



ROYAL
OPERA

7 MARCH 2010

STATEMENT FROM THE ROYAL OPERA

PHILIP LANGRIDGE, CBE (1939 – 2010)

It is with great sadness that The Royal Opera announce the death of British tenor Philip Langridge who died on Friday 5 March following a brief illness.

Elaine Padmore, Director of Opera, The Royal Opera

“It was a huge shock when we heard very recently that Philip had cancer, and more so when we heard how quickly we were going to lose him.

We are all so very sad at this news. Philip was such a generous friend to all of us at the Royal Opera House, and on a personal level that friendship went back many years. His intelligence, his humour, his wonderful voice and superb musicianship, his compelling presence on stage, the many roles he made his own - his Loge here is etched in the memory, and *Lulu* only last season - all these come to mind together with the obvious pleasure he felt at singing in Harrison Birtwistle's *The Minotaur* directed by his son Stephen. All these wonderful things about Philip will be sorely missed, as well as his broad smile and great story-telling.

Heartfelt feelings for his dear wife Ann Murray - a wonderful musical couple.”

Antonio Pappano, Music Director, The Royal Opera

“Philip Langridge was one of the most admired artists by every member of the Royal Opera House family. He WAS family to us. Personally, I had always dreamed of working with him. He was part of the upper echelon; but when my dream came true with *Das Rheingold*, I found not only the greatest singing actor, but a vibrant, funny and warm human being. His passing is truly a big loss for the music world.”

Sir Harrison Birtwistle

“I first encountered Philip Langridge in the sixties as a member of the John Alldis Choir along with John Tomlinson. Since then I have had a more or less continuous working relationship with him which ended in his last Wigmore Hall recital when I wrote a song for him. He was a unique artist musician and his death leaves a large hole in the world's music”

Sir John Tomlinson

“Philip was an accomplished and respected colleague. We shared the stage on many occasions and my admiration for him as a man and artist knew no bounds. Under the stress and demands of live performance, he was the consummate professional, the most supportive and warmest of colleagues, an actor with deep insights and humanity, singing beautifully and expressively, dedicated to his craft and loved by audiences at home and abroad.”

PHILIP LANGRIDGE AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

Philip Langridge made his debut with The Royal Opera in September 1983 in a double bill singing the role of The Fisherman in Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol* and Teapot in Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. He returned later in the year to sing the role of Prince Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*). Janáček was a composer he became closely associated with and he sang the role of Laca in *Jenůfa* in 1986 for The Royal Opera. He was an outstanding interpreter of major Britten roles, singing the title role in *Peter Grimes* at the Royal Opera House in 1989, followed by Gustav von Aschenbach (*Death in Venice*) in 1992. His roles for The Royal Opera included the title role in *Idomeneo* in 1989, Jupiter (*Semele*) in 1996 and more recently Don Basilio in David McVicar's production of *Le nozze di Figaro* in 2006. In 2001 he performed the title role in *Palestrina* for the first time at the Royal Opera House to great critical acclaim. He returned to the Wagnerian role of Loge (*Das Rheingold*) on a number of occasions for The Royal Opera, first performing the role in 1996 under Bernard Haitink, and repeating it at the Royal Albert Hall and at Birmingham Symphony Hall in 1998. His last performances of the role for The Royal Opera were in 2007, conducted by Antonio Pappano. Having previously sung in the world premieres of Birtwistle's *The Mask of Orpheus* at English National Opera and *The Second Mrs Kong* at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, his close association with the composer Sir Harrison Birtwistle continued when he created the role of Hiereus in *The Minotaur* for The Royal Opera in 2008, directed by his son Stephen Langridge. In his final performances at the Royal Opera House, in June 2009, he sang the multiple roles of Prince/Manservant/Marquis in a new production of *Lulu*, conducted by Antonio Pappano.

Philip Langridge's last performances on stage were with The Metropolitan Opera, New York in December 2009/ January 2010 when he reprised the role of The Witch in Richard Jones' production of *Hänsel und Gretel*.

BIOGRAPHY

Philip Langridge was born 16 December 1939 in Hawkhurst, Kent and studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London. He was one of the world's most distinguished singers, whose musical and dramatic qualities ensured that he was in constant demand throughout Europe, the USA and Japan. He was made a Commander of the British Empire in the Queen's Birthday Honours of 1994.

He started his career as an orchestral violinist before making his professional operatic debut at Glyndebourne in *Capriccio* in 1964. This was followed by further appearances as Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Florestan (*Fidelio*) and Laca (*Jenůfa*). He made his debut at The Metropolitan Opera, New York in 1985 as Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*) and made his debut at Salzburg in the role of Aron in Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* in 1987. He first sang the role of Loge (*Das Rheingold*) with The Metropolitan Opera under James Levine in 1993 and the following year he appeared in a new production of *Oedipus Rex* in Japan with Seiji Ozawa which won the Classical Music Award for Best Opera Production.

