

## Philip Venables

*Biography valid for 23/24 season.*

*Do not edit without permission.*

*Pronouns: he or they*

*682 words*

Philip Venables has been described as a “*composer of ferocious dramatic instincts*” and “*an arrestingly original musical personality*” by Alex Ross in *The New Yorker* and as “*one of the finest composers around*” by the *Guardian*. Philip’s output covers opera, music theatre, multimedia and text-based concert works, sound installation and chamber music, with a strong emphasis on storytelling.

Philip’s most recent music-theatre work, *The Faggots and their Friends Between Revolutions* (Manchester International Festival, Festival d’Aix-en-Provence, Bregenzer Festspiele, Ruhrtriennale, London Southbank Centre, Holland Festival and NYU Skirball), with director/dramatist Ted Huffman, was acclaimed as “irresistibly, unforgettably compelling” by the *Guardian*.

Recent concert works include *Answer Machine Tape, 1987*, based on the audio archive material from artist and AIDS activist David Wojnarowicz; *My Favourite Piece is the Goldberg Variations* (Text: Ted Huffman) and *Numbers 81–85 and 96–100* (Text: Simon Howard). These works have been performed at festivals including HCMF, Time of Music, November Music, Festival d’Automne à Paris, Rainy Days, Klang Festival and Musica Festival Strasbourg. *Answer Machine Tape, 1987* was shortlisted for an Ivors Classical Award in 2023.

Philip’s second opera *Denis & Katya* (Opera Philadelphia, Music Theatre Wales, Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier), with director/dramatist Ted Huffman, won the 2019 Fedora Generali Prize for Opera and the 2020 Ivor Novello Award for Best Opera, and was shortlisted for the International Opera Awards. *Denis & Katya* has been one of the most performed new operas worldwide in the last decade. Critics have called it “*an intimate, haunting triumph*” (*New York Times*), “*a monumental, dramatically shattering event*” (*Parterre Box*), and “*the most brilliantly original operatic work I’ve seen in a decade... a sensitive, subtle and deeply questioning meditation on youth, voyeurism, and the age of social media*” (*Musical America*).

Philip’s first opera, *4.48 Psychosis* (Royal Opera, London), was the first ever permitted adaptation of any of British playwright Sarah Kane’s work. The opera won the 2016 UK Theatre Award for Opera, the 2017 Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Large-scale Composition and the 2017 British Composer Award for Stage Work, and was nominated for an Olivier Award and Sky Arts South Bank Award. Subsequent productions have happened in New York City (Prototype), Strasbourg (Opéra National du Rhin), Dresden (Semperoper) and Munich (Reaktorhalle / Bayerische Theaterakademie). Critics described it: “*A new brand of opera*” (*The Times*) “*rawly powerful and laceratingly honest*” (*The Telegraph*); “*A Gesamtkunstwerk of unbelievable intensity*” (*Klassikfavori*); “*he ambushes and refreshes an old art form.*” (*The Observer*); “*opening our eyes to what musical theatre is capable of*” (*The Times Literary Supplement*); “*one of the most exhilarating operas in years*” (*The Spectator*).

Philip collaborates extensively in cross-media work, including with artist Douglas Gordon on *Bound to Hurt* (HAU Theater Berlin, Kampnagel Hamburg, Theater Basel), with drag/performance artist David Hoyle on *Illusions* (London Sinfonietta, UK New Music Biennial), *The Gender Agenda* (London Sinfonietta, Remix Ensemble, Asko Schoenberg and Ensemble Modern) and sound installation *Canal Street* (Manchester International Festival/Manchester Camerata), with violinist Pekka Kuusisto on *Venables*

plays *Bartók* (BBC Proms/BBC Symphony Orchestra) and with Mahogany Opera and Ted Huffman on a 'snappy opera' for children *The Big History of Little England*. Philip's debut album *Below the Belt* was released on NMC in 2018: "*unmissable... music of forensic clarity and visceral force – but also great tenderness and generosity*" (BBC Music Magazine).

Philip was featured composer at the 2021 Festival d'Automne à Paris, including a new large-scale sound installation for l'Église Saint-Eustache, and in the same season made their professional conducting début with the London Sinfonietta. Philip was a Yaddo Fellow in 2023, a MacDowell Fellow with Ted Huffman in 2017 and in the Opera Creation Workshop at Aix-en-Provence Festival in 2019. He studied at Cambridge University and then with Philip Cashian and David Sawyer at the Royal Academy of Music, which elected him as Associate (ARAM) in 2016 for their contribution to composition. Philip completed their doctorate in 2016 while Doctoral Composer in Residence at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal Opera House with Julian Philips and James Weeks. Philip's work is published by Ricordi.

The 23/24 Season sees further performances of all three music theatre works in Munich, Vienna, the Ruhrtriennale, London, Erfurt and Amsterdam. Philip is working on their next opera.

