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Press Release

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Major new commissions to mark the bicentenary of the Royal Philharmonic Society and Benjamin Britten's centenary in 2013.

Harrison Birtwistle, Magnus Lindberg, Per Nørgård, Wolfgang Rihm, Richard Rodney Bennett and Judith Weir to write new works.

The Royal Philharmonic Society [RPS] and The Britten-Pears Foundation [BPF] have announced a series of major co-commissions to mark the RPS's bicentenary and Britten's centenary in 2013.

The project, initiated by RPS Trustee **Colin Matthews**, who is also BPF's Music Director, involves six leading international composers. 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. The works will be premiered and performed nationally and internationally during 2013, with a full schedule of performances announced later this year.

Wolfgang Rihm will write for symphony orchestra, **Judith Weir** for chamber orchestra, **Magnus Lindberg** for large-scale ensemble, **Per Nørgård** for string quartet, **Harrison Birtwistle** for tenor and piano (with words by **David Harsent**) and **Richard Rodney Bennett** will write a children's song cycle. Premieres will be given by the **Hallé Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Vertavo Quartet** and **Mark Padmore** and **Till Fellner**.

The commissions will form part of a year-long celebration of the Royal Philharmonic Society's bicentenary in 2013, featuring concerts and special events nationwide. Alongside the new commissions, the centenary of Benjamin Britten's birth will be marked internationally by publications, exhibitions, broadcasts, educational projects and hundreds of performances, including a series of opera productions supported by the Britten-Pears Foundation's Britten 100 Awards. BPF will announce highlights of the Britten centenary year this coming autumn.

Rosemary Johnson, Executive Director of the Royal Philharmonic Society

comments: *"The RPS is dedicated to creating a future for music, and commissioning new music is central to this tenet. The society has a long tradition of supporting composers – from Beethoven and Mendelssohn through to Elliott Carter and many composers in the early stages of their careers. It is, therefore, particularly fitting that we celebrate our bicentenary in 2013 and the independent spirit of both Britten and the RPS with these ambitious commissions from some of the world's finest composers."*

Richard Jarman, General Director of the Britten-Pears Foundation comments:

"Britten himself was a keen champion of new music, and would surely approve of us working with the RPS to celebrate his centenary, and their bicentenary, with six new works from such outstanding contemporary composers."

Composer Magnus Lindberg comments: *"I'm honoured to be commissioned to write a new ensemble work for the Britten Centenary year and to celebrate the bicentenary of the Royal Philharmonic Society, an organisation which has enthusiastically supported my work and that of so many other composers."*

I've always admired Britten as a composer for the clarity of his scoring and the amazing range of his output - he could turn his hand to anything. He also had an innate sense of drama, and I hear this just as much in his instrumental music as in his operas. His legacy continues to be important for living composers and contemporary music in general."

www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk

www.brittenpears.org

Further press information from:

Sophie Cohen, Royal Philharmonic Society, on 020 7428 9850 07711 551 787
sophiecohen@blueyonder.co.uk

Richard Jarman, Britten Pears Foundation on 07710 313147

r.jarman@brittenpears.org