



# A Year in Review RNCM50

To Be Continued...





## RNCM50 TO BE CONTINUED...


**For 50 years the RNCM has fuelled the aspirations of young musicians, composers, conductors, educators, and entrepreneurs from all over the world.**

Constantly driven to define the future of music, we're a laboratory of innovation. A place where creativity flows freely, inspiring ambition to become reality.

Between September 2022 and July 2023, we marked our anniversary year with a feast of special concerts, events, projects and initiatives that cemented our position as one of the world's most progressive and forward-thinking conservatoires.

**Here's a snapshot of an incredible milestone...**



A young man in a white shirt is shown in profile, playing a flute. He is wearing earbuds and has a focused expression. The background is dimly lit with blue and purple stage lights, showing other musicians and instruments like a saxophone.

***'At 50 years young our journey is still very much beginning, but we already have so much to celebrate. We continue to be recognised as one of the world's most progressive conservatoires, inspiring young musicians to develop the skills and creativity needed to establish successful and sustainable careers across today's music industry. We are also proud to be at the heart of music-making in Manchester, from our unique public venues to the work we do transforming lives in the wider community. Our anniversary year was something truly special, and everyone here – our students, staff, alumni, supporters, and partners – are ready to embrace the next chapter.'***

**PROFESSOR LINDA MERRICK CBE**  
Principal



## AT A GLANCE

**£2.65million**

raised

**52,000**

tickets sold

**6,000**

young people participating in  
community projects and initiatives

**250**

paid performance opportunities  
for RNCM students

**185**

concerts and events

**60+**

world premieres

**7**

major community  
engagement projects







*'The RNCM was founded not only as an educational institution but as a conservatoire and public performance venue combined, placing public engagement central to the training of young musicians. The aim was to showcase the performance activity within, alongside and in partnership with some of the industry's very best performers. This creation of a hub whereby students can mingle and collaborate with professionals, young musicians, amateurs, and of course the audience and local community, is one of the defining features of the RNCM today.'*

# Collaboration

**MANUS CAREY**  
Deputy Principal  
(Performance and Programmes)



## PARTNERSHIPS

Since our formation in 1973, we've forged partnerships with orchestras, ensembles and organisations worldwide, all of which provide our students with exceptional opportunities to develop their professional and personal skills.

This year we celebrated connections with our professional partners in performances that included appearances at the **BBC Proms** with the **BBC Philharmonic** and **Edvard Grieg Kor**, as well as unique collaborations with the **Chamber Orchestra of Europe**, **Manchester Camerata**, **Manchester Collective** and **Opera North**.

Our 50th also brought opportunities to strengthen relationships with **Manchester International Festival** through an exciting project with Anna Meredith at Depot Mayfield, and **BBC Radio 3**, which dedicated two programmes to showcasing our past, present and future.





## ALUMNI, STAFF AND GUEST ARTISTS

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*‘When I entered the RNCM I had only visited London on three occasions, and the idea of playing a concert there, never mind the famous BBC Proms, was a distant dream. So, to be able to perform there this year with the BBC Philharmonic in a celebration of Manchester, my alma mater, and their rich cultural life, was a special privilege and joy.’*