[www.philipvenables.com](http://www.philipvenables.com)

#### MEDIUM VERSION (424 words)

Philip Venables has been described as a "*composer of ferocious dramatic instincts*" and "*an arrestingly original musical personality*" by Alex Ross in The New Yorker and as "*one of the finest composers around*" by the Guardian. Philip's output covers opera, music theatre, multimedia and text-based concert works, sound installation and chamber music, with a strong emphasis on storytelling.

Philip's latest music-theatre work, *The Faggots and their Friends Between Revolutions* with director/dramatist Ted Huffman (Manchester International Festival, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Bregenzer Festspiele), was acclaimed as "irresistibly, unforgettably compelling" by the Guardian. Their second opera, *Denis & Katya*, with Ted Huffman, won the 2019 Fedora Generali Prize for Opera and the 2020 Ivor Novello Award for Best Opera. It is among the most performed new operas worldwide in the last decade, and was described as "*an intimate, haunting triumph*" by the New York Times.

Philip's first opera, *4.48 Psychosis*, based on the final play by Sarah Kane, won the 2016 UK Theatre Award for Opera, the 2017 Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Large-scale Composition and the 2017 British Composer Award for Stage Work, and was nominated for an Olivier Award and Sky Arts South Bank Award. The original production (dir. Ted Huffman) and subsequent ones in London, New York City, Strasbourg and Dresden received overwhelming praise: "*A new brand of opera*" (The Times); "*sledgehammer power*" (The New Yorker); "opening our eyes to what musical theatre is capable of" (The Times Literary Supplement).

Concert works include *Answer Machine Tape, 1987*, based on the audio archive material from artist and AIDS activist David Wojnarowicz; *My Favourite Piece is the Goldberg Variations* (Text: Ted Huffman); a series of pieces based on *Numbers* by poet Simon Howard; several pieces with drag/performance artist David Hoyle (*Illusions*, sound installation *Canal Street*); and *Venables plays Bartók*, a concerto with violinist Pekka Kuusisto for the BBC Proms. Philip's debut album *Below the Belt* was released on NMC in 2018: "*unmissable... music of forensic clarity and visceral force – but also*

*great tenderness and generosity*" (BBC Music Magazine).

Philip was featured composer at the 2021 Festival d'Automne à Paris, and in the same season made their professional conducting début, with the London Sinfonietta. Philip has been a fellow at Yaddo and MacDowell and in the Opera Creation Workshop at Aix-en-Provence. Philip studied at Cambridge University, the Royal Academy of Music (with Philip Cashian and David Sawer) and as Doctoral Composer in Residence at the Royal Opera House and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (with Julian Philips and James Weeks). Philip's work is published by Ricordi.

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#### SHORT VERSION (266 words)

Philip Venables is described as "*an arrestingly original musical personality*" by Alex Ross in *The New Yorker* and "*one of the finest composers around*" by *The Guardian*. Philip's work is often about storytelling.

Philip's previous music-theatre works, *4.48 Psychosis* (2016, text: Kane), *Denis & Katya* (2019, text: Huffman) and *The Faggots and their Friends Between Revolutions* (2023, text: Huffman after Mitchell) have been performed by leading companies in London, New York City, Paris, Amsterdam, Dresden, Manchester, Aix-en-Provence, Philadelphia, Strasbourg, Bregenz, Hannover and Montpellier. The operas have won the Fedora Prize, an RPS Award, and an Ivor Novello Award, as well as shortlisted nominations for an Olivier Award and a Sky Arts South Bank Award. *The Times* branded *4.48 Psychosis* "*a new kind of opera*" and *The New York Times* *Denis & Katya* as "*an intimate, haunting triumph*."

Concert works include *Answer Machine Tape, 1987*, based on archive material from David Wojnarowicz; *My Favourite Piece is the Goldberg Variations* (Text: Ted Huffman); a series of pieces based on *Numbers* by poet Simon Howard; several pieces with drag/performance artist David Hoyle (*Illusions, Canal Street*); and *Venables plays Bartók* with violinist Pekka Kuusisto for the BBC Proms. Philip's debut album *Below the Belt* was released on NMC in 2018: "*unmissable... music of forensic clarity and visceral force – but also great tenderness and generosity*" (BBC Music Magazine).

Philip has been a fellow at Yaddo and MacDowell, doctoral composer in residence with the Royal Opera and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in 2014–2016, and elected Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2016. Philip's work is published by Ricordi.

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#### VERY SHORT VERSION (94 words)

Described as "*an arrestingly original musical personality*" by Alex Ross in *The New Yorker*, Philip Venables' previous award-winning music-theatre pieces, *4.48 Psychosis* (2016, Kane), *Denis & Katya* (2019, Huffman) and *The Faggots and their Friends Between Revolutions* (2023, Huffman) have been performed worldwide by leading companies such as the Royal Opera House in London, Prototype Festival, Dutch National Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Manchester International Festival, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Festival d'Automne à Paris. Philip studied at Cambridge University, the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal Academy of Music, and their work is published by Ricordi.

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