



ROYAL
OPERA
HOUSE

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PRESS RELEASE

KOEN KESSELS TO SUCCEED BARRY WORDSWORTH AS MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL BALLET AND BARRY WORDSWORTH TO BECOME PRINCIPAL GUEST CONDUCTOR

Kevin O'Hare, Director of The Royal Ballet, announced today that **Koen Kessels** has been appointed Music Director of The Royal Ballet to succeed **Barry Wordsworth** who becomes Principal Guest Conductor from the 2015/16 Season.

"I'm delighted that Koen Kessels will join us as Music Director in September 2015. As a guest conductor with us over the last six years he has got to know the Company well and we very much look forward to working with him from next Season in his new role. He becomes Music Director Designate with immediate effect.

"I'm also delighted that Barry will continue his relationship with the Company and become Principal Guest Conductor next Season. We have enjoyed a long relationship with him, including two periods as Music Director totalling more than 13 years, and have greatly valued his wealth of knowledge, insight and support. We are indebted to him for his contribution to the musical standards of the Company over many years.

"In addition to his work on the podium, Barry has also been a real advocate for the specific training of ballet conductors and ballet pianists, both absolutely vital elements for world class ballet performance."

Alex Beard, Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House added “Barry has brought so much to both The Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet over several decades and has had a huge impact on the standards of music in British ballet. We are delighted that he has agreed to maintain his relationship with us as Principal Guest Conductor for The Royal Ballet and I’m really pleased that Koen Kessels is joining us from September.”

Koen Kessels will continue in his role as Music Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet where he also succeeded Barry Wordsworth.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Barry Wordsworth:

Barry Wordsworth has a long relationship with The Royal Ballet having first been appointed as Assistant Conductor to the Company’s touring orchestra in 1972. The following year he became Principal Conductor of the Sadler’s Wells Royal Ballet and served as Music Director of The Royal Ballet from 1990 to 1995, a role he resumed in 2006 after a period with Birmingham Royal Ballet. He recently became Music Director Laureate of BRB, and has appeared as a guest conductor with companies around the world including Tokyo Ballet, Leipzig Ballet and Paris Opéra Ballet.

Wordsworth has had a distinguished parallel career as a symphonic conductor. In 2006 he was appointed Conductor Laureate of the BBC Concert Orchestra having been its Principal Conductor for many years. He has conducted at every BBC Proms season since 1989 and in 1993 conducted the Last Night of the Proms. Wordsworth holds honorary doctorates from the University of Brighton and the University of Central England in Birmingham, and is an Honorary Fellow of Trinity College of Music in London.

Koen Kessels:

Koen Kessels joined Birmingham Royal Ballet in 2010 and has been a regular guest conductor for The Royal Ballet since 2008 conducting ballets including *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle* and the world premiere of Wayne McGregor’s *Raven Girl*. He has also been a regular guest conductor for Opéra National de Paris since 2005 and conducted at the Wiener Staatsoper, Bolshoi Ballet, Brussels Opera de Munt and Antwerp Opera, Wiener Staatsoper, Teatro Real, Madrid, Teatro dell’Opera di Roma, New York City Ballet, Theatre du Capitole Toulouse and Het Nationale Ballet, Amsterdam.

Kessels is on the artistic direction team at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp , artistic director of the HERMES ensemble (specialising in contemporary music) and artistic director of Inspiratum.

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