



Press Release
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Royal Philharmonic Society marks its Bicentenary with series of awards for international music makers, in association with the British Council.

Musical visionaries working in Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Afghanistan, Brazil and USA recognised with rarely awarded Royal Philharmonic Society Honorary Memberships.

- **Awards to be made at 'Oscars' of live classical music, RPS Music Awards, on Tuesday 14 May.**

Five extraordinary music makers on four continents who have put music at the heart of some of the most challenged communities in the world, supported young musicians and made a profound difference to diversity in music making, have each been awarded one of the UK's most prestigious musical honours – **Royal Philharmonic Society Honorary Membership.**

- **Armand Diangienda:** A former airline pilot who founded a symphony orchestra in one of the poorest cities on earth, Kinshasa, DR of the Congo
- **Dr Ahmad Sarmast:** the founder of Afghanistan's first national music school in Kabul
- British viola player **Rosemary Nalden**, founder of Buskaid, who persuaded distinguished musicians to busk at British railway stations to raise funds for a string project in South Africa, and now directs the thriving stringed instrument school in Diepkloof, Soweto.
- International pianist (and former winner of the Leeds Piano Competition) **Ricardo Castro**, who established a flourishing youth music programme in Bahià, Brazil.
- **Aaron P. Dworkin**, the founder of the Sphinx Organization, which gives opportunities and assistance to aspiring Black and Latino musicians in the USA. Sphinx's mission is for classical music to embrace the diversity inherent in the society that it strives to serve. Mr Dworkin was President Obama's first appointee to the US National Council on the Arts.

The International RPS Honorary Memberships are given in association with the British Council and in partnership with The Guardian.

A rare honour, RPS Honorary Membership has only been presented 131 times since the first honorary membership was made to composer Carl Maria von Weber in 1826. The international RPS Honorary Memberships will be presented at the annual 'Oscars' for live classical music, the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards in London on the evening of **Tuesday 14 May**, and feature in a special RPS Music Awards programme on **BBC Radio 3 at 2pm on Sunday 19 May**.

Further details of the work of all five recipients can be found in 'notes to editors' at the end of this release. In addition to the presentation of the awards from British Council Chairman Sir Vernon Ellis at the RPS Music Awards ceremony, the recipients will talk about their work and meet with key musical and arts figures at a special morning event on Tuesday 14 May at the British Council.*

John Gilhooly, Chairman of the Royal Philharmonic Society comments:

"In its Bicentenary year, the Royal Philharmonic Society is looking outwards and has chosen to honour these musicians, who understand the fundamental importance of culture in society and its potential to change lives. Each has shown tenacity and vision, and each is driven by a "love of their art" which is very much in keeping with the founding principles of the RPS. In the UK, the arts are often regarded as an unnecessary luxury. These awards are a salutary reminder of why culture matters."

Cathy Graham, Director of Music at the British Council comments:

"During my time as Director of Music at the British Council I have been inspired and humbled by encounters with individuals all over the world whose passion for and belief in the power of music has changed the lives of individuals, communities and society. As a member of the Royal Philharmonic Society and a keen supporter of its mission, I am truly delighted to be able to bring the British Council's own mission to this partnership – to build trust and understanding between the UK and the rest of the world through the sharing of knowledge, creativity and art – and to bring our honoured recipients to the UK to share their experiences with us."

About the RPS Music Awards

The Royal Philharmonic Society has been at the heart of music for 200 years and is dedicated to creating a future for music. The RPS Music Awards, presented in association with BBC Radio 3, are the highest recognition for live classical music making in the United Kingdom and reflect the Society's guiding principles of Excellence, Creativity and Understanding. They were set up in 1989 to celebrate the outstanding musical achievements of both young and established, British and International musicians, with winners in 13 categories decided by independent, eminent juries from the music profession. The awards honour a broad sweep of live music making including categories for performers, composers, inspirational arts organisations learning, participation and engagement. The list of winners since 1989 reads as a roll call of the finest living musicians.

