



BIOGRAPHY

John Dew was born in 1944 of British parents in Cuba.

He discovered opera on the 16th of February 1957. Bored by being forced to stay in bed because of a flu, his father, seeking to entertain him, put the radio on just when Siegfried was about to awaken Brünnhilde. Shocked and captivated by what he heard, he begged his parents to take him to the opera. He studied to be a painter and art historian but his love of the theatre and music soon pointed him in the direction of Opera. Herbert Graf advised him to study art which he did at the Pratt Institute NY, following this up with further studies with Walter Felsenstein in East Berlin and Wieland Wagner in Bayreuth.

His first engagement took him to Durban, South Africa where he designed sets and costumes for *The Magic Flute*, an experience that made it clear that what he really wanted to do was to direct. Lord Harewood advised him to look for an apprenticeship in Germany, so he secured an assistant director position in Osnabrück and then in Ulm, where he scored his first sensational success, with *The Rake's Progress* (1972).

His freelance work from 1977 to 1982 took him to Kiel, Mannheim, Hanover and Basel where he mounted several productions, as well as a Ring cycle and various Mozart operas in Krefeld.

Recognising that the choice of works that were offered to him did not always coincide with his interests, he decided to take on a position as Head of Productions at Bielefeld's municipal Theatre. From 1982 to 1995 he was able to produce 45 Operas of 'entartete Musik' – works that had been labelled 'Degenerate' and forbidden during Nazi rule. For this he was awarded the Seidenweber Medallie, the city's highest honour.

Between 1995 and 2001 he took on the Artistic Directorship of Dortmund's Municipal Theatres specialising in reviving forgotten French operas. As thanks for his services to the French culture Mr. Dew was made an 'officier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres'.

During his tenure at Dortmund he commissioned several operas about modern heroes including operas based on the lives of Harvey Milk, Raul Wallenberg and Willy Brandt. He scheduled German premieres of operas by British composers such as Thea Musgrave, Gavin Bryars, Alexander Goehr, and Mark-Anthony Turnage. He has been awarded the Carl Orff Prize for his many productions of Orff's work including the world première of Orff's opera *Gisei*.

Over the years he has produced operas at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Hamburg State Opera, Houston Grand Opera, the Baden State Theatre, the Royal Opera Covent Garden, the Royal Opera Madrid, The Opera Comique Paris, the Prague State Opera, the Salzburg Festival, the Stuttgart State Opera, the Vienna State Opera, and the Zürich Opera.

John Dew is presently Artistic Director of the Darmstadt State Theatre.

As of 2015 he will start working on a cycle of operas by Benjamin Britten for Opera Bonn.

He has directed over 200 productions of 170 different operas.