**SIR STEPHEN HOUGH**  
Alumnus and RNCM50 artist-in-residence



**30+**

performances featuring  
RNCM staff

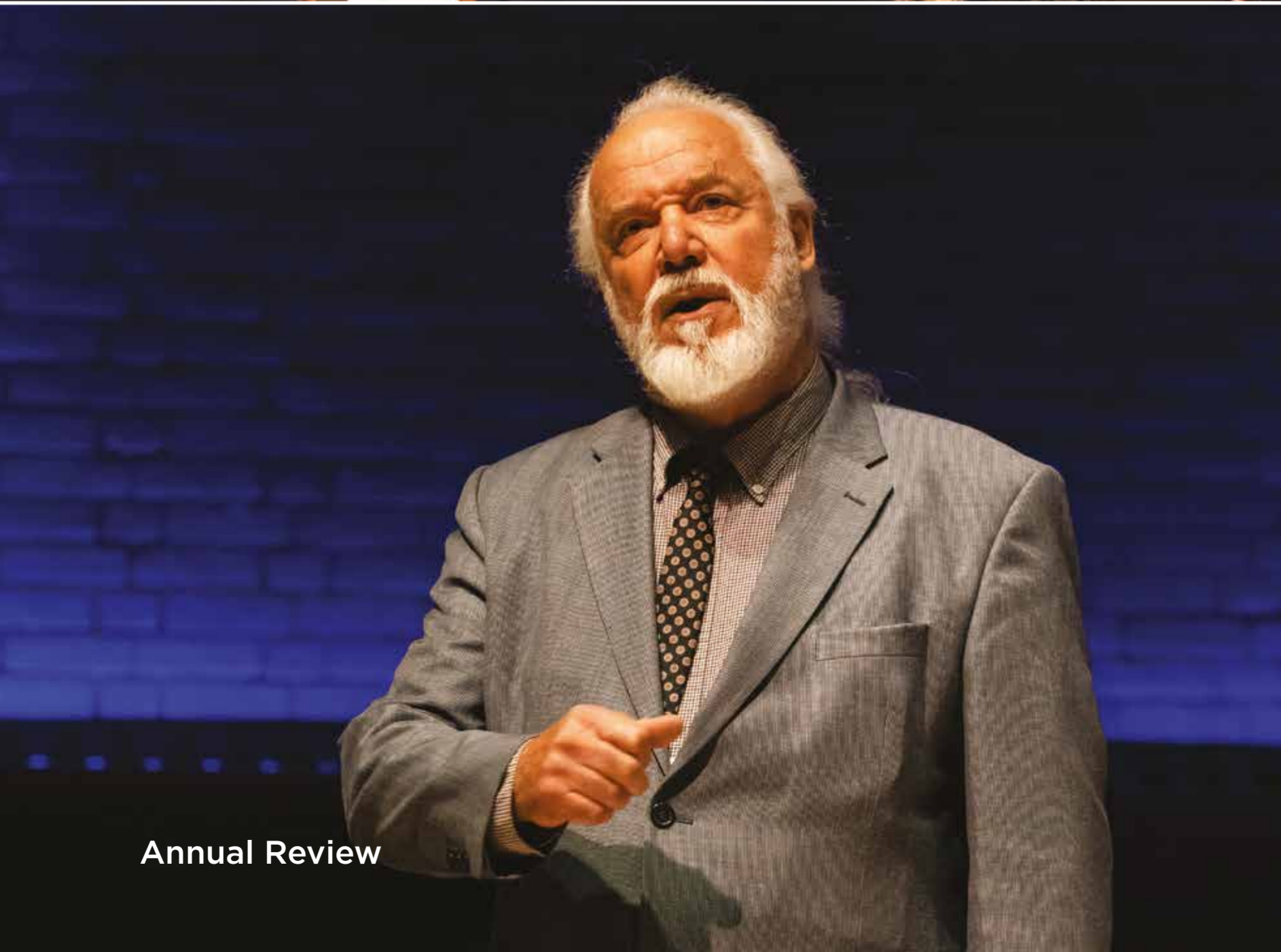
**20+**

performances featuring  
RNCM alumni

**3**

international alumni  
artists-in-residence







## NEW MUSIC AND CREATIVITY

*'I enjoyed every minute and felt very honoured that so much of my music was performed - and so beautifully. I really appreciate the huge amount of work and planning that went into the week. It was truly special, and I won't forget it.'*

**SALLY BEAMISH**

RNCM50 composer-in-residence

*'...even though we're string players, we're not just string players. We have really creative ideas, we have thoughts on wider world issues and every time we curate something, and we think about playing something, we bring those things into each performance.'*

**VULVA VOCE**

String quartet

*'Hearing [the RNCM Session Orchestra] play what I've written and it to sound that amazing is surreal. It's a massive privilege and I feel really, really lucky.'*

**PIPPA CROSSLAND**

Popular music student

## AS A CONSERVATOIRE WE DON'T JUST CONSERVE, **WE CREATE.**

With a history steeped in the legacy of Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Alexander Goehr and Sally Beamish, the RNCM has always been a pioneer in its support of the creation of new music.

