

RICHARD FARNES

CONDUCTOR

‘His shaping of phrases and then paragraphs and whole acts can only be compared to the supreme Wagnerians... his concern for the feeling of a riveting story moving forward is as potent as Furtwängler’s, and it is impossible to say or envisage anything finer than that’

The Spectator

Richard Farnes has a distinguished career that spans both symphonic music and opera. His contributions to music have been recognised with prestigious awards, including the 2017 Royal Philharmonic Society Conductor of the Year Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Critics’ Circle Music Awards, and the Achievement in Opera Award at the UK Theatre Awards in 2014.

In recent years he has conducted an impressive range of orchestras across the globe, including all the BBC orchestras, working with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the BBC Proms in London and at the Dubai Proms, where he conducted the first-ever performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in 2019. His recent engagements have also taken him twice to the Symphony Orchestra of India in Mumbai. He returns to the Grange Festival in 2026 conducting *La bohème*.

Farnes was Music Director of Opera North in Leeds from 2004 to 2016, conducting productions of *La fanciulla del West*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Manon Lescaut*, *La Rondine*, *Otello*, *Falstaff*, *La Traviata*, *Macbeth*, *Giovanna d’Arco*, *Don Carlos*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *The Secret Marriage*, *Peter Grimes*, *Gloriana*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Death in Venice*, *Werther*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Katya Kabanova*, *The Makropoulos Case* and *From the House of the Dead* as well as premiere productions of David Sawer’s *Skin Deep* and Simon Holt’s *The Nightingale’s to Blame*. With Opera North he made recordings of *Bluebeard’s Castle* and *Don Carlos* for Chandos Records.

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MAESTROARTS

After successful performances of *Salome*, *Elektra*, *Hansel & Gretel*, *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Der fliegende Holländer* in the concert hall, Farnes embarked with Opera North on an ambitious project to perform Wagner's Ring semi-staged, which culminated in 2016 with six highly acclaimed complete Ring Cycles presented in Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham, Gateshead and London, and subsequently streamed online. In 2022 he returned to Opera North to conduct semi-staged performances of *Parsifal* in various UK cities.

For the Royal Opera in London, Farnes has conducted *Simon Boccanegra*, *Il trovatore* and *Death in Venice*, and *Falstaff* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He has had close associations with both Glyndebourne – conducting *The Makropoulos Case*, *La traviata*, Jonathan Dove's *Flight* and Sir Peter Hall's production of *Otello* at the Festival as well as *Albert Herring*, *Die Entführung* and *Le nozze di Figaro* on tour – and Scottish Opera, where he has conducted *Tosca*, *La bohème*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *L'elisir d'amore*, the world premiere of David Horne's *Friend of the People* and a double bill of works by Param Vir.

Other opera engagements have included *The Turn of the Screw* with London Symphony Orchestra, *La traviata* for the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Tosca* at English National Opera, *Nabucco* for New Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv, *Hänsel und Gretel* at the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, and various projects for Birmingham Opera Company, English Touring Opera and Opera Theatre Company in Dublin. He returned to English National Opera with *La traviata* at the end of 2023 and opened the 2024–25 season there with *Rigoletto*. He conducted *La traviata* for The Grange Festival's 2025 summer season.

Farnes read Music at King's College, Cambridge, where he was organ scholar, and subsequently studied at the Guildhall School of Music, Royal Academy of Music and National Opera Studio in London. He has a strong interest in music education and its place in the curriculum, and gives individual and group tuition in conducting. He has worked with students at both the Royal College of Music and the Guildhall School of Music in London. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he pioneered a groundbreaking performance with the Guildhall Symphony Orchestra using Low Latency technology, allowing different sections of the orchestra to play simultaneously from separate buildings.

In addition to his musical pursuits, Farnes is an accomplished portrait and landscape photographer and has a keen interest in astronomy, hill-walking, and enjoying the tranquillity of nature. He was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) for services to Music in the King's New Year Honours list for 2026.