**OAE Biography (2024/25)**

In 1986, a group of inquisitive London musicians took a long hard look at that curious institution we call the Orchestra, and decided to start again from scratch. They began by throwing out the rulebook. Put a single conductor in charge? No way. Specialise in repertoire of a particular era? Too restricting. Perfect a work and then move on? Too lazy. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was born.

And as this distinctive ensemble playing on period-specific instruments began to get a foothold, it made a promise to itself. It vowed to keep questioning, adapting and inventing as long as it lived. Residencies at the Southbank Centre and the Glyndebourne Festival didn’t numb its experimentalist bent. Record deals didn’t iron out its quirks. Instead, the OAE examined musical notes with ever more freedom and resolve.

That creative thirst remains unquenched. The Night Shift series of informal performances taking place in pubs and bars redefines concert formats. Its association with another London venue, Kings Place, has fostered further diversity of music-making including the innovative series Bach, the Universe and Everything.

The OAE continues to tour around the UK – appearing in the major cities and concert halls as well as towns that most orchestras don’t check in to - and internationally. In 2024/25 the OAE performs at the Brucknerhaus in Linz, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Musikverein in Vienna, Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, in Copenhagen, Budapest, Graz, Antwerp, Munich, Zurich and on tour to the USA and Asia.

The OAE has never had a music director. It enjoys many long term collaborations and the title of Principal Artist is currently held by John Butt, Sir Mark Elder, Adam Fischer, Iván Fischer, Vladimir Jurowski, Sir Simon Rattle and Sir András Schiff.

In keeping with its values of always questioning, challenging and trailblazing, in September 2020, the OAE became the resident orchestra of Acland Burghley School in Camden (London). The residency – a first for a British orchestra – allows the OAE to live, work and play amongst the students of the school.

**Andrew Mellor**
(with additions)

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