



Patron: Her Majesty the Queen

Press Release:

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"Ode to Joy"

Royal Philharmonic Society celebrates its 200th birthday by announcing new transatlantic partnership and a major new work written in response to its most famous commission, **Beethoven's 9th Symphony**.

Mark-Anthony Turnage to write an orchestral work inspired by **Beethoven's** masterwork.

One of the world's most illustrious musical institutions, the **Royal Philharmonic Society [RPS]** marks its 200th anniversary tomorrow (24 January 2013) by announcing a major new work by internationally acclaimed English composer **Mark-Anthony Turnage**, written in response to the Society's most famous commission, **Beethoven's 9th Symphony**.

Turnage's new work, *Frieze*, co-commissioned by the **RPS, BBC Radio 3 and New York Philharmonic**, will receive its **world premiere at the BBC Proms*** this summer alongside Beethoven's 9th Symphony. Performed by the **National Youth Orchestra and National Youth Choir of Great Britain** under **Vasily Petrenko**, the concert will be this year's free Prom. The **U.S. premiere** (and four further performances) by the **New York Philharmonic** under **Alan Gilbert** feature in the orchestra's 2013/14 season at **Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center NYC** (3-5, 8-9 October). At each concert, Turnage's new work will be performed with the symphony that has inspired it; the U.S. concerts are part of *Philharmonic Pioneers – Beethoven, the Big Apple and Beyond*, an Autumn season of RPS Bicentenary events in New York City.

A revolutionary composition and one of the greatest works of art to celebrate humanity and brotherhood, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was commissioned by the Philharmonic Society in 1817 for 50 pounds. It 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 New York Philharmonic gave its U.S. Premiere in 1846, for which it commissioned the first English translation of "Ode to Joy".

Alongside the New York Philharmonic concerts, the RPS Bicentenary will be celebrated in the Big Apple in September/October 2013 with a display of artefacts from the RPS and New York Philharmonic archives at the Bruno Walter Gallery at Avery Fisher Hall, a concert including the U.S Premieres of RPS commissions at the Juilliard School of Music, the U.S premiere of a new work by Poul Ruders at the Morgan Library, 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 Juilliard's own historic score – the first time that the two will have been together and on public display since 1824. **Roger Wright**, Director of the BBC Proms and Controller of BBC Radio 3 will give the first ever RPS Lecture outside the UK (9 October).

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. In Hill's 1836 diary (to be displayed at Avery Fisher Hall), he raved about the Ninth Symphony's "*majesty vigor, genius, [and] originality*" after hearing it for the first time, conducted by Mendelssohn; Hill wrote that it would be 100 years "*before the like can possibly be hoped to be heard in the United States,*" but only ten years later, Hill arranged for the New York Philharmonic to perform the Ninth Symphony's U.S. Premiere.

Beethoven 9 and Mark-Anthony Turnage premiere

The Royal Philharmonic Society enjoyed close links with Beethoven right from its foundation in 1813, giving first performances of his 5th and 7th Symphonies and 1st, 3rd and 4th Piano Concertos. 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.*"

Turnage's work, *Frieze*, takes its name from **Beethoven Frieze** by the painter Gustav Klimt, which itself is inspired by Beethoven's 9th Symphony. Commenting on the commission, Turnage said: "*I've been obsessed with Beethoven from the age of eight. What a joy, therefore, to be asked by the RPS to write a piece inspired by Beethoven's great symphony. Beethoven is a towering figure, but I find him more inspiring than intimidating.*"

One of Britain's most successful living composers, Mark-Anthony Turnage has achieved international stature and is commissioned and performed throughout the world. His music is colourful, rhythmic, often lyrical and always distinctive, with an innate dramatic sense. Powerful in its contrasts, his music and texts hold up a mirror

to the realities of modern life and make a broad appeal to an enquiring contemporary audience.

About the Royal Philharmonic Society

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.

Today, 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. 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 and Henri Dutilleux.

200th birthday marked tomorrow (24 January) by special Philharmonia Orchestra concert at the Royal Festival Hall, London broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, and National Listening Day on Classic FM

Bicentenary celebrations throughout this 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. The exact anniversary of the founding of the Society is celebrated on Thursday 24 January 2013 (TOMORROW). 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.

The Bicentenary year continues with new commissions from leading and emerging composers, and reaches out to audiences through live performances, debates, exhibitions, broadcasts and online via www.rps200.org

Full details of all events at www.rps200.org

Further press information about the Royal Philharmonic Society from:
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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".