His numerous subsequent performances at the Salzburg Festival included the role of Nerone in Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with Nikolaus Harnoncourt as well as Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*) under Claudio Abbado and *From the House of the Dead*. He also appeared regularly at La Scala, Milan where his roles included Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*), Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*) and Idomeneo.

His interpretations of major Britten roles were highly regarded. He sang the title role of *Peter Grimes* at the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, New York, La Scala, Milan, in Munich, Los Angeles and Florence, Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* for Scottish Opera and for The Royal Opera, Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* for Scottish Opera, English National Opera, Opera North, The Metropolitan Opera, in Paris, Barcelona and Sydney and Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* for English National Opera and in Florence.

He was a dedicated and enthusiastic performer of contemporary British music and premiered several works by British composers including Birtwistle's *The Mask of Orpheus*, (ENO), *The Second Mrs Kong* (Glyndebourne), *The Minotaur* (The Royal Opera) as well as Michael Tippett's *New Year*. In addition, he sang many important twentieth-century roles including Mark in Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*, Edrisi in Szymanowski's *King Roger* and Andres in Berg's *Wozzeck*.

He was also closely associated with the music of Janáček, singing Albert Gregor in *The Makropulos Case* at English National Opera, *Jenůfa* at the Royal Opera House with Bernard Haitink and at Glyndebourne with Andrew Davis and *The Diary of One who Disappeared* (Vienna Festival).

He received numerous awards, including the prestigious Olivier Award for his portrayal of Zivny in Janáček's one act opera *Osud* in 1984, the Singer of the Year Award from the Royal Philharmonic Society, The Worshipful Company of Musicians' Santay Award and the NFMS/Charles Groves Prize 2001 for "outstanding contribution to British Music".

His remarkable versatility and command of a wide variety of styles is reflected in his extensive discography, ranging from the early classical period to the present day. He received two Grammy Awards for *Moses und Aron* and *Peter Grimes*, a Gramophone Award for *War Requiem* and a Classic CD Award for *The Turn of the Screw*. His recording of *Death in Venice* was awarded the Helpmann Award in 2006 and also received a Grammy nomination.

His performances on DVD include *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, *Idomeneo*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *From the House of the Dead*, *Wozzeck*, *Oberon*, *Jenùfa*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *The Minotaur*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, *The Dream of Gerontius* and *Oedipus Rex* which won the Classical Music Award.

International Festivals and Opera Houses with which he had a particularly close association include the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, New York, La Scala, Milan, Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, Salzburg and Edinburgh. His principal roles included new productions of *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, *Death in Venice*, *Moses und Aron*, *Das Rheingold*, *Boris Godunov*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Idomeneo*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *Oberon*, as well as numerous revivals. In 2001 he performed *Palestrina* for the first time at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden to great critical acclaim.

He was regarded as one of the most versatile British singers of the day, with a large concert repertory that extended from Claudio Monteverdi and 18th and 19th-century oratorios to first performances of works by Harrison Birtwistle, Richard Rodney Bennett, Alexander Goehr, Heinz Holliger, Elisabeth Lutyens and Anthony Milner. He appeared in concert with the world's major orchestras and leading conductors such as, Abbado, Barenboim, Bychkov, Davis, Gergiev, Haitink, Harnoncourt, Hickox, Levine, Mackerras, Masur, Mehta, Ozawa, Pappano, Previn, Rattle and Solti.

During his career he gave numerous recitals together with Steuart Bedford, Graham Johnson, John Constable, Peter Donohoe, Maurizio Pollini, Andras Schiff, and more recently with David Owen Norris (fortepiano) in a tour of Schubert's *Die Winterreise*, culminating in a performance at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, to public and critical acclaim. He also performed and recorded as a trio together with his daughter Jennifer Langridge on 'cello and David Owen Norris.

Philip Langridge was also well known for his communication master classes with young singers and appeared in this capacity in Salzburg, Paris, Munich, New York, Porto, Aix-en-Provence, The Britten Pears School, Royal College of Music, Royal Academy of Music and Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.

PRESS OFFICE CONTACTS

Christopher Millard / Ann Richards

Press Office, Royal Opera House

Tel: (020) 7212 9458/ 9132

Fax: (020) 7212 9725

Mob: 07545 502226 / 07767 870517

E-mail: christopher.millard@roh.org.uk / ann.richards@roh.org.uk