

JAMES O'DONNELL

Biography

James O'Donnell is Organist and Master of the Choristers of Westminster Abbey and, since January 2011, President of the Royal College of Organists. He is internationally recognised as a conductor and organ recitalist. He has given organ concerts all over the world, including the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and throughout Europe. He has appeared as organ soloist in the BBC Proms and at many other festivals.

James O'Donnell studied as a junior exhibitioner at the Royal College of Music and then won an organ scholarship to Jesus College, Cambridge. He studied the organ with Peter Hurford, Nicolas Kynaston and David Sanger. He was then appointed Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, and was promoted to the position of Master of Music in 1988, at the age of twenty-six. Under his direction for the next twelve years, the Choir of Westminster Cathedral won the *Gramophone* 'Record of the Year' award (for its Hyperion recording of masses by Frank Martin and Pizzetti in 1998), and the Royal Philharmonic Society award (1999), both of which were unprecedented for a Cathedral Choir. On leaving Westminster Cathedral in 1999 he was awarded the papal honour of Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory in recognition of his work.

In January 2000 James O'Donnell took up his present appointment at Westminster Abbey, where he is responsible for the direction of the Abbey's music at the daily choral services and the many great occasions which take place there. These have recently included the State Visit of Pope Benedict XVI and the Wedding of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. He also directs the Choir of Westminster Abbey in its concerts, broadcasts, recordings and tours, which have included visits to the Far East, the United States, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Russia and Spain. The Choir's celebrated Hyperion

recordings have attracted critical acclaim and an international following. The most recent release is a recording of Music from the Reign of King James I. A disc of music by Christopher Tye will follow in early 2012.

Alongside his responsibilities at Westminster Abbey, James O'Donnell has worked widely as soloist and director with many of the country's leading orchestras and ensembles. In 2011 he became Music Director of St James's Baroque. Until 2004 he was professor of organ at the Royal Academy of Music, and is now Visiting Professor. He was awarded Honorary Membership of the Academy in 2002, and in 2009 was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Music. In November 2010 he was Artist in Residence at Yale University. He was elected to an Honorary Fellowship of Jesus College, Cambridge in October last year.

Current as of January 2012