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JAMES O'DONNELL
Program biography

Internationally recognized as a conductor, organist and teacher, James O'Donnell has performed all over the world. Following a distinguished 23-year tenure as Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey, Mr. O'Donnell now holds the post of Professor in the Practice of Organ at Yale School of Music and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music in New Haven CT, where he succeeds Thomas Murray as professor to graduate organ majors and other students in sacred music. In addition, he will direct a newly formed professional liturgical vocal ensemble at Yale University, which will serve as a model and a vehicle for study for students preparing for careers in church music and liturgy.

In his tenure at Westminster Abbey Mr. O'Donnell was responsible for all musical aspects of the Abbey's work, training and conducting the Abbey Choir in its daily choral services, recordings, concerts, and broadcasts and at the great national occasions for which the Abbey is known, including directing the music for the September 2022 State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, which was broadcast live throughout the world to an estimated audience of over 4 billion people. He has toured extensively with the Choir of Westminster Abbey to the United States, the Far East, Australia, and Europe. Prior to his appointment at Westminster Abbey, Mr. O'Donnell served for twelve years as Master of Music at Westminster (Roman Catholic) Cathedral where under his direction the renowned Cathedral Choir made many recordings and won the coveted Gramophone Record of the Year award, unprecedented for such a choir.

James O'Donnell began his studies as a junior exhibitioner in organ and harpsichord at the Royal College of Music. He then studied for a degree in Music at Jesus College, Cambridge, where he was Organ Scholar. Over the course of his career he has played concerts in the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and throughout Europe. Recent engagements have included solo recitals in the Gstaad Menuhin Festival, Cologne Cathedral, and Dresden Kreuzkirche, as well as appearances in Italy and the Netherlands. He has appeared as soloist in the BBC Proms, most

recently in Poulenc's Organ Concerto which he has recorded with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin at the Royal Festival Hall in London.

As conductor and soloist James O'Donnell has worked with many of Britain's leading ensembles. He continues as Music Director of the London-based period instrument orchestra St James' Baroque and appears regularly with the BBC Singers and other ensembles. He is also Visiting Professor of Organ and of Choral Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, of which he is also an Honorary Member. Among his honours and distinctions he was President of the Royal College of Organists 2011–13, elected an Honorary Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Music by the University of Aberdeen, and Honorary Fellowship by the Royal College of Music.

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