



Press Release
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Royal Philharmonic Society – 200 years at the heart of music The UK's oldest concert society celebrates its Bicentenary in 2013

January and February 2013 highlights

200th anniversary on Thursday 24 January 2013, marked by

- National Listening Day on Classic FM
- special birthday concert by the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3

Concerts

- Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Liverpool Philharmonic, Psappha and Orchestra of the Swan join the celebrations
- World premiere of new commission for dance by Kenneth Hesketh
- Beethoven and Bust: iconic sculpture of composer set to become a familiar site on the platform of RPS Bicentenary concerts nationwide throughout 2013

Exhibition

- Barbican Library exhibition, featuring rare correspondence, documents and artefacts, traces 200 years of RPS concerts and commissions

Talks, Debates and Film

- James MacMillan leads RPS focus on English Visionaries at Royal Festival Hall
- “Breaking the Mould”: Leading figures from across the arts, including director/designer Netia Jones, BBC Arts Editor Will Gompertz and Mark Baldwin, artistic director of Rambert Dance Company debate what classical music can learn from other contemporary art-forms (part of the ABO Conference 2013)
- RPS film commissions: ‘Encore’ Composers:
 - New films on David Matthews and Hugh Wood (at rps200.org)
 - London Short Film Festival premiere: *Rockhaven*, a response to the music of Brian Ferneyhough, by award winning director Ruth Paxton.

Online

- RPS200.org launches new website and an interactive timeline documenting 200 years of the RPS at the heart of music.

One of the world's most illustrious musical institutions, the Royal Philharmonic Society [RPS] turns 200 in 2013.

Bicentenary celebrations throughout the year bring the music profession together to celebrate the Society's unparalleled contribution to music, with the emphasis as much on the music of the future as the many triumphs of the past. Those taking part in RPS200 include many of the UK's leading orchestras, ensembles and organisations including the **Philharmonia Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé, Britten Sinfonia, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and National Youth Choir; BBC Radio 3** and the **BBC Proms; Classic FM; The British Library, Southbank Centre, Aldeburgh Festival** and **Wigmore Hall**. The programme features concerts nationwide (with many broadcast live on BBC Radio 3), an unprecedented 16 new RPS commissions in one year from leading and emerging composers, talks, debates and exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic, and extensive online activities. New York celebrations, in Autumn 2013, are led by the **New York Philharmonic, Juilliard School** and **Morgan Library**.

Happy Birthday! – 24 January 2013

The exact anniversary of the founding of the Society is celebrated on Thursday 24 January 2013. **Tugan Sokhiev** conducts the **Philharmonia Orchestra** in a special Royal Festival Hall concert of music from three composers who were closely associated with the Society: Mendelssohn, Brahms and Dvořák, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. The anniversary will also be marked by a special **National Listening Day** on **Classic FM** and **classicfm.com**. The day features many of the key works that were commissioned or premiered by the Society and is part of a week of special programming dedicated to the sights and sounds of the RPS. The anniversary is also celebrated by the **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra**, with a performance of RPS commissioned Lutoslawski's *Cello Concerto* (23 January); some bold assertions by leading arts figures in the RPS debate at the ABO conference (25 January) and a day long discussion of English Visionaries, Edwardian aesthetics and spirituality at the Royal Festival Hall featuring a keynote talk by composer **James MacMillan** (26 January). An exhibition tracing 200 years of RPS commissioning and concerts runs at the Barbican Library throughout January and February.

Concerts: January and February 2013

An RPS commissioned 20th century masterwork, and a perennially popular 19th century classic premiered by the Society also feature in the opening events of what promises to be an invigorating year of Bicentenary performances on both sides of the Atlantic.

