DAVID AFKHAM
Conductor

Internationally acclaimed for his insightful musicianship and compelling performances, David Afkham recently concluded a celebrated tenure as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España (2019–2026), having first been appointed as Principal Conductor in 2014. In recognition of his outstanding leadership of the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España, Afkham was awarded the Order of Alfonso X the Wise (Orden Civil de Alfonso X el Sabio), one of Spain's highest civilian distinctions in culture, education and science, honouring his exceptional contribution to the orchestra and chorus and his role in shaping their artistic profile over twelve years.

Afkham's international career has brought him to the podium of many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Concertgebouworkest, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Münchner Philharmoniker, Staatskapelle Berlin, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, Wiener Symphoniker, Orchestre National de France, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic and Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, as well as the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Staatskapelle Dresden, Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen and Mahler Chamber Orchestra.

With regular appearances in North America, Afkham has led many of the continent's leading ensembles, including The Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, San Francisco Symphony, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

Highlights of the 2026/27 season include Afkham's much-anticipated debut at the BBC Proms with the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España in a programme dedicated to Spanish repertoire. He also returns to the ensemble for two further projects, as well as to the San Francisco Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, following successful debuts with several of these ensembles in previous seasons. Further debuts include engagements with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, including concerts at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and in Utrecht, the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra (NOSPR), where he will conduct the world premiere of a new organ concerto by Sebastian Fagerlund. In addition, Afkham will lead two projects with the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra.

Recent opera highlights include Strauss's *Elektra* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, *Daphne* in concert with Seattle Opera, productions of Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Strauss's *Arabella* at the Semperoper Dresden and Teatro Real Madrid, as well as a new production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at the Santander Festival, directed by Rolando Villazón. Afkham has also conducted Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Staatsoper Stuttgart, Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* at Oper Frankfurt, Verdi's *La traviata* at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Ginastera's *Bomarzo* at the Teatro Real. His work with the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España has included

acclaimed semi-staged performances of major works including Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Strauss's *Elektra* and *Salome*, and Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*.

Born in Freiburg, Germany, Afkham began piano and violin lessons at an early age. He studied piano, music theory and conducting at the Hochschule für Musik Freiburg before continuing at the Hochschule für Musik FRANZ LISZT Weimar. He was the first recipient of the Bernard Haitink Fund for Young Talent and assisted Maestro Haitink on major projects including complete symphonic cycles with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouworkest and London Symphony Orchestra. From 2009–2012, he was Assistant Conductor of the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester.

Afkham won first prize at the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition in London in 2008 and was the inaugural recipient of the Nestlé and Salzburg Festival Young Conductors Award in 2010.

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