



**=Fair
Access**

RPS COMPOSERS APPLICATION GUIDELINES 2021

Establishing yourself as a professional composer is rarely easy. Now, as the pandemic continues to impact classical music, this has undoubtedly become even harder.

Annually, the Royal Philharmonic Society Composers programme aims to transform the prospects of promising composers and we are pleased to welcome applications for 2021.

Besides offering a commission - performed with one of a range of noted ensembles, venues and festivals - we support a cohort of composers taking critical steps towards establishing their careers, and equip them with the skills and confidence to seek further commissions and performances of their own beyond the programme. We do this through a year-long range of sessions and activities from Autumn 2021, 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, as well as individual sessions looking at your own 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, encouraging you to think more about the scope of everything you can do as a professional composer. Composers in the pandemic are recognising they need to draw upon, adapt and apply their skills in lateral ways, and we want to give you insights and encouragement into where and how you can do that yourself.

By being selected for the programme, 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. Your continued success beyond our programme matters hugely to us. As such, we will hold one or two consequent sessions with you and the cohort some time after you have completed your year with us. This will give you the chance to reflect together on what you have achieved as a result of your year on the programme and consider what further resolutions you next need to make.

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

If you have any queries not addressed here, you can contact our General Manager Robin Sheffield at robin@philharmonicsociety.uk.

What does the RPS offer? Usually we grant around seven commissions which last year had a value of £2,000 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 such organisations in future. Moreover, from Autumn 2021 you will attend a number of sessions through the year 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. 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 Festival, Music in the Round, players from the Philharmonia, Presteigne Festival, 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 a similar range of opportunities to be offered anew in the year ahead.

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 2022. Each will have its own submission date, likely a month or two before performance and premieres take place from May to December 2022.

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 2021 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 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.

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 gender parity 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, and those who are disabled. In this, we actively invite applicants to declare such characteristics in their application form, though this is not compulsory. We are also keen to ensure the application process and opportunity is as widely accessible as possible. 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. We warmly welcome feedback and are keen to hear from anyone who may have identified potential barriers to applying.

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 will be invited to an interview in June to talk more about your music and aspirations, in London in person, or remotely over Zoom as needs be, in

June. We would dearly love to be able to meet and chat to all those we interview in person at our offices in London, but are very glad to accommodate remote interviews where traveling is particularly difficult or not possible for some.

What does it cost to apply? There is no application fee or cost to those who undertake the programme.

When is the closing date? The closing date is **midday, Tuesday 23 March 2021**. 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. If you have applied before, please take time to provide fresh answers, giving us an updated picture of your situation now. 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. You will also be asked to provide your UK address and confirm that you are resident in the UK and plan to be till the end of 2022. 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 what shape you envisage your career taking. We also ask you candidly to share where you feel you need help at this point in your career and how you feel this programme could be of vital worth to you right now. In this, you are welcome to reflect on the pandemic's impact, whether it has limited your progress or indeed led you to new creative pursuits or realisations.

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.

You also will need to provide the name, role and email address of one referee. 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 three compositions of their own original, unaided work. These may be of any instrumental/vocal combination and should demonstrate your ability to write for different instruments, as well as your proficiency in notating scores.

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 23 March 2019 (two years before the closing date). If this is not possible, perhaps due to you taking a 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](#) or [YouTube](#). Both are free and easy to set up an account with and 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, YouTube 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, 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, in the application form you must state the time in minutes and seconds when it begins.

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 Tuesday 23 March.

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 to arrive no later than the closing date of midday on Tuesday 23 March 2020. 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 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

Generally 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 - newly invited to fulfil this role each year.

Selected applicants are then invited to an interview, in London in person, or remotely over Zoom as needs be, in June. We aim to notify you by the end of May if you have been invited to interview.

A small, friendly interview panel comprises representatives from the RPS and at least one of our partner organisations, and another professional composer - not involved in the initial shortlisting process. 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 2021. 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 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 2022 so they are able to easily partake in and, where applicable, travel to 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 some may be held remotely, for instance over Zoom). We do not want your location or any access needs you might have to inhibit your participation in our programme, so please do not let this be a deterrent to you applying. For any who would need to travel long distances to partake, we would look to offer a discretionary travel bursary where possible. In a couple of cases, the partner organisation with whom we are working may be able to offer a little support towards travel for any opportunities they run. With regards to access, all applicants are invited to note any access needs they might have in their application form, and we would be so pleased to look at these with you and how we can accommodate them if you were selected for the programme. You are always welcome to get in touch with Robin Sheffield at the RPS (contact details below) if you would like to chat about this or find out more about participation in the programme.

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 2022, 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 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 or call one of the team on 020 7287 0019 (our voicemail will be checked daily whilst we work remotely, and we will reply to messages as soon as we can). We warmly welcome feedback about our application process and are keen to hear from anyone who may have identified potential barriers to applying.