Lutoslawski's Cello Concerto, commissioned by the RPS in 1970, takes centre stage in a concert by the **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** on 23 January 2013. **Johannes Moser** is the soloist (and discusses the work in a pre-concert event); **Kirill Karabits** conducts. **Bruch's Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor** was first performed in the UK at a Philharmonic Society concert in 1868. **Hyeyoon Park** joins the **Liverpool Philharmonic**, under **José Luis Gomez** for a Valentine concert featuring Bruch's concerto alongside popular classics by Prokofiev, Ravel and Tchaikovsky (14 & 16 February – Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool).

23 January – Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/Karabits – Lutoslawski Cello Concerto – Bournemouth

24 January – (Anniversary of the founding of the Philharmonic Society): Philharmonia Orchestra/Sokhiev – Mendelssohn, Dvořák & Brahms – Royal Festival Hall

14 & 16 February – Liverpool Philharmonic/Gomez – Bruch Violin Concerto – Liverpool

Commissions

The RPS Bicentenary year will feature 16 new RPS commissions from both leading and emerging composers – the most in any year of RPS history. **Kenneth Hesketh** gets the ball rolling in February with *Particle Velocity*, a new work for dance commissioned by the RPS Drummond Fund, which receives its world premiere by **Psappha** and **Phoenix Dance Company**, with choreography by Phoenix's Artistic Director **Sharon Watson**, at West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds (6-9 February). **Huw Watkins** is currently working in partnership with **Orchestra of the Swan** as RPS/PRS for Music Composer in the House, and has developed a 'shorts' pre-concert series, which showcases work by student composers. A new piece by **Chris Roe** features in concerts in Stratford-upon-Avon, Birmingham and Cheltenham. Watkins is also piano soloist in the orchestra's *Young Romantics* concert programme, featuring works by Mendelssohn (with whom the Philharmonic Society had a close working relationship), conducted by **David Curtis** (12 – 15 February).

Beethoven busts Britain

A rarely seen 19th Century Schaller bust of Beethoven will take pride of place at celebratory concerts nationwide throughout 2013. The Society enjoyed a close association with Beethoven from the start, commissioning his 9th Symphony and premiering several other major works. The bust was given to the Philharmonic Society in 1870 in commemoration of the Centenary of Beethoven's birth and sat on the platform of every Philharmonic Society concert given in the 19th and 20th Centuries, but has very rarely been seen out and about in the last three decades. The bust has been limbering up in London before hitting the road to Bournemouth, Liverpool, Leeds and cities across the Midlands in January and February 2013: www.rps200.org/rps_today/rps200/beethoven_busts_london.

Exhibition

Concerts and Commissions: 200 years of the Royal Philharmonic Society
2 January – 28 February
Barbican Music Library, Barbican Centre, London

A year of RPS Bicentenary exhibitions and displays on both sides of the Atlantic gets underway with an exhibition at the Barbican Music Library featuring rare correspondence, scores, artefacts, documents and curios.

The exhibition traces the influential work of the Society through its commissions and details the establishment of the UK's first public orchestral season and the Society's support for musicians across 200 years, from the earliest associations with Beethoven and Mendelssohn to its work today supporting young artists and championing excellence.

It includes: correspondence with leading composers; concert programmes and manuscripts of RPS commissioned works across two centuries and photos and posters from the Society's extensive archive.

Talks, Debates and Film

English Visionaries: Royal Festival Hall, London
Saturday 26 January, Royal Festival Hall

The RPS encourages people to listen and talk about great music. January sees the Society in reflective mood, discussing the pioneering spirit and drive of Edwardian culture in shaping artistic thought through the 20th century and beyond, and the impact of works such as Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*. Part of Southbank Centre's *The Rest is Noise Festival*, the *Visionaries* series of RPS events includes a talk by composer **James MacMillan** and a discussion on the Edwardian aesthetic featuring composer **Anthony Payne** and academic **Heather Wiebe**. A new film installation brings together a range of young musicians to voice their thoughts about music today and their visions for the future.

