

JESSICA HORSLEY, BIOGRAPHY



Foto: Susanna Drescher

“Jessica Horsley conducts with assurance and poise. Thanks to the clarity of her baton technique and her natural sense of stylistic purity, she conveys even the smallest nuances of the music with consummate ease” (Jiří Němeček, Lead Violinist). Her highly acclaimed conducting debut took place in Basel’s main concert hall in March 2015 with a pioneering programme of orchestral music by women composers (www.frauenkomponiert.ch). For its third season in 2018, *frauenkomponiert* presented an entire festival of music by women composers, featuring the world premiere of Agnes Tyrrell’s overture from the oratorio “Die Könige in Israel” (c. 1880), the premiere of a commissioned work by Swiss

composer Heidi Baader-Nobs and a performance of her own violin concerto by British child prodigy Alma Deutscher. The Festival’s fifth season in 2021 included Jessica’s debut with the BBC Concert Orchestra in London in a live broadcast for BBC Radio 3. The broadcast, featuring works by Ruth Gipps, Cécile Marti and Peggy Glanville-Hicks, received a glowing review in *The Times*. This Festival season also saw Jessica’s debut with the Basel Sinfonietta with three concerts/livestreams including a radio broadcast for the Swiss network SRF2 Kultur and the premiere recording of Dorothy Howell’s ballet *Koong Shee* (1921). As a conductor, Jessica specialises in music from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Her new talk-show for new music, “JessTalks: music worth spreading”, is dedicated to making contemporary music both accessible and enjoyable.

Jessica swapped bow for baton in 2010, mentored initially by Thüring Bräm. She completed postgraduate studies in conducting with Arturo Tamayo at the *conservatorio della svizzera italiana* in Lugano in 2012, in a programme focussed on modern and contemporary repertoire, directing works such as Pierre Boulez’s *Le Marteau sans maître* (1957), Arnold Schönberg’s *Erwartung* (1909), and *The Key to Songs* (1985) by Morton Subotnick. She went on to broaden her repertoire to include the major works of the nineteenth century, benefitting from advanced coaching with Kirk Trevor (CZ/US), Tomáš Netopil (CZ/DE) and Sasha Mäkilä (FI) and gaining particular recognition as an interpreter of Brahms. She has worked with orchestras such as the BBC Concert Orchestra (GB), Kammerorchester Basel (CH), the Basel Sinfonietta (CH), *Plovdiv State Opera* (BG) and the *Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic* (CZ) and ensembles including *St. Michel Strings* (FI), *les trombones de bale* (CH), Schrödinger’s Synopsis (CH), and *900* (CH), as well as for the Swiss radio networks *Rete Due* and *SRF2* and for the BBC.

Jessica performs regularly as a violist, both as a soloist and with various European Early Music ensembles. She has worked with groups such as *Ferrara* (Crawford Young) and *Gilles Binchois* (Dominique Vellard), and was a founder member of the viol consort *The Earle His Viols*, which specialised in the chromatic and enharmonic music of the early seventeenth century. The first CD of the consort, *canzon del principe*, with music from the Rossi manuscript (c. 1600), won several accolades. A second recording of music from the circle around Cardinal Barberini in Rome c. 1635 was awarded five “Diapason”. Her CD with David Hatcher of virtuosic music for two bass viols by Godfrey Finger, *Furiosa*, was released to high acclaim in 2011. She has performed and recorded in the US, Canada, South Africa, Namibia, Australia, and throughout Europe and has appeared at festivals in, for example, Amsterdam, Berlin, Frankfurt, Magnano, Melbourne, Saarbrücken and Witten.

Jessica has devoted much time to new works and commissions, being privileged to work with musicians such as Peter Rundel, Heinz Holliger, Rachid Safir, Kai Wessel, Olivier Marron and Walter Grimmer and groups such as Collegium Novum (Zürich), Contrechamps (Geneva) and the Ensemble Modern (Frankfurt am Main).

She is a specialist on the little-known baryton and is one of the few people on the planet to have mastered the solo baryton part in Klaus Huber's '*...à l'âme de marcher sur ses pieds de soie....*'. Recent commissions for solo baryton include works by Heidi Baader--Nobs, Thüring Bräm, Giorgio Colombo Taccani, Helena Winkelman, and a new arrangement of a work by Klaus Huber.

Jessica was a child prodigy, performing as a soloist and chamber musician from an early age. She was proficient on several instruments, attracting for example the accolade of "youngest organist in Great Britain" in a television broadcast at the age of ten, performing violin concertos as a teenager, and winning competitions as a young pianist. After finishing school with various awards and a first piano diploma, she gained a further diploma in piano performance from the Royal College of Music in London, but was prevented from taking up a career as a pianist by tendonitis in her right hand. She went on to read music as a Choral Scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge (BA), where she was introduced to the world of early music and the viol. After completing a master's degree in Modern History with Russian at the University of London with distinction, Jessica studied the viol with Paolo Pandolfo at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (CH). She was subsequently awarded the *prix de perfectionnement* in viol with Ariane Maurette at the Conservatoire Supérieur de Paris (FR) and profited in addition from advanced coaching with Jaap ter Linden (NL), Eunice Brandão (CH), Marianne Mueller (FR), and Philippe Pierlot (BE). Parallel to this she completed a doctorate at the University of Tübingen (DE) on the *Blue Rider Almanac* ("Der Almanach des Blauen Reiters als Gesamtkunstwerk", Peter Lang, Frankfurt/M., 2006) with the award "magna cum laude". She has also published on visual sources and cultural history, and on the Modernist period. In addition to her mother tongue, English, she speaks fluent German, French and Italian, can read Russian, and has a working knowledge of Chinese. Jessica is British-Swiss.