



LONGBOROUGH
— FESTIVAL OPERA —

POLLY GRAHAM APPOINTED ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF LONGBOROUGH FESTIVAL OPERA



Image cr Jorge Lizalde

Acclaimed opera director Polly Graham is to become Artistic Director of Longborough Festival Opera.

The 33-year-old daughter of Martin and Lizzie Graham says: "As a family we are so proud of Longborough and have long talked about its future. But it is only recently that I have felt ready to take on the challenge of leading it forward."

The Longborough theatre was built on a dream in the garden of maverick impresario Martin Graham's family home, and opened in 1997. From the beginning Lizzie Graham has been running the shows, and in 2014 appointed Jennifer Smith as General Manager.

Looking to the future, Martin and Lizzie will continue to be deeply involved in the festival, and it is with their blessing that Polly will steer it in a new direction. Lizzie Graham says: "We are delighted that Polly will be continuing the Longborough legacy. It seems the perfect way to build on what has been achieved here."

Polly will take up her new role with immediate effect, combining it with her independent directing career. She aims to preserve the special atmosphere created by her parents. "Longborough has established itself as a mecca for Wagnerians, led by the esteemed conductor Anthony Negus. I intend to build on the spirit of the festival, which has been willfully daring and ambitious, by expanding repertoire and commissioning new work. My aim is to share great opera with as many people as possible."

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Image links:

Longborough imagery: <https://lfo.org.uk/index.php/actions/supercoolTools/downloadFile?id=3253>

Polly Graham: http://www.caroline-phillips.co.uk/_images/artists/hi-res/polly-graham-2.jpg

Notes for Editors

Martin and Lizzie Graham began promoting opera in the grounds of their home in 1991 as Banks Fee Opera. Longborough Festival Opera is now an established opera company and a registered charity (no.1087303), with an annual season that takes place in a purpose-built 500-seat opera house situated in the heart of the Cotswolds. Longborough has long been known for showcasing upcoming Wagner singers, and its summer season is firmly secured into the diaries of a loyal and ever-increasing audience. Audiences have grown from 400 in 1991 to more than 8,500 tickets issued in 2017.

The charity now also runs a popular education programme, with over 350 students participating in workshops in 2017 and even more planned for 2018. It also has a scheme for ages 18-35, offering ticket discounts at most performances. Longborough Festival Opera is a privately funded charity: with no public subsidy, the organisation relies on ticket sales and the generosity of its supporters.

About Polly Graham

Polly Graham read English at Trinity College, Dublin and completed an MA in Text and Performance at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Polly spent two years as Genesis Assistant Director at Welsh National Opera, mentored by David Pountney.

Her directing work includes *Le Vin Herbé* (WNO), *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (Independent Opera at Sadlers Wells), the UK premiere of Iain Bell's *A Christmas Carol* (Trento/ WNO), *Unheard Voices: CREW* (WNO) and *Kommilitonen!* (WNO). She was revival director on *Usher House* at San Francisco Opera.

She regularly directs projects at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and has run education projects for Glyndebourne, ENO, WNO and Opera Sonic.

Polly was the recipient of the Independent Opera Director Fellowship 2016 and was nominated as Best Newcomer 2017 at the International Opera Awards.

Polly has just made her Swiss début with *Der Zaubertrank* (Theater St Gallen). Future work includes *Mosè in Egitto* (Teatro di San Carlo), *Dido and Aeneas* (Blackheath Halls/ Albany Theater Deptford), and a new commission *A Town* (Barefoot Opera). Polly has recently founded her own company Loud Crowd.