



Patron: Her Majesty the Queen

Press Release

For release: embargoed until
00:05, Thursday 24 January 2013

Royal Philharmonic Society wins prestigious ABO Award Award presented on the eve of the Society's 200th birthday

The Royal Philharmonic Society turns 200 today (Thursday 24 January) and celebrated this auspicious moment by scooping the top prize at the ABO Awards in Leeds last night (23 Jan).

On the eve of its 200th birthday, the Royal Philharmonic Society [RPS] has been awarded the prestigious ABO Award. The award is presented annually to an individual or institution considered by the member orchestras of the Association of British Orchestras to have made the most important contribution to the orchestral life of the UK. The RPS is only the third organisation to receive the award since it was instigated in 1990.*

In its citation, the ABO comments: *"This year the board decided it was right to honour the Royal Philharmonic Society, an institution which, in the words of Richard Morrison of The Times, has for centuries "been the beating heart and conscience of British musical life". The UK's orchestral tradition started in 1813 when this institution, founded by a group of professional musicians, mounted the first public season of regular instrumental concerts. Driven by the sheer determination and musical passion of its directors (and despite numerous cash-flow issues) its Philharmonic seasons went on unbroken through two world wars.*

New music has always been central to its ethos, which from the start fostered close associations with many composers including, among others, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Wagner (who led the 1855 season), Dvorak, Elgar and Vaughan Williams. Where would orchestras be without Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, commissioned by the Philharmonic Society in 1822. Today it maintains a vigorous commissioning policy (quite startlingly half its total commissions have been made in the last 15 years).

200 years on and this unique organisation is still at the heart of music: supporting and working creatively with talented young performers, championing excellence, and encouraging audiences to listen to, and talk about, great music. And at a time when many august organisations might choose to sit on their laurels, the emphasis of its Bicentenary is as much on the music of the future as the many triumphs of the past."

Accepting the award at the ABO/Rhinegold Awards Ceremony in Leeds (Wednesday 23 January), RPS Chairman **John Gilhooly** said:

“People often get confused and think that the Royal Philharmonic Society is an orchestra. They are of course, completely wrong. We are the mother of all orchestras.

It was 200 years ago tomorrow, on 24 January 1813, that a group of musicians gathered to discuss the future of music and the meeting heralded the birth of the UK’s orchestral tradition. From the off, the Philharmonic Society recognised the need to be bold of ambition and to unashamedly beat the drum for excellence and creative thinking in music. It’s a resolute position that we retain today, however unfashionable that might be, and given current threats to the arts from the proposed Ebacc and funding cuts, it’s never more needed.

Thank you, and – as our founding fathers might have said: “for the love of our art”, here’s to the next 200 years!”

THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY CELEBRATES ITS 200TH BIRTHDAY TODAY (THURSDAY 24 JANUARY) WITH NATIONAL LISTENING DAY ON CLASSIC FM AND A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY CONCERT BY THE PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, BROADCAST LIVE ON BBC RADIO 3 (PART OF A BICENTENARY YEAR OF CONCERTS, TALKS, EXHIBITIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC).

www.rps200.org

Further press information from:

Sophie Cohen on 020 7428 9850 07711 551 787 sophiecohen@blueyonder.co.uk

* BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM are the only other organisations to have won the ABO Award