

BARNABY PALMER

FULL BIOGRAPHY

British-American conductor Barnaby Palmer has built an international career over more than twenty years across Europe, Asia and the United States, encompassing symphonic repertoire, opera and film with live orchestra. He is currently Music Director of Armonia Kronstadt in Braşov, Romania, where his work includes artistic leadership, programming and conducting the ensemble's professional concert activity.

Palmer's principal conducting appointments have included Music Director of the Shanxi Symphony Orchestra in Taiyuan, Music Director of the Sichuan Symphony Orchestra, Resident Conductor of the Guangxi Symphony Orchestra in Nanning and Resident Conductor of the SHIYO Symphony Orchestra in Shanghai. His responsibilities have included season planning, auditions, subscription and outreach programming, touring and orchestral development. At Sichuan he authored the orchestra's first season plan and founded an intra-orchestra concerto competition.

He has conducted the Hong Kong Philharmonic and Shanghai Philharmonic and has worked with professional orchestras and opera companies across Europe, China and the United States. Earlier in his career Palmer served as Assistant Conductor to Iván Fischer at the Budapest Festival Orchestra and to Marc Minkowski at Les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble, working as cover conductor, assisting rehearsals and conducting educational and outreach performances. His work with the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona included preparing the orchestra through the principal rehearsal period before the principal conductor's arrival.

Opera has been central to Palmer's professional life. From 2001 to 2010 he served as Artistic Director & Conductor of San Francisco Lyric Opera, leading artistic planning and season programming, hiring personnel and conducting productions and outreach concerts. Across his career he has conducted more than 30 complete operas, including works by Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, Puccini, Wagner and Britten.

His symphonic repertoire ranges from the Classical and Romantic canon to twentieth-century and contemporary music. Film with live orchestra is another strand of his work; in October 2025 he conducted Disney in Concert with the Shanghai Philharmonic. Recent engagements have also included Brăila Philharmonic, the Shanxi Taiyuan Symphony Orchestra and Chicago Summer Opera.

Palmer was born in Hong Kong and studied music performance at the Cleveland Institute of Music and the University of Michigan. His conducting studies and mentorship have included work with Iván Fischer, Alan Gilbert, Larry Rachleff and Michael Morgan. Alongside his professional conducting career, he has maintained a substantial commitment to education and conducting pedagogy. He taught graduate and undergraduate music at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, has taught conducting and score study in China, and currently teaches conducting at MIMA Music School in Braşov.

His approach combines clear, efficient rehearsal technique with imaginative programming and a particular commitment to connecting musicians and audiences through thoughtful context and direct communication.