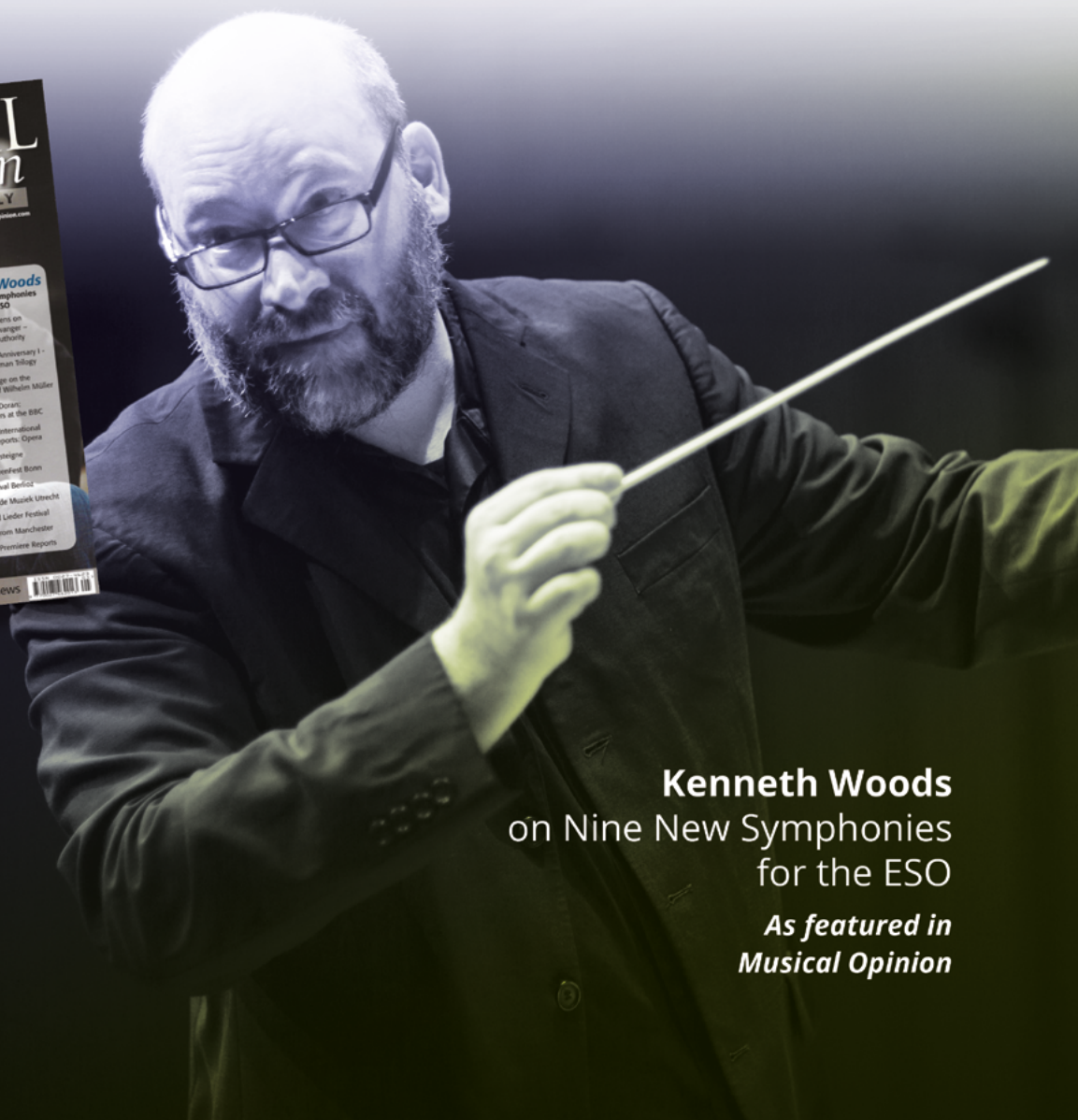


THE 21ST CENTURY SYMPHONY PROJECT

NINE SYMPHONIES, NINE COMPOSERS,
ONE ORCHESTRA



Kenneth Woods
on Nine New Symphonies
for the ESO

*As featured in
Musical Opinion*



ENGLISH
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ORCHESTRA

International Orchestra of Elgar Country



In 2017, the **English Symphony Orchestra** launched one of the most ambitious new music initiatives in living memory- a multi-year endeavour to commission, premiere and record nine new full length symphonies.

