

Biography | William Lai

Hong Kong-born conductor William Lai is establishing an international career across the United Kingdom, Germany and continental Europe. Currently Conducting Fellow of Northern Ballet, where his fellowship has been extended through the 2026/27 season, his recent and forthcoming engagements include the English Chamber Orchestra, Northern Ballet, the Moroccan Philharmonic Orchestra and return engagements with the Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality Symphony Orchestra following his prize-winning success at the inaugural Eskişehir International Gürer Aykal Conducting Competition.

William Lai's artistic profile is rooted in the German Kapellmeister tradition and distinguished by a breadth of experience across symphonic, operatic and ballet repertoire. In 2024, he assisted Herbert Blomstedt and the Gewandhausorchester in performances and recordings of the Schubert Symphony Cycle. During his fellowship with Northern Ballet, he conducted the world premiere of Peter Salem's *Gentleman Jack* and led touring performances throughout the United Kingdom, appearing in major theatres including Sadler's Wells, The Lowry, Leeds Grand Theatre and Norwich Theatre Royal. Alongside his conducting responsibilities, he has served as cover conductor and led company rehearsals. He is returning in the 2026/27 season to conduct Prokofiev's *Cinderella*.

William Lai has conducted orchestras including the English Chamber Orchestra, Kammerorchester Basel, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Nürnberger Symphoniker, Filharmonia Śląska, Mitteldeutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Bergische Symphoniker and Northern Ballet Sinfonia. As Principal Conductor of the Gramophone Orchestra in Hong Kong, he continues to maintain strong artistic connections between Europe and Asia.

Awarded Third Prize at the inaugural Eskişehir International Gürer Aykal Conducting Competition, William Lai is also the Orchestra Prize winner at the 5th International Conducting Competition "University of Almería", and has been a finalist of Germany's Forum Dirigieren, the Leverhulme Conducting Fellowship with Scottish Opera and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and a semi-finalist at the 11th Grzegorz Fitelberg International Competition for Conductors.

Originally trained as a violinist and pianist, William Lai has performed with both the NDR Radiophilharmonie and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. He led the Opening Night of Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* from the harpsichord as Solo Cembalist (2. Kapellmeister) at the Alte Musik Institut Hannover. His musical foundations were further shaped by early training in the English choral tradition under Sir Stephen Cleobury, experiences that continue to inform his work across both the concert platform and the stage.

William Lai has collaborated with soloists and singers including International Chopin Piano Competition Laureate Colleen Lee, Tomasz Strahl, Isabelle Bringmann, Quiteria Muñoz and Felix Brunnenkant, and has worked with conductors in Masterclasses including Martyn Brabbins, Johannes Schlaefli, Jorma Panula, Ulrich Windfuhr, Jahja Ling and Sir Stephen Cleobury. He holds a Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting from the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover, where he studied with Eiji Oue.