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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 with a programme of events that explore both the RPS's historic legacy and its vision for the future of music

Don't miss during January...

- **Free exhibition**, featuring rare correspondence, documents and artefacts from the RPS's private archive traces 200 years of RPS concerts and commissions - Barbican Music Library until 28 February
- **James MacMillan** leads RPS exploration of English Visionaries past and present at Royal Festival Hall – Saturday 26 January
- “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 breaking through the barriers (part of the ABO Conference 2013 – Friday 25 January)

200th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Philharmonic Society Thursday 24 January 2013:

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

One of the world's most illustrious musical institutions, the Royal Philharmonic Society [RPS] turns 200 in 2013. Bicentenary celebrations throughout the year put the spotlight on 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.

Concerts and Broadcasts

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 programme includes Mendelssohn's *Overture, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, first heard at a Philharmonic Society concert on 1 March 1830, following a mammoth seven hour rehearsal with the composer, and Dvorak's *Violin Concerto*, given its UK premiere at a Philharmonic Society concert in 1886. Brahms's *Symphony No.1* was performed in 1877, the same year in which the composer was awarded the Society's highest honour, the Philharmonic Society Gold Medal.

The 200th anniversary will also be marked by a special **National Listening Day on Classic FM** and **classicfm.com**. The day features key works that were commissioned or premiered by the Society, including works by many of classical music's most famous composers, and is part of a week of special programming dedicated to the sights and sounds of the RPS.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra marks the RPS Bicentenary with a performance in Bournemouth of Lutoslawski's *Cello Concerto*, commissioned by the RPS in 1970 (23 January). **Johannes Moser** is the soloist (and discusses the work in a pre-concert event); **Kirill Karabits** conducts.

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

Exhibition

**Concerts and Commissions: 200 years of the Royal Philharmonic Society
until 28 February
Barbican Music Library, Barbican Centre, London**

This 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 to its work today supporting young artists and championing excellence.

Displays include the programme of the first UK performance of RPS commissioned **Beethoven's 9th Symphony** in 1825 and a programme from the Philharmonic Society's 1855 season, which was conducted by **Richard Wagner**, as well as programmes from Royal Philharmonic Society concerts given during two world wars. The exhibition also features: correspondence from composers and musicians including RPS Gold Medallists **Witold Lutoslawski, Henri Dutilleux, Sir Malcolm Sargent** and violist **Lionel Tertis**; RPS commissioned autograph scores of 20th and 21st century RPS commissions by **Poul Ruders, Luke Bedford, Simon Holt** and **Elliott Carter** and a marking sheet from the 1971 RPS Composition prize judging process in which Master of the Queen's Music, **Sir Peter Maxwell Davies** offers some choice words. The Society enjoyed a close association with Beethoven, and the exhibition includes a copy of Beethoven's life mask, cast on his deathbed by the Viennese sculptor Franz Klein and a chance to see up close the RPS Gold Medal, one of the world's most prestigious musical honours; presented fewer than 100 times since 1871, the medal bears an effigy of Beethoven. The exhibition also includes a letter from poet laureate **Cecil Day-Lewis CBE** to the Society, accompanying his 'Ode to Beethoven', commissioned by the Society in 1969 to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the composer's birth.

Talks & Debates

**English Visionaries: Royal Festival Hall, London
Saturday 26 January at 2.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall, 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 *English Visionaries* series of RPS events includes a key note talk by composer **James MacMillan**. Taking Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* as a starting point, MacMillan examines the idea of Elgar as a visionary artist and explores how social, cultural and religious thought, combined with the pioneering spirit and drive of Edwardian Culture in England, shaped artistic thought through the Twentieth Century. The day also includes a discussion on the Edwardian aesthetic featuring composer **Anthony Payne** and a new film installation that brings together a range of young musicians to voice their thoughts and visions for the future of music.

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 feature on the panel.

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

Further press information from:
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Booking details

Barbican Music Library

Opening Hours

Mon, Wed: 9.30am – 5.30pm

Tues, Thu: 9.30am – 7.30pm

Fri: 9.30am-2pm

Sat: 9.30am-4pm

Sun: Closed

Royal Festival Hall/SouthBank Centre:

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Philharmonia Orchestra

www.philharmonia.co.uk

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

www.bsolive.com

Association of British Orchestras

www.abo.org.uk

BBC Radio 3

www.bbc.co.uk/radio3

Classic FM

www.classicfm.com

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, Henri Dutilleux and Elliott Carter**. 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*