



## Only Connect

**Antony Hermus launches his 2022-23 season with inaugural concert as Chief Conductor Designate of the Belgian National Orchestra (9 September 2022) and returns to Opera North as Principal Guest Conductor for new production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (18 February – 24 March 2023)**

**Conductor's schedule this season includes world premieres of works by Unsuk Chin with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France (12 February), appearances with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Danish National and Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, and North American debut (Oregon Symphony)**

'Opera North has engaged a superb conductor, Antony Hermus.... He clearly understands the theatrical ebb and flow of Puccini's ever-compelling score.' Review of *Tosca*, *The Sunday Times*

Positive energy, engaging enthusiasm and uplifting optimism are bedrock conditions for Antony Hermus. The Dutch conductor's art and craft are shaped by his desire to bring people together, to reveal and reinforce the common connections that link audiences, performers and all concerned with making and listening to music. His unifying mission continues throughout the coming year, which sees his debut season as Chief Conductor Designate of the Belgian National Orchestra, concert performances of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and a new staging of Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Opera North, world premieres of landmark works by Unsuk Chin during the latest edition of Radio France's *Présences* festival at the Philharmonie de Paris, and a series of high profile guest conducting engagements in Europe, the UK and the United States.

"I don't like to be put into a box," observes Antony Hermus. "I prefer to be considered on my qualities as a musician and a person rather than on any one single area of repertoire. We need to break open the boxes as musicians and let people hear music of all kinds. I have so many positive experiences of introducing classical music to people who discovered a real love for it that they didn't know they had! I feel it is my place, wherever I go, to connect people, to bring musicians, audiences, managements, everyone involved front and backstage together. This is my role in the world!"

Opera North appointed Antony Hermus as its Principal Guest Conductor in 2019 following the tremendous success of his debut with *Tosca*, having previously guested in houses such as Stuttgart, Strasbourg and Gothenburg and his extensive experience as Music Director of two German opera companies. He is set to return to Opera North to conduct Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* in concert in Huddersfield, Leeds, Nottingham and Manchester (20 October – 18 November 2022) as part of the company's *Orpheus* season. Alice Coote headlines the cast as Orfeo, with Fflur Wyn taking the role of Euridice and Daisy Brown that of Amor.

Hermus turns to the music of his beloved Richard Strauss for his second Opera North outing of the season. He will conduct four performances of *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Grand Theatre, Leeds, directed by Rodula Gaitanou and staged in co-production with Gothenburg Opera (18, 21 & 24 February, 1 March 2023) before leading the show on tour to Manchester, Nottingham and Newcastle (10, 17 & 24 March). The production's fine cast includes Hannah Hipp as the composer, Elizabeth Llewellyn as the prima donna and Ariadne, Erin Caves as the tenor and Bacchus, Daniel Norman as the dancing master, Jennifer France as Zerbinetta, John Savournin as Truffaldino and the Major-Domo and Daisy Brown as Naiad.

"I was delighted when Opera North asked me to become Principal Guest Conductor," comments Antony Hermus. "This means I am able to develop our already strong relationship and conduct at least one opera that I love each season. Opera North is a very versatile, open-minded organisation. They are truly connected to society as a warm-hearted opera company. I was blown away by their standard of delivery when we did *Tosca* together and am struck by their total dedication. They feel like family to me." *Ariadne auf Naxos*, he adds, is the ideal work to display the company's all-round excellence. "It's such a refined and sophisticated work, with an orchestra of twenty-six players sounding like a hundred. I'm a Strauss addict, so I can't wait to explore this amazing music with Opera North and this wonderful cast!"

Following his decision to step down as Dessau Opera's General Music Director in 2015, after garnering enormous critical and popular acclaim with the company's first *Ring* cycle for half a century (attended by the International Wagner Congress), Hermus turned his focus on guest conducting work in the Netherlands and beyond. His schedule in subsequent seasons included engagements with, among other leading orchestras, the Royal Concertgebouw, Philharmonia and BBC Scottish Symphony.

