

PRESS RELEASE

Monday 27 March 2023



City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra

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Emma Stenning appointed new Chief Executive of City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra



The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) has today announced **Emma Stenning** as its new Chief Executive, starting in her new role on Monday 3 April 2023.

Taking the helm of one of the world's most respected orchestras, Emma brings a wealth of experience in leading cultural organisations, many of which have had innovative live music programmes at their heart. She brings a track record in regional cultural impact, a reputation for delivering world class artistic quality, and a passion for developing new audiences.

Emma joins the CBSO from her most recent role in the arts as Executive Director of Soulpepper Theatre in Toronto, the renowned Canadian company, much loved for its popular concert series. Her previous roles include Chief Executive of Bristol Old Vic, where she produced the Bristol Proms and Executive Director of Battersea Arts Centre, which was then home of BAC Opera. She was also Head of Theatre at Arts Council England and Cultural Programme Advisor at the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games. Emma was Head of Producing for the 2009 Manchester International Festival, where she delivered a number of world premieres including Rufus Wainwright's opera *Prima Donna*, Antony and the Johnsons with the Manchester Camerata and the London transfer of Damon Albarn's *Monkey*.

Emma Stenning, Chief Executive-designate, says: *"I owe my love of classical music to the musicians, artists and educators who brought the repertoire to me in new and accessible ways, and held my hand as I discovered each piece for the first time. Those magical experiences left me with the abiding passion that I might work to help others on the same life-enriching journey of musical discovery. What better place to do that, than in Birmingham."*

I have been entirely captivated by CBSO's exquisite artistry, pioneering spirit and sense of adventure. The company's mission that 'every life be enriched by music' echoes my own, and is evident in all it does, held tightly by players and staff alike. I am thrilled to lead us onwards, ever thankful for Stephen Maddock's remarkable tenure, and looking forward to developing my own collaboration with Kazuki Yamada and the creative leadership that will come to define the future of this extraordinary orchestra."

David Burbidge CBE, Chair of the Board of Trustees, says: *'We are delighted to welcome Emma into the CBSO family. She brings a powerful combination of successful experience as a Chief Executive in the cultural arena alongside a love of orchestral music and deep respect for the CBSO's symphonic DNA. Emma's significant experience of building audiences in different cultural organisations will bring a fresh perspective to the CBSO and she shares our strong belief in the importance of working closely with the people and organisations of Birmingham and the West Midlands. We look forward to this exciting new chapter at the CBSO continuing our history of innovation and high quality.'*

The appointment has been made following an extensive search process led by a committee made up of CBSO musicians, board members, management, and external industry leaders. Emma joins the orchestra at an exciting time, as it prepares to launch its 2023-24 season and welcomes its new Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor **Kazuki Yamada**. Alongside the Board and Kazuki, Emma will work closely with a strong artistic team to ensure the continuation of the CBSO's world-renowned artistic and musical excellence.

Emma will be relocating to the Birmingham area and will join the CBSO on Monday 3 April 2023, where she will initially spend two days a week, before starting her full-time role from mid-July.

Emma succeeds Stephen Maddock, who leaves the orchestra after nearly 24 years to take up the role of Principal at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Stephen is working closely with the Board and Emma to ensure a smooth transition.

Incoming Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor **Kazuki Yamada** says: *"I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Emma Stenning as our new Chief Executive. Coincidentally, her appointment coincides with the timing of my own appointment as Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor, and I am thrilled that we will be able to create a new page in the history of the CBSO together. Emma brings exceptional leadership, sensitivity and intelligence which will enhance the positive spirit inherent in the culture of the CBSO. The CBSO, whom I love dearly, will continue to be an orchestra that attracts the attention of the world, and I am very much looking forward to being a part of this next chapter, facing exciting new challenges alongside the CBSO musicians, CBSO staff and Emma."*

CBSO Players' Committee Chair **Joanna Patton** says: *"This is a really exciting moment in our CBSO story. The CBSO is well recognized for making bold leadership appointments and I am certain that together, Emma and Kazuki will pay great honour to the place the CBSO already holds in people's hearts, whilst ensuring we remain unique and distinctive in creating and developing pathways to share and connect our music making with our audiences here in Birmingham, the UK and internationally."*

www.cbso.co.uk

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Notes to Editors

About Emma Stenning

Emma was previously Executive Director of Soulpepper, Toronto's largest not-for-profit theatre.

From 2009 - 2018, Emma was Chief Executive of Bristol Old Vic, leading the organisation in partnership with Artistic Director Tom Morris. Together they delivered the long-awaited £26m refurbishment of the 256-year-old theatre, and successfully revitalised the organisation's creative life and public profile; locally, nationally and internationally.

Previously she was Head of Producing for the 2009 Manchester International Festival, where she delivered a number of world premieres including Rufus Wainwright's opera "Prima Donna" and the London transfer of Damon Albarn's "Monkey".

Past roles include Head of Theatre at Arts Council England, London and Cultural Programme Advisor at the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, where she was responsible for the initial feasibility planning for the stadium ceremonies. From 2002 – 2005 she was Executive Director of BAC, also in partnership with Tom Morris as Artistic Director. She has worked with Complicite, Oxford Stage Company and the RSC, producing theatre on the London fringe, in the West End, on national and international tour.

Emma was a Clore Fellow, winner of the Clore Prize, and was made a Doctor of Letters by Bristol University. She serves on the US Board of Shakespeare's Globe and is a member of Globe Council. She is a trustee of Cheek By Jowl and the Wardrobe Ensemble, and, from October 2022, became Chair of Shoreditch Town Hall.

About the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras, and the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the Midlands.

Based at Birmingham's spectacular Symphony Hall, the orchestra and its ensembles give over 150 concerts each year in the UK and worldwide, playing a wide range of music including everything from symphonic blockbusters to world premieres, film music and family concerts. With a far-reaching education and community programme, four choruses, a Youth Orchestra, and the new Shireland CBSO Academy (set to open in September 2023), it is involved with every aspect of music-making in the Midlands. But at its heart is a team of 90 superb professional musicians, and a 100-year tradition of making the world's greatest music.

The orchestra was founded by future Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1920, and Elgar conducted its inaugural concert. But it was when it discovered the young British conductor Simon Rattle in 1980 that the CBSO became internationally famous, and showed how the arts can help give a new sense of direction to a whole city. Rattle's successors Sakari Oramo, Andris Nelsons and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla cemented that global reputation, and continued to build on the CBSO's distinguished tradition as one of the UK's leading musical ambassadors.

Currently Principal Guest Conductor, from April 2023 Kazuki Yamada will take up the role of Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor*. Gražinytė-Tyla becomes Principal Guest Conductor alongside Associate Conductor Michael Seal, and Chorus Director Simon Halsey.

Having celebrated its centenary in 2020, the CBSO remains one of the most vibrant cultural organisations in the UK – playing great music for people in Birmingham and beyond.

*The position of Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor is generously supported by John Osborn CBE.