



RPS COMPOSERS

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Here follows information on the programme and how to apply. If you may like this information in a different format, for accessibility reasons, please call us on 020 7287 0019 or email us at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk, and we will do our best to help.

Establishing yourself as a professional composer is rarely easy and, in a challenging funding landscape following the consequences of the pandemic, this has undoubtedly become even harder.

Annually, the Royal Philharmonic Society Composers programme aims to transform the prospects of promising UK-based composers. We are pleased to welcome applications for the 2024 programme.

Besides offering a commission - performed with one of a range of noted ensembles, venues and festivals - we support a cohort of composers at critical turning points in establishing their careers, helping them develop the skills and confidence they need to seek further commissions and performances of their own beyond the programme. We're looking for composers secure in their compositional writing who are in the early stages of their careers and will benefit from a year-long range of sessions and activities. Composers will join us for some preliminary sessions in Autumn 2023, before the programme fully gets underway in January 2024.

The RPS Composers programme includes the opportunity to meet and draw insights from key figures in the music business and professional composers, group sessions to fuel your confidence and ability to promote yourself and your music, and individual sessions looking at your own personal objectives and how we might help you fulfil them. Furthermore we will give you an insight into the range of settings in which you and your music can have real impact, encouraging you to think more about the scope of everything you can do as a professional composer.

Timeline

2 February 2023: applications open

14 March 2023: applications close at 11am

April-May 2023: applications are reviewed by expert panel

June 2023: all applicants will be notified if they have been shortlisted by the end of the month

July 2023: interviews for shortlisted applicants will take place

August 2023: places and partner ensembles and organisations will be confirmed

October 2023: the 2024 RPS Composers programme cohort will be announced

Autumn 2023: initial sessions and conversations with partner ensembles and organisations

January 2024: professional development sessions continue and composers begin writing

May-December 2024: composers receive their premieres

By being selected for the programme, we will proudly present you as an RPS Composer, part of a lineage that goes back to Beethoven and Mendelssohn, and has more recently supported composers like Charlotte Bray and Daniel Kidane, helping you get the recognition your music deserves. Your continued success matters to us and, once the programme is over, we aim to find an occasion to bring the cohort back together, giving you chance to reflect with us and each other on what you have achieved resulting from your RPS experience and what further resolutions you next need to make.

Please read these Application Guidelines carefully before applying, and continue to consult them throughout the process.

If you have any queries not addressed here, you can contact our Administrator Charlotte Smith at charlotte@philharmonicsociety.uk.

What does the RPS offer?

Usually we grant around seven commissions which we expect to have a value of £2,500 each, for a chamber or solo work plus its premiere performance with a leading ensemble, venue or festival in the UK. Each of these valued partners plays a vital role in your experience, giving you a practical insight into their creative work and how you as a composer can most fruitfully collaborate with more organisations like them in future. Moreover, from Autumn 2023 you will attend a number of sessions through the year designed for you to make plans and enable you to establish a good footing in the music profession, meeting contacts who will be invaluable for your future. We are particularly grateful to Schott Music - with whom the RPS shares its premises - whose team lend their expertise to several of these sessions helping our composers address a range of practicalities of being a professional composer and offer individual specialist guidance. Most of these sessions will take place remotely over Zoom, but we may hold some of them in person where it is practical to do so. We estimate all such activity will take place across approximately 15-20 days over the course of the year.

Our current cohort of composers is writing for Cheltenham Music Festival, Ensemble 10/10, Manchester Camerata, Music in the Round, ORA Singers, Presteigne Festival, Solem Quartet and Wigmore Hall Learning. To give you a general impression of what is offered, you can read about our current commissions and the composers fulfilling them on our [website](#). While plans are still taking shape, we expect a similar range of opportunities to be offered in the year ahead. Before finalising our partners for 2024, we look forward to meeting shortlisted composers at interview and hearing more about your plans and aspirations.

With each partner, we will set the brief and parameters for the work you are going to write in the first months of the programme with a view to you being able to make significant headway with it from the start of 2024. Each will have its own submission date, likely a month or two before performance, and premieres take place from May to December 2024.

Who is it open to?

