

Professor David Watkins, FGSM, Hon ARAM

Short Biography & Publicity Photo



While still at school, he was a member of the National Youth Orchestra and a finalist in a Daily Mirror Competition for young instrumentalists. After studying at the Royal Academy of Music, a French Government Scholarship enabled him to continue his studies in Paris and later in Switzerland.

On David's return to London, he applied for an audition as Principal Harpist at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. David says *'I was auditioned by Georg Solti, and there were 14 applicants. To my astonishment I was selected by Solti, who considered me his protégé. I was 26, and he kindly guided me through a minefield of orchestral territories but playing for him was always an unpredictable experience. It was a golden age in Covent Garden and I got to know many of the greats; Rudolf Nureyev, who had the greatest charisma of anyone I ever met; Margot Fonteyn's expressive dancing inspired me; Maria Callas mesmerised me with her acting, and the amazing coloratura of Joan Sutherland – the list could go on'*.

He then became a founder member of the Welsh National Opera Company under the direction of James Lockhart and, after a short time with the Royal Philharmonic, joined the London Philharmonic under the batons of Boult, Solti, Haitink and Tennstedt.

His solo concerts have taken him all over the world, performing many of the compositions that have been written especially for him. He has also performed as soloist with the London Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, etc. and appeared as soloist with the London Sinfonietta at the London 'Proms' with Sir Simon Rattle conducting. In 2000 he was Principal Harpist at a 'Prom Concert' given by the World Orchestra for Peace under Gergiev.

Since winning first prize in an International American Competition with his composition 'Petite Suite' for Harp, he has written many pieces including the 'Concertino Pastorale', which he played with the London Philharmonic at the Royal Festival Hall, Walter Susskind conducting.

His recording of Ravel's Introduction & Allegro with the National Philharmonic became a bestseller in the USA, and other highly acclaimed recordings have been issued by RCA, Meridian and Pyramid.

One of his most memorable invitations was to devise a recital of poetry and music with Princess Grace of Monaco for the official engagement of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer.

More recent concerts have included a performance of his solo harp concerto and his new concerto for two harps with the Budapest Strings, and a solo recital attended by the widow of Zoltan Kodály.

For many years he was Professor of Harp at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and has written a 'Method' for the harp published by Boosey and Hawkes.

David has appeared on BBC 'Songs of Praise' with Julian Lloyd Webber and has recorded numerous CD's both as composer and soloist. Meanwhile he continues to give recitals and master classes in Austria, France, Germany and Italy as well as the UK where he has, in recent years, given performances in such widely diverse locations as Canterbury, Winchcombe, Plymouth, Stow on the Wold, Coventry, Chipping Camden, Morville - Shropshire, Tanfield Railway - Co Durham, St Melangell's Church - Powys, Tynycornel - Tal-y-llin, and Markenfield Hall - North Yorkshire.