"When the Belgian National Orchestra asked me to become their Chief Conductor back in Spring 2021, I had already worked with the orchestra twice before, and I knew it was the ideal orchestra for me," observes Antony Hermus. "Its players are quite amazing, they play at a very high level, work hard and really put everything into their performances. They occupy a unique position in Belgian cultural life, attract star soloists (we open my first season with Hilary Hahn) and are the house orchestra of the famous Queen Elisabeth Competition. Brussels, a city I know well, is an exciting place for me."

In addition to his work in Brussels, Antony Hermus is set to make his debut with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France on 12 February as part of its *Présences* festival. The upcoming series, devoted to the music of Unsuk Chin, includes the first performance of a new version of the South Korean composer's *Le silence des sirènes*, the world premieres of Francesco Filidei's Cello Concerto and Théo Méridgeau *Hoquetus Animalis* and the French premiere of Chin's *Puzzles and Games from Alice in Wonderland*.

"I have a close connection to Unsuk," says Antony Hermus. "We got to know each other when I took over a programme with the Netherlands National Youth Orchestra, which is another one of my musical passions. Her *Rocaná* was on the bill. It's an incredibly demanding work to play, but the kids just got on with it and Unsuk was delighted with what they achieved. We've worked together often since, at the Helsinki Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony and elsewhere, and I was very happy to be invited for the *Présences* festival. She's one of the major composers of our time, with a very individual idiom and clear soundworld."

Other significant debut dates for Antony Hermus this season include concerts in London, Hull and Reading with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (3-5 May), a programme of works by Chin, Gershwin and Shostakovich with the Oregon Symphony (12-15 May), and concerts in Valladolid with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León (25 & 26 May). Hermus will resume his ongoing Mahler cycle as Principal Guest Conductor of the North Netherlands Orchestra with a compelling coupling of Brahms's *Gesang des Parzen* ("Song of the Fates") and Deryck Cooke's completion of Mahler's Tenth Symphony (16 & 17 December). He will also perform Mahler as part of the orchestra's 'Symphonic Cinema' series, to accompany *The Echo of Being* by Dutch film director Lucas van Woerkum (20 & 21 April), and conduct the Mahler's Ninth Symphony with the Residentie Orkest (28 & 29 April).

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**20 October 2022, 7.30pm, Huddersfield Town Hall**

**26, 28 October 2022, 7pm, Leeds Grand Theatre**

**9 November 2022, 7pm, Theatre Royal, Nottingham**

**18 November 2022, The Lowry, Salford Quays**

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**Antony Hermus** conductor | **Alice Coote** (exc. 26 Oct) / **Polly Leech** (26 Oct) Orfeo | **Fflur Wyn** Euridice | **Daisy Brown** Amor | **Orchestra and Chorus of Opera North**

**Gluck** *Orfeo ed Euridice*

**18, 21, 24 February, 1 March 2023, 7pm, Leeds Grand Theatre**

**10 March 2023, 7pm, The Lowry, Salford Quays**

**17 March 2023, 7pm, Theatre Royal, Nottingham**

**24 March 2023, 7pm, Theatre Royal, Newcastle**

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**Antony Hermus** conductor | **Elizabeth Llewellyn** Prima Donna/Ariadne | **Erin Caves** Tenor/Bacchus | **Hanna Hipp** composer | **Daniel Norman** Dancing Master | **Jennifer France** Zerbinetta | **John Savournin** Truffaldino/Major-Domo | **Daisy Brown** Naiad | **Rodula Gaitanou** director | **Victoria Newlyn** choreographer | **Orchestra and Chorus of Opera North**

**R. Strauss** *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Co-production with Gothenburg Opera, performed there in 2018)

**Sunday 12 February 2023, 7pm**

**Maison de la radio et de la musique, Paris**

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**Antony Hermus** conductor | **Elena Villalón** soprano | **Alexandra Oomens** soprano | **Sonia Wieder-Atherton** cello | **Lucile Dollat** organ | **Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France**

**Unsk Chin** *Le silence des sirènes* (world premiere of new version)

**Francesco Filidei** *Concerto pour violoncelle et orchestre* (world premiere, Radio France/Teatro Carlo Felice co-commission)

**Théo Mérigeau** *Hoquetus Animalis* (world premiere, Radio France commission)

**Unsk Chin** *Puzzles and Games from Alice in Wonderland* (French premiere)