Winners of the RPS Music Awards will be announced and presented with trophies by Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medallist **Dame Janet Baker** at a special ceremony at London's Dorchester Hotel on Tuesday 14 May, presented by BBC Radio 3's Sara Mohr-Pietsch and Sean Rafferty. **BBC Radio 3 will broadcast a special programme devoted to this year's RPS Music Awards at 2pm on Sunday 19 May.**

Further press information/interview requests/images from:
Sophie Cohen on + 44 (0)20 7428 9850 07711 551 787
sophiecohen@blueyonder.co.uk

Press information about the British Council from:
Alex Bratt on +44 (0)20 7 389 4872



*** RPS/British Council Special Event – 10am, Tuesday 14 May**

Members of the press are welcome to attend the morning event at the British Council on Tuesday 14 May, subject to availability. Pre-booking essential. The morning will include a short presentation by each of the recipients, followed by the opportunity for questions, networking and in-depth discussion. Please contact Sophie Cohen or Alex Bratt for further details or to register interest.

Notes:

Further details about RPS Honorary Membership, including a full list of previous recipients can be seen at www.rps200.org

Further details about RPS Music Awards at www.rpsmusicawards.com

International Royal Philharmonic Society Honorary Memberships

The recipients

Ricardo Castro	Neojibá – Núcleos Estaduais de Orquestras Juvenis e Infantis da Bahia	Brazil
Armand Diangienda	L’Orchestre Symphonique Kimbanguiste	Kinshasa, DR Congo
Aaron P. Dworkin	Sphinx	USA
Rosemary Nalden	Buskaid	Diepkloof, Soweto South Africa
Dr Ahmad Sarmast	Afghanistan National Institute of Music	Kabul, Afghanistan

About the Royal Philharmonic Society

philharmonic: adj. devoted to music; music loving

The Royal Philharmonic Society is celebrating its bicentenary throughout 2013. The 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. 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 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.

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. rps200.org [twitter @royalphilsoc](https://twitter.com/royalphilsoc)

About the British Council

The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We are a Royal Charter charity, established as the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations.

We work in more than 100 countries, and our 7000 staff – including 2000 teachers – work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year through English, arts, education and society programmes.

We earn over 75% of our annual turnover of £739 million from services which customers pay for, education and development contracts we bid for, and from partnerships. A UK Government grant provides the remaining 25%. We match every £1 of core public funding with over £3 earned in pursuit of our charitable purpose.

For more information, please visit: britishcouncil.org

You can also keep in touch with the British Council through twitter.com/britishcouncil and blog.britishcouncil.org/.

Notes to Editors:

International RPS Honorary Memberships – Recipient Biographies

Ricardo Castro NEOJIBA, Bahia, Brazil

Ricardo Castro is the Founder and General Director of NEOJIBA – *Núcleos Estaduais de Orquestras Juvenis e Infantis da Bahia*. He is also the Artistic Director of the Bahia Youth Symphony Orchestra and teaches at the *Lausanne Haute École de Musique* in Switzerland.

Ricardo Castro has an international career as a pianist and won the 1993 Leeds International Piano Competition (the unique Latin- American winner in the competition's history). However, since the founding of NEOJIBA, he has put all his efforts into developing in Bahia an initiative which is solid enough to survive government changes, in the hope that others will follow the example in the rest of Brazil. Since 2007 the NEOJIBA has offered the possibility of change in the lives of children and young people through the collective practice of music and by acquiring the essential tools that allow them to reach the full extent of their capabilities. NEOJIBA's success is demonstrated by the high level of excellence achieved by the musicians of his orchestras.

NEOJIBA is based on Venezuela's "El Sistema" programme and has a Centre for Management and Training – NGF – in Salvador, Bahia, where the main activities occurs every day. With around 260 members from 6 to 28 years, the NGF has 3 different orchestras and one choral, performing, teaching and spreading the "El Sistema" methodology in five other Centres in the state of Bahia, touching directly more than 900 children and youth. The programme provides free musical instruments, rehearsal and teaching of music theory by qualified professionals, transportation assistance and a snack. The members of the NGF also receive a scholarship. NEOJIBA is a priority program of the Government of Bahia and a pioneer in Brazil, run by the Association of Friends of Youth and Children Orchestras and NEOJIBA - AOJIN, with maintenance of the Secretariat of Culture of the State and support of the *Teatro Castro Alves*.