The brainchild of ESO Artistic Director Kenneth Woods, the goal of the Project is to commission a group of works that will encourage orchestral audiences to re-think their relationship with the music of our time and to give leading composers the opportunity to work on one of music's greatest canvasses.

The 21st Century Project was launched with the world-premiere of Philip Sawyers' Third Symphony at St John's Smith Square on the 28th of February, 2017.

The Premiere

"The importance of Woods's initiative is greatly significant, and to judge by Philip Sawyers's Third Symphony the plan has got off to an excellent start....Sawyers is a natural symphonist... This Symphony, like the song-cycle, is a masterpiece" **Robert Matthew-Walker, ClassicalSource.**

"What future for the symphony in the 21st century? Kenneth Woods and the English Symphony Orchestra are on a mission to find out, with this concert the first in a project of commissions and premières. On the strength of this showing, the première of Philip Sawyers' Third Symphony, the future looks bright indeed. The work is a substantial and distinctive contribution to the genre, and it was here presented in a compelling reading, impressively disciplined and with a passionate intensity maintained across its 40-minute span."

Gavin Dixon, Bachtrack.

"....Sawyers' Third Symphony is a tremendously impressive accomplishment. If the subsequent commissions by 'The 21st C. Symphony Project' turn out to be only half as good, it will still be a cause for celebration. The ESO gave this opening instalment what was obviously a zinger of a performance, Woods' detailed direction embracing both its ambitious scale and complexity of detail; the composer, certainly, seemed dizzy with pleasure when he took his bow, and we civilians in the audience knew we had heard something special..."

Martin Anderson, Musical Opinion

Critics' Choice 2017

Our critics each chose a favourite recording from the past 12 months. If you're after the perfect gift guide for Christmas, look no further!

Guy Rickards

Sawyers Symphony No.3 etc

April Fredrick *sop* **English Symphony Orchestra; English String Orchestra / Kenneth Woods**

Nimbus Alliance NI6353 (10/17)



What an astonishing year for British Symphonies on disc: the last of Havergal Brian's to be issued (11/17), the first by both David Hackbridge Johnson (6/17) and Steve Elcock (10/17), plus Pickard's Fifth (A/17). Philip Sawyer's classically structured Third, however, out-compels its rivals in sweep, scope and ESO's gripping performance.

"Philip Sawyers's Third Symphony (2015) is undoubtedly one of the finest British symphonies of recent years... the long, visionary Adagio is its emotional heart, music of searing intensity, yet the expressive fulcrum lies rather in the Arnold-like Intermezzo, full of disarming charm and gentle humour, adjusting the context of the whole. The impact is overwhelming... Great music, great performances..." **Guy Rickards, Gramophone**

"I have no reservations in pronouncing this a very fine work indeed and one which deserves a place in the any orchestra's repertoire." **Gary Higginson, MusicWeb**

"Philip Sawyers's Third Symphony is a major new work from a distinctive voice in British music... a work of impressive symphonic unity and drama." **Gavin Dixon, Fanfare**

"Sawyers can handle the resources of a modern - or smaller - symphony orchestra to brilliant effect...this is an impressively expressive piece of sustained writing with more lyrical interludes balancing the power of the massed instrumental passages." **Nick Barnard, MusicWeb**



Forthcoming works

David Matthews- *Ninth Symphony*

Premiere in St George's Bristol, 9 May 2018

Programme to include Elgar Cello Concerto with Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Elgar Piano Quintet arr. for Symphony Orchestra by Donald Fraser

Matthew Taylor- *Symphony no. 5*

Premiere in London, November 2018

James Francis Brown- *Symphony no. 1*

Premiere in 2019

Cheryl Frances Hoad- *Pastoral Symphony*

Premiere in 2020

Robert Saxton- *Symphony "The Epic of Gilgamesh"*

Premiere in 2021

More in the media

Classical Music Magazine, November 2017

Katy Wright interviews Kenneth Woods about the 21st C Symphony Project.

Musical Opinion, January 2017

Cover story- Kenneth Woods on the 21st C Symphony Project

Composition Today


Interview with Philip Sawyers

Contact

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