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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 to celebrate its Bicentenary in 2013

- **Leading orchestras, ensembles, musicians and composers feature in a year of celebratory concerts, talks and exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic**
- **The RPS, commissioner of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, points the way to a bright future with 16 new commissions**
- **Top international composers Harrison Birtwistle, Wolfgang Rihm, Magnus Lindberg, Poul Ruders, Judith Weir and Richard Rodney Bennett compose new pieces inspired by Benjamin Britten**
- **BBC Proms premiere for major new work in response to Beethoven's 9th Symphony**
- **200th anniversary marked by National Listening Day on Classic FM (24 January 2013) and birthday concert at the Royal Festival Hall, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3**
- **Beethoven and Bust: iconic sculpture of composer to tour the UK in 2013**
- **Historic scores annotated by Beethoven displayed together in public for the first time since 1824**
- **RPS archive at the British Library to be digitised to give unprecedented access to scholars worldwide**
- **New iPad app to launch exploring in depth the Society's most famous commission, Beethoven's 9th Symphony**
- **rps200.org: RPS launches two new websites and an interactive timeline documenting 200 years of activity**

One of the world's most illustrious musical institutions, the Royal Philharmonic Society [RPS] turns 200 on 24 January 2013. Bicentenary celebrations throughout 2013 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.

The year brings together new commissions from leading and emerging composers, and reaches out to audiences through live performances, debates, exhibitions, broadcasts and online via a new website, digitisation of the extraordinary RPS Archive at the British Library, which provides a unique insight into two centuries of concert giving and going in the UK, and a new app dedicated to the Society's most famous commission, Beethoven's 9th Symphony. The Society's extended support of young artists will be celebrated through a series of awards and bursaries: from practical support to purchase the very tools of their trade – quality instruments – to mentoring and opportunities for further study with the best in the business. A Royal Philharmonic Society Bicentenary Appeal has already raised over half of its target of £270,000 to invest in talented young musicians and composers.

Those taking part in RPS200 include many of the UK's leading orchestras, ensembles and organisations including the **Philharmonia Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé, Britten Sinfonia, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and National Youth Choir; BBC Radio 3 and the BBC Proms; Classic FM; The British Library, Southbank Centre, Aldeburgh Festival and Wigmore Hall.** The programme features concerts nationwide (with many broadcast live on BBC Radio 3), an unprecedented 16 new RPS commissions in one year from leading and emerging composers including **Harrison Birtwistle, Magnus Lindberg, Wolfgang Rihm and Poul Ruders,** talks and debates featuring great musical minds, leading academics and cultural commentators, and exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic. A major new orchestral work in response to Beethoven's 9th Symphony, co-commissioned by the RPS, BBC and The New York Philharmonic will be unveiled at the BBC Proms – full details to be released with the season announcements of The New York Philharmonic and the BBC Proms. Beethoven's 9th Symphony was commissioned by the RPS and given its US premiere by The New York Philharmonic. New York celebrations in Autumn 2013 are led by **The New York Philharmonic** (which was founded in 1842 on the model of the Philharmonic Society of London), **Juilliard School** and **Morgan Library,** which for the first time since 1824 will reunite and display side by side the two original copyists' scores of Beethoven's 9th Symphony from the RPS and Juilliard School archives, both annotated by the composer. **Treasures from the RPS Archive,** including scores, fascinating correspondence with leading composers and musicians and concert curios will also be on show at RPS200 exhibitions at the **British Library** and **Barbican Music Library.** An historic bust of Beethoven, a familiar sight at Society concerts in the late 19th and 20th Centuries – but unseen for over 30 years – returns to the concert platform to take centre stage at

Bicentenary concerts nationwide throughout 2013. **Watch Beethoven go for bust on the streets of London at www.rps200.org from 7 November:**
www.rps200.org/rps_today/rps200/beethoven_busts_london.

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 concert of music from three composers who were closely associated with the Society: Mendelssohn, Brahms and Dvořák (Royal Festival Hall), broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. The anniversary will also be marked by a special **National Listening Day** on Global Radio's national classical music station, **Classic FM** and classicfm.com. The day features many of the key works that were commissioned or premiered by the Society and is part of a week of special programming dedicated to the sights and sounds of the RPS.