The programme is for composers of any nationality based in the UK who plan to build their career here. Accordingly, the content of our year-round sessions is based on principles and situations you will encounter in the UK music profession, and led by UK industry experts. Furthermore, we strive for our cohort of composers to meet online or in person as a group throughout the year, and each composer is expected to visit the UK ensemble, venue or festival for whom they are composing.

Vitally, you should be at a stage where you are able to demonstrate genuine commitment to establishing a career as a composer, both in what you write in your application, and also in the proficiency of the music you submit. For most people, this programme is likely to be most useful when you have already been working in the music profession in some capacity and are looking to reach the next level. You may have graduated in the last few years, or some time ago. Equally, a formal degree or equivalent qualification is not compulsory. We recognise that composers pursue many different routes at different stages in their lives, so we look forward to hearing your individual story.

Please note, this opportunity is not open to those studying at Undergraduate or Masters level from September 2023 onwards. If you are still studying, we recommend that you focus on all that your college or university can offer, and you're welcome to apply in a future year. Composers working towards a PhD are welcome to apply. Equally, given its purpose to help establish your career, this opportunity is only for those aged 18 and above.

We're always keen to hear from those who have not considered applying to the RPS before, but you are equally and warmly welcome to apply again if you have in a previous year, so long as you take the time in your application to tell us what has been creatively occupying you since you last applied. If you are applying again, please don't simply duplicate what you told us about yourself last time.

We are continually striving to address how we can minimise barriers to the widest possible range of applicants. We are proud to have adopted Sound and Music's [Fair Access Principles](#) and are also signed up to the [Keychange](#) initiative, aiming to achieve 50:50 parity of marginalised genders in the composers we support. We warmly welcome applications from composers of all backgrounds, particularly under-represented demographics, such as those who are Black, Asian and ethnically diverse, those who are disabled, and those from working class backgrounds. In this, we actively invite applicants to declare such characteristics in their application form - though this is not compulsory - as well as any access needs you might have. If you feel that any part of our offer - or the experience in applying for it - could inhibit you or a candidate from applying, please do let us know (our contact details are below) and we will be happy to address this.

What is the process?

Applications can be made via our online application form. Applicants should complete the form themselves where possible, but may elect another person to complete it on their behalf

if needs be. You will also need to submit two of your compositions for consideration by our panel – details of how to do this can be found in the 'Compositions' section below. We will notify all applicants if they have been selected for interview by the end of June, and thank you for your patience. Selected applicants will be invited to a short interview in July - to be held on Zoom - to talk more about your music and aspirations.

What does it cost to apply?

There is no application fee or cost to apply.

When is the closing date?

The closing date is 11am on **Tuesday 14 March 2023**. We regret we cannot consider any applications or supporting materials received after that time.

What if I still have questions?

We are pleased to offer two Q&A sessions on Zoom for potential applicants. We hope you'll be able to find answers to most of your questions in these guidelines but appreciate that it can be useful to hear from one of the RPS team and ask questions directly. We are newly doing this to be as helpful as possible as you consider applying for the programme and give you an opportunity to get to know us a little better before you apply. You can read more about our small, friendly team on our [website](#).

Our General Manager Harriet Wybor will host the meeting with her video on, but you won't see the other participants. Harriet will give a short introduction to the RPS and the Composers programme. She will talk through the application process and answer your questions, which you can ask anonymously or in the group chat. Sessions will be held as follows:

1.00-2.00pm on Thursday 16 February 2023 [register here](#)

6.00-7.00pm on Tuesday 21 February 2023 [register here](#)

To register, please click the link next to the session you would like to sign up for. Once you've registered, you will be sent an email with instructions for how to join. The content in each session will be the same, so you only need to attend one session.

APPLICATION FORM

All applicants are required to complete our online application form, or elect another person to do so on their behalf if needs be. As we can only invite a number of applicants to interview, we encourage you to take time and care in completing the application form to ensure it represents you well. It plays just as vital a role as the compositions you submit in helping us gauge whether to grant you an interview. If you have applied before, please take time to provide fresh answers, giving us an updated picture of your situation now. For ease, we have included the questions you'll find in the application form below. We recommend that you to draft any longer answers offline in a Word document or similar, which you can save, and copy and paste your answers into the online form when you are ready to submit.