Breaking the Mould: The RPS debate at the ABO Conference
Friday 25 January, 11.30am – 1pm, Doubletree Hotel by Hilton, Leeds

For the past five years, the RPS debate at the Association of British Orchestras Annual Conference has proved a catalyst for meaty discussions on cultural conundrums. This year, the debate asks what classical music can learn from other cultural disciplines, what can be done to entice the discerning consumer and asks whether programmers are being bold enough? Director/designer **Netia Jones**, **Will Gompertz**, BBC Arts Editor and **Mark Baldwin**, artistic director of Rambert Dance Company will all feature on the panel.

Film: Composer Encores

RPS/BBC scheme *Encore* gives a second hearing to works of distinction that, after their premiere, have largely disappeared from view. With a focus on chamber works, this season's *Encore* includes live performances nationwide and broadcasts on BBC Radio 3. As part of *Encore*, the RPS has commissioned a series of films that offer a sideways view of the composers and their music. Distinguished film-maker **Barrie Gavin**'s film on **David Matthews**, and a feature on **Hugh Wood**, both feature online at rps200.org from January. Award-winning young director **Ruth Paxton**'s response to **Brian Ferneyhough**'s *Prometheus*, *Rockhaven*, premieres at the London Short Film Festival (ICA Cinema 2, 8 – 11 January, showings 3.30 - 5.30pm).

Online

rps200.org

The Royal Philharmonic Society's new website, featuring an interactive timeline of 200 years of RPS history goes online in the New Year.

Full details of all RPS 200 events at: www.rps200.org

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PLEASE NOTE: There is a range of images now available to illustrate the Royal Philharmonic Society's Bicentenary, including archive material from the RPS Archive at the British Library and the Society's own collection of photos and memorabilia

Notes: About the Royal Philharmonic Society

philharmonic: *adj. devoted to music; music loving*

The Royal Philharmonic Society is for people who love music and live music making and who want to ensure a vibrant future for classical music. It offers support to talented young performers and composers, champions excellence and encourages audiences to listen, and talk about, great music. Watch what our members have to say in **My RPS www.rps200.org**

The Society's work is supported by many leading musicians, including distinguished RPS Gold Medallists **Sir Simon Rattle, Dame Janet Baker, Dame Mitsuko Uchida, Thomas Quasthoff, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Bernard Haitink, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Alfred Brendel, Placido Domingo, Pierre Boulez, Claudio Abbado** and **Henri Dutilleux**. The RPS receives no public funding. It is a registered charity supported by member subscriptions, partnerships and the generosity of individual donors.

To mark the achievements of distinguished practitioners across the industry the Society presents the annual RPS Music Awards, the UK's leading awards for live music; the Leslie Boosey Award, for those who have made an outstanding contribution to further contemporary music in the UK, often in a 'back stage' capacity; the Salomon Prize, for orchestral musicians; Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society, for services to music, which has been awarded to composers, conductors, performers, patrons, commentators programmers and educationalists; and the Society's highest honour, the RPS Gold Medal.

The Society's artistic activities focus on opportunities for composers and young musicians and through a programme of audience development, awards and lectures it seeks to raise the public consciousness of the finest music making today and to create a forum for debate about the direction of classical music.

The history of the Royal Philharmonic Society is also the history of two centuries of classical music in Britain. In 1813, the aims of the fledgling Philharmonic Society were '*to promote the performance, in the most perfect manner possible, of the best and most approved instrumental music*' and to '*encourage an appreciation by the public in the art of music*'. The Philharmonic Society was determined to make a case for serious music and lost no time in forming associations with composers, including Beethoven. Audiences for Philharmonic Society concerts were unified in '*one great object: the love of their art.*' By founding the Philharmonic Society, British musicians opened the doors to the world's best music and performers, and created a channel of communication that has hummed ever since. These aims hold true today and 200 years on, the Society still stands at the heart of music in the UK.

Royal Philharmonic Society:

*Champions of Excellence
Creative thinking for Music
Understanding Music*

Did you know? Twenty facts from two hundred years of the RPS...

