



## Press Release

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### Winners announced for the inaugural RPS DUET PRIZES FOR YOUNG INSTRUMENTALISTS AND COMPOSERS

Winners have been announced of the inaugural RPS Duet Prizes for Young Instrumentalists and Composers. From exceptional shortlists which revealed an invigorating array of talent in schools across the UK, 18-year-old composer **Freya Ireland\*** and 16-year-old cellist **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** were chosen as the winners of the RPS Duet Prize for Young Composer, and the RPS Duet Prize for Young Instrumentalist. Each wins £1500 to assist with their musical development and a public recital/performance at a national music festival.

The biennial RPS Duet Prizes are for outstanding young musicians aged under-18, who study at a mainstream school (not a music specialist school). They are part of 'Ensemble Philharmonic', a partnership between the RPS and the Duet Group to build links between exceptional young musicians and secondary music departments, and the music profession. The Duet Group is the leading organisation for leasing and maintaining musical instruments in schools, conservatoires and universities.

Rosemary Johnson, Executive Director of the Royal Philharmonic Society comments: *"There is always something special about listening to very young musicians– to hearing their musical ideas, and witnessing the passion and enthusiasm that they have for their craft at a crucial, formative stage. The RPS is pleased to team up with the Duet Group to celebrate school-aged talent and build links between the profession and young musicians. Sheku and Freya shone out from incredibly strong shortlists of young musicians and composers, all of who demonstrate how talent that is nurtured and supported can flourish, and the vital importance of high quality music education. Many congratulations to Sheku and Freya; we look forward to watching your musical development in the months and years to come."*

Jonathan Thorne, Director of the Duet Group comments: *"The Duet Group has enjoyed the good fortune of partnering the Royal Philharmonic Society in a number of initiatives to encourage young musicians including our "Ensemble Philharmonic" project to join Duet client schools with*

*the RPS and more recently the RPS Young Musicians' Prizes for best soloist and composer. This year saw intense competition from some outstanding young musicians who represented themselves as an absolute credit to their schools and parents. Difficult though it was, we had the privilege of choosing two winners, Sheku Kanneh-Mason (a young cellist) and Freya Ireland (a young composer) both of whom we are thrilled will be engaged at professional events in the near future. It is critical that young musicians are offered access to every possible tool and opportunity to advance their journey into the profession and Duet, along with its Duet Philharmonic Orchestra and charitable foundation could not be more pleased with the outcome of this year's competition."*

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\* Freya Ireland was 17 at the time of application to the RPS Duet Prize for young composers

## **ABOUT THE WINNERS**

### **SHEKU KANNEH-MASON**

16-year-old **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** attends Trinity Comprehensive School in Nottingham. He holds the ABRSM Junior Scholarship to The Royal Academy of Music, where he studies cello with Ben Davies. Sheku plays in the Chineke! Junior and Professional Orchestra, as well as the JRAM Symphony Orchestra. He is currently participating in the BBC Young Musician 2016. He plays chamber music with the Kanneh-Mason Piano Trio and the Ash String Trio. Sheku plays a cello made by Frank White of Ladystone Violins. He also enjoys football.

### **FREYA IRELAND**

**Freya Ireland** is 18 years old and attends Pate's Grammar school in Cheltenham. She plays Percussion, Clarinet and Piano, and sings in a number of local choirs. As a composer, Freya has had her setting of Jeremiah's Lamentations performed by the Tallis Scholars and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 as the winning piece of the NCEM young composers' competition 2014. She has recently been commissioned to write a number of works for local choirs including the Tewkesbury Abbey choir, Gloucester Choral Society, and the Oriel singers. In November 2014 she was a finalist in the Nonclassical composers' competition, with a piece that involved musicians and singers in four different countries playing a piece via video links, this piece was singled out for praise in the Daily Telegraph's review of the event.

This year, Freya has been given the role of principal composer for the National Youth Orchestra, having joined the composing section in 2013; her music has been performed by members of the NYO in Birmingham Symphony Hall, Tate Britain, Royal Festival Hall and other prestigious venues.