



## Press Release

For release: Tuesday 12 May 2009

## Winners announced for the 20<sup>th</sup> Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards

In association with BBC Radio 3

- **Janine Jansen, Valery Gergiev, Harrison Birtwistle and 3000 Hackney school children amongst the winners**
- **Major new award announced for Services to British Music, in memory of Richard Hickox**
- **German bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff receives The Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal, one of classical music's highest honours**

Star names, including conductor Valery Gergiev and violinist Janine Jansen, shared the honours with more unlikely musical heroes – including 3000 Hackney school children, and 100 homeless people – at this year's Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, the UK's most prestigious accolade for live classical music, presented in association with BBC Radio 3 (announced 7pm, Tuesday 12 May). An evening devoted to the awards will be broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on Wednesday 13 May at 7pm.

Gergiev triumphed in the Conductor category, with Jansen taking the coveted Instrumentalist award. Streetwise Opera, who 'give homeless people a voice', picked up the award for Audience Development and Hackney Music Development Trust scooped the Education award for a project with a fascinating legacy that sets music in an ambitiously broad context: a twinning programme between Primary schools in Hackney and Beijing.

Further highlights during the evening included the presentation of the Royal Philharmonic Society Gold medal, one of classical music's highest honours, to the German bass-baritone **Thomas Quasthoff** and the announcement of a special new award for Services to British Music, presented posthumously to the conductor **Richard Hickox**.

**Richard Hickox's** death in November 2008 has been deeply mourned across the music profession and by music lovers worldwide. The award marked the conductor's "*quintessential humanity*" and his championing of British music of the last 100 years. Alongside many memorable live performances, he left a legacy of over 300 recordings from the past 20 years (a staggering 280 of which were recorded with Chandos). The award subsequently will be named '**The Royal Philharmonic Society Richard Hickox Award for Services to British Music**' in his memory, and be given at the discretion of the society to those who share Richard's "*vision and conviction*".

**Dame Liz Forgan**, making the award's keynote speech, one of her first since taking up her new role as Chairman of the Arts Council of England, was in upbeat mood. Outlining her own defining musical experiences, she spoke against an 'apologist' attitude to classical music and for the importance of a central role for music in the life of every child, focusing on the outstanding education and outreach work of many of the evening's award winners.

The distinguished octogenarian conductor **Sir Charles Mackerras**, a former RPS Music Award winner himself and a Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medallist, presented the awards, the highest annual accolade in the field of live classical music – this year for achievement in 2008 - at a ceremony at London's Dorchester Hotel.

Graham Sheffield, Chairman of the Royal Philharmonic Society, comments

*"We could not wish for a more confident articulation of the power, reach and potential of classical music in the UK than through this year's Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award winners, chosen from an already formidable list of nominees. The classical scene in the UK is international, innovative, inclusive, forward-thinking and dynamic. It wants to contribute more to the nation. I believe the Society's founders in 1813 would have been proud to see that not only London, but the whole of the UK today is increasingly at the epicentre of the best in world classical music, defined by performance and creativity, so much part of their original vision."*

Roger Wright, Controller of RPS Music Awards associates, BBC Radio 3 comments:

*"This is always an important night in the classical music calendar. The Royal Philharmonic Society has managed to raise public awareness of high quality classical music making since its inception in 1813 and through its prestigious Awards - now in their 20th anniversary year – it continues to create a forum for debate about the direction of the art form. At BBC Radio 3, we share the aims of the RPS, in particular the continuing commitment to live music and new work. We are proud to be award partners and broadcasting the awards on Wednesday 13 May in Performance on 3 at 7pm."*

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## The Winners:

RPS Music Awards, presented in association with BBC Radio 3, were made in thirteen categories, marking outstanding achievement across the breadth of live classical music in the calendar year 2008.

The young Dutch violinist **Janine Jansen** won the coveted RPS Music Award for Instrumentalist, one of the most prestigious and **hotly contested** awards in classical music. Described by the award's jury as "*a musician of great vision, at the height of her powers who continues to develop, delight and surprise...*" Jansen triumphed over the distinguished cellist **Steven Isserlis**, and pianist **Daniel Barenboim**, nominated for his hot-ticket Beethoven Sonata Cycle on London's South Bank.

