

Bassem Akiki

Conductor, Composer

The music is like a patchwork quilt, so skilfully sewn together by conductor

Bassem Akiki

Stéphane Renard, L'Echo, Frankenstein, La Monnaie

Bassem Akiki is a Lebanese-Polish conductor and composer who regularly performs with theatres, festivals and orchestras worldwide, such as La Monnaie, Philharmonie de Paris, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Polish National Opera, Warsaw, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and Sinfonia Varsovia. In 2016, he was nominated for The International Opera Award in the Young Conductor category and recently won the Polish Theatrical Music Award as Best Conductor. Until 2018 he held the position of Artistic Director of Opera Śląska, Bytom and since 2015 he has been Artistic Director of the NFM New Year Festival in Wrocław. Future engagements include the world premiere of his first opera, commissioned by La Monnaie.

Bassem Akiki began his musical studies at the High National Conservatory of Music, Beirut while simultaneously studying philosophy at the Lebanese University of the same city. He received his MA in choral conducting at the Academy of Music, Kraków and his MA in symphonic and opera conducting at the Academy of Music, Wrocław. His philosophical studies led him to analyse the relationship between philosophy and music; after his master thesis concerning Wagner – Nietzsche – Strauss he wrote his PhD thesis at Fryderyk Chopin University, Warsaw about Péter Eötvös' *Angels in America*, 'Anthropocentrism and Theocentrism in 21st Century Music'. Subsequently he conducted the Polish premiere of *Angels in America* at the Festival of Contemporary Opera 2012 in Wrocław.

Beside conducting, Akiki's interests gather around the music of the East and the West, their mutual influence is the theme of a series of lectures he gave at the Philipps-Universität Marburg from 2007 onwards. He also led many masterclasses in institutions like Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel of Waterloo, Opera Academy of La Monnaie, and Swarthmore College, Philadelphia where he also performed Wysocka and Zadara's interdisciplinary project, *Chopin Without Piano*.

At the age of 24, Akiki made his professional conducting debut with Verdi's *La traviata* at Opera Wrocławska where he was resident conductor until 2013. Since then he has built an extensive repertoire of titles like Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Zauberflöte*, Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *Turandot*, Verdi's *Falstaff*, *Nabucco*, *Rigoletto*, Hosokawa's *Matsukaze*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Szymanowski's *Hagith*, *Król Roger*, Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel*, Adès' *Powder Her Face* and Dusapin's *To Be Sung*, among many others. In 2013 he made his debut at Polish National Opera, Warsaw with Verdi's *Nabucco* and double bill of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*.

A specialist in contemporary repertoire, Bassem Akiki has conducted the world premieres of many new works such as Nicholas Lens' and J. M. Coetzee's *Slow Man* at Malta Festival, Poznań, Björk's *Medúlla* at La Monnaie, *Orfeo and Majnun* at La Monnaie and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Mark Grey's *Frankenstein*, also at La Monnaie, and most recently Zad Moultaqa and Paul Audi's *Hémon* at Opéra national du Rhin.