

Axel Köhler

DIRECTOR + SINGER

Born in Schwarzenberg, began his musical studies at Carl Maria von Weber music school in Dresden where he concentrated on violin pedagogy and singing. Upon graduating he was engaged as bariton in Halle in 1984. Two years later, following the advice of Marianne Fischer-Kupfer in Berlin and Jessica Cash in London, he switched to altus.

Axel Köhler made his professional debut as an altus as Eustatio in Handel's RINALDO in Halle in the legendary production by Peter Konwitschny in 1987. In the time since, he has become known internationally as a Handel specialist, appearing in the titel roles of Sosarme, Giulio Cesare, Orlando, Tamerlano, Tolomeo. He made his American debut as Tamerlano in 1990 at the Kennedy Centre in Washington, DC, with the Handel Festival Orchestra conducted by Stephen Simon. He made his Carnegie Hall debut with Richard Westenberg's Musica Sacra in Handel's Messiah. Other projects included Orpheo by Telemann in Innsbruck and at the Berlin State Opera conducted by René Jacobs, the title role of GUISTINO and TAMERLANO at Komische Oper Berlin, Daniel in BELSAZAR and Poro in CLEOFIDE at Dresden Semper Opera, David in SAUL in Karlsruhe and Berlin, Ottone in AGRIPPINA in Halle. He sang Orlovsky in DIE FLEDERMAUS at Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, in Hamburg and Berlin, Ottone in L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA, Eustazio in RINALDO and Nireus in GIULIO CESARE at Bavarian State Opera.

During his career several composers have written parts for Axel Köhler: 1995 the part of Baccho in ARIANNA by Alexander Göhr (his debut at Royal Oper House in London), 1998 the titel role of FARINELLI by Siegfried Matthus, performed in Karlsruhe and Dresden, 2001 the devil in SCHERZ, SATIRE, IRONIE UND TIEFERE BEDEUTUNG by Detlef Glanert and the title role in CANTOR – DIE VERMESSUNG DES UNENDLICHEN by Ingomar Grünauer at Oper Halle. A particular importance for the singer reached the works by Hans Werner Henze – the part of Adschib in L'UPUPA at Salzburger Festspiele and at Teatro Real de Madrid in 2003, and the part of Artemis in PHAEDRA in Berlin, Brüssel, Wien, Frankfurt, Köln and London.

Axel Köhler is a virtuos song singer, his altus-recitals „Falsetto grazioso“ und „Falsetto amoroso“ in Berlin, Halle, Essen, Duisburg, Dresden and Rom were very successful. He worked with renowned early music ensembles such as Concerto Köln, Musica Antiqua Köln, Lautten Compagny and with conductors such as René Jacobs, Marcus Creed und Howard Arman.

In 1994 Axel Köhler was awarded the Handel Prize, in 1998 he was appointed Kammersänger and 1999 received the renowned Critics' Award of Berliner Zeitung.

In 2000 Axel Köhler presented his first production as a director: L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA in Halle got enthusiastic acclaim both by critics and audience. He was asked to direct RODRIGO at 50th Handel Music Festival in Halle. Handel's TESEO as production by Axel Köhler was acclaimed in 27 performances in Germany, Switzerland and England and is also available on DVD. In following he staged in Munich, Schwerin, Augsburg, Bayreuth, Leipzig, Innsbruck, Dresden, Palermo und Graz.

At the Semper Opera in Dresden in 2012 Axel Köhler directed the opera ŠVANDA DUDÁK by Jaromir Weinberger, hailed by the journal „Opernwelt“ as rediscovery of the year. There also successful were his productions of CARMEN by Georges Bizet and DER FREISCHÜTZ by Carl Maria von Weber, honored with the Bachtrack Opera Award 2015. The DVD was honored by the renowned Japanese Record Geijutsu Magazine with his Record Oscar 2016.

With Philip Jenkins's dramatic version of DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE, Axel Köhler staged his first acting (without music) at the Landesbühnen Sachsen.

From 2009 till 2016 Axel Köhler was Artistic Manager of Oper Halle. From the season 2016 | 2017 he is member of the ensemble of the Staatsoperette Dresden.

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