Born in Brazil, Ricardo Castro began to play the piano at three and his musical studies with Esther Cardoso started at the age of five when he was exceptionally accepted at the Music School of the Federal University of Bahia. He appeared for the first time in public three years later and played Haydn's *D Major Concerto* at the age of 10. After he studied in Europe with Maria Tipo and Dominique Merlet.

BMG Arte Nova Classics signed Ricardo Castro as an exclusive recording artist from 1995 to 2000. He has also recorded for Deutsche Gramophone with Maria João Pires with whom he has a successful piano duo. Winning at Leeds launched Ricardo Castro on an international career, giving recitals in the world's major concert halls and performing concertos with some of the world's finest orchestras including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony, Academy of St.Martin-in-the-Fields, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchestra, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Warsaw National Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Mozarteum of Salzburg, Suisse Romande and Tokyo Philharmonic. He has worked with some of the world's major conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Yakov Kreizberg, Leif Segerstam, Alexander Lazarev, Gilbert Varga, Markus Stenz, Kazimierz Kord and Libor Pesek. www.neojiba.org/en www.ricardocastro.com

Armand Diangienda L'Orchestre Symphonique Kimbanguiste
Kinshasa, DR Congo

Almost ten million people live in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the third largest city in Africa. They number among the poorest inhabitants on this planet. Kinshasa is the home of Central Africa's one and only symphony orchestra that tackles big pieces – like Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Orff's Carmina Burana – out of sheer love, learning their instruments and craft as they go. Full of self-taught musicians, many of whom travel two hours by foot for rehearsals and play on home-made instruments, this orchestra's very existence provides hope and promotes peace in a country full of poverty and war.

Former airline pilot, conductor Armand Diangienda founded the L'Orchestre Symphonique Kimbanguiste, the world's first all-black symphony orchestra, in **December 1994**. Never conservatory trained - he calls himself "just inquisitive by nature" - he named the ensemble after his grandfather, Simon Kimbangu, who founded an **African Christian church in Congo named "Kimbanguist Church"** .

Entirely self-taught, Armand Daingienda was playing the piano by the age five and today his knowledge encompasses almost all of the instruments of classical and modern music. His compositions include the symphony "Souffle de Vérité" in 2003 and "Symphony in A Minor" in 2007, both of which retain influences of African culture. Armand Diangienda has built his symphony orchestra from the ground up, literally transforming his home into a make-shift conservatory. When Diangienda first gathered 12 young people who wanted to learn to play the violin, he had only five instruments: *"One of them would play for 20 minutes, and then pass the violin on to the next one."* When violin strings broke, they replaced them with brake cables from old bicycles. When they needed a C trumpet, they cut up another instrument. And when they needed a bell for another trumpet, they transformed the wheel rim from an old minibus. In 2010, a film about the orchestra, **Kinshasa Symphony**, won several prizes at international film festivals. Diangienda was the focus of a recent CBS News 60 Minutes profile and the recipient of the inaugural Charles Ansbacher "Music for All concert" Award.

www.oskimbangu.org

Aaron P. Dworkin

Sphinx USA

Sphinx vision: We transform lives through the power of diversity in the arts.

The Sphinx Organization is the national non-profit organisation founded in 1996 by Sphinx President Aaron P. Dworkin on the notion that, to be truly in tune, classical music must embrace diversity inherent in the society that it strives to serve. Sphinx's key programmes range from an annual series at Carnegie Hall featuring top young musicians of color, to the national Sphinx Competition for young Black and Latino string players, an international convening on diversity in the arts (SphinxCon), 2 summer programmes, along with a year-round grassroots educational program (Sphinx Overture)