- 1 The Philharmonic Society was born on 24 January 1813 when a group of professional musicians met at 17 Manchester Street, London, the home of Henry Dance.
- 2 The Philharmonic Society received its Royal moniker in 1913 to mark its centenary; the Society's Patron is Her Majesty the Queen. Its first 'Royal Command performance' was in 1843.
- 3 The annual Philharmonic season of concerts neatly coincided with the 'London season', when Parliament sat and high society was in town. Mendelssohn's final concert with the Society in 1847 attracted '*numerous attendance of rank and fashion*'.
- 4 Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, commissioned by the Society in 1822, is still the most requested work on BBC Desert Island Discs. *Ode To Joy* has featured in over 715 programmes since the show began 70 years ago.
- 5 An early Philharmonic superstar was the virtuoso double bassist Domenico Dragonetti. He brought his dog Carlo to performances and commanded higher fees than almost any other player.
- 6 Nearly half of the works commissioned or dedicated to the RPS since 1813 have been commissioned since 2000.
- 7 The RPS Archives at the British Library include autograph letters from Albéniz, Bax, Berlioz, Brahms, Britten, Bruch, Busoni, Clementi, Coleridge-Taylor, Debussy, Delibes, Delius, Dvořák, Elgar, Gounod, Grieg, Holst, Kodaly, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, Rossini, Saint-Saëns, Sibelius, Ethel Smyth, Spohr, Stainer, Stanford, Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Tippett and Wagner (to name just a few).
- 8 Early directors and conductors were given engraved ivory tickets for Philharmonic Society performances, now housed in the RPS Archives.
- 9 The RPS Gold Medal is one of the most privileged honours in music; fewer than 100 medals have been presented since 1871. Pianist Mitsuko Uchida is the most recent recipient.
- 10 Honorary Membership of the RPS is awarded in recognition of services to music. Since 1826, when the first recipient was Carl Maria von Weber, Honorary Membership has been awarded fewer than 130 times. Recent recipients include conductor Sir Mark Elder and composer George Benjamin.
- 11 Wagner was musical director of the 1855 Philharmonic Society Season and conducted all 8 concerts. To Wagner, the worst thing about London was 'the worthlessness, insolence, venality & vulgarity of the press'. He hated the weather too!
- 12 The RPS continued to give concerts throughout two world wars. During World War II, the Society stepped in for the BBC to mount the Proms of 1940 and 1941.
- 13 During World War I, as well as underwriting every season, Sir Thomas Beecham conducted all but five concerts. A performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony scheduled for March 1916, was cancelled due to the problems of assembling a chorus at a time of '*difficulties of transport and the abandonment of railway concessions*'
- 14 Planetary intervention: The first public performance of Gustav Holst's *The Planets* (minus "Venus" and "Neptune") was given in London under the auspices of the Royal Philharmonic Society on 27 February 1919, conducted by Adrian Boult.
- 15 Schaller's Beethoven bust was given to the Philharmonic Society in 1870 in recognition of its kindness to Beethoven during his final years. The Society's conductor, the indefatigable W.G Cusins, volunteered to collect it and made the journey to Budapest '*without any difficulty, though trains were delayed on account of the conveyance of troops*'.
- 16 In 1936, seven fellows asked '*that the Society not include so much modern music in the programmes*'. Had they taken a dislike to RPS commissioned Vaughan Williams's *4th Symphony* or Walton's *Viola Concerto* earlier that season?
- 17 Today, RPS membership is a 50/50 split between professional musicians and music lovers.
- 18 Before they were famous... Stephen Hough, Alina Ibragimova and composer Julian Anderson are just a few of the world class musicians that the Society has supported with grants and awards during their formative years. Conductors Edward Gardner, Gustavo Dudamel and tenor Ian Bostridge are amongst those spotted by the Society early in their careers and awarded the RPS Music Award for Young Artists.
- 19 RPS Music Awards speakers have often raised debate (and an eyebrow or two). Artist Grayson Perry remains the only speaker to date to wear an inflatable PVC dress.
- 20 The RPS has been at the heart of music in the UK for 200 years – "*for the love of music*".