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.
My RPS: www.rps200.org/rps_today/rps200/my_rps

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.

John Gilhooly, Chairman of the Royal Philharmonic Society comments: *"The Royal Philharmonic Society is that rare beast: an organisation that has stayed true to its founding principles, yet has a distinctive voice that speaks loud and clear in the 21st*

Century. We continue to be bold of ambition, a guiding hand to younger musicians and a partner to distinguished artists. We unashamedly beat the drum for excellence and creative thinking and 200 years on, musicians and those who love music remain at the very heart of our work. As forward looking champions of the best in music, we have formed strong partnerships with artists, and with the orchestras, ensembles, venues and broadcasters who make the UK's music scene so vital and dynamic, and who will play a major role in our Bicentenary celebrations.

As we move into our third century, we will continue to champion excellence and to be an independent voice for "the love of our art", so that the composers and musicians that we support today will become the history makers of tomorrow."

RPS Gold Medallist, pianist **Alfred Brendel**, speaking at the launch of RPS200 said:

"I feel privileged to be able to say a few words about a Society which has commissioned and premiered so much important music. Throughout its history, the Society has made choices which today may seem prescient, but at the time were brave and bold – wonderful pieces by Beethoven and Mendelssohn, but also by Bartók, Elliott Carter or Lutoslawski which brought the shock of the new to audiences yet have become part of the repertoire and continue to resonate, enthrall, or at times, tantalise and frustrate, today.

Listening to John Gilhooly outline the plans for the RPS Bicentenary year in 2013, it's good to hear that the RPS is continuing to stir things up, and growing old disgracefully: please keep commissioning composers, keep supporting musicians, keep talking about music and keep championing excellence. It needs organisations like the RPS to remind us that young artists take time to develop, that composers require opportunities for their voices to be heard and that serious music and musicians are vital, and should be valued. Great artists never stop learning, and great musicians never stop listening. The RPS shares these qualities and I wish it well for 2013 and well beyond!"

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

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Notes:

About the 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; 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 RPS 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.

Royal Philharmonic Society: *Champions of Excellence*
Creative thinking for Music
Understanding Music

Royal Philharmonic Society 200: 2013 Programme Highlights

Concerts

Some of the most famous works in the classical repertoire were either commissioned by the Philharmonic Society, or premiered in the UK at Philharmonic Society concerts. Commissions include Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, Mendelssohn's 'Italian' *4th Symphony*, Vaughan William's *9th Symphony* and Lutoslawski's *Cello Concerto*. The Society gave England its first taste of Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, Beethoven's *5th Symphony*, Rachmaninov's *2nd Piano Concerto*, Chopin's *Piano Concerto in F Minor*, Brahms's *German Requiem*, Shostakovich's *Cello Concerto No.2* and symphonies by Schumann, Dvořák, Strauss, Sibelius, Haydn and Bruckner... to name but a few.

Live concerts celebrating the Society take place nationwide throughout the Bicentenary year featuring major works commissioned or premiered by the Royal Philharmonic Society, including pieces by **Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Lutoslawski, Schumann, Elgar and Saint-Saëns**. An impressive list of Bicentenary live performance partners includes the **London Symphony Orchestra, Hallé, Liverpool Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Britten Sinfonia, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Swan, National Youth Orchestra and Youth Choir of Great Britain, Vertavo Quartet, Mark Padmore, Till Fellner, Royal Philharmonic Society young musicians and composers, Southbank Centre, Wigmore Hall, Barbican, British Library and Aldeburgh Festival**. In addition to the RPS birthday concert at the Royal Festival Hall on 24 January, the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** perform **Schumann's 2nd Symphony**, given its first English performance by the Philharmonic Society in 1864, 200 years to the day of the first Philharmonic Society concert (**Friday 8 March 2013, Queen Elizabeth Hall**).