In the form, you will first be asked to tell us some basic information about yourself. You will also be asked to provide your UK address and confirm that you are based in the UK and plan to be till the end of 2024. If you are currently a student living away from home in higher education, you should give the UK address of your family home or equivalent.

You will next be asked to write about your progress as a composer so far, talking about your music and any other musical work you may have alongside composing (such as performing, teaching, education work, arranging). We ask you to tell us about your future aspirations and what shape you envisage your career taking, in the following four questions:

1. Have you applied to the RPS Composers programme before?

We're always keen to hear from those who have not considered applying to the RPS before, but are equally pleased to hear from those who have and read about what they have achieved recently.

Tip: for composers who have applied before, in the questions that follow, we ask that you take the time to tell us about your progress and what you have sought to do creatively since you last applied.

2. Please give brief details on your compositional journey to date. (1000 characters max):

Unless you are submitting this application on behalf of another person, please write in the first person. Your answer should include reference to any study, significant performances (here, please specify if any were gained through application to a scheme/programme), and other musical activities you may have alongside composing such as performing, teaching, arranging, leading/contributing to workshops.

Tip: Wherever possible, write sentences in the first person and be specific. Try to avoid copying a generic biography with a list of collaborators. It helps our selection panel to have some context about how you have worked with the artists or initiatives you mention.

3. How do you see your career taking shape and what are your aspirations, both in terms of the music you want to write and how you see it positively contributing to society? (1000 characters max):

Tip: what practical examples can you give of how your work does this?

4. What specifically do you feel this programme can help you with at this point in your career - and why particularly now? (1000 characters max):

Tip: pick one or two vocational examples that you'd particularly like to address in the year ahead. Don't try to second-guess what you think we want to hear! We're simply keen to understand what you most need support with.

You are next asked to provide the details of the two compositions you are submitting. See the 'Compositions' section below for what is required here.

You also will need to provide the name, role and email address of someone who can give you a character reference. Please see the 'Reference' section below.

Finally, you will be invited to complete some standard diversity monitoring questions. These are not obligatory (and you may complete as many or as few as you wish) but, by completing them, you will help us gauge our reach and monitor the effectiveness of our inclusivity policy.

COMPOSITIONS

We ask all applicants to submit two compositions of their own original, unaided work. These may be of any instrumental/vocal combination and should demonstrate your ability to compose for different forces.

Applicants need to provide a PDF score for each work and a recording. Recordings of performances or workshops with musicians are preferred but electronic recordings (such as Sibelius software audio) are accepted in circumstances where opportunity to obtain a recording with live musicians has been limited.

For each piece, we will accept either the complete work or a movement from it, but multiple movements from one piece cannot be considered as separate works. We appreciate some applicants may have taken a career break (which you can outline in the question titled, 'Please give brief details on your compositional journey to date') and as such might not be able to submit two recent works. Nevertheless, if possible, we ideally ask that at least one of your pieces be a recent composition.

Optimally you should upload your recordings to the internet using a website/application like [SoundCloud](#) or [YouTube](#). Both are free and easy to set up an account with and you can set your recordings as private or unlisted if you prefer not to share them publicly. Please ensure your recordings are clearly labelled with their title and your name online, and check that the links work and will be accessible for at least six months.

We prefer not to receive recordings via Google Drive as this can make accessing a large number of recordings more time-consuming for our panel, so if you are unable to use SoundCloud, YouTube or an equivalent, please email us and we will suggest another way for you to submit your recordings.

In your application form, you need to provide the title and duration of each work, and a link to where we can find the recording online (on SoundCloud, YouTube or equivalent). If the link is private, make sure you tell us the password in your application form.

If your composition does not begin at the very start of any recording you submit, please state the time in minutes and seconds when it begins in the application form.

We ask you to upload your PDF scores to a dedicated RPS Dropbox folder - the link to this is [here](#) and you can also find the link in the application form online. Scores must be uploaded by the closing date of 11am on **Tuesday 14 March 2023**.

