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## **JAMES O'DONNELL** **Biography**

James O'Donnell is Organist and Master of the Choristers of Westminster Abbey. Internationally recognized as a conductor and organ recitalist, he has given concerts all over the world, including the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and throughout Europe, and appeared as organ soloist in the BBC Proms and at many other festivals. Recent engagements have included Poulenc's Organ Concerto with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin at the Royal Festival Hall, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and released on CD on the LPO Live label, and solo recitals in the United States, Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands.

James O'Donnell was a junior exhibitioner at the Royal College of Music and subsequently Organ Scholar of Jesus College, Cambridge, where he read music and studied the organ with Peter Hurford, Nicolas Kynaston and, later, David Sanger. He was appointed first Assistant Master of Music and, six years later, Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral. During his twelve-year tenure as Master of Music, the Choir of Westminster Cathedral became one of the most highly regarded choirs in the world, winning many plaudits, including 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.

In January 2000 James O'Donnell was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey. In addition to a full schedule of daily choral services, his responsibilities have included directing the music for a service in the presence of Pope Benedict XVI in 2010 and the Wedding of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in April 2011.

In recent years the Abbey Choir's external engagements have included tours to the Far East, the United States, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Russia, Spain, Hungary and two visits to Rome in 2012 and 2017 where the Abbey Choir sang in a historic partnership with the Sistine Chapel Choir at the Pope's invitation.

Alongside his responsibilities at the Abbey, James O'Donnell has worked widely as soloist and director with many of the United Kingdom's leading orchestras and ensembles. In 2011 he became Music Director of St James's Baroque. He is Visiting Professor of Organ and of Choral Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, and in November 2010 he was Artist in Residence at Yale University in the U.S.A. He was awarded the papal honour of Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory in 1999. He received Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music in 2002, and a Fellowship of the Royal College of Music in 2009. He was elected an Honorary Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge in 2011 and received an Honorary Doctorate of Music from the University of Aberdeen in July 2013.

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