- **Diary Dates:**

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

14 & 16 February – Liverpool Philharmonic/Gomez – Bruch Violin Concerto – Liverpool

7 March – Philharmonia/Salonen – Royal Festival Hall – Lutoslawski Cello Concerto

8 March – (Anniversary of first Philharmonic Society concert in 1813) Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Marin Alsop – QEH – Schumann's 2nd Symphony

17/18/21 April – Hallé/MacDonald – Saint-Saëns, Mendelssohn & Beethoven – Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

NB: RPS Bicentenary concert schedule for Summer/Autumn 2013 will be announced in Spring 2013.

New Commissions

In the past ten years, the Royal Philharmonic Society has commissioned new music from over 60 composers – from the centenarian Elliott Carter to the brightest talent of a new generation.

- 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 season features premieres by **Harrison Birtwistle**, **Magnus Lindberg**, **Wolfgang Rihm**, **Richard Rodney Bennett**, **Poul Ruders** and **Judith Weir**. For the project, initiated by RPS Trustee **Colin Matthews**, who is also BPF's Music Director, the composers have been commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society and Britten-Pears Foundation to write works for different ensembles to reflect the range of Britten's composition output, including symphony orchestra, children's choir and tenor with piano.

Wolfgang Rihm will write for symphony orchestra (premiered by the Hallé), **Judith Weir** for chamber orchestra (**Britten Sinfonia**), **Magnus Lindberg** for large-scale ensemble (**Birmingham Contemporary Music Group**), **Poul Ruders** for string quartet (**Vertavo Quartet**), **Harrison Birtwistle** for tenor and piano (with words by **David Harsent**, premiered by **Mark Padmore** and **Till Fellner**) and **Richard Rodney Bennett** will write a children's song cycle (**New London Children's Choir**). **Poul Ruders's** new work will be premiered at the Barbican in March 2013, with all other works premiered at Aldeburgh Festival in June 2013.

- Further new commissions include 2013 performances of two new orchestral works by **Huw Watkins**, the RPS/PRS for Music Foundation *Composer in the House* at the Orchestra of the Swan, two new works by the recipient of the RPS Elgar Bursary for mature composers, **Jonathan Lloyd**, performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, five commissions from young composers performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra and at Cheltenham and Presteigne Festivals; and a new work for dance by **Kenneth Hesketh** supported by the RPS Drummond Fund.

- **Diary Dates:**

9 March – World Premiere – Poul Ruders – Vertavo Quartet – Barbican

8 June – World Premiere – Judith Weir – Britten Sinfonia – Aldeburgh Festival

9 June – World Premiere – Richard Rodney Bennett – New London Children's Choir – Aldeburgh Festival

13 June – World Premiere – Harrison Birtwistle – Mark Padmore / Till Fellner – Aldeburgh Festival

21 June – World Premiere – Huw Watkins – Orchestra of the Swan – Stratford

22 June – World Premiere – Magnus Lindberg – BCMG – Aldeburgh Festival

23 June – World Premiere – Wolfgang Rihm – Hallé – Aldeburgh Festival

Summer 2013 – World Premiere – New work (full details to be announced in April 2013) – National Youth Orchestra and National Youth Choir of Great Britain – BBC Proms

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

The Royal Philharmonic Society enjoyed close links with Beethoven right from its foundation, giving first performances of his 5th and 7th Symphonies and 1st, 3rd and 4th Piano Concertos. In 1817, the Society paid Beethoven 50 guineas as a commission for a new symphony – the monumental Ninth Symphony.

One of the greatest works of art to celebrate humanity and brotherhood, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* continues to inspire people of all ages around the world, providing the anthem for the European Union and even hitting the right note with myriad celebrities, who have made it the most requested work on BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs.

