



*At the heart of music for 200 years*

## Press Release

For release: 9pm, Tuesday 30 October 2012

### **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's veteran double bass player Roy Benson awarded prestigious Salomon Prize for orchestral musicians**

### **Benson nominated by fellow RPO musicians for his 'commitment and dedication above and beyond the call of duty'**

For the second year running, a double bass player has scooped the RPS/ABO Salomon Prize. Roy Benson, recently retired Co-Principal of the double bass section of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, follows in the footsteps of the first ever recipient, Hallé double bass player Beatrice Schirmer, to take the annual award celebrating the outstanding contribution of orchestral players to the UK's musical life.

The UK boasts many of the world's finest orchestras, many of which have trophy cabinets bursting with awards in testimony to their brilliance on the concert platform and in the recording studio. Yet, the contribution of individual musicians within an orchestra often goes unnoticed.

The Salomon Prize\* was created by the Royal Philharmonic Society and Association of British Orchestras in 2011 to celebrate the 'unsung heroes' of orchestral life; the orchestral players that make our orchestras great. The award is named after Johann Peter Salomon, violinist and founding member of the Philharmonic Society in 1813. Each year, players in all orchestras across the UK are asked to nominate a colleague who has been '*an inspiration to their fellow players, fostered greater spirit of teamwork and shown commitment and dedication above and beyond the call of duty*'.

**Roy Benson** was nominated by his fellow musicians and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's management for his unstinting service to the orchestra over three decades, and for a generosity of spirit and heart which has seen him, as co-principal of the double bass section, provide outstanding leadership and support.

Roy was presented with his award by conductor, Paul Daniel on stage at the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's concert at the Cadogan Hall on Tuesday 30 October. He received a cheque for £1000 and will keep for one year the Salomon Prize Trophy – a soft-ground etching of Salomon made by William Daniell in 1810.

The Salomon Prize citation from the RPS and ABO comments:

*'For over thirty years, Roy Benson has given unstinting service to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and his fellow colleagues. As co-principal of the double bass section he has consistently provided leadership and support, always accompanied with a smile and a positive energy that has helped this section particularly through difficult times.'*

*Always an inspiration, Roy was one of a few musicians who bravely cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats in aid of the RPO's Sickness & Benevolent Fund, out-riding many half his age! This generosity of heart and caring nature are precious assets for any orchestra and are often unseen by the public eye. These qualities lie at the heart of any true musician and are why Roy Benson is awarded the Salomon Prize 2012."*

[www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk/awards/](http://www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk/awards/)

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\*Named after renowned violinist Johann Peter Salomon\*, one of the founding members of the Philharmonic Society in 1813, the annual £1000 Salomon Prize, sponsored by Selina and David Marks, will be awarded each year to a musician who has shown commitment and dedication above and beyond the expected service asked by their orchestra over a single concert season. They will have been "an inspiration to their fellow colleagues and engendered a greater spirit of teamwork within the orchestra".

Note: The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Society are separate and independent organisations.

Notes:

**Johann Peter Salomon** was born in Bonn and was the second son of Philipp Salomon, an oboist at the court in Bonn. His birth home was at Bonngasse 515, coincidentally the later birth home of Beethoven. At the age of thirteen, he became a violinist in the court orchestra and six years later became the concert master of the orchestra of Prince Heinrich of Prussia. He moved to London in the early 1780s, where he worked as a composer and played violin both as a celebrated soloist and in a string quartet. He made his first public appearance at Covent Garden on 23 March 1781 and became a central figure in London Orchestral life for over 30 years.

Salomon brought Joseph Haydn to London in 1791-92 and 1794-95, and together with Haydn led the first performances of many of the works that Haydn composed while in England. Haydn wrote his symphonies numbers 93 to 104 for these trips, which are sometimes known as the Salomon symphonies (they are more widely known as the London symphonies). Salomon is also said to have had a hand in providing Haydn with the original model for the text of *The Creation*.

He was one of the founder members of the Philharmonic Society and led the orchestra at its first concert on 8 March 1813. Salomon died in London in 1815, of injuries suffered when he was thrown from his horse. He is buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

The Salomon Prize is named in honour of this versatile and influential musician.

**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; 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, Placido Domingo, Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Henri Dutilleux, Thomas Quasthoff, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Mitsuko Uchida.

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.

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.

**The Association of British Orchestras (ABO)** was founded in 1947 as the Orchestral Employers' Association, primarily to negotiate with the Musicians' Union and other bodies on behalf of its membership, which consisted almost entirely at that time of those orchestras receiving annual funding from the newly established Arts Council of Great Britain. In 1982 the Association took on limited company status, becoming the Association of British Orchestras. It continues to negotiate the ABO/MU Freelance Orchestral Agreement with the MU and represent its membership in discussions and negotiations with a number of other national organisations.

The past decade has seen a substantial development in the organisation in terms of its size (an increase from 35 in 1989 to over 150 organisations today) and its role, which has expanded to include a diverse range of activities designed to support the development of the UK's orchestral life. The ABO now has an extensive programme of Events from Specialist Manager Meetings and training to Seminars and the Annual Conference.

In past years, the Association of British Orchestras has developed a role as co-ordinator of various national projects, including two major sponsorship programmes involving the participation of a large number of member orchestras. As a champion of the education and community work of the UK's orchestras, one of the ABO's key objectives has been the support and development of this core area of work. A series of nationally co-ordinated education projects over the past years resulted in a well established Orchestras in Education programme, which existed to promote the education work of member orchestras and to develop the relationship between schools, teachers and orchestral players.

The Association of British Orchestras has also mounted a number of research initiatives, with a series of important industry reports being produced, such as a comprehensive statistical survey of the UK's orchestral profession, *Knowing the Score*, and the highly influential report on noise damage to musicians, *A Sound Ear*.

### **Roy Benson - Biography**

Roy Benson began playing the double bass in his local youth orchestra in Staffordshire where he met the inspiring teacher Ron Large. His first foreign tour to Norway with the Staffordshire Youth Orchestra opened his eyes to his joint passions, music and travel. He then moved to London to study with John Walton at the Royal Academy of Music and to work with several leading great conductors including a performance of Brahms' *Symphony No.3* with Sir John Barbirolli.

Roy Benson subsequently embarked on a busy freelance career travelling the length of the country before joining the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera as Principal Double Bass in 1971. After four years, he moved to London to join the Orchestra of English National Opera as Sub-Principal Double Bass. Here he met his wife Jean who was a member of the viola section. They were very fortunate in not only taking opera to some of the most beautiful areas of the UK, such as the Yorkshire Dales, Northumberland and Scotland, but most importantly were part of Reginald Goodall's *Ring Cycle* and performed many of Janáček's operas with Sir Charles Mackerras.

Roy Benson began his association with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in 1977 as No.4 Double Bass and was promoted to the Co-Principal position ten years later, a position he holds to this day. He very much enjoys the diversity of music the Orchestra plays and has performed all over Europe and the world, highlights include touring Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Japan and China. During his time with the Orchestra, he has enjoyed working with many great conductors from Antal Doráti in the 1970s to Yuri Temirkanov, Kurt Masur, Daniele Gatti and, most recently, Charles Dutoit.