

The One to Watch

Jonathon Heyward announced as next Chief Conductor of Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie

Conductor's artistic vision for new appointment includes developing local audiences, building compelling programmes and raising orchestra's global profile



One of classical music's most exciting young talents, **Jonathon Heyward**, is set to become **Chief Conductor** of the **Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie** (NWD). His appointment, which starts officially on 1 January 2021, represents a major landmark in a flourishing career. He will be twenty-eight when he commences his tenure, the same age as Andris Nelsons when he began his three-year period in charge of the orchestra in 2006. Recently described as 'one to watch' by the *Daily Telegraph*, Heyward has already received critical acclaim for his work as the Hallé Orchestra's Assistant Conductor and guest conducting engagements in Europe, Asia and the United States. The latter

embraced concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra as a Dudamel Conducting Fellow and recent debuts with, among others, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Osaka Symphony Orchestra, Staatskapelle Halle, the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestre Symphonique de Saint-Étienne.

"I am thrilled to become part of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie," comments Jonathon Heyward. "It makes a lovely segue for me to take on this new job after being with the Hallé for the past three years. The work I've done so far with the NWD has felt incredibly natural. We'll meet again next February and March for concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and on tour in Germany. I think it's a great orchestra with an extraordinary amount of musicianship and tremendous dedication."

Jonathon Heyward established an immediate rapport with the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie when he made his debut with the orchestra last October at the Concertgebouw. Their first rehearsal of Stravinsky's *The Firebird* made a strong impression, prompting many players to congratulate the conductor and express their sense of enjoyment. The concert experience reinforced the relationship; it led the orchestra's Intendant, Andreas Kuntze, to offer Heyward the post of Chief Conductor just two months after his debut performance.

"It was clear that we got along very well," Heyward recalls. "They were incredibly receptive to me and the connections between us felt completely natural. There was a really beautiful energy about it. This kind of chemistry either works or it doesn't – it's not something you can manufacture. I felt so lucky to make my Concertgebouw debut with the orchestra and then to perform with them again in Viersen."

Jonathon Heyward intends to embrace the full range of the NWD's work across the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. "In addition to its regular series in Herford, the orchestra reaches out to smaller cities such as Paderborn, Gütersloh and Detmold, and it has a really strong tradition of international touring. Connecting with the local community matters to me. The idea of being a fly-in, fly-out principal conductor doesn't appeal to me at all. I want to learn about the people in Herford and build a relationship with them through our concerts and education work. We'll aim to give them something different while performing the works that they want to hear. I'm sure this will let me grow in what is going to be my new musical home."

Before taking up his Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie post, Jonathon Heyward will make a series of guest conducting dates on both sides of the Atlantic. He returns to his homeland next month for debut concerts with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra (6-9 June), presenting the North American premiere of Hannah Kendall's *The Spark Catchers* alongside Haydn's Symphony No.98 and Holst's *The Planets*. Next season's highlights include a tour of Belgium with the Flanders Symphony Orchestra in November, projects in the Netherlands with Het Gelders Orkest, Philharmonie Zuid Nederland and Jenaer Philharmonie at the beginning of 2020, and his debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra next May. Heyward will give his first concert at the Spoleto Festival next year, a red-letter return to his home city of Charleston, South Carolina.

"I'm delighted that I'll be making a homecoming to share music with so many of my family and friends as well as the incredible music educators who helped me while I was at school," the conductor observes. "It takes a village to make a career as a musician and I am forever grateful to all those who encouraged me. Looking ahead to the future, I am absolutely determined to pass on my experience to the next generation."

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