The "mercurial" **Valery Gergiev**, Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra scooped the RPS Music Award for Conductor. Soprano **Susan Bullock** flew in from Australia to pick up the Singer award for her vocal and dramatic tour-de-force in the title role in Strauss's *Elektra* at the Royal Opera House and at Opera North. Acclaimed the world over, it was only in 2008 that she was given the opportunity to demonstrate her brilliance in this role to UK audiences

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin**, the Canadian Principal Guest Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, described by the award's jury as "*a rare talent*", came out top in a strong Young Artists category.

Two of the UK's most distinguished composers took the composition awards – **Harrison Birtwistle** for his chamber scale composition *Tree of Strings*, first performed by the Arditti Quartet at Aldeburgh Festival 2008, and **George Benjamin** in the large-scale composition category for *Into the Little Hill*, which received its UK concert debut in 2008, (and hit the headlines earlier this year when the stage premiere made an emergency move to the bar at the Royal Opera House following a power cut).

With no fewer than ten new productions during 2008, including a new creative partnership with the Young Vic Theatre, the RPS Music Award for Opera and Music Theatre went to a rejuvenated **English National Opera** for its "creative ambition" and "distinctive artistic identity".

The success of Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008 was marked with two awards: the RPS Music Award for Ensemble went to the **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra** and its contemporary music ensemble, **10/10**, with 10/10 running out double-winners by also leading the field in the Festivals and Series category.

**Britten Sinfonia**, winners of the RPS Ensemble award in 2006 showed their versatility "*and extraordinary artistry as chamber musicians and soloists*" by this year scooping the Chamber Music Award. The orchestra was recognised for an 'At Lunch' series which rewrote the rule book on traditionally safe lunchtime programming with a series of newly commissioned works by established and emerging composers.

The RPS Music Awards are the only mainstream awards to recognise work in the field of education and audience development. **Streetwise Opera** runs music workshops in UK homeless centres, and is the winner of this year's RPS Music Award for Audience Development for *My Secret Heart*. The multi-media work, created with electronic composer Mira Calix, video artists Flat-e, sound engineer Dave Sheppard and a cast of 100 Streetwise performers, is now being shown around the world.

3000 children were involved in the development of *Confucius Says*, a new opera based on Chinese myths, created by Hackney Music Development Trust. With a range of activity, including composition workshops, design tasks to cross-curricular initiatives and workshops with Chinese artists, the scope of the project placed music in the broadest possible context. With some of the participating schools now

twinned with their counterparts in Beijing, **Hackney Music Development Trust** took the RPS Music Award for Education for *Confucius Says*, the second time it has won the award in the past four years.

**Alex Ross's** book, **The Rest is Noise**, was featured on Radio 4's 'Book of the Week', something of a rarity for a serious book about 20<sup>th</sup> century music. The jury felt it was a work that placed "*music back at the centre of cultural debate*" and awarded Ross, the influential music critic of the New Yorker, the RPS Music Award for Creative Communication.

A full list of winners and citations follows at the end of this release.

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## About the RPS Music Awards

The Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards are the most prestigious accolade for live classical music-making in the United Kingdom. Since 1989 the RPS Music Awards have recognised not only the calibre of today's classical musicians but also those who push creative boundaries to produce work that excites and engages audiences. Governed by the Society's guiding principles of 'Excellence, Creativity and Understanding', the awards are truly those of the music profession with nominations invited annually from leading organisations throughout the country and each category decided by an eminent, independent jury. The list of winners over the last 20 years reads as a roll call of the finest living musicians.

The 20<sup>th</sup> RPS Music Awards were hosted at the Dorchester Hotel London by BBC Radio 3 presenters **Sean Rafferty** and **Catherine Bott**, with awards presented by **Sir Charles Mackerras**.

