



The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra where Ian Maclay, below, worked as MD for 25 years

Picture: Nick Rutter

**T**he Cambridge Summer Music Festival is already looking forward to next year as it announces the appointment of Ian Maclay as festival director for the 2018 event.

Highly experienced in his chosen field, Ian will take up the post next month.

Ian was managing director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for 25 years – a post he took up in 1982 – and, since 2016, has been artistic director of Cadogan Hall, the 950-seat concert hall in Sloane Terrace in London's Chelsea / Belgravia area.

He will be taking over from Juliet Abrahamson, who organised her last Summer Music Festival this year and who was also festival director from 1994 to 2015.

Next year the festival will celebrate 40 years – an added challenge for Ian, then, to come up with a programme fit for such an anniversary.

“Nothing too radical,” he said of his plans for next year's series of concerts, “because I think the whole essence of the festival is making the most of the wonderful venues that Cambridge and the university have to offer, which makes it unusual.

“When you're in lovely surroundings it adds to the enjoyment in terms of the performance.”

Ian continued: “But having said that, if a new director comes in and replicates exactly what went before, that would be a bit dull and disappointing and there wouldn't be much point to it.

“So we'll maybe do some late-night

## A royal appointment: The new face of summer music

Ian Maclay spent 25 years as MD of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and has worked for the BBC. His new challenge is as the artistic chief of Cambridge Summer Music Festival. He spoke to **Adrian Peel**.

performances of jazz or cabaret-style things that currently the festival doesn't do – and I think perhaps we'll have more of a mix of different types of music.

“But it's early days yet and I'm still talking to people and actively going around the venues and seeing the advantages and disadvantages, logistics – you can't put certain types of concerts in certain venues because they just don't fit, or they're not realistic. So I'm still doing a certain amount of exploratory work, but it'll come together.”

Based in Hertfordshire, Ian is keen to find temporary office space in Cambridge two weeks prior to the festival opening, to also use during it. Never one to sit still, he runs his own company, Kestrel Music, which promotes music and musicians in the world of broadcasting, recording and live performance.

During his long and distinguished

career, Ian has also worked for the BBC and the Royal Festival Hall.

Discussing how he first became involved in music, he recalled: “In most cases, people coming into the arts – and into music in particular – don't necessarily leave school or college saying ‘I must work for an orchestra’ or ‘I must work for a festival’. Frankly you're just pleased if you get any opportunity at all.

“I studied flute and piano but it soon became abundantly clear to me that I was nothing like good enough to earn a living at it, so I took the next option and tried to get a job in music administration.

“I was fortunate enough to get a fairly junior job at the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and that's how it worked out – but it was pure chance, being in the right place at the right time and keeping my fingers crossed.”

Ian has taken a great deal of pride

and emotional fulfilment in his role as managing director.

“I enjoy the company of the musicians enormously,” he said, “and I have a great admiration for musicians generally. It's very demanding; a huge amount of rehearsal work and preparation goes in.

“Equally, you want to ensure that you sell all the tickets so that financially it's a success as well. Combining the artistic and financial can be quite a trick; I've got a lot of experience at doing that and more times than not I've

managed to come out alive!

“It is very satisfying. I'll tell you what is fantastic: to devise your own programme, put it on at the Royal Albert Hall and at 7.25pm stand on the corner of the stage, watch everybody go on and see the place full. That's really great – I get a massive buzz out of it.”

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