



RPS COMPOSERS

APPLICATION GUIDELINES 2022

Establishing yourself as a professional composer is rarely easy and, as the consequences of 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 2022.

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, helping them develop the skills and confidence they need 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 2022, including 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.

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, 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 Camilla Carden at camilla@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 such organisations in future. Moreover, from Autumn 2022 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 aim to hold some of them in person too. 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, the Chorus of the Royal Northern Sinfonia, Manchester Camerata, Music in the Round, Presteigne Festival, Riot Ensemble and Wigmore Hall. 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 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 2023. Each will have its own submission date, likely a month or two before performance and premieres take place from May to December 2023.

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 2022 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 just 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 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 - 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 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?

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

What does it cost to apply?

There is no application fee or cost to those who undertake the programme. If you are selected for an interview in person, 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 11am on **Tuesday 15 March 2022**. 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 2023. 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.

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 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 three 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. 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. 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 three 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 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, please state the time in minutes and seconds when it begins in the 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 11am on **Tuesday 15 March 2022**.

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 (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 their reference by email to admin@philharmonicsociety.uk to arrive no later than the closing date of 11am on Tuesday 15 March 2022. 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 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 which all being well will take place 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 programme.

As each composer on the final cohort needs placing with a partner venue, festival or organisation, it can take time to confirm outcomes following the interview stage. Nevertheless, we aim to notify candidates of outcomes in July 2022. 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 2023 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 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 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 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 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, you can contact our Administrator Camilla Carden at camilla@philharmonicsociety.uk or call us on 020 7287 0019. We warmly welcome feedback about our application process and are keen to hear from anyone who may have identified potential barriers to applying.