



English Chamber Orchestra

Roberto Forés, principal guest conductor

The English Chamber Orchestra (ECO) was founded in 1948 as an ensemble dedicated to Baroque repertoire. In 1960 it was renamed under its current title, expanding its repertoire to include works from the 18th to the 20th centuries while maintaining an orchestral size similar to that of Mozart's time, which came to define its interpretative approach. It holds the record as the chamber orchestra with the largest number of recordings to its name, and as the chamber ensemble that has toured the most extensively worldwide.

The ECO developed a close relationship with the Aldeburgh Festival, taking part in premieres of Benjamin Britten's works such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1960), *Owen Wingrave* (1970), *Curlew River* and others. Britten conducted the orchestra on numerous occasions, including the opening concerts of the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Snape Maltings in 1967, and recorded several works with the ensemble.

During its early decades, the ECO had no principal conductor, instead working with distinguished guest conductors such as Raymond Leppard, Sir Colin Davis and Daniel Barenboim. In 1985, Jeffrey Tate was appointed the orchestra's first Principal Conductor, followed by Ralf Gothóni (2000) and, in 2009, Paul Watkins as Music Director. The orchestra has also frequently collaborated with guest conductors such as Paul Goodwin, Lawrence Power and James Sherlock. In 2023, Roberto Forés was appointed Principal Guest Conductor. That same year, Stephanie Conley was officially recognised as Leader and Artistic Director of the orchestra, after more than 30 years leading the ensemble.

Over the course of its history, the English Chamber Orchestra has performed and recorded with artists including Kathleen Battle, Benjamin Britten, Daniel Barenboim, Dame Janet Baker, Sir Colin Davis, Plácido Domingo, Jacqueline du Pré, Sumi Jo, Kiri Te Kanawa, Yehudi Menuhin, Luciano Pavarotti, Murray Perahia, Itzhak Perlman, André Previn, Karl Richter, Mstislav Rostropovich, Georg Solti, Joan Sutherland, Mitsuko Uchida, Maxim Vengerov and Pinchas Zukerman. Recent tours have taken the orchestra to Bermuda, the United States, Mexico, Finland, France, Turkey, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Slovenia and Austria, as well as to major UK venues including the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Kings Place and Cadogan Hall.

His Majesty King Charles III has been Patron of the ECO since 1977, and the orchestra has performed at royal weddings, birthday celebrations and other distinguished events, including the first ever concert broadcast from Buckingham Palace. In 2023, several of its members were selected to perform at the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

The ECO's recordings of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven have long been considered benchmarks in the discography. The orchestra has also recorded numerous acclaimed film soundtracks, including Dario Marianelli's award-winning scores for *Atonement* and *Pride & Prejudice*.

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