

## Press Release

For Release: STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 7.30PM, THURSDAY  
15 MAY 2008

Winners announced of  
Royal Philharmonic Society [RPS] Music Awards  
Presented in association with BBC Radio 3

RPS  
Music  
Awards

in association with

BBC  
RADIO



90 – 93FM

the UK's live classical music awards

At the start of 2008, **Birmingham Opera's** very existence looked in doubt with the threat of a grant cut by Arts Council England. Now, the successful campaign to reverse the decision has been vindicated, with Graham Vick's groundbreaking company picking up a coveted RPS Music Award for its stadium-production *La Traviata*.

The RPS Music Awards, presented in association with BBC Radio 3, are the UK's most prestigious awards for live classical music. Birmingham Opera triumphed in the Audience Development category, one of fifteen awards presented by **Ann Murray DBE** at a glittering awards ceremony at London's Dorchester Hotel (7.30pm on Thursday 15 May). A special programme devoted to the RPS Music Awards is broadcast on **BBC Radio 3** on **Friday 16 May at 7pm.**

*Graham Sheffield, Chairman of the Royal Philharmonic Society comments:*

*"The nature of the 'live' music experience is such that the brilliance of the moment can so easily be lost except in the memory. This is just one reason why the RPS Music Awards really matter. A flourishing live music scene provides the foundations for a more enduring recorded legacy, and without these unrepeatabe moments of inspiration, our lives would all be the poorer. These awards set out to make a strong and unambiguous statement of genuine quality: at a time when vacuous celebrity and instant stardom seem so highly valued, where 'outputs' and 'indicators' are in danger of overriding the true value of artistic ambition, we believe that excellence, creativity and understanding must continue to set the standard."*

**Welsh National Opera** proved the night's big winner, with composer **James MacMillan** picking up the Opera and Music Theatre award for *The Sacrifice*, premiered by WNO in 2007, and **WNO Max**, Welsh National Opera's programme of new work beyond the main stage, scooping the Education award for its ambitious environmental operatic trilogy *Land, Sky Sea*.

El Sistema, the extraordinary Venezuelan programme of social action through music, dominated the evening with conducting sensation **Gustavo Dudamel**, music director designate of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor of the Simon Bolívar Orchestra on its recent, ecstatically received, visit to the UK receiving the RPS Music Award for Young Artists. **José Antonio Abreu**, the inspirational Venezuelan economist and composer who in the early 1970s founded the National System of Children and Youth Orchestras of Venezuela (El Sistema), through which Dudamel – along with hundreds of thousands of other Venezuelan children and young people – received his formative musical experience, accepted a special award: Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society. Maestro Abreu is only the 123<sup>rd</sup> recipient of the award since the election of Carl Maria von Weber in 1826. The evening's keynote speaker, **Dr Richard Holloway**, Chair of the Joint Board of Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, and Chair of Sistema Scotland, talked about the importance of play in childhood. The first Sistema project in Europe, Sistema Scotland launches in Raploch, Stirlingshire in June.

In the individual performance categories, bass **John Tomlinson** triumphed in the Singer category as a last minute replacement as Wotan in Keith Warner's production of *The Ring Cycle* at the Royal Opera House. It is an unprecedented third RPS Music Award for the singer. Pianist **Imogen Cooper** received the RPS Music Award for Instrumentalist and English National Opera's 33 year old Music Director **Edward Gardner** won the RPS Music Award for Conductor. The people's vote went to American soprano **Christine Brewer**, winner of the BBC Radio 3 Listeners Award, voted for by the network's listeners online and via telephone. Roger Wright, Controller of BBC Radio 3 comments:

*"The RPS Music Awards continue to reflect an immense breadth and brilliance of music-making and are clearly highly valued by artists and audiences alike. Christine Brewer's live performances broadcast during 2007 have clearly been enjoyed by our listeners and she is a thoroughly deserving winner."*

**The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** picked up the RPS Music Award for Ensemble, marking the “*stunning delivery of a breadth of repertoire...*” in its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday year.

