

PRESS RELEASE

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The ESO (English Symphony Orchestra/English String Orchestra) have announced the appointment of American-born soprano April Fredrick as the orchestra's first Affiliate Artist.



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Fredrick will be one of several leading artists to work with the ESO in long-term partnership as part of the new scheme.

“Working in collaboration with our fellow artists has been one of the biggest contributing factors to the ESO’s success over the last few years,” said ESO Artistic Director Kenneth Woods. “We’ve always believed that it’s better to build strong working relationships with soloists and composers we respect and enjoy working with over time than to simply populate our concerts with a bunch of one-off appearances by artists who, however gifted, never spend enough time with the orchestra to really create a rapport.”

April Fredrick: “I first heard the ESO’s recordings many years ago as a teenager in Wisconsin, and I was struck then by its passion, flexibility, and precision. As a performer, I have found the orchestra a sheer joy to work, and I am absolutely delighted to have the chance to develop that relationship further. I have also been deeply impressed by the vibrancy and power of its performances, full of an equal depth of thought and feeling, under Kenneth Woods. I am incredibly excited at the prospect of being able to collaborate

long-term with such wonderful and dynamic thinkers and musicians to re-imagine old works and models and create new ones that speak afresh to today's world".

Woods also explained that the new scheme is about more than simply inviting the same artists to appear over and over again on concerts. "The Affiliate Artist scheme is about strategic and creative partnership. It's about finding artists we can work with to commission new works, develop new projects, reach new audiences and create new recordings."

One of Fredrick's most ambitious projects with the ESO is "The Hour of Love and Death"- an immersive multi-media staging of Shostakovich's 14th Symphony in which Fredrick is appearing as soloist alongside current ESO Artist-in-Association Matthew Sharp and serving as Executive Producer. "A large part of my inspiration to create The Hour of Love and Death came from knowing Matthew and April as singers," said Woods. "In fact, the very first project April and I did was a performance of Shostakovich 14. I could immediately see that she was one of those rare sopranos who have the voice for this formidable work, but that she also brings communicative gifts, movements skills and theatrical presence to the piece that opened up the possibility of taking this work to a whole different level. The same is true of Matthew Sharp, who also brings vast experience as a theatrical and operatic director to the project. In her capacity as Executive Producer, April has further expanded the project's creative scope and public engagement. This is exactly the sort of strategic cooperation that I hope the new Affiliate Artist scheme will help us develop."

Fredrick made her debut with the ESO in the arias from Beethoven's Incidental Music to Goethe's Egmont in 2015 and created a nationwide sensation among critics and music lovers when she sang the title role in the world premiere performance and Somm recording of John Joubert's opera *Jane Eyre* in 2016. More recently, she gave the London premiere of Philip Sawyers' *Songs of Loss and Regret*, a performance of which Robert Matthew-Walker wrote in Classical Source that "a considerable compliment was paid to the composer by the exceptional April Fredrick who sang superbly throughout without a score. For an artist of this quality to memorise the music is itself an indication of her view of the work's stature." Her upcoming ESO projects also include Mahler's Fourth Symphony with Kenneth Woods in February, 2018.

Hailed as 'astonishing and luminous' (Bachtrack), soprano **April Fredrick** grew up in rural Wisconsin and trained first as a violinist before studying voice at the University of Northwestern St Paul in Minnesota. She went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music, where she gained an MMus in Vocal Performance and a PhD on the late songs of Ivor Gurney, singing with the Historical Performance department under Laurence Cummings, premiering works by Academy composers, and frequently appearing as part of the Lyric Song Salon.

Her first two discs on the SOMM label, of Barber *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* and Copland *8 Songs of Emily Dickinson* with the Orchestra of the Swan and *Earth's Call*, John Ireland songs with pianist Mark Bebbington, have been described as full of 'humane and vulnerable', with 'creamy timbre and velvet strength', (MusicWeb), where 'not the slightest distance can be felt between her and the texts' (Gramophone).

Other recent performances include Barber *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Cheltenham Symphony Orchestra, Mahler *Symphony 4* with the Warsaw Philharmonic, the world premiere of Philip Sawyer's *Songs of Loss and Regret* with the English Symphony Orchestra (forthcoming on Nimbus Records) in Hereford Cathedral, and Strauss's *Vier Letzte Lieder* with the Blackburn Symphony Orchestra.

Upcoming work includes, Brahms *Requiem* and Strauss' *Vier Letzte Lieder* with the Nottingham Harmonic Society and the world premiere of a new song-cycle by David Matthews.

What the press are saying about April Fredrick- soprano

'a **lyrically gleaming soprano**, soaring rapturously on Joubert's singer-friendly lines.' [John Allison, DailyTelegraph](#)

'a **perfectly-formed voice**, fearless in melisma, bright at the top and reflective in descent. She really did embody Charlotte Bronte's heroine.' Christopher Morley, *Birmingham Post*

'Fredrick was **an outstanding Jane** - independent, fiery, poetic' [Rob Barnett, MusicWeb International](#)

'A splendid, strong-willed Jane...terrific dramatic sense, reflected both visually and vocally... utterly riveting...passion and utter conviction...**quite fabulous, variable voice, powerful and expressive** right across the range' [Roderic Dunnett, Music and Vision](#)

'April Fredrick gleams in the title role' [Erica Jeal, The Guardian](#)

'April Fredrick captured the development of the character well, and made all the words tell. Her voice is warm and attractive across a wide range and the resolve of the character shone through'. [Alexander Campbell, Classical Source](#)

'**This was a marathon for April Fredrick**, the soprano who took the role of Jane, but she finished as strongly as she started. It was her show on the platform and rightly so: not only vocally, but visually too, how you might imagine Brontë's heroine to be, she was **an ideal Jane** (but far from Brontë's 'plain' Jane)...**These are her strengths, essential in an opera singer – characterization abilities allied to a solid register.**' [Geoff Read, Seen and Heard International](#)

'The American soprano **April Fredrick was simply breathtaking as Jane**; intonation, phrasing and sheer musical understanding demonstrated that she is a soprano of whom there is nothing to suggest she will not pursue a leading international career.' Robert Matthew-Walker, *Musical Opinion*

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For more information about April Fredrick please visit her website www.aprilfredrick.com

