

## PRESS RELEASE

*Under strict embargo until 09/09/2020*

### **Royal College of Music reignites live music-making in London's newest concert venue**



- RCM's brand-new Performance Hall in South Kensington to be filled with music for the first time, having lain in wait during lockdown
- Autumn season highlights include visits from acclaimed conductors, performances of new music by female composers and five specially-commissioned short films
- Innovation and ingenuity on show in the RCM's programming and research, including research into the potential of Virtual Reality for Covid-19-hit performers

The Royal College of Music (RCM) today [Wednesday 9 September 2020] launches its autumn events season for 2020, including the first performances in London's newest concert hall. The state-of-the-art Performance Hall is part of a recent £40million investment in the RCM's iconic South Kensington campus. Students at the UK's top institution for performing arts (QS World University Rankings 2016-2020) are set to experience an autumn filled with music-making on a campus which has almost doubled in size since 2017. A new home for the Royal College of Music Museum's internationally significant collection will complete the transformation when it opens in January 2021.

The RCM's two new performance spaces, designed by architect John Simpson and completed in March 2020, have lain in wait during the UK's Covid-19 lockdown. Following a period of socially distanced acoustic testing, music is finally coming to the new spaces, with the RCM harnessing the latest digital technology to bring the performances to audiences at home. The autumn season features a mixture of YouTube and Facebook Premieres, on-demand content and specially commissioned films, all recorded at the College with social distancing in place for the performers. Some of the world's most celebrated classical musicians will join talented RCM musicians to perform an exciting and wide-ranging programme.

Highlights of the Autumn events include the return of violin legend Maxim Vengerov, the RCM's Polonsky Visiting Professor of Violin, giving a glimpse into his artistic process in an inspiring masterclass. There is also an insightful masterclass from world-renowned pianist Freddy Kempf. Acclaimed conductors Jac van Steen and Martyn Brabbins visit to conduct chamber pieces with socially distanced ensembles, while celebrated opera director Olivia Fuchs will direct scenes from a variety of operatic masterpieces based around the themes of isolation, separation and resolution. The season also includes performances of contemporary works by female composers, including RCM composition professor Errollyn Wallen, Eleanor Alberga, Kristina Arakelyan and Caroline Shaw.

RCM alumna, composer Elizabeth Maconchy is the subject of one of five specially commissioned films produced this season. Offering a new way of experiencing classical performance, the RCM's Five Films series will harness the RCM Studios' cutting-edge technology to allow audiences to get

closer than ever before to the performers as they bring some of the world's best music to life. Audiences can also discover the intriguing stories behind the programmes through the range of artifacts, instruments and paintings held in the RCM's treasured collections.

RCM alumnus Samuel Coleridge-Taylor features in the film series with a performance of his lesser-known but masterful Clarinet Quintet, while vocal works by composers including Stanford, Howells, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Charlotte Bray will also be given the cinematic treatment. The recent acquisition of an 18th-century German harpsichord inspires another film, celebrating the instrument's liberation from quarantine, having arrived in the UK pre-lockdown.

The College's ingenuity in adapting to performers' 'new normal' is further demonstrated by a new research project into the potential of Virtual Reality (VR) for performance. Led by the Centre for Performance Science (CPS) – a long-running collaboration between the RCM and Imperial College, London – the project will see the development of a new VR environment which allows performers to virtually experience performing in a real-life venue while working from home. Beginning with the RCM's Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall, venues will be digitally mapped to provide musicians with a tool allowing them to respond to the visual and auditory features of performance spaces, while remaining physically remote.

Professor Colin Lawson, Director of the Royal College of Music, comments: *'I am delighted that we are making music once more in the Royal College of Music, not least in the wonderful new facilities which we have waited six months to unveil! Unfortunately, we won't be able to welcome audiences in person, but our innovative series of films will give a real flavour of the new Performance Hall. We can't wait to welcome some of the world's best performers to work with our gifted students, who will not only gain invaluable experience in working with them but also with our talented in-house producers, videographers and technicians in the RCM Studios and researchers in the Centre for Performance Science.'*

The RCM usually welcomes over 120,000 visitors a year and whilst concert tickets are kept deliberately low to be as accessible as possible, the performance programme generates valuable income for student activities. The RCM's autumn season will be free to watch online, but the College invites those who wish to support young musicians to donate to its Scholarship Fund, through which talented young musicians can access world-class education regardless of financial means. More than 50% of RCM students currently receive financial support from the College, but with rising tuition fees and costs of living set against a backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, expanding this support is vital.

Details of all the Royal College of Music's autumn events and how to watch are available at [www.rcm.ac.uk/events](http://www.rcm.ac.uk/events).

--- ENDS ---

For more information, please contact:

Tash Payne

Communications Officer

[tash.payne@rcm.ac.uk](mailto:tash.payne@rcm.ac.uk)

## **Notes to editors**

### About the Royal College of Music

Founded in 1883, the Royal College of Music (RCM) is a world leading music conservatoire with a prestigious history and contemporary outlook. Our 800 undergraduate and postgraduate students come from over 55 countries and are taught in a dynamic environment, leaving the RCM to become the outstanding performers, conductors and composers of the future.

For the fifth consecutive year in 2020, the RCM was ranked as the top institution in the UK for the Performing Arts in the QS World University Rankings. RCM was also ranked the top UK conservatoire for music in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019 and top music conservatoire for overall student satisfaction in the 2018 National Student Satisfaction (NSS) Survey according to the Times Higher Education.

RCM professors are leaders in their fields and, under such expert guidance, RCM students regularly achieve remarkable success around the globe.

Among our alumni are composers and performers such as Sir Hubert Parry, Benjamin Britten, Gustav Holst, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Lord Lloyd Webber, Rebecca Clarke, Anna Meredith, Clemency Burton-Hill, Dame Joan Sutherland, Dame Sarah Connolly, Gerald Finley, Sophie Bevan, Louise Alder, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Sir Thomas Allen.

Regular visitors to the RCM include Bernard Haitink, Sir Thomas Allen, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Alina Ibragimova and Lang Lang. Our recent honorary doctorates include Sir Antonio Pappano, Jonas Kaufmann, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Bryn Terfel, Steve Reich and Maxim Vengerov (Polonsky Visiting Professor of Violin).