

## **Kenneth Woods- conductor**

Hailed by the Washington Post as a “true star” of the podium, conductor, rock guitarist, author and cellist Kenneth Woods has worked with many orchestras of international distinction including the National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, Cincinnati Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Budapest Festival Orchestra and State of Mexico Symphony Orchestra. He has also appeared on the stages of some of the world’s leading music festivals such as Aspen and Lucerne. His work on the concert platform and in the recording studio has led to numerous broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, National Public Radio, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

In 2010, Kenneth Woods became Principal Guest Conductor of Stratford-upon-Avon-based Orchestra of the Swan. He is active with the orchestra in concert as well as recordings, beginning with an all-Mahler CD for Somm Records released to critical acclaim in the spring of 2011. For Avie Records he has embarked on a survey of the world premiere recordings of the four symphonies by Austrian émigré composer Hans Gál alongside those by Schumann. 2012 sees the release of the second volume in this hugely acclaimed series, the release of a new disc of concerti for Japanese instruments with Orchestra of the Swan and Kyo-Shin An Arts and the debut CD from his string trio, Ensemble Epomeo. Other recordings to be made in 2012 include a disc of Franck and De Falla with the Royal Philharmonic, Brahms with Orchestra of the Swan, and volume 3 of the Schumann/Gál series. Kenneth Woods made his commercial recording debut as a conductor in sessions for Avie Records with the Northern Sinfonia. That disc of world-premiere recordings of music by Hans Gál has been hailed for its “committed performances”, “first class” and “quick witted” interpretations, and “orchestral playing throughout most assured.”

Woods’ unique gifts were widely acknowledged early on by some of today’s leading conductors. In the spring of 2001, he was selected by Leonard Slatkin to be one of four participants in the National Conducting Institute at the Kennedy Center, where he made his National Symphony debut. In the spring of 2000, David Zinman selected Woods from a pool of over 200 applicants to be a fellow in the inaugural class of the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen. Toronto Symphony Music Director Peter Oundjian has praised Woods as “a conductor with true vision and purpose. He has a most fluid and clear style and an excellent command on the podium... a most complete musician.”

In addition to a vast orchestral repertoire spanning from the Classical masters to the present day, Woods has conducted critically praised productions of operas from Puccini to Britten, and ballet scores as diverse as Giselle, the Nutcracker and Firebird. Woods’ work as an active proponent of contemporary music includes collaborations with such composers as John Corigliano, Philip Sawyers, Jennifer Higdon and Peter Lieberson. As music director of the Oregon East Symphony from 2000-9, Kenneth transformed a tiny orchestra in a remote, rural area into possibly the most talked-about orchestra in the Pacific Northwest, winning universal praise for their nationally celebrated “Redneck Mahler” series, progressive programming and innovative youth outreach. In June 2010, he was invited by the Stradivari Trust to conduct their 25th anniversary concert, featuring a string orchestra of many of the world’s leading soloists and chamber musicians including Natalie Clein, Lawrence Power, Guy Johnston, Matthew Trussler and the Endellion and Fitzwilliam String Quartets.

A respected mentor, in 2005 Woods was asked by the musicians of the Rose City (Oregon) Chamber Orchestra to found a new professional training institute for young conductors. In just a few years under his leadership, the Rose City International Conductor’s Workshop became widely recognized as one of the leading training centers for young conductors, drawing students from the world’s leading conservatories and nations as diverse as Argentina, Japan, Korea, Germany, Spain, Israel, Mexico, Brazil, Russia and Canada.

As a cello soloist and chamber musician, Woods’ collaborators have included members of the Toronto, Chicago and Cincinnati symphonies, the Minnesota, Gewandhaus and Concertgebouw orchestras and the La Salle, Pro Arte, Tokyo and Audubon quartets. He is currently cellist of the string trio Ensemble Epomeo, with whom he performs regularly in the UK, Europe and the USA.

A widely read writer and frequent broadcaster, Woods’ blog, A View from the Podium, is one of the 25 most popular classical blogs in the world. He has spoken on Mahler on NPR’s All Things Considered and BBC Radio 4’s Today Programme.