Today, we are proud to promote one of the most extensive and diverse programmes of new and contemporary music in the UK, enabling students to share, express, explore and develop their own ideas and personal voices.

**30+**

new works by  
RNCM student composers

**50+**

student-led public performances

**40+**

performances featuring underrepresented  
artists and/or composers

**30+**

world premieres by professional composers,  
including RNCM staff, alumni and PhD students

**5**

Creative Innovators Award-winners for student  
creativity and entrepreneurship

**3**

international  
composers-in-residence









## EXCEPTIONAL TEACHING

*'That first visit to the RNCM is just so memorable, I'll probably never forget it. It's one day that completely changed my life... The teachers are just extraordinary. They have that incredible ability to push you, to challenge you, to nurture you, to give you the right advice at the right time, and to come on a journey with you. One of the best pieces of advice I was given was to just be the best version of yourself, and for me every single experience at the RNCM really emphasised that and really helped me to find my unique voice.'*

**ALEXANDRA DARIESCU**

Alumna and RNCM50 artist-in-residence

Each year our students benefit from incredible opportunities to develop their professional and personal skills with experts across the industry. This includes masterclasses, side-by-side performances, entrepreneurial initiatives, work placements, and creative projects.

RNCM50 guests included, amongst others, conductors Sir Mark Elder, Anthony Hermus, Elena Schwarz, Gábor Takács Nagy and Garry Walker; vocalists William Dazeley, Elizabeth Llewellyn and Dame Ann Murray; instrumentalists Lise Berthaud, Ning Feng, Henning Kraggerud, Steven Osborne, Abel Selaocoe and Alice Zawadski; music education specialist Nate Holder; and entrepreneur Anthony Diver.



## WORLD-LEADING RESEARCH

Research is a cornerstone of the musical creativity and experimentation that flourishes at the RNCM, as well as an invaluable discipline in its own right.

The expertise of our researchers infiltrates our programmes of study, underpinning the work we do and setting the foundation for activities that create change and impact society beyond our industry.

Throughout the year, we were proud to build on our dynamic research culture by recognising, supporting and disseminating the work of our staff and students in all areas, including the creation, performance, production, history, theory, and psychology of music.





A close-up photograph of a man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved button-down shirt, playing a silver trumpet. He is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The background is a blurred crowd of people, suggesting a social event or concert. The lighting is warm and ambient. The word "Connections" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

# Connections



## RNCM ENGAGE: EDUCATION

**We're dedicated to tackling the challenges surrounding music education and RNCM Engage is central to our work.**

This award-winning programme of free and subsidised projects encourages children and young people across the North West and beyond to build their skills and confidence in music. Throughout our anniversary we stepped up our commitment to this vital area of work, helping young musicians to overcome barriers through initiatives such as RNCM Young Projects, Young Artists, Young Strings and Pathfinder.

All of this is complementary to the incredible work undertaken at **Junior RNCM**, our centre for advanced training for talented young musicians aged eight to 18.

Each Saturday during term time the RNCM is their home; a place to study with exceptional tutors, perform with like-minded people and make long-lasting friendships. It's also a place that looks to the future, teaching transferrable skills for life and creating a solid platform for further study at a conservatoire or university.

*'They've improved massively since first joining Pathfinder, they have already learned so much and it makes the future even more exciting.'*

**PARENT OF A PATHFINDER PARTICIPANT**

**110**

students were received financial awards to study at Junior RNCM

**59**

workshops across our Young Projects programme for musicians aged five - 18

**30**

RNCM Young Artists sessions for pop musicians aged 11 - 18

**28**

Pathfinder sessions breaking barriers for young musicians aged eight to 18

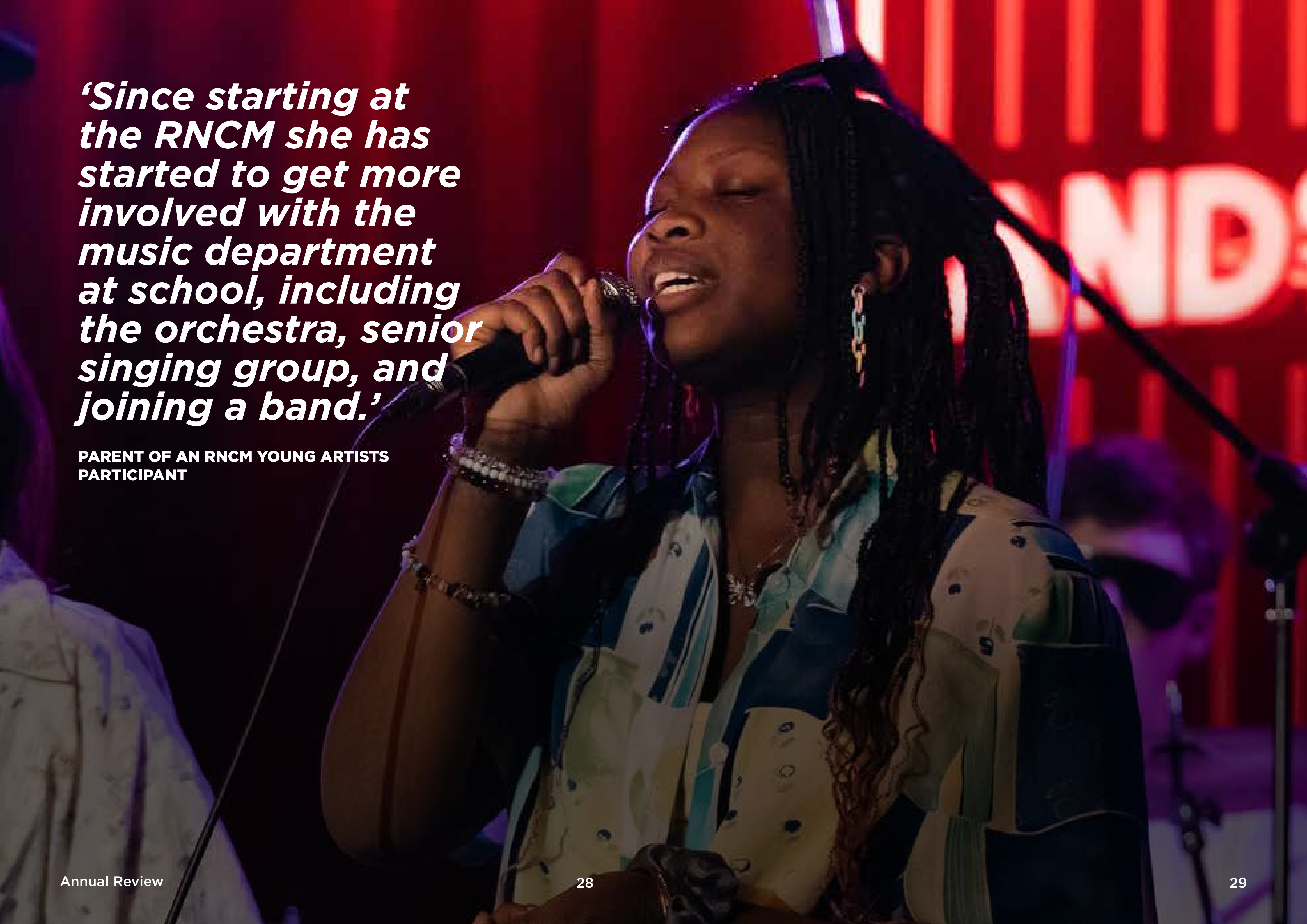
**18**

RNCM Engage Brass sessions for musicians aged 11 - 18, including 2 sessions with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

**1**

Engage Showcase featuring musicians across all our Young Programmes



A young woman with long, dark braids is singing into a microphone on a stage. She is wearing a light-colored, patterned button-down shirt. The background is lit with red and purple lights, and a sign with the letters 'ND' is visible. The overall atmosphere is vibrant and energetic.