[www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk](http://www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk)

[www.rpsmusicawards.com](http://www.rpsmusicawards.com)

## List of 20<sup>th</sup> RPS Music Awards Winners

<b>Audience Development</b>	<b>Streetwise Opera: My Secret Heart</b>
<b>Chamber Music</b>	<b>Britten Sinfonia Lunchtime Series</b>
<b>Chamber Scale Composition</b>	<b>Harrison Birtwisle: The Tree of Strings</b>
<b>Concert Series and Festivals</b>	<b>Ensemble 10/10</b>
<b>Conductor</b>	<b>Valery Gergiev</b>
<b>Creative Communication</b>	<b>Alex Ross: The Rest is Noise</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>Hackney Music Development Trust: Confucius Says</b>
<b>Ensemble</b>	<b>Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Ensemble 10/10</b>
<b>Instrumentalist</b>	<b>Janine Jansen</b>
<b>Large Scale Composition</b>	<b>George Benjamin: Into the Little Hill</b>
<b>Opera and Music Theatre</b>	<b>English National Opera</b>
<b>Singer</b>	<b>Susan Bullock</b>
<b>Young Artists</b>	<b>Yannick Nézet-Séguin</b>

**Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal** Thomas Quasthoff

**Royal Philharmonic Society award for Services to British Music** Richard Hickox (posthumous award)

## **RPS MUSIC AWARDS CITATIONS** in association with BBC Radio 3

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### **Audience Development** in partnership with Classic fm

#### **Streetwise Opera: My Secret Heart**

A work of the highest quality from a company engaging with profound issues, Streetwise Opera's My Secret Heart drew audiences to three multi-media performances involving 100 homeless participants. Imaginative viral and press marketing continues to build and inspire new audiences as a film and music version tours 40 venues and festivals worldwide.

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### **Chamber Music** donated by David W Bowerman CBE

#### **Britten Sinfonia Lunchtime Series**

This award goes to a flexible ensemble drawn from an orchestra which further enhanced its reputation for innovative programming with a lunchtime chamber music series. Touring in the east of England, London, Birmingham and Krakov, this remarkably fresh project included a range of commissions from established and emerging composers, a collaborative programming process, and the opportunity to highlight the Britten Sinfonia's extraordinary artistry as chamber musicians and soloists.

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### **Chamber-Scale Composition**

#### **Harrison Birtwistle: The Tree of Strings**

Harrison Birtwistle's The Tree of Strings shimmers with the shock of the new. But it is also inspired by things more ancient and mysterious: the oral traditions of Scottish bagpipe playing, the landscapes of Raasay, Birtwistle's time living on the island, and the poetry of Sorley MacLean. The Tree of Strings creates a musical world that is timeless, contemporary, and thrilling.

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### **Concert Series and Festivals**

#### **Ensemble 10/10**

Ensemble 10/10's 2008 programme showed remarkable integrity and imagination and a pleasing element of surprise. The jury was impressed by the Ensemble's clear sense of artistic ambition, allied to the quality of the connection with its audiences. Ensemble 10/10 has become an integral part of the RLPO's activity and the jury hopes it will go on to become a lasting part of the Liverpool scene.

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### **Conductor**

#### **Valery Gergiev**

The award goes to a conductor of unique talent and personality. A mercurial figure on the international musical stage, he chooses to devote a significant amount of time to music making in the UK, particularly with the London Symphony Orchestra. Intensity and passion - and a high level of risk taking - are the hallmarks of his conducting, and he pursues a single-minded advocacy of composers in whom he believes. He is a conductor who makes things happen - an inspiration to players and audiences alike: Valery Gergiev.

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**Creative Communication**  
sponsored by The Guardian

**Alex Ross: The Rest is Noise (4th Estate / Harper Perennial)**

Out of a field that was particularly strong in books, two publications stood out. For its elegant writing, interweaving music with history, culture and politics, and success in placing music back at the centre of cultural debate, the jury gave the award to The Rest is Noise by Alex Ross.

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**Education**  
sponsored by The Musicians Benevolent Fund

**Hackney Music Development Trust: Confucius Says**

The jury members were impressed and inspired by the range, quality and musical vision of this year's nominations. In particular, there was a real sense of projects being embedded within their community and of innovative, often artistically challenging planning. Confucius Says led by Hackney Music Development Trust clearly displayed these characteristics through a large scale programme culminating in a spectacular new opera. Artistically strong, educationally ambitious and culturally appropriate, Confucius Says was an inspirational achievement.

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**Ensemble**

**Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Ensemble 10/10**

This award recognises the combined achievements of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Ensemble 10/10 in making an outstanding contribution to British musical life during Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture. The jury was impressed by the synergy created within a fruitful collaborative environment, the enthusiasm and vibrancy with which both groups embraced repertoire of remarkable stylistic diversity and their determined efforts to involve audiences at all levels.

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**Instrumentalist**  
supported by the BBC Music Magazine

**Janine Jansen**

For her extraordinary ability to breathe fresh life into core repertory, and her commitment to chamber music, the award goes to Janine Jansen, a musician of great vision, at the height of her powers, who continues to develop, surprise and delight.

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**Large-Scale Composition**  
donated by Anthony Bolton

**George Benjamin: Into the Little Hill**

The jury was impressed by the sheer skill with which the composer has created a work of immense expressive power, inventiveness, drama and beauty, of a stature way beyond the sum of its physical and temporal parts. With Into the Little Hill George Benjamin has provided music theatre with a work for our time.

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**Opera and Music Theatre**

**English National Opera**

The award goes to English National Opera for its creative ambition. No fewer than ten new productions during 2008, together with an innovative partnership with the Young Vic, made a collective impact on London opera audiences and re-established the company's distinctive artistic identity.

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**Singer**  
**donated by Rosenblatt Recitals**

**Susan Bullock**

Acclaimed the world over, but only in 2008 given the opportunity to demonstrate her brilliance in this role to UK audiences, Susan Bullock is the Elektra of our time. Performances in Leeds and London revealed blazing commitment, allied to her trademark galvanising of text and music.

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**Young Artists**  
**donated by Peter Bull**

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin**

Yannick Nézet-Séguin has already made a huge impact on London's musical life. His first appearance as chief principal guest conductor of the LPO highlighted his flair, originality, maturity and engagement with the orchestra. He is a rare talent and the clear winner of this award.

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**Gold Medal**  
**of the Royal Philharmonic Society**

**Thomas Quasthoff**

Thomas Quasthoff is a singer with a rare capacity to inspire listeners of all ages, be it in classical music or jazz, but not just for the luminous beauty of his voice or his sensitive colouring of words. His life is also an inspiration to many. With courage and a great sense of humour he has refused to allow any adversity to deter him from his pursuit of excellence in all that he does, and as a result - as musician, teacher, writer, and raconteur - he has enriched and delighted audiences the world over. Thomas Quasthoff is truly an artist universally admired and loved.

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**Special Royal Philharmonic Society Award**  
**for services to British Music**

**Richard Hickox**

Whether you worked with Richard Hickox, or came to know him through hearing his performances and recordings, the same qualities shone through: his passion, warmth, generosity, enthusiasm, commitment, ability to inspire, his indefatigable energy and, above all his quintessential humanity. While his repertoire ranged from baroque to contemporary, at the heart of it lay his championing, both at home and abroad, of British Music from the last 100 years.

The list of composers is remarkable. Not only Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Walton, Holst, Tippett and Britten; but Alwyn, Arnold, Bliss, Bridge, Butterworth, Delius, Dyson, Finzi, Goossens, Howells. The list goes on: Leighton, Parry, Rubbra, Stanford. Then there are the Berkeleys - Lennox and Michael -, Minna Keal, Colin Matthews, Peter Maxwell Davies, Michael Nyman and Nigel Osborne. How fortunate we are that he left the most extraordinary recorded legacy – over 300 recordings in total - an astonishing 280 of these made in the last 20 years for Chandos.

In honouring Richard with this special Royal Philharmonic Society for his services to British Music we acknowledge not only his personal commitment to this repertoire but we also extend his legacy just a little further. In future the RPS Richard Hickox Award will be given, at the discretion of the Society, to those who share his vision and conviction.

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