- The Society's most famous commission will be celebrated on 8 August with a performance by the National Youth Orchestra, National Youth Choir of Great Britain and young singers from across Ireland at the Derry-Londonderry City of Culture 2013 celebrations.
- At the BBC Proms, the NYO will perform Beethoven 9 alongside the premiere of a major new RPS/BBC/New York Philharmonic co-commission inspired by Beethoven's masterwork. This will be next year's free Prom. (Full details to be released with the season announcements of The New York Philharmonic and the BBC Proms.).
- The Society's rarely seen 19th Century Schaller bust of Beethoven will take pride of place at celebratory concerts nationwide throughout 2013. Given to the Royal Philharmonic Society in 1870 in commemoration of the Centenary of Beethoven's birth, the marble bust used to be a regular feature at Philharmonic Society concerts in the 19th and 20th Centuries, but has only made one public appearance in the past three decades.
- **Diary Dates:**
8 August – Derry-Londonderry City of Culture 2013 – National Youth Orchestra and National Youth Choir of Great Britain/Petrenko – Beethoven 9
Summer 2013 – BBC Proms/National Youth Orchestra and National Youth Choir of Great Britain/Petrenko – Beethoven 9 and premiere of major new RPS/BBC/New York Philharmonic commission.

Notes: *In 1827, when the Society learnt that Beethoven was both ill and much in need of money, the Directors decided that a sum of £100 should be sent to him "to be applied to his comforts and necessities". The money, held up en route, reached him only a few days before he died, but time enough for him to express his heartfelt appreciation to the Society. Schindler, his amanuensis, reported that "the Society had comforted his last days, and that event on the brink of the grave he thanked the Society and the whole English nation for the great gift, God bless them."*

Exhibitions

The **Royal Philharmonic Society Archive at the British Library** is an extraordinary collection of manuscript scores, correspondence, letters, documents and concert curios that give an unparalleled insight into two centuries of concert giving and going in the UK.

- Treasures from the archive, including a rare copyist's score of Beethoven's 9th Symphony annotated by the composer and fascinating letters from **Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner and Dvořák** (amongst others) form the centre piece for several exhibitions and displays during 2013, including at the British Library, Barbican Music Library, and the Lincoln Center, Juilliard School of Music and Morgan Library in New York.
- In addition, a newly digitised version of the RPS Archive at the British Library will enable scholars and enthusiasts worldwide to delve deeper into a seminal period of classical music's history.

- **Diary Dates:**

2 January – 28 February

Barbican Music Library, Barbican Centre, London

EXHIBITION: Concerts and Commissions – 200 years of the Royal Philharmonic Society

Summer 2013

British Library, London

EXHIBITION: Treasures from the RPS Archive

8 October – 1 December

The Morgan Library, New York City

EXHIBITION: Beethoven – featuring first showing in over 180 years of two scores of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, annotated by the composer.

Royal Philharmonic Society in New York

New York's own Philharmonic Society was formed in 1842 and has strong parallels with the RPS. The founder of The New York Philharmonic, Ureli Corelli Hill, travelled to Europe in the 1830s and attended concerts in London by the Philharmonic Society. Following his travels and experiences he returned to New York and founded The New York Philharmonic on the model of the Philharmonic Society of London.

RPS Bicentenary celebrations move Stateside in Autumn 2013. Events include:

- Performances by the The New York Philharmonic Orchestra including a major new work co-commissioned by the RPS, BBC and New York Philharmonic
- A **Lincoln Center** display of artefacts from the RPS and New York Philharmonic archives
- A concert of contemporary RPS commissions at the **Juilliard School of Music**
- A display at the **Morgan Library** and at the library of **Juilliard School of Music** of the Royal Philharmonic Society's annotated copyist's score of Beethoven's 9th alongside the Julliard's own historic score – the first time that the two will have been together and on public display since 1824.

- **Diary Dates:**
 - 28 September** – Concert of Contemporary Music – New Juilliard Ensemble – Juilliard School of Music
 - 30 September – 4 October** – Beethoven Exhibition – Juilliard School of Music
 - Autumn 2013** – New Commission – New York Philharmonic – Lincoln Center
 - 8 October – 1 December** – Beethoven Exhibition – The Morgan Library

Discussion

RPS Bicentenary programme features leading figures from across the arts and includes:

- RPS talks on 'English Visionaries' and 'Future Composers' at Southbank Centre's *The Rest is Noise* festival
- Special RPS debates at the Association of British Orchestras conference (January) and Institute of Ideas (October)
- RPS focus as part of Ninth Biennial Conference on Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Cardiff (June)
- A range of pre-concert events in partnership with ensembles around the country

Full details of RPS Bicentenary speakers will be announced in the New Year.

