



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 our Administrator Emily Porter 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 establishing their careers. We are pleased to welcome applications for the 2026 programme.

Besides offering a paid 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 later in 2025, before the programme fully gets underway in January 2026.

The RPS Composers programme includes the opportunity to meet and draw insights from key figures in the music business and professional composers, group workshops to fuel your confidence and ability to promote yourself and your music, and individual mentoring sessions looking at your own personal objectives and how we might help you fulfil them. Through the programme, we aim to 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

4 February 2025: applications open

25 March 2025: applications close at 11am

April-May 2025: applications are reviewed by expert panel

June 2025: all applicants will be notified if they have been shortlisted by the end of the month

4 July 2025: interviews for shortlisted applicants will take place

28 July 2025: introductory meeting for cohort

September 2025: partner ensembles and organisations will be confirmed

October 2025: the 2026 RPS Composers programme cohort will be announced

Autumn 2025: initial sessions and conversations with partner ensembles and organisations

January 2026: professional development sessions continue and composers begin writing

April-December 2026: 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 Emily Porter at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk.

What does the RPS offer?

Usually we grant around seven or eight commissions which we expect to have a value of £3,000 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 organisations like them in future. Additionally, from Autumn 2025 you will attend a number of sessions and workshops through the year designed for you to make plans and enable you to establish a good footing in the music profession. You will make contacts who will be invaluable for your future, who will offer specialist guidance and help you to address a range of practicalities of being a professional composer. 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 12 Ensemble, RLPO's Ensemble 10:10, Hebrides Ensemble, The Hermes Experiment, The Marian Consort, Presteigne Festival 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 2026, 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 2026. Each will have its own submission date, likely a month or two before performance, and premieres are expected to take place from April to December 2026.

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 it is anticipated that each composer will 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 2025 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 if you are already working professionally to some extent alongside your studies. 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. 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](#), we work closely with [Black Lives in Music](#), and we 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 represent the global majority, those who are disabled, and those from working class backgrounds. If you feel that any part of our offer – or the experience in applying for it – could inhibit you or another 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 needed. 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 25 March 2025**. 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, or elect another person to do so on their behalf if needed. 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 2026. 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? What can you tell us about your longer-term goals as a composer?

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 specific 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.

If you prefer to answer these questions in a filmed format, you should provide a link to one short film in which all the above is addressed, that does not exceed 6 minutes in duration. We anticipate that this will mostly entail the applicant talking to camera. This need not be high-quality and we welcome it being filmed on a smartphone or similar. This should be submitted as a link to YouTube or an equivalent platform, and the footage should remain visible there until the end of July 2025. You may send a link to footage that is 'unlisted' but please ensure to include any passwords with your link, if applicable, in the application form.

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.

We don't ask applicants to provide references at this stage, but may ask you to provide the name, role and email address of someone who can give you a character reference if you are invited to interview. Please see the 'Reference' section below for more information.

Finally, you will be invited to complete some standard inclusivity monitoring questions in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. These are not obligatory, and you may complete as many or as few questions as you wish. Taking a moment to do this is so helpful to us all collectively in classical music. We are committed to working with colleagues sector-wide to

ensure we are representing excellence, creativity and innovation in music-making within a diverse, multicultural society. Thank you for playing your part in this.

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 notation 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 YouTube or a cloud-based storage facility such as Google Drive. Both are free and easy to set up an account with. 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.

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 (YouTube, Google Drive, or similar). 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 25 March 2025**.

Each PDF should be submitted using the following filename format:

Forename Surname – Title of work

REFERENCE

We don't require a reference to apply to the RPS Composers programme, but if you are invited to interview we may ask you to provide the name, role and email address of someone who can provide a character reference for you. This could be anyone you've worked with in the music profession who knows you and your compositional work.

SHORTLISTING

We receive well over 100 applications each year for around seven or eight 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 on **Friday 4 July 2025**. Please mark this date in your diary now, as it is very unlikely that we will be able to offer any alternative interview dates if you are unable to attend. 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.

We aim to notify applicants of outcomes and make conditional offers within a few days of the interview. The decision of the panel is final. We will invite those selected to an introductory session – also to be held on Zoom – to meet each other and the RPS team on Monday 28 July. Each composer in the final cohort will be paired with a partner venue, festival or organisation, which we don't finalise them until we've met you at the interview so we can take your plans and aspirations into consideration. We aim to introduce composers to partners in September 2025.

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. We endeavour to provide feedback to all composers who apply for the programme for those who wish to receive it. If for any reason you do not want to receive feedback, there is an opportunity to indicate this in the application form.

TERMS

Applicants should be resident in the UK and plan to be till the end of 2026 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 should be prepared to travel to London once or twice during the programme for group activities where attendance in person is beneficial. The majority of

group sessions will be held online. It is anticipated that you will travel to the festival, ensemble or venue in the UK where your commission is taking place, details of which will be agreed with your partner organisation. It is expected that you will arrange any travel and accommodation required yourself, though this should be fairly minimal. Depending on your location, the RPS and/or your partner organisation may be able to make a contribution towards standard rail travel and accommodation, which will be discussed with composers individually on being selected for the programme. Please let us know if you have any access needs or financial concerns that you feel may adversely impact your ability to participate in the opportunity offered, and we will do our best to address these with you.

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 in Autumn 2025. The second will be paid around the time of your premiere in 2026, 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 RPS 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 Emily Porter at admin@philharmonicsociety.uk or call us on 020 7287 0019.