Prior to Sphinx, solo performances in the USA by musicians of colour were rare (around 20-30 a year), there were no Black and Latino symphony orchestras (Sphinx runs two) and black members of America's largest orchestras accounted for only 1.4% of orchestral players. To date, Sphinx has reached over 100,000 students in 200 schools across America and over two million individuals annually through live and national broadcasts. It has provided \$300,000 in quality instruments to young minority musicians, with \$2,000,000 in prizes and scholarships administered to Sphinx Competition Semi-Finalists and 260 orchestral performances reaching over 250,000 people. The number of black members of USA orchestras has doubled in major orchestras: in all instances, the member was a Sphinx Alumni, a Sphinx Symphony Orchestra member or the orchestra is a Sphinx partner. Aaron Dworkin comments: *"In 15 years, Sphinx has created significant change in the classical music sector, but Blacks and Latinos remain tremendously underrepresented in the ranks of American orchestral musicians.*

For the next 15 years, we have set ambitious goals that will go far toward achieving our vision of a world in which performing arts reflect our cultural diversity. The network of musicians, educational institutions, orchestras, presenters and supporters we have built over our first 15 years is vast and reaches around the world... It is through this ever-growing network of partners that Sphinx will continue to change the face of classical music."

Named a 2005 MacArthur Fellow, a Member of the Obama National Arts Policy Committee and President Obama's first appointee to the National Council on the Arts, Aaron P. Dworkin is the Founder and President of the *Sphinx Organization*, the leading national arts organization that focuses on youth development and diversity in classical music. A lifelong musician, Mr. Dworkin is an accomplished acoustic and electric violinist. He is also an author, social entrepreneur, multimedia artist, artist-citizen and an avid youth education advocate and has received extensive national recognition for his many accomplishments.

www.sphinxmusic.org

Rosemary Nalden

Buskaid

Soweto

The Buskaid Trust was founded in the UK in 1992 by British viola player Rosemary Nalden in response to a BBC programme highlighting the difficulties besetting a string project in Diepkloof, Soweto. Rosemary enlisted the support of 120 distinguished UK professional musicians who took part in a simultaneous fundraising "Busk" at 16 British Rail Stations in aid of the young African musicians. A number of similar charitable events were held over the next few years.

In 1997, responding to requests from the local Diepkloof community, Rosemary established the Buskaid Soweto String Project, formed from fifteen members of the original project and a few new beginners. Based in a tiny run-down church office, the little project was soon overwhelmed with requests from local youngsters eager to join. With rapidly increasing numbers, these facilities were woefully inadequate; in 1999, assisted by generous grants from South African companies and trusts, Buskaid built its own dedicated Music School in the grounds of another church in Diepkloof.

The Buskaid Music School now offers specialised string tuition to approximately 110 youngsters aged between four and 30. Over the years the school has had to turn away hundreds of students through lack of resources, and in 2002 Buskaid implemented a very successful teacher-training scheme for both junior and senior students. Apart from Rosemary Nalden and Sonja Bass, Buskaid's cello and bass teacher, the string staff consists solely of senior Buskaid students, nine of whom are currently employed as assistants to Rosemary and Sonja. They in turn are supported by a number of younger trainee teachers. To celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the founding of the Buskaid Trust, and the Buskaid Music School's 15th Anniversary, the Buskaid Project was renamed the Buskaid Academy of String Teaching and Performance.

In fifteen years the school has produced an outstanding string orchestra that, through numerous appearances at corporate functions in South Africa, has generated significant revenue for the Buskaid Trust. Apart from its many regular South African appearances, the Buskaid Soweto String Ensemble has toured internationally on some twenty occasions, performing with great success in London, New York, Los Angeles, Holland, Ireland, New Zealand, Botswana, Syria, Colombia and most recently, Paris and Toulouse (2012); and as guest artists at festivals in the UK and USA. In 2007, the Ensemble became the first South African orchestra to play the Proms and two years later, the Ensemble was voted one of the world's ten most inspirational orchestras by *Gramophone* magazine. Rosemary Nalden was a keynote speaker at the Observer's TEDx presentation in London in 2012, at which members of the ensemble also performed.

The Ensemble has played five times under the baton of Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and in collaboration with such distinguished artists as Bernarda Fink and Steven Isserlis. It has performed several times in the presence of Nelson Mandela, for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, HRH Prince Charles and other members of the British Royal family, as well as for many distinguished foreign dignitaries, including the First Lady of the United States of America, Mrs Michelle Obama.

