

Press Release

For release: Thursday 10 March 2016



Birmingham Contemporary Music Group appoints Stephan Meier as Artistic Director

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group has appointed **Stephan Meier** as its new Artistic Director.

Stephan Meier, currently Artistic Director of Hanover's Das Neue Ensemble, will join BCMG in August 2016. As Artistic Director, he will be responsible for leading the artistic and strategic direction of BCMG, including programming, the commissioning of new work and the development of the learning and participation programme. Alongside a new Executive Producer (to be appointed this Spring) he will also steer the company's resources and infrastructure.

Percussionist, composer and conductor **Stephan Meier** founded the acclaimed Das Neue Ensemble in 1993; the ensemble has worked with eminent composers including Earle Brown, Wolfgang Rihm, Carola Bauckholt, Johannes Schöllhorn, Mark André and Helmut Lachenmann (its Honorary President), with guest soloists including Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Peter Rundel and produced a series of successful CDs devoted to the work of Pierre Boulez, Gérard Grisey and, in June 2015, Sir Harrison Birtwistle. Through Das Neue Ensemble and his work as Chairman of *Musik 21*, a national network for the promotion of new music in Germany, Meier has played a leading role in developing an annual festival of contemporary music, a series of site-specific events across Hanover, and an education programme in Lower Saxony to inspire children with the music of today and tomorrow. In 2013, Stephan founded the Leibniz Harmonies international Composition Competition for young composers, with this year's competition and associated concerts taking place in Germany and China. He will continue as Artistic Director of Das Neue Ensemble following his appointment at BCMG.

Commenting on the appointment of Stephan Meier, **Christoph Trestler**, Chairman of BCMG's Board said: *"We are very pleased to have appointed Stephan Meier to what is one of contemporary music's most important, and most exciting roles. Stephan offers an interesting international perspective coupled with the bold artistic ambition that has been BCMG's calling card for so many years. He has a deep love for new music, and a keen sense, as a musician and conductor, as well as an Artistic Director, of the importance of engaging audiences of all ages with the invigorating possibilities presented by today's keenest musical minds. We very much look forward to welcoming him to Birmingham."*

Stephan Meier comments:

"Birmingham Contemporary Music Group is one of the world's finest new music ensembles, admired for its joyous, uncompromising championing of the music of today. It is, therefore, a privilege to be its next Artistic Director, and to be asked to lead a new phase in the ensemble's life. The outgoing Artistic Director, Stephen Newbould, leaves an extraordinary legacy. I am very much looking forward to building a stimulating future for BCMG as cultural - as well as everyday - life grows ever more diverse and internationally connected, and to working with the outstanding musicians and dedicated BCMG team, the composers who are such a key part of the ensemble's success, and audiences who offer such enthusiastic and loyal support."

Melinda Maxwell, BCMG Principal oboe, comments:

"I was impressed by Stephan Meier's imaginative and intelligent approach to the Artistic Director role at BCMG; I can't help thinking we are destined for a wonderfully invigorating future – fresh, different, at the musical heart of Birmingham and the UK, and connected to a wider Europe."

Jonathan Mayes, Relationship Manager, Music, Arts Council England comments:

"Stephan Meier's appointment as Artistic Director for BCMG marks an exciting new development for contemporary music in England. His strong credentials will ensure that BCMG continues to champion composers and new music. Stephan assumes the leadership of an organisation which, under Stephen Newbould's guidance, has embodied ACE's vision of Great Art for Everyone. We look forward to BCMG's continued outstanding contribution to artistic excellence, talent development and diversity and to its role as a sector leader both in England and internationally."

Further press information from:

Sophie Cohen on 00 44 (0)207 428 9850 00 44 (0)7711 551 787

sophiecohen@blueyonder.co.uk

Notes to editors:

About Stephan Meier

Percussionist, conductor, composer, and artistic director of Das Neue Ensemble Hannover, the Musik 21 Niedersachsen network project and several International competitions for composers, Stephan Meier studied percussion and piano in Hannover and The Hague, attended courses with Pierre Boulez, Mauricio Kagel and Luigi Nono, and in conducting with Diego Masson and Peter Eötvös under scholarships from the Centre Acanthes and der Foyle Foundation / Cath Collins, Dartington. As soloist and with his ensembles Stephan Meier has performed on WDR, NDR, br, ORF, at ZKM Karlsruhe and Het Slagwerkfestival, and with the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Kölner Philharmonie, musica viva München, Philharmonie Ljubljana and Nischni-Novgorod. As an expert in the popularisation and promotion of New Music, Meier has been invited to speak at conferences of the Deutscher Musikrat and by the President of Germany. He is chair of Musik 21 NGNM e.V., which stages the Musik 21 Niedersachsen festival within the national network for New Music.

About Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

Emerging from within the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 1987, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group quickly established a reputation for exciting performances, innovative audience building and learning initiatives, and a central commitment to composers and the presentation of new work. The Group thrives on innovation and invention and is critically acclaimed for championing the most forward-looking music regionally, nationally and internationally. Recent highlights have included David Lang's epic *Crowd Out* for 1000 shouting, whispering, chanting voices and two acclaimed concerts at the US Library of Congress, Washington.

As a world-leading contemporary ensemble, BCMG has premiered over 160 works, most commissioned through its pioneering Sound Investment 'crowd-funding' scheme, with a family of Investors supporting each new piece. In addition, BCMG's extensive Learning and Participation programme supports young people as composers, performers and listeners of new music through an exciting range of projects in and out of school. BCMG features on numerous CDs, including an ongoing series of NMC discs devoted to British composers, with recent recordings of music by Charlotte Bray, Oliver Knussen, Tansy Davies, Alexander Goehr, Richard Causton, and the recent Grammy nominated recording of Gerald Barry's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. BCMG has received a host of national and international awards, and broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio. The Group has two Artists-in-Association, Oliver Knussen and John Woolrich, and Sir Simon Rattle is the Group's Founding Patron.

bcmg.org.uk

Arts Council England

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves, and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2015 and 2018, we plan to invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**