- **Diary Dates:**

23 January – Talk – **Lutoslawski's Cello Concerto** – featuring cellist Johannes Moser and Emeritus Professor of Music at Cardiff University, Adrian Thomas – The Lighthouse, Poole

25 January – Debate – **Breaking the Mould** – featuring Will Gompertz, BBC Arts' Editor, Mark Baldwin, Artistic Director, Rambert Dance Company and Netia Jones, director and video artist – ABO Conference, Leeds

26 January – Talk – English Visionaries – Academics and cultural commentators including Dr. Heather Wiebe (University of Virginia & Kings College, London) come together to discuss the Edwardian aesthetic – Southbank Centre, London

8 March – Talk – Concerts and the Canon – Dr. Leanne Langley and Ian Day – Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre

18 April – Talk – Romantic Worlds – The Symphony, from Mendelssohn to Saint-Saëns – Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

On Air

Royal Philharmonic Society on Classic FM and classicfm.com

The RPS's 200th anniversary on 24 January 2013 is marked with a day featuring many of the composers and works associated with the Society as part of Classic FM's popular National Listening Day on air and online at classicfm.com. National Listening Day will be just part of a week of special programming and online features focusing on the sights and sounds of the Society on Global Radio's national classical music station (from Sunday 17 January).

RPS Bicentenary on BBC Radio 3

BBC Radio 3 will be broadcasting RPS Bicentenary concerts in **Live in Concert** throughout the year. A special focus on the Society's work in summer 2013 includes Composer of the Week, interval talks and a special Proms broadcast.

Online

Beethoven 9 iPad app

A new iPad app dedicated to the Society's most famous commission, developed by Touch Press in partnership with Deutsche Grammophon and the RPS, will be launched in early 2013 to coincide with the RPS Bicentenary.

New at rps200.org and rpsmusicawards.com

The RPS will launch two new websites for the Bicentenary. Offering a more comprehensive platform for its work, these new sites will include specially commissioned video material encapsulating the Society's work and a new interactive timeline spanning the wealth of activity, events and stories from the Society's two hundred-year history.

rpsmusicawards.com new site will be launched at the end of November 2012

rps200.org new site will be launched at the start of 2013

Digitisation of the RPS Archive at the British Library

A new digitisation of the RPS Archive at the British Library, part of *Nineteenth Century Collections Online (NCCO): British Theatre, Music, and Literature: High and Popular Culture* from Gale Digital Collections will revolutionise research for students, scholars and researchers around the world.

NCCO features a wide range of primary sources related to the arts in the Victorian era and beyond, from playbills and scripts to operas and complete scores. These rare documents, many of them never before available, were sourced from the British Library and other renowned institutions, and curated by experts in British arts history. Covering more than a century, *British Theatre, Music, and Literature* is without equal as a resource for 19th Century scholars of cultural history.

The documents from the entire RPS archive include both manuscripts as well as the records of the Society, and have never before been filmed or digitised. Extensive work is underway by a team of conservators at the British Library to repair and further preserve these documents as part of the digitisation process. The documents will be searchable and browsable, and can also be downloaded for closer study.

gdc.gale.com/nineteenth-century-collections-online/british-theatre-music-and-literature/

Royal Philharmonic Society Bicentenary Appeal

"There could not be a better cause than the Royal Philharmonic Society's appeal"

Dame Janet Baker, RPS Gold Medallist

Talented young musicians are struggling with the high costs of instruments, music college fees and bills as they start on their professional careers. New music needs time and promotion to take its place in the repertoire. Concert halls, festivals and publishers need strong advocates in today's competitive world, if they are to be innovative and creative.

The RPS Bicentenary Appeal aims to raise an additional **£270,000** to invest in talented young musicians and composers who are writing and performing great music now and for future generations.

