



Gethin Rees was born in 1984 in Swansea, Wales. He began singing in the choir of Swansea's Tabernacl Chapel under choirmaster Huw Beynon, an early formation he credits with his understanding of text and breath. At sixteen he was accepted into the junior programme at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff, studying with baritone-turned-teacher Alun Parry. In 2003 he received a scholarship from the Arts Council of Wales and moved to Amsterdam to study at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam under Pieter Valk, a specialist in twentieth-century vocal repertoire whose influence on Rees's approach to extended technique and pitch was decisive. He subsequently joined the postgraduate programme at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin under Katharina Bresser, where his engagement with the contemporary stage repertoire – Lachenmann, Nono, Aperghis – became the defining axis of his development.

His early career was anchored at Welsh National Opera, where he sang supporting roles in the standard repertoire between 2006 and 2009 while quietly building a parallel profile in new music. The turning point came at the 2010 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, where his performance of a song cycle by composer Mira Vondrak – written partly with his voice in mind – was heard by festival directors and recording producers from across Europe.

"His voice has an edge that most tenors sand away. In contemporary opera, that edge is everything."

Resonance

International visibility arrived at the 2012 Aix-en-Provence Festival, where he created the role of the Cartographer in the world premiere of Vondrak's chamber opera Fold Lines, directed by Stefan Murer and conducted by Lena Dahl. The production transferred to the Barbican Centre in 2013 and subsequently to the Opéra Comique in Paris. The Berlin Philharmonic invited him first in 2014 for a programme of orchestral song, pairing Berg's Sieben frühe Lieder – in a tenor arrangement – with three new works written for him by composers in residence. He has returned twice since.

Rees created the title role in Vondrak's full-length opera The Severing at the Bayerische Staatsoper in 2017, a production that became the most discussed operatic premiere of that season in the European press. A recording followed on Kairos Music in 2019. His second major collaboration with Vondrak, the song cycle Gravel & Light, was released on ECM Records in 2022 and won the Gramophone Award for Contemporary Music in 2023. A third project – a staged oratorio for Rees, chamber ensemble, and electronics, composed by Welsh composer Brennan Holt – is scheduled for premiere at Welsh National Opera in autumn 2026, with subsequent performances at the Wiener Festwochen.

He holds an honorary fellowship at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, awarded in 2022, and gives masterclasses regularly at the Darmstadt Summer Courses. Rees has spoken in interviews about the particular demands of carrying a living composer's intentions – the ethical weight of being the first voice a role has ever had, and the responsibility not to fix it prematurely.

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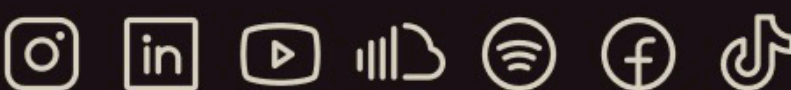
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