

Our Conductor

JEREMY BACKHOUSE, who became the first conductor of the Vasari Singers in 1981, began his musical career at Canterbury Cathedral, where he was Head Chorister, and later studied music at Liverpool University. He spent five years as Music Editor at the Royal National Institute for the Blind, transcribing print music into Braille, before moving to EMI Classics to work as a Literary Editor. Since 1990, he has been working as a Consultant Editor for EMI and other companies, and as a freelance musician.

From 1991 to 1995 he was Music Director of both the Streatham Choral Society and the BBC Club Choir. With these choirs he conducted many of the major works of the choral society repertoire and in doing so built close relationships with the Kensington Symphony Orchestra and the Surrey Sinfonietta. In January 1995, he was appointed Chorus Master of the Guildford Philharmonic Choir (GPC), working closely with conductors such as Jonathan Willcocks, En Shao and Vernon Handley, as well as conducting concerts with the choir and orchestra alike. In November 1997 he conducted a performance of the Howells' *Hymnus Paradisi* and Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* as part of the Guildford Philharmonic's subscription series, and in March 1998 a memorable performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. In November 1998, he conducted Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Lambert's *Rio Grande* with the Guildford Philharmonic and in March 1999 gave a "masterly" performance Bruckner's *Mass in E minor* and Mahler's *Symphony No.2*.

In April 1995 he conducted the BBC Singers for the first time in a programme of music by Lennox Berkeley, broadcast on Radio 3 and has since conducted them in broadcast programmes of Holst (for the BBC's 'Fairest Isle' celebrations), Rubbra, Massenet and Delibes. Subsequent work with the BBC Singers included a programme of music by Phyllis Tate and Arnold Bax. He has also established a regular and close rapport directing the Kent Youth Choir and Kent Youth Chamber Choir, with whom he toured Italy in the Summer of 1996.

Since the spring of 1998 he has worked regularly with the Brighton Festival Chorus and from September 1998, became the Music Director of the Wooburn Singers, only the third conductor in the distinguished 30-year history of the choir, following Richard Hickox and most recently, Stephen Jackson.

Jeremy is a member of the Association of British Choral Directors, the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Royal Society of Musicians.