One of the UK's leading young composers, **Thomas Adès**, triumphed in the Large Scale Composition category for his orchestral work *Tevot*, which was co-commissioned by the Barbican and received its UK premiere at the hall, with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle. The German-based British composer **Rebecca Saunders** scooped the Chamber Scale Composition Award with the “*ethereal, yet elementally beautiful*” *Stirrings Still*. The BBC's **Classic Britannia**, a notable three-part television documentary on music in Britain in the last 60 years won the RPS Music Award for Creative Communication, with the jury strongly urging broadcasters to “*ensure that the music of our time continues to be documented for television so that comparable footage of today's musical world is available 60 years from now.*”

Two of the UK's most respected music institutions were also recognised amongst the winners. **IMS Prussia Cove**, which combines internationally established artists with the brightest of emerging talent through workshops, tours and performances won the RPS Music Award for Chamber Music in recognition of its “*local reach and national impact from Cornwall [where it is based] to the Wigmore Hall*”. The ninth (and final) **RNCM Manchester International Cello Festival** was awarded the RPS Music Award for Concert Series and Festivals “*for creating its unique blend of excitement and intensity through a wide-ranging programme which brought together the world's finest cellists.*”

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RPS Music Award Winners and Citations

### **Audience Development**

In partnership with Classic FM

#### **Winner: Birmingham Opera Company: La Traviata**

Citation: *While welcoming a number of projects tackling audience development issues through new media, the jury felt that evidence of effective engagement with a growing public was most outstandingly demonstrated by Birmingham Opera Company, whose two National Indoor Arena performances of La Traviata attracted very diverse audiences of close on 10,000, many new to opera, transforming pre-conceptions and attitudes and galvanising local support in the process.*

### **BBC Radio 3 Listeners Award**

#### **Winner: Christine Brewer**

Citation: *The BBC Radio 3 Listeners Award goes to a singer with a radiant voice and a wonderfully warm stage personality. Listeners heard her in a solo recital of Berg, Strauss, Britten and Daugherty from the Wigmore Hall; in Poulenc's Stabat Mater from the Edinburgh Festival and most notably, as an unforgettable Brunhilde in the Proms performance of Wagner's Götterdämmerung. The Award goes to the soprano Christine Brewer.*

### **Chamber Music**

Donated by David W Bowerman CBE

#### **Winner: International Musicians Seminar Prussia Cove**

Citation: *This award goes to an organisation that achieves both a local reach and a national impact from Cornwall to the Wigmore Hall. Combining internationally established artists with the brightest of emerging talent, through a unique combination of workshops, performances and inventive programming IMS Prussia Cove's contribution to chamber music and its role in nurturing chamber musicians in 2007 were exemplary.*

## Chamber-scale Composition

### **Winner: Rebecca Saunders: *Stirrings Still***

Citation: *Stirrings Still by Rebecca Saunders* is a work of ethereal but elemental beauty, creating an intoxicating web of sound that is typical of this composer's investigation of the limits of instrumental possibility. *Stirrings Still* also expands her compositional thinking, defining new kinds of musical relationships between the virtuosic players of the German ensemble musikFabrik, for whom the piece was written.

## Concert Series and Festivals

### **Winner: RNCM Manchester International Cello Festival**

Citation: *Under the inspirational leadership of its founder Ralph Kirshbaum, the 9th RNCM Manchester International Cello Festival* again created its unique blend of excitement and intensity through a wide-ranging programme which brought together the world's finest cellists. Students and audiences alike were given a richly satisfying experience and this festival has been a perfect example of the potential for our conservatoires to play a catalysing role in international music life.