Each PDF should be submitted using the following filename format:

Forename Surname – Title of work

REFERENCE

In addition to your application, you should ask one person (for example your teacher, a professional composer, or someone working in the music profession who knows you) to write a short character reference.

You should ask your referee to send us their character reference for you by email to admin@philharmonicsociety.uk to arrive by the closing date of 11am on Tuesday 14 March 2023. In the subject heading of the email, they should simply write 'Composer reference for' followed by your name. Please note, due to the volume of applications received, we are unable to acknowledge receipt of references.

In your application form, you should state the name, role and email address of your referee so we know who to expect it from. We can only consider applications for which we have a character reference. However, if obtaining a character reference is not possible for whatever reason, please do let us know via the contact details at the bottom of this document, as we do not want this to prevent you from applying. Please note that we will not proactively contact your referee to obtain your reference, so you should ensure they know to send it to us by email by the closing date.

SHORTLISTING

We receive well over 100 applications each year for around seven places, the majority of a very impressive standard. Applications are read with care, and submitted compositions reviewed by us at the RPS, select representatives from our partner organisations, and two independent professional composers. We appoint different people to fulfil this role annually and, in our brief to partner organisations and composers, we ask that they be aware of and challenge their own implicit biases.

INTERVIEW

Shortlisted applicants are invited to an interview which will take place remotely over Zoom. In June, we will notify applicants who have been selected for interview, and interviews will take place in July 2023. The interview will last 15-20 minutes with a small, friendly interview panel comprising representatives from the RPS and at least one of our partner organisations, and another professional composer – not involved in the initial shortlisting process. In advance of the interview, we will let you know who will be on the interview panel and send you the questions we plan to ask. It's an opportunity to tell us more about your progress and aspirations as a composer, and the works you have submitted.

As each composer in the final cohort needs placing with a partner venue, festival or organisation, it can take time to confirm outcomes following the interview stage. We don't finalise these until we've met you at the interview so we can take your plans and aspirations into consideration. We aim to notify applicants of outcomes in August 2023. The decision of the panel is final.

FEEDBACK

As noted, we can only invite a select number of applicants for interview, and then we have a very limited number of opportunities to offer. There is considerable competition for this, so please do not be too disappointed if your application is unsuccessful: as noted above, if you are still eligible to do so, you are welcome to apply again in future. If you would like feedback on your application or interview, you are welcome to email admin@philharmonicsociety.uk with the subject heading:

Composer feedback – Forename Surname

Owing to various commitments of our small team, it can take some time to collate and send feedback to those who request it, and we thank you for your patience in this.

TERMS

Applicants should be resident in the UK and plan to be till the end of 2024 so they are able to travel easily to partake in the programme.

The RPS is based in London and any opportunities taking place in person will invariably be held here, so composers will need to plan and fund their own travel arrangements. You may occasionally be required to travel to the festival, ensemble or venue in the UK where your commission is taking place. In most cases, you will be expected to arrange and fund any such travel and accommodation yourself, though this should be fairly minimal. In a couple of cases, the partner organisation with whom we are working may be able to offer some support towards this. We regret that the RPS itself is unable to offer travel bursaries, but please let us know if you have any financial concerns that you feel may adversely impact your ability to participate in the opportunity offered.

Payment of the grant will be made into your UK bank account in two instalments. The first will be paid in the first months of the programme. The second will be paid around the time of your premiere in 2024, on receipt of a signed, printed copy of the work you have written. Following the completion of your work, it is your responsibility to prepare the parts and score for the musicians (and, if relevant, conductor), and submit these by the submission date agreed with the festival, ensemble or venue.

As we will proudly regard you as an RPS Composer, we ask in return that you represent the Society whilst fulfilling the opportunity, and help us tell our Members and the wider public about how we are supporting you, most likely in the form of occasional blogs or videos accounting your progress that we can share online.

The information you provide in your application will only be used in accordance with our Privacy Policy as found on [our website](#).

If you have any further queries not addressed in these guidelines, please contact our Administrator Charlotte Smith at charlotte@philharmonicsociety.uk or call us on 020 7287 0019.