

# THE NORTHERN

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## REYNISH RECEIVES MBE

Many congratulations to Tim Reynish, awarded an MBE for services to music in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Renowned the world over for his work with orchestras and ensembles, Tim joined the RNCM in 1975 as a tutor for the Postgraduate Conducting Course, later becoming Head of the School of Wind and Percussion (now Wind, Brass and Percussion), a post he held for 25 years. He has worked significantly with the RNCM Wind Orchestra, both in the recording studio and in concert, and has conducted a wide range of RNCM Opera productions over the years.

Now a part-time Tutor in Chamber Music, Tim said: *'In accepting this honour, I am extremely conscious of the enormous support I have had from my wife, family and the thousands of musicians of all ages who have played for me over the past 60 years – schoolchildren, students, amateurs and professionals including past and present staff and students of the Royal Northern College of Music.'*

## STUDENT SUPPORT

We recently received two significant grants to support students at both the RNCM and Junior RNCM. In December, the Leverhulme Trust awarded us £421,200, while in January, The Wolfson Foundation agreed a new three-year grant of £90,000.

## JOINT SCHOLARSHIPS FOR RNCM AND WAAPA

We're deepening our partnership with the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University (WAAPA) through substantial joint scholarships.

Worth £10,000 each, the financial support will enable two of WAAPA's graduating classical music students to undertake a year of postgraduate study at the RNCM, commencing in 2020.

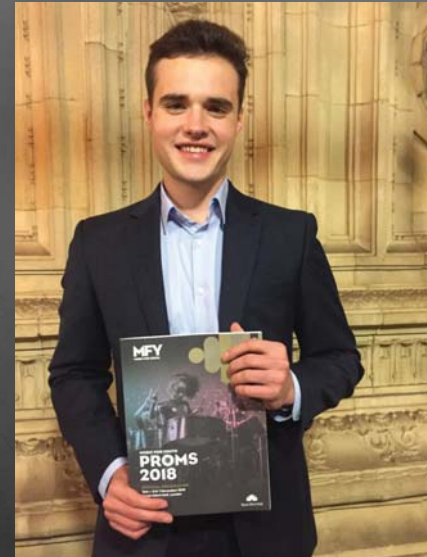
The new initiative is part of an ongoing collaboration between our institutions, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2017. Since then, we've engaged in collaborative research and performance opportunities, as well as placements and exchanges for staff and students.



## CONTINUING EXCELLENCE

Congratulations to our fantastic Library Team on securing the RNCM's fourth Excellence Award from the International Association of Music Libraries (UK and Ireland).

Presented every three years, the Awards acknowledge music libraries which demonstrate sustained good work and good practice in addition to recognising outstanding personal achievement by individuals. For 2018, we were one of only two institutions to receive the accolade with distinction due to achieving *'the highest standard of Excellence in all compulsory criteria'*.



An original song by 19-year-old popular music student Pete Morgan was selected to close the Music for Youth Proms at the Royal Albert Hall.

*Let's Get Together* is a rousing anthem for full symphony orchestra, big band and several hundred young singers. It was composed by Pete with other RNCM students and is available to download on all digital platforms.

# RAISE THE ROOF





February offered an incredible sell-out show by our Session Orchestra as they were joined on stage by *American Idol* star Mario Jose. The vocal powerhouse from San Francisco performed numerous hits with the orchestra, our flagship ensemble for cross-school collaboration, including *One Last Time*, *Mamma Mia*, *Somebody to Love* and *Purple Rain*.

Writing on Instagram, Mario said he was '*inspired*' by the '*unparalleled talent*' of all musicians and singers involved.



The night also included the launch of a new ambassador campaign, as we assigned nine students and alumni to act as role models for our Popular Music Degree programme.

Recent graduates James Bradshaw, Simon Dumas and Rebecca Lewis, and current students Henry Beach, Grettel Killing, Harry Preen, Charlie Sinclair, Joe Stott and Ollie West were chosen as RNCM Popular Music Ambassadors due to the incredible things they've already achieved in the industry, with many signing to management companies and record labels, both in the UK and overseas.







Thanks to the generosity of our Principal's Circle, we've renovated our Reed Room, creating an enviable learning environment for double reed students.

With guidance from oboe tutor Stéphane Rancourt, the space has benefitted from a complete redecoration, with eight new workstations and draughtsman chairs being installed, alongside storage for equipment and instruments, and upgraded electrics.

Stéphane said: *'The idea for a new Reed Room came about when I saw the original space and wondered how we could teach a big class of 10-12 oboists and bassoonists as*

*there was only room for one or two musicians to work at the same time. From here I had an initial chat with Nick Thompson, Head of Wind, Brass and Percussion, and then we got together with Dominic Wood and his team in the Operations Department to see what we could create.*

*'The purpose-built space we now have is something our students can be really proud of. I don't think there are many music colleges or establishments in the world that have a facility like this – it's fantastic.'*

The RNCM Reed Room is kindly sponsored by **oboes.ch**   **reed machines**

## REED ROOM RENOVATION

## ALL THE BEST

**We'd like to wish Professor Martin Harlow a long and happy retirement after 18 years at the RNCM.**

Martin joined us as Head of Undergraduate Studies in 2001, becoming Dean of Academic Studies in 2009, Director of Studies in 2013 and Vice-Principal (Academic) the following year.

We'd also like to congratulate our Director of Performance, Manus Carey, on his appointment to the new position of Deputy Principal (Performance and Programmes). Manus will work in parallel with Susan Baines, whose role has been re-designated from Vice-Principal (Operations) to Deputy Principal (Operations), to drive forward our ambitious strategic plans, leading our academic and professional service teams.



## JUNIOR FELLOW IN CONDUCTING

**Kaapo Ijas will be joining us in September as our Mills Williams Junior Fellow in Conducting.**

Kaapo was one of 12 candidates chosen to attend the live auditions in February, selected from over 60 applications worldwide. Three made it through to the final round, each conducting the RNCM Symphony Orchestra following five rounds of opera, contemporary and chamber orchestra repertoire. Sir Mark Elder (Music Director of the Hallé and our International Chair in Conducting), Clark Rundell (Head of Conducting) and Mark Heron (Deputy Head of Conducting) made up this year's panel, and we'd like to thank the Mills Williams Foundation for supporting this position.



## SINGER RETURNS TO TAKE ON NEW ROLE

**We're looking forward to welcoming Sara Fulgoni back to the College in September, as our new Deputy Head of Vocal Studies.**

A leading mezzo-soprano, Sara studied with Barbara Robotham, Nicholas Powell and April Cantelo, graduating in 1993. Since then, she's enjoyed a prominent career at the highest international level, appearing at some of the world's major opera houses and concