music in October 2020, Stephen Layton is one of the most sought-after conductors of his generation, whose ground-breaking approach has had a profound influence on choral music over the last 30 years. Often described as the finest exponent of choral music in the world today, Layton is regularly invited to work with the world's leading choirs, orchestras and composers. His interpretations have been heard from Sydney Opera House to the Concertgebouw, from Tallinn to São Paolo, and his recordings have won or been nominated for every major international recording award. He has two Gramophone Awards and a further ten nominations, five Grammy nominations, the Diapason d'Or de l'Année in France, the Echo Klassik award in Germany, the Spanish CD compact award, and Australia's Limelight Recording of the Year.

The founder and director of Polyphony, Layton is also Fellow and Director of Music at Trinity College Cambridge and Music Director of Holst Singers. Former posts include Chief Conductor of Netherlands Chamber Choir, Chief Guest Conductor of Danish National Vocal Ensemble, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of City of London Sinfonia, and Director of Music at the Temple Church, London.

Layton is constantly in demand to premiere new works by the greatest established and emerging composers of our age. A longstanding partnership with Arvo Pärt has resulted in premiere performances and award-winning recordings, including three discs with Polyphony on Hyperion. With the late Sir John Tavener, premieres include Layton's bold realisation of his epic seven-hour vigil *The Veil of the Temple*, a new departure in British choral music. Passionate in his exploration of new music, Layton has introduced a vast range of new choral works to the UK and the rest of the world, transforming the music into some of the most widely performed today. His long association with music from the Baltic includes acclaimed recordings of works by Eriks Ešēvalds, Uģis Prauliņš and Veljo Tormis. His captivating discs, with Polyphony, of the American Morten Lauridsen's *Lux aeterna* and Eric Whitacre's *Cloudburst* were nominated for Grammy Awards, with *Cloudburst* spending a year in the USA's Billboard Classical Album Chart. On the Deutsche Grammophon label, Layton and Polyphony recently recorded a disc of Karl Jenkins' *Motets* which entered the Classical Artist Albums Chart at No. 1 during the week of its release, and on Decca they recorded Karl Jenkins' *Miserere* with the Britten Sinfonia.

Layton's recordings have consistently broken new ground, creating a new sound world in British choral music that continues to influence and inform conductors and choirs throughout the world. Award-winning discs with Polyphony include Britten's *Sacred and Profane*, James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* and Poulenc's *Gloria*. In a recent Gramophone critics' poll of the world's 20 greatest choirs, not only was Polyphony voted second finest, but The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge also made it into the top five: confounding expectation, Layton had led a student choir into the highest ranks. Now the choir tours at the highest international level and records prolifically, recently receiving a Gramophone award, a Grammy nomination, and Australia's Limelight Recording of the Year.

Layton guest-conducts widely, working with and inspiring the world's finest choirs and orchestras: Netherlands Chamber Choir; Danish National Vocal Ensemble; SWR Vokalensemble, MDR Leipzig and NDR Hamburg Radio Choirs in Germany; Latvian State and Radio Choirs, Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, and Voces Musicales in the Baltic; Polish Radio, NFM, and Wroclaw Philharmonic Choirs; Slovenian Philharmonic Choir; Eric Ericsson Chamber Choir, Stockholm; Die Konzertisten, Hong Kong; and the inaugural concert of Yale Center for Music and Liturgy at Carnegie Hall. With Britten Sinfonia, his eight

highly acclaimed recordings include Handel's Messiah ("Best Messiah recording" – BBC Music Magazine); with City of London Sinfonia (where Layton succeeded Richard Hickox as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor), tours included Latin America and premieres uniting cathedral choristers across Britain; and with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment he has recorded Bach's Christmas Oratorio, B Minor Mass and St John Passion.

Layton's interpretations of Bach and Handel have been heard with orchestras ranging from Academy of Ancient Music to the London Philharmonic and Philadelphia orchestras. Performances include Messiah in Sydney Opera House, the first staged St John Passion with English National Opera, and regular BBC broadcasts. He has worked with London Sinfonietta; BBC National Orchestra of Wales; Opera North; Scottish and Australian chamber orchestras; Auckland Philharmonia; Seattle, Queensland, Melbourne, Adelaide and West Australian symphony orchestras; and Minnesota, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National and Hallé orchestras. Layton is also Artistic Director of the Annual Christmas Festival at St John's Smith Square.

Layton continues to innovate, taking bold and original steps, and leading the way in the use of new technologies in choral music. Everything sung by The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge is webcast live and available to listen again online. Layton was the first in the world to webcast every single note sung in this way, laying bare the music-making without any digital editing. This searchable archive of over 4,000 musical tracks recorded live over the last six years forms an invaluable resource for listeners around the world.

This biography is valid for use until September 2022. We update our biographies regularly and ask that they are not altered without permission.  
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