## Conductor

### **Winner: Edward Gardner**

Citation: *The jury felt that this was a year when four young conductors had particularly distinguished themselves through their commitment to music making in the UK - and the winner has certainly proved himself to be the right man in the right place at the right time. He has produced consistently high musical standards across a wide repertoire, and great nights at the opera! The Award goes to the Music Director of English National Opera, Edward Gardner.*

## Creative Communication

Sponsored by The Guardian

### **Winner: Classic Britannia. Sixty Years of British Classical Music (BBC 4)**

Citation: *Excellent research, an impressive range of interviewees and fascinating archival footage of performances made the BBC's Classic Britannia a notable documentary on music in Britain in the last 60 years. The jury strongly urges broadcasters to ensure that the music of our time continues to be documented for television so that comparable footage of today's musical world is available 60 years from now.*

## Education

Sponsored by the Musicians Benevolent Fund

### **Winner: Land Sea Sky Trilogy: WNO Max**

Citation: *The operatic trilogy, Land, Sea, Sky, commissioned by WNO Max for performance by schoolchildren and professional musicians, was written for rural Welsh speaking and inner-city English speaking communities. With no compromise to the challenge of the operatic form, the impressive scope of this three-year project, culminating in 2007, brought to young participants and audiences an unforgettable first experience of high quality opera.*

## Ensemble

Supported by an Anonymous Donor

### **Winner: Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment**

Citation: *For its stunning delivery of a breadth of repertoire, indefatigable advocacy of the interpretation of music played on original instruments and pioneering work in education and through a range of media – not to mention the artistry of its individual members in making each listening experience uniquely creative, engaging and thrilling – the Ensemble Award goes, in its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday year, to the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.*

### **Instrumentalist**

Supported by BBC Music Magazine

#### **Winner: Imogen Cooper**

Citation: *Imogen Cooper's* distinction as one of the most formidable musicians of her time is widely recognised. But the intellect, musicality and programming skills that she has demonstrated in her music-making in 2007 have, we feel, taken her to new levels. This award celebrates her achievements as a deeply thoughtful soloist, an inspirational keyboard director and a fastidiously accomplished chamber musician.

### **Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society**

Maestro Abreu's visit to the UK was supported by the Scottish Venezuelan Society

#### **José Antonio Abreu**

Citation: *The vision and leadership of José Antonio Abreu, the Venezuelan economist and musician, led him, in 1975, to found 'El Sistema', an intensive educational programme designed to lift children out of poverty and deprivation by teaching them to play classical music. Thirty years on Venezuela has 60 children's orchestras, 120 youth orchestras and a network of choirs - all of which feed into the now flourishing professional musical life of the country. 250,000 Venezuelan teenagers and children are currently part of El Sistema: lives are being transformed, communities empowered and orchestras built for the future. Inspired by ambassadors of the project such as the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra, which thrilled audiences in the UK last year, news of Venezuela's programme of social action through music is rapidly spreading throughout the world - not least to Scotland where a pilot scheme is being introduced this year in Stirling's Raploch community. No one person more completely embodies the Royal Philharmonic Society's core purpose of 'creating a future for music' than José Antonio Abreu.*

### **Large-scale Composition**

Donated by Anthony Bolton

#### **Winner: Thomas Adès: Tevot**

Citation: *The award goes to a work which combines a powerful expressive directness with the technical mastery which has consistently been a feature of the composer's output. The jury responded to a profound and timely artistic statement. Thomas Adès's Tevot represents a new milestone in an already extraordinary career.*

### **Opera and Music Theatre**

Supported by the Britten Pears Foundation

#### **Winner: James MacMillan: The Sacrifice (Welsh National Opera)**

Citation: *The award goes to James Macmillan for the rich imagination of his juicy score. The Sacrifice is a compelling, savage opera with an enduring power to communicate and Welsh National Opera's vivid production, conducted by the composer himself, performed to responsive audiences in eight UK cities.*

### **Singer**

Donated by Rosenblatt Recitals

#### **Winner: John Tomlinson**

Citation: *John Tomlinson's Wotan in the Royal Opera House Ring Cycle was remarkable for its artistry, its humanity and its physical and emotional strength. His generosity of spirit inspired both audiences and colleagues and it is for these qualities that we make the Singer award to him for an unprecedented third time.*

### **Young Artists**

Donated by Peter Bull

#### **Winner: Gustavo Dudamel**

Citation: *In a strong field of singers and instrumentalists, the young artist who clearly stood out in 2007 was the Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel, whose dynamic presence and electrifying music-making won the hearts of musicians and audiences alike, in performances with orchestras around the UK and especially with his young compatriots of the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra at the BBC Proms.*