

Press Release

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John Stephens awarded Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society

John Stephens has been made an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society in recognition of his outstanding services to music education. A rare honour, the award has only been presented 130 times since the first honorary membership was made to Carl Maria von Weber in 1826.

John Stephens has been a pioneering figure in British music education for many decades. As Staff Inspector for Music at the ILEA, from 1986 until 1989, he oversaw the development of the London Schools Symphony Orchestra to great artistic heights and also instigated many innovative educational initiatives in London schools, including the first schools educational projects of the Royal Opera House and the London Sinfonietta. He also chaired the National Curriculum Working Group for Music in the 1990s bringing his knowledge and wisdom to bear to ensure that the curriculum embodied innovative ideas about creativity in music, as well as a strong basis for the learning of core musical skills. He has been a music advisor to the Royal Opera House, Wigmore Hall, London Symphony Orchestra, Trinity College of Music, Youth Music and many other organisations, and is a board member of Britten Sinfonia. In 1999, he received the OBE for services to music education.

Commenting on the award of RPS Honorary Membership to John Stephens, Rosemary Johnson, RPS Executive Director said:

"The Royal Philharmonic Society is delighted to present Honorary Membership to John Stephens. John has been a valued member of the RPS community, both serving on and chairing the Education (now the Learning and Participation) Jury of the RPS Music Awards. He brings to everything he does experience, astuteness, an incisive and clear mind, a respect for colleagues and, above all, a belief in the creative abilities of young people and in the power of music to enhance their lives."

On receiving the award, John Stephens commented:

"There is a great reservoir of latent musical talent in our schools, conservatoires and universities and I have been privileged to see that develop over the last sixty years. That talent flourishes when music educators and professional musicians come together to support, nurture and inspire - but most of all to make music together."

Musical talent is not prescribed by parental income or post-code; it is not confined by either gender or ethnic background; it is not restricted by musical genre or idiom. Quite straightforwardly, it is at the heart of every civilised community. Politicians and parents; teachers and musicians must all ensure that young people have the opportunity to develop their talent."

John Stephens will be presented with RPS Honorary Membership at the **LSO Discovery Celebration Concert on Thursday 28 June at the Barbican** by music animateur and fellow RPS Honorary Member, **Richard McNicol**, surrounded by music makers from local schools and musicians of the London Symphony Orchestra. Jeff Moore's 'River Journey', commissioned by John Stephens especially for the LSO and primary schools close to LSO St Luke's, opens the programme.

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Notes:

Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society is given in recognition of outstanding services to music. Illustrious Honorary Members have included Rossini (1839), Brahms (1882), Clara Schumann (1887), Stravinsky (1921), Aaron Copland (1970), Paul Sacher (1991) Lady Evelyn Barbirolli (2001) and most recently, the founder of El Sistema, José Antonio Abreu (2008) Sir Brian McMaster (2009) Graham Johnson, Fanny Waterman (2010) and George Benjamin, Tony Fell, Sir Mark Elder (2011).

Royal Philharmonic Society

The Royal Philharmonic Society [RPS] is a charity dedicated to creating a future for music through the encouragement of creativity, the promotion of understanding and the recognition of excellence.

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 – from programmers to publishers; the newly launched Salomon Prize, for orchestral musicians (with the inaugural award recently presented to Hallé double bass player Beatrice Schirmer); Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society, for services to music and which has been awarded to composers, conductors, performers, patrons, commentators programmers and educationalists; and the society's highest honour, the RPS Gold Medal. Current recipients of the RPS Gold Medal are: Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Janet Baker, Bernard Haitink, Alfred Brendel, Colin Davis, Elliott Carter, Pierre Boulez, Simon Rattle, Plácido Domingo, Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Henri Dutilleux and Thomas Quasthoff.

The Society's artistic activities focus on 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. Over the past decade, the Royal Philharmonic Society has championed the importance of placing music at the heart of learning through awards of RPS Honorary Membership to Jose Antonio Abreu, founder of El Sistema (2008), and Richard McNicol (2004) and by creating two RPS Music Awards for Learning and Participation, and for Audiences and Engagement.

The RPS celebrates its bicentenary in 2013. It was formed on 24 January 1813 with the aim 'to promote the performance, in the most perfect manner possible of the best and most approved instrumental music', which it did principally by giving regular public orchestral concerts in London, including through two world wars.