John Gilhooly, Chairman of the Royal Philharmonic Society comments: *"The modern Royal Philharmonic Society borrows from its forefathers a core mission to underline the importance and excellence of classical music in the 'most perfect way possible' and today, as then, we see support for the next generation of musical talent as central to this mission.*

The Society takes a lead in supporting young talent. Increasingly, however, demand for our support far outstrips available resources, and this gap is widening. The implications are serious for both the individual and for music as a whole. For example, this year the Society was only able to meet 14% of the total funds requested towards purchase of new instruments. How can musicians entering the profession reach their full potential if crucial years of training are impeded by a lack of a decent instrument, and what impact will lost young talent ultimately have on our musical life?"

Bicentenary Appeal Donations can be made online and donors can decide to direct their donation to focus on young musicians, composers and commissions, audiences and understanding or support for musical excellence.

The RPS is a UK registered charity no. 213693.

Full details at: rps200.org/support

Did you know? Twenty facts from two hundred years of the RPS...

- 1 The Philharmonic Society was born on 24 January 1813 when a group of professional musicians met at 17 Manchester Street, London, the home of Henry Dance.
- 2 The Philharmonic Society received its Royal moniker in 1913 to mark its centenary; the Society's Patron is Her Majesty the Queen. Its first 'Royal Command performance' was in 1843.
- 3 The annual Philharmonic season of concerts neatly coincided with the 'London season', when Parliament sat and high society was in town. Mendelssohn's final concert with the Society in 1847 attracted '*numerous attendance of rank and fashion*'.
- 4 Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, commissioned by the Society in 1822, is still the most requested work on BBC Desert Island Discs. *Ode To Joy* has featured in over 715 programmes since the show began 70 years ago.
- 5 An early Philharmonic superstar was the virtuoso double bassist Domenico Dragonetti. He brought his dog Carlo to performances and commanded higher fees than almost any other player.
- 6 Nearly half of the works commissioned or dedicated to the RPS since 1813 have been commissioned since 2000.
- 7 The RPS Archives at the British Library include autograph letters from Albéniz, Bax, Berlioz, Brahms, Britten, Bruch, Busoni, Clementi, Coleridge-Taylor, Debussy, Delibes, Delius, Dvořák, Elgar, Gounod, Grieg, Holst, Kodaly, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, Rossini, Saint-Saëns, Sibelius, Ethel Smyth, Spohr, Stainer, Stanford, Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Tippett and Wagner (to name just a few).
- 8 Early directors and conductors were given engraved ivory tickets for Philharmonic Society performances, now housed in the RPS Archives.
- 9 The RPS Gold Medal is one of the most privileged honours in music; fewer than 100 medals have been presented since 1871. Pianist Mitsuko Uchida is the most recent recipient.
- 10 Honorary Membership of the RPS is awarded in recognition of services to music. Since 1826, when the first recipient was Carl Maria von Weber, Honorary Membership has been awarded fewer than 130 times. Recent recipients include conductor Sir Mark Elder and composer George Benjamin.
- 11 Wagner was musical director of the 1855 Philharmonic Society Season and conducted all 8 concerts. To Wagner, the worst thing about London was 'the worthlessness, insolence, venality & vulgarity of the press'. He hated the weather too!
- 12 The RPS continued to give concerts throughout two world wars. During World War II, the Society stepped in for the BBC to mount the Proms of 1940 and 1941.
- 13 During World War I, as well as underwriting every season, Sir Thomas Beecham conducted all but five concerts. A performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony scheduled for March 1916, was cancelled due to the problems of assembling a chorus at a time of '*difficulties of transport and the abandonment of railway concessions*'
- 14 Planetary intervention: The first public performance of Gustav Holst's *The Planets* (minus "Venus" and "Neptune") was given in London under the auspices of the Royal Philharmonic Society on 27 February 1919, conducted by Adrian Boult.
- 15 Schaller's Beethoven bust was given to the Philharmonic Society in 1870 in recognition of its kindness to Beethoven during his final years. The Society's conductor, the indefatigable W.G Cusins, volunteered to collect it and made the journey to Budapest '*without any difficulty, though trains were delayed on account of the conveyance of troops*'.
- 16 In 1936, seven fellows asked '*that the Society not include so much modern music in the programmes*'. Had they taken a dislike to RPS commissioned Vaughan Williams's *4th Symphony* or Walton's *Viola Concerto* earlier that season?
- 17 Today, RPS membership is a 50/50 split between professional musicians and music lovers.
- 18 Before they were famous....Stephen Hough, Alina Ibragimova and composer Julian Anderson are just a few of the world class musicians that the Society has supported with grants and awards during their formative years. Conductors Edward Gardner, Gustavo Dudamel and tenor Ian Bostridge are amongst those spotted by the Society early in their careers and awarded the RPS Music Award for Young Artists.
- 19 RPS Music Awards speakers have often raised debate (and an eyebrow or two). Artist Grayson Perry remains the only speaker to date to wear an inflatable PVC dress.
- 20 The RPS has been at the heart of music in the UK for 200 years – '*for the love of music*'.