In 2009, following successful auditions, two Buskaid students were awarded substantial scholarships by the Royal Academy of Music, (RAM) London, where

they are currently studying towards Bachelor of Music Performance degrees. A third Buskaid student commenced his studies at the RAM in September 2011. Buskaid's first graduate, founder member Samson Diamond, was the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Music winner 2010.

The Buskaid Ensemble has been widely acclaimed for its intuitive grasp of classical musical style as well as for its unique African sound. It has recorded five CDs, of which the fifth, *Crazy*, features the Ensemble playing Timothy Kraemer's arrangements of 'classic pops'. *Soweto Strings*, Mark Kidel's award-winning documentary about Buskaid that has been shown worldwide, also features Buskaid's 2007 Paris concert.

Such achievements are a tribute to the youngsters' dedication and discipline, basic requirements for anyone wishing to master the complex skill of playing a stringed instrument. Inevitably this training has a powerful influence on all other aspects of their lives. Many are high achievers in their academic work and many, who battle with problems such as difficult home circumstances, drug abuse and bereavement, find both support and solace at the Music School.

Whilst providing a first-class training ground for the exceptional musical talent to be found throughout the townships, Buskaid also challenges its members to attain to high standards in all aspects of their lives, giving them confidence and a great sense of optimism about their future. In all senses they are role models and a fine example of how a modest endeavour can impact powerfully on both local and international communities.

www.buskaid.org.za

**Dr Ahmad Sarmast Afghanistan National Institute of Music,
Kabul, Afghanistan**

"Historically, music has been a vibrant and important part of Afghan culture, but war and neglect has left students without teachers, teachers without resources, and professional musicians without a context for their art."

Dr. Ahmad Naser Sarmast is a native of Afghanistan and a son of the late well-known Afghan composer, conductor, and musician Ustad Sarmast.

In 2006, Dr. Ahmad N. Sarmast, then a Research Fellow at the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia (where he gained a PhD), initiated the Revival of Afghan Music (ROAM) project. ROAM made nine recommendations, including the establishment of a dedicated vocational music education entity as a pilot project where Afghan children could receive a general education as well as specialist training in Afghan and Western Classical music.

In April 2008 after two years of planning and negotiations with the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan and with additional support from the international donor community, Dr. Sarmast returned to Afghanistan to lead and implement this project to provide music education for the most disadvantaged children. As fundraising continued, Dr. Sarmast began rebuilding music education and establishing the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) by converting the music department of the School of Fine Arts into an independent entity with all the prerequisites of music education including soundproofed rehearsing rooms, a high quality collection of instruments, well equipped library and multimedia rooms, a standard music curriculum, recording studio, and finally the employment of a qualified local and international music faculty.

Since its inauguration in June 2010, ANIM and its students are progressing at a rapid rate and making a tremendous influence on the social and cultural life of Afghan society. ANIM is continuing to develop and implement its vision, grow its resources, and expand its influence to all citizens of Afghanistan with future plans to replicate its success in the cities of Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, and Jalalabad.

Dr Sarmast is the author of the landmark book, *A Survey of the History of Music in Afghanistan*. His research areas also include music of North India, Central Asia, and Iran. His other publications include *The naghma-ye chartuk of Afghanistan: a new perspective on the origin of a solo instrumental genre*, *Ustad Mohammad Salim Sarmast: a 20th century composer*, and *the first symphonic score of Afghanistan*." Dr. Sarmast has received several accolades, including the International Music Council (IMC) Musical Rights Award in recognition of assuring the musical rights of the Afghan children. In December 2009, Dr. Sarmast received the David Chow Humanitarian Award in recognition of his "brave and selfless" efforts to rebuild and promote music education in Afghanistan. In 2011, the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan acknowledged Dr. Sarmast's contribution by awarding the Education Award of the Government of Afghanistan. In 2012 Dr Sarmast was among the Victorian Finalists of the Australian of the Year Award. In March 2013, Dr Sarmast has been named "Person of the Year" by Radio Azadi, RFE/RL's Afghanistan Service.
www.afghanistannationalinstituteofmusic.org