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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 Bicentenary throughout 2013**

#### **March and April: 'Philharmonic Firsts'**

Music introduced to UK audiences by the Philharmonic Society in 200 years at the heart of music takes centre stage in nationwide concerts, with world premieres taking their place alongside pioneering works that are now a core part of the classical repertoire.

#### **CONCERTS**

- **8 March 2013**: Marking to the day the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first public concert by the Philharmonic Society, Orchestra of the Age Enlightenment plays RPS premiered Schumann's *Symphony No.2*, Queen Elizabeth Hall
- **9 March**: Barbican world premiere of new commission by Poul Ruders to celebrate RPS Bicentenary and Centenary of birth of Benjamin Britten, performed by Vertavo Quartet
- **7 March**: Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Esa Pekka Salonen, performs RPS commissioned Lutoslawski's Cello Concerto, with soloist Truls Mørk, Royal Festival Hall
- **12 April**: BBC Symphony Orchestra premieres new work for strings by Jonathan Lloyd, commissioned by the RPS Elgar Bursary
- **17, 18 & 21 April**: The Hallé plays RPS commissioned Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony and Saint Saën's 'Organ' Symphony, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester
- **26 March**: RPS Young Artist Recital - Philip Langridge Mentoring Scheme: Philip Higham (cello)
- The Society's iconic bust of Beethoven continues its 'round Britain tour' with stopovers at the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Barbican Centre in London and the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester. Keep updated on Beethoven's bust's odyssey by following on twitter @beethoven\_bust

#### **AWARDS**

- **11April**: Shortlists announced for RPS Music Awards

#### **TALKS AND DEBATES**

- **8 March**: Early 19<sup>th</sup> century concert giving and going, with social historian Dr Leanne Langley, pianist David Owen Norris and music historian/writer Ian Taylor – Queen Elizabeth Hall
- **18 April**: Romantic worlds: the symphony through the Romantic era – Bridgewater Hall

## **200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of first Philharmonic Society concert – Friday 8 March 2013**

The first Philharmonic Society concert was given on 8 March 1813 and included works by Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn and Boccherini. To mark this auspicious date, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment gives a special concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, featuring one of the many works that the Society introduced to Britain; Schumann's 2<sup>nd</sup> *Symphony*, first heard at a Philharmonic Society concert in 1864. Marin Alsop conducts a programme that also include works by Mozart, Beethoven (with whom the Society enjoyed a close relationship, including commissioning his 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony) and Weber (the first ever recipient of RPS Honorary Membership in 1826). In a special pre-concert event, social historian Dr. Leanne Langley, pianist and broadcaster David Owen Norris and music historian Ian Taylor join Tom Hutchinson from the RPS to discuss concert giving and going in 1813 and offer fascinating insights into how the established classics of today were introduced to and viewed by early British audiences (5.45pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall).

## **Concerts celebrate RPS Bicentenary in London and Manchester: March and April 2013**

Three major RPS commissions feature in Bicentenary concerts in March and April. As part of the Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Philharmonia's Lutoslawski Festival, the orchestra is joined by Truls Mørk for a performance of Lutoslawski's *Cello Concerto*, commissioned by the RPS in 1970. (Royal Festival Hall, [Thursday 7 March](#)). A double-bill of famous Philharmonic Society commissions brings RPS200 celebrations to Manchester for the first time, with The Hallé, conducted by Rory Macdonald, performing Mendelssohn's radiant 4<sup>th</sup> 'Italian' Symphony, and Saint-Saëns' Symphony No.3, 'Organ', with soloist Jonathan Scott (Wednesday 17, Thursday 18 and Sunday 21 April). A pre-concert panel discussion including Martin Harlow, Dean of Academic Studies at the RNCM and Tom Hutchinson (RPS) examine the development of the symphony through the Romantic era.

## **RPS Bicentenary: New Commissions**

The RPS Bicentenary year will feature 16 new RPS commissions from both leading and emerging composers – more than in any year of RPS history.