200 years of the Royal Philharmonic Society:

Commissions and Premieres

Commissions and world premieres, including:

Beethoven: Symphony No. 9; **Mendelssohn:** Symphony No. 4 in A, Italian;
Mendelssohn: Trumpet Overture in C; **Mendelssohn:** Concert aria 'Infelice' Op 94;
Parry: Symphony No. 3 in F; **Dvořák:** Cello Concerto; **Delius:** Song of the High Hills;
Holst: The Planets; **Vaughan Williams:** Symphony No. 9; **Walton:** Variation on a Theme of Hindemith; **Bartok:** Concerto for 2 pianos, percussion and orchestra (revised edition);
Hoddinott: Variants for Orchestra; **Musgrave:** Clarinet Concerto; **Lutoslawski:** Cello Concerto; **Elliott Carter:** Of Rewaking

In the past decade the Society has commissioned 61 works by both distinguished and young composers including: **Luke Bedford, Judith Bingham, Simon Bainbridge, Detlev Glanert, Jonathan Dove, Julian Philips, Lyell Cresswell, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Hugh Wood, Huw Watkins, Charlie Piper, Joseph Phibbs, Dai Fujikura, Emily Hall, Stuart MacRae and Dominic Muldowney.**

UK premieres given by the Philharmonic Society include:

Beethoven: Symphony No. 5; Symphony No. 7; Symphony No. 9; Overture, Fidelio;
Piano Concerto No. 1 in C; Piano Concerto No. 4 in G; Overture, Leonora No.1 **Mozart:**
Piano Concerto in D, K451 **Weber:** Piano Concerto No. 2 in E flat; Overture Euryanthe;
Rossini: Overture, William Tell **Mendelssohn:** Overture, Fingal's Cave; Piano Concerto
No. 1 in G minor; Piano Concert No. 2 in D Minor; Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Scottish;
Music from a Midsummer Night's Dream **Joseph Strauss:** Symphony in Eb Chopin:
Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor **Schumann:** Symphony No. 1 in Bb; Symphony No. 2
in Eb **Bruch:** Violin Concerto No.1 in G Minor; Scottish Fantasia for Violin and
Orchestra **Wagner:** Prize Song from Die Meistersinger **Gounod:** Symphony No. 2 in Eb
Berlioz: Dramatic Symphony Romeo et Juliette **Dvořák:** Violin Concerto in A minor
Tchaikovsky: Serenade for Strings; Suite No. 1 in D; Symphony No. 4 in F Minor;
Symphony No. 6 in B Minor **Haydn:** Symphony No. 54 in G; Symphony No. 51 in Bb
Borodin: Symphony No. 2 in B Minor **Rachmaninov:** Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor;
Symphony No. 2 in E Minor; Piano Concerto in D Minor **Sibelius:** Symphony No. 3 in C;
Symphony No. 7 in C **Delius:** On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring; Summer Night on
the River **Debussy** (orch Goossens): Clair de lune **Prokofiev:** Violin Concerto No. 1 in D
Holst: Egdon Heath **Ravel:** Piano Concerto **Bartok:** Rhapsody No. 1 for violin and
orchestra **Bruckner:** Symphony No. 4 in Eb **Walton:** Violin Concerto; Cello Concerto
Shostakovich: Cello Concerto No.2 **Messiaen:** Des canyons aux étoiles **Lutoslawski:**
Les Espaces du sommeil