

Mr John Raymond Hopkins

John Hopkins, OBE was born in Yorkshire in 1927. He is an internationally acclaimed conductor, educator and music administrator. He originally trained as a cellist with Haydn Rogerson at the Royal Manchester College of Music. He then studied conducting with Joseph Lewis at the Guildhall School, London and with Carlo Zecchi at the Mozarteum, Salzburg. He became Assistant Conductor of the BBC Scottish Orchestra in 1949, then Conductor of the BBC Northern Orchestra in 1952, at the age of 25, the youngest conductor of a major orchestra in Britain.

He moved to New Zealand as Conductor of the National Orchestra in 1957, and also became Musical Director of the New Zealand Opera Company.

In 1963 he moved to Australia as Federal Director of Music for the ABC, and under his leadership, Australia had perhaps the most important decade of its orchestral development. With overall responsibility for the national network of orchestras, he at once set about varying the traditional subscription concerts with contemporary series and youth events modelled on the London Proms.

He enlarged the repertoire of the orchestras, introducing many contemporary European scores to the programs, including works by Maxwell Davies, Messiaen, Lutoslawski, Penderecki and Xenakis. He championed Australian composers, through ABC commissions, performances and commercial recordings, and personally conducted many premieres of Australian works. His interest in the music of Percy Grainger, led to a renewed awareness of the wide range of this artist's compositions. He introduced the young Conyngham to the public and brought such composers as Butterley, Meale and Sculthorpe to a much wider audience. He conducted the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in a tour of New Zealand in 1964 and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Asia and Britain in 1965.

In 1973 he became founding Dean of Music at the Victorian College of the Arts, then Director of the New South Wales State Conservatorium from 1986 to 1992 and served as Artistic Adviser to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. His recordings include numerous Australian works as well as six LPs devoted to Percy Grainger.

For eight years he was Principal Conductor of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and has made many guest appearances around Australia. He has conducted orchestras in Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, the USSR, Canada, the USA, South Africa and Japan.

From 1995 to 1999 he was Education and Development Consultant to the Natal Philharmonic Orchestra in South Africa, conducting the orchestra and devising educational programs for black communities in the province.

Recognising the importance of training young players, he has taken a deep interest in the National Music Camp Association, conducting the first orchestra for several years, and conducting the Australian Youth Orchestra in Australia and on tours to Asia, including China, and to North and South America.

His enthusiasm for teaching young musicians has never waned and he is currently Head of Conducting and an Honorary Professorial Fellow in the Faculty of Music at the University of Melbourne.