The Society's on-going commitment to new music is marked in 2013 by a major series of new works from six leading international composers, co-commissioned with the Britten-Pears Foundation to mark the RPS's Bicentenary and the Centenary of Benjamin Britten's birth in 2013. The first of the commissions, a new string quartet by the distinguished Danish composer **Poul Ruders**, will be premiered by the **Vertavo Quartet** at the Barbican on **Saturday 9 March** as part of the BBC's weekend of music from Scandinavia and Finland: *Total Immersion: New from the North*, with a further performance alongside the other commissions at Aldeburgh in June. New works by **Harrison Birtwistle**, **Magnus Lindberg**, **Wolfgang Rihm**, **Judith Weir**, and a new songbook featuring songs by **Sally Beamish**, **Anna Meredith**, **Charlotte Bray** and **Thea Musgrave** are all premiered at Aldeburgh. For the project, initiated by RPS Trustee **Colin Matthews**, who is also BPF's Music Director, the composers have been commissioned to write works for different ensembles to reflect the range of Britten's composition output, including symphony orchestra, children's choir, chamber ensemble, large-scale ensemble and tenor with piano.

In April, **Jonathan Lloyd's** new work for strings, *Old Racquet*, commissioned by the RPS Elgar Bursary, receives its world premiere, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davis (Friday 12 April, Barbican). The work is part of a diptych; *New Balls* for wind will be premiered in May.

The RPS enjoyed a long and fruitful association with Elgar, and the **RPS Elgar Bursary** was set up by the surviving members of Sir Edward Elgar's family using the royalties of Anthony Payne's elaboration of Elgar's sketches for the unfinished Third Symphony. The bursary is specifically for mature composers, and provides financial support to a composer over the age of 29 to allow for the creation of a new work that may push back musical boundaries, but not at the expense of accessibility. Distinguished previous RPS Elgar Bursary recipients have included Lyell Cresswell, Dominic Muldowney and Edwin Roxburgh.

The Society's strong commitment to young artists is reflected in the work of the Philip Langridge Mentoring Scheme, set up by the Society and YCAT to offer creative and practical support to the next generation of musical talent. Cellist **Philip Higham**, who has been mentored by Steven Isserlis, gives a lunchtime recital at Bishopsgate Institute, London on Tuesday 26 March, playing cello sonatas by Shostakovich and Debussy.

## **Beethoven about town!**

Look out for the Society's 19<sup>th</sup> century Schaller bust of Beethoven on the concert platform at Bicentenary events throughout the spring: [http://rps200.org/rps\\_bicentenary\\_2013/beethoven\\_busts\\_london/](http://rps200.org/rps_bicentenary_2013/beethoven_busts_london/)

## **Awards**

The Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, presented in association with BBC Radio 3, takes place on **Tuesday 14 May** at the Dorchester Hotel.

Shortlists for awards in 13 categories will be announced on **Thursday 11 April**.

## **Online**

### **rps200.org**

The Royal Philharmonic Society's new website, featuring the latest films, listings of RPS events and notes and articles about the history and current activity of the Society, is now online.

**Full details of RPS 200 events at: [www.rps200.org](http://www.rps200.org)**

### **Further press information from:**

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**LAST CHANCE TO SEE...**

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

An exhibition that 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 commission Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony in 1825 and correspondence from composers and musicians including RPS Gold Medallist Witold Lutoslawski, Henri Dutilleux, Sir Malcolm Sargent and violist Lionel Tertis; RPS Commissioned autograph scores of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century RPS commissions by Poul Ruders (to be premiered at the Barbican on 9 March), Luke Bedford, Simon Holt and Elliott Carter and a marking sheet from the 1971 RPS composition prize judging process in which Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, now Master of the Queen's Music, offers some choice words.

## **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](http://www.rps200.org)**

The Society's work is supported by many leading musicians, including distinguished RPS Gold Medalists **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*