



## RPS COMPOSERS

### APPLICATION GUIDELINES 2020

Establishing yourself as a professional composer is rarely easy. Despite having the talent, composers at this stage in their careers often do not have the confidence, contacts and wherewithal to create new opportunities for themselves.

Annually, the Royal Philharmonic Society aims to transform the prospects of promising composers, helping them take their first critical steps in establishing a career. We not only grant a range of commissions and the chance for your work to be performed with a noted ensemble, venue or festival: we also aim to help you develop the means to seek further commissions and performances of your own. This comes through a range of sessions and activities, including the opportunity to meet and draw insights from key figures in the music business and professional composers, workshops to develop skills that will enable you to promote yourself and your music, and individual sessions to define personal objectives that we will help you to fulfil.

Furthermore we will give you an insight into the range of settings in which you and your music can have real impact, and will encourage you to think more about the scope of everything you can do as a professional composer. Our composers will spend time experiencing the vital education initiatives our partner organisations deliver, giving you a sense both of the responsibility and the many opportunities you have to enrich other's lives. Additionally, we will proudly present you as an RPS Composer, part of a distinguished lineage that goes back to Beethoven and Mendelssohn, helping you get the recognition your music deserves.

The following Application Guidelines are a step-by-step guide to submitting an application and all that follows. Please read it carefully before applying, and continue to consult it throughout the process.

If you have any queries not addressed in these Application Guidelines, you can contact us at [admin@philharmonicsociety.uk](mailto:admin@philharmonicsociety.uk) or call one of the team on 020 7287 0019.

### KEY QUESTIONS

**What does the RPS offer?** Usually we grant around eight commissions which this last year have had 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 a range of their creative work and how you as a composer can most fruitfully collaborate with more such organisations in future. Moreover, over the course of a year, from September 2020, you will also attend a number of sessions designed for you to set goals, 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. Over the course of the year, we estimate all such activity will take place across approximately 15-20 days.

Our current cohort of composers is writing for Cheltenham Festival, Music in the Round, Philharmonia, Presteigne Festival, RLPO's Ensemble 10/10 and Wigmore Hall's Composer Apprenticeship scheme. To give you a greater 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 most of these opportunities will be offered anew in the year ahead.

With each composer, we set the brief and parameters for the work they're going to write with their respective festival, ensemble or venue in early Autumn 2020. A provisional submission date will be agreed at this point, and the composers are then free to set about writing their works. Premieres usually take place from May to December the following year.

**Who is it open to?** 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. You may have recently graduated or be coming to the end of your studies, but equally a formal degree or equivalent qualification is not compulsory. We recognise that composers pursue many different routes, 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 2020 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 are equally pleased to hear from those who have and read about what they have achieved recently.

We are continually striving to address how we can minimise barriers to the widest possible range of applicants, and particularly welcome applications from under-represented demographics, such as those from a BAME background or those who are disabled. If you feel that any part of our offer - or the experience in applying for it - could inhibit any such person from applying, please do let us know (see contact details at the end of this document) and we will be happy to address this. We have also proudly signed up to the [Keychange](#) initiative, aiming to achieve 50:50 gender parity in the composers we support.

**What is the process?** You are asked to complete our online application form and also submit three of your compositions for consideration by our panel – details of how to do this can be found in the 'Compositions' section below. Selected applicants are then invited for an interview in London to talk more about your music and aspirations.

**What does it cost?** We are pleased to say that there is no entry fee or cost to those who undertake the programme. If you are shortlisted for interview in London, you would generally need to cover your own travel expenses, but do talk to us if you are concerned that this may prevent you attending.

**When is the closing date?** The closing date is **midday, Wednesday 15 April 2020.**

We regret we cannot consider any applications or supporting materials received after that time.

## APPLICATION FORM

All applicants are required to complete our online application form.

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. Particularly when completing the longer answers on the form, we advise you write these offline in a Word document 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. We ask you to upload some form of documentation (in PDF or JPG format) to prove your age. This may be a photograph or scan of a passport, birth certificate, driving licence or similar. You will also be asked to provide your fixed UK address and confirm that you are resident in the UK and plan to be till the end of 2021. 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 pursuits you may have alongside composing (such as performing, teaching, education work, arranging). We ask you to tell us about your future aspirations and candidly share where you feel you need help at this point in your career. In this, you should illustrate why you believe this opportunity is of vital worth to you right now.

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

Finally, you will need to provide the name, role and email address of one referee. Please see the 'Reference' section below.

Once submitted, you will receive a confirmation email from us saying your application has been safely received. **Please let us know if you think you have not received a confirmation email**, as your application may not have been submitted correctly.

Upon submitting your application, you will be invited to anonymously complete a standard 'diversity monitoring form'. This is not compulsory and you are welcome to complete as much or as little of it as you wish. Any data you submit helps us gauge the range of people we are reaching, which in turn helps us evaluate how to improve our reach. This data is filed entirely separately and has no bearing on your application.

## COMPOSITIONS

We ask all applicants to submit three compositions of their own original, unaided work. These may be of any instrumental combination and should demonstrate your ability to write for different instruments, as well as your proficiency in notating scores. Vocal compositions are welcomed as well, though applicants should note that the majority of commissioning opportunities (if not all) on offer in the year ahead will be for instrumental forces.

Applicants need to provide a PDF score for each work and a recording. Recorded performances are preferred but electronic recordings (such as Sibelius software audio) are accepted.

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. At least one of your compositions should be recent, namely it should have been composed since 15 April 2018 (two years before the closing date). If this is not possible, perhaps due to you taking career break, please simply let us know in the application question titled, '*Please give brief details on your compositional journey to date*'.

Optimally you should upload your recordings to the internet using a website/application like [Soundcloud](#). It's free and easy to set up an account on this and it can prove very useful for your future career as a means of sharing your recordings. Please ensure your recordings are clearly labelled with their title and your name online. If, for any reason, you are unable to use Soundcloud or an equivalent entity, please email us to tell us why, and we will propose 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 or equivalent). If the link is private, make sure you tell us the password in your application form.

You are required 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 midday on 15 April 2020.

Each PDF should be submitted with the following filename:

*Forename Surname – Title of work*

## REFERENCE

In addition to your application, you should ask one person (such as your teacher, a professional composer, or someone working in the music profession) to write a short reference. In this, they should talk about your compositional style and approach, and state why they believe you deserve our support at this time.

You should ask your referee to send their reference by email to [admin@philharmonicsociety.uk](mailto:admin@philharmonicsociety.uk) to arrive no later than the closing date of **midday on Wednesday 15 April 2020**. In the subject heading of the email, they should simply write 'Composer reference for' followed by your name.

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 reference.

If obtaining a 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 inhibit you from applying.

## INTERVIEW

Selected applicants will be invited to attend an interview in London in mid-June. We aim to notify you by the end of May if you have been invited to interview.

In the interview, you will meet a small, friendly panel comprising an RPS representative, along with distinguished colleagues from the music profession. The interview will last 15-20 minutes and will be

an opportunity to tell us more about your progress and aspirations as a composer, about the works you have submitted, and for you to find out more about the opportunity available.

Candidates will be notified of the outcome in July 2020. 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. If you would like feedback on your application or interview, you are welcome to email [admin@philharmonicsociety.uk](mailto:admin@philharmonicsociety.uk) with the subject heading:

*Composer feedback – Forename Surname*

Owing to various commitments, it can sometimes be several weeks before we can send you feedback, so thank you for your patience.

## TERMS

Applicants should be resident in the UK and plan to be till the end of 2021 so they are able to travel easily to partake in the opportunities we present throughout the year.

As the RPS is based in London, opportunities will invariably take place here (though not necessarily all) and candidates 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 a little support towards this. We regret that the RPS itself is unable to offer travel bursaries but you can contact us 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 towards the start of your year with us in Autumn 2020. The second will be paid around the time of your premiere in 2021, on receipt of a signed, printed copy of the work you have written.

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 a blog or video 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, you can contact our General Manager Robin Sheffield at [robin@philharmonicsociety.uk](mailto:robin@philharmonicsociety.uk) or call one of the team on 020 7287 0019.