***‘Since starting at the RNCM she has started to get more involved with the music department at school, including the orchestra, senior singing group, and joining a band.’***

**PARENT OF AN RNCM YOUNG ARTISTS PARTICIPANT**



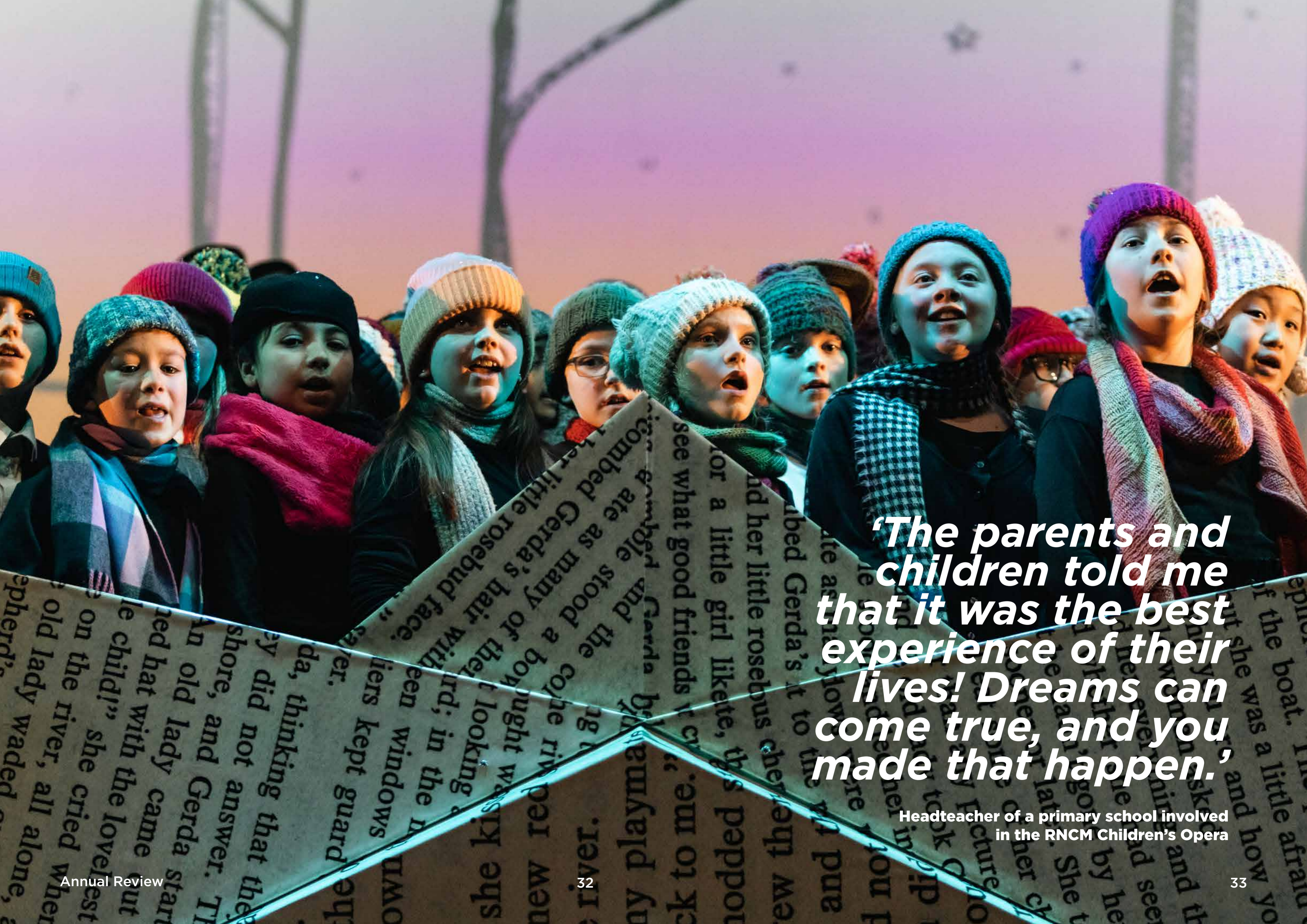
## RNCM ENGAGE: COMMUNITY

**RNCM Engage also provides our students with unrivalled opportunities for professional development through placements and projects in schools, hospitals and care homes. It also reaches out to local communities through a range of family-friendly initiatives designed to make live music accessible to all.**

Alongside our Young Explorers concert series, Children's Opera and Christmas Family Day, RNCM50 saw us throw open our doors for *Explore@RNCM*, a spectacular day of free creative workshops and performances from Manchester-based groups, followed by a performance of Sondheim's *Into the Woods* featuring our new Community Chorus and RNCM singers. The day ended with the launch of our *Late Night Sessions*, showcasing local DJs.







***‘The parents and children told me that it was the best experience of their lives! Dreams can come true, and you made that happen.’***

Headteacher of a primary school involved in the RNCM Children’s Opera



**200**

local schoolchildren worked with us to create and perform a Children's Opera

**100**

students took part in **3** Young Explorers concerts, including performances with the Fairey Band and Untold Orchestra

**73**

students took part in the Christmas Family Day

**50**

students took part in *Explore@RNCM* with **25** amateur singers joining to form our Community Choir

**12**

students completed a placement in a Special Educational Needs School as part of the Jessie's Fund Training Residency

**12**

students participated in a visit by Orchestras for All

**4**

students created and performed a music festival at Manchester Children's Hospital

A range of students presented

**50**

performances in

**50**

local schools





## A GLOBAL NETWORK

We launched our anniversary with *Discover RNCM50*, a very special open day for potential students, donors, supporters, industry guests and friends from across the UK. As well as learning about life at today's conservatoire, guests were treated to an insight into the celebratory year ahead, with topical debates, presentations and performances by students, staff and alumni.

***'We've seen so many younger students who are just thinking about their conservatoire career, and they have come here for the first time and their eyes have been opened to all the possibilities. You can see the spark of inspiration; you can see the beginning of new musicians about to bloom. They are the musicians of the future and for me, that's been the most exciting thing about today.'***

**JAMES SERGEANT**

Yamaha International Business Manager, after attending the Discover RNCM50 launch event



**Ark Ensemble**

**Led by Rob Buckland**  
SENIOR TUTOR IN SAXOPHONE

Astor Piazzolla Tango Apasionado  
Steve Martland Re-Mix  
Henry Purcell Dido's Lament  
Michael Nyman Knowing the Ropes

#DoWhatYouLove

Facebook: @rncm50 Instagram: @rncm50 Twitter: @rncm50





## RNCM50 ALUMNI REUNION

**Being part of our family doesn't end at graduation. The experiences and memories of RNCM alumni illustrate our history, and their professional journeys inspire our future.**

During our anniversary we were delighted to welcome back graduates from across the decades, with over 150 joining us for a very special reunion and a number returning to the stage for celebratory performances. Alongside this, many took part in advisory panels and mentoring programmes, attended professional networking events, and joined our online global network through *RNCM Connect*.



## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

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**Our 50th anniversary brought several awards and accolades, reflecting our position at the forefront of music education. They include:**

- A **Times Higher Education Award** (Technical and Digital Innovation of the Year) in recognition of our response to teaching and performance during the pandemic.
- Two **HEIST Awards**, celebrating our creativity in Marketing and Student Recruitment.
- A **Parson Music Advocacy Award** for our research and activity into breaking down barriers to music education.
- A **Manchester Youth Buzz Award**, presented to our newly launched RNCM Young Artists initiative for emerging pop musicians aged 11 to 18 from across the North West.
- An **IAML Excellence Award** for the RNCM Library.

We were also incredibly proud to share that **Professor Linda Merrick**, who celebrated 10 years as Principal in January 2023, was awarded a **CBE in the King's New Year Honours** for services to music in higher education.





# THANK YOU

The RNCM thrives because of our incredibly generous community, and this year we raised £2.65 million, with a further £1.95 million committed to future projects.

Amongst a huge variety of support, we were proud to announce three new significant funded projects that will play a vital role in transforming lives through music:

## **RNCM ENGAGE CUMBRIA**

Thanks to a £1.3million transformational gift, we were able to develop our award-winning music education programme, RNCM Engage, for school aged young people in West Cumbria.

## **THROWING OPEN THE CONCERT DOORS**

A significant award from the National Lottery Heritage Fund gave us the go-ahead to digitise 1,000 at risk recordings in our archives while developing a new community engagement programme.

## **RNCM MUSIC AND HEALTH**

Our anniversary Gala Dinner raised £65,000 enabling us to launch a three-year project that will train over 60 students to take therapeutic music provision into health settings.

Every grant or donation we receive is a vote of confidence in our talented students and means we can provide them with outstanding education and specialist training, propelling them into careers on the national and international stage. We are so grateful to those who support our mission to define the future of music.



***‘The RNCM has every reason to be proud of an event that was truly innovative. My friends have all been equally impressed - I heard one of them saying ‘probably one of the most memorable times in my life’. The students and staff provided music that will be impossible to remember without intense pleasure.’***

**SUPPORTER DIANA KEALEY EDWARDS**  
after attending the RNCM50 Gala Dinner



#### Picture credits:

##### Robin Clewley:

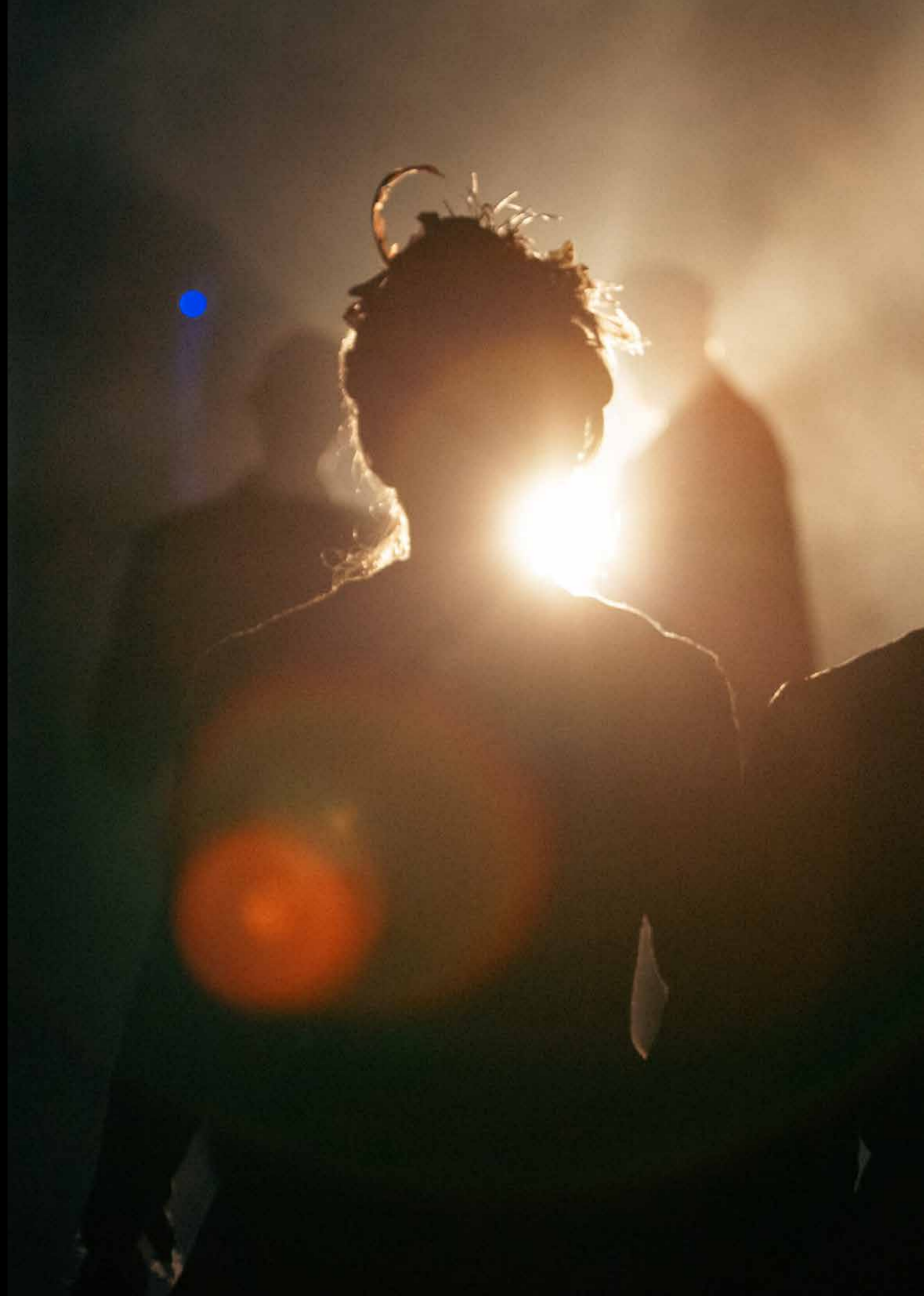
Front cover: RNCM Chamber Ensemble  
Page 2-3: Bernstein's Mass at The Bridgewater Hall  
Page 4-5: RNCM Festival Orchestra at Manchester International Festival  
Page 6-7: RNCM Session Orchestra: 50th Anniversary Edition  
Page 8-9: RNCM Festival Orchestra at Manchester International Festival  
Page 10-11 (bottom): RNCM Festival Orchestra at Manchester International Festival  
Page 14 (top): Alumnus Alpesh Chauhan and the RNCM Symphony Orchestra  
Page 14 (bottom): RNCM President Sir John Tomlinson  
Page 19 (bottom left): RNCM Ark Ensemble  
Page 19 (right): RNCM Original Voices: Kantos Chamber Choir  
Page 20-21: Alumna Alexandra Dariescu, Junior Fellow in Conducting Agata Zajac, and the RNCM Symphony Orchestra  
Page 23-24: Dr Michelle Phillips, Head of Enterprise and Senior Lecturer in Music Psychology  
Page 24-25: Discover RNCM50 Open Day  
Page 28-29: RNCM Young Artists at Band on the Wall  
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Page 36-37: Discover RNCM50 launch event  
Page 40-41: Professor Linda Merrick CBE, Principal  
Page 43: RNCM50 Gala Dinner

##### Roscoe Rutter:

Page 10-11 (top): RNCM students and alumni with the Orchestra of Opera North  
Page 15 (top): Saxophonist Andy Scott and the RNCM Big Band  
Page 15 (bottom): RNCM Wind Orchestra featuring staff and students  
Page 18 (top left): RNCM Original Voices Festival  
Page 18 (bottom left): RNCM Gospel Choir  
Page 19 (top left): RNCM Session Orchestra  
Page 38: RNCM Alumni Reunion

##### Chris Christodoulou:

Page 12-13: Sir Stephen Hough, the BBC Philharmonic and RNCM students at the BBC Proms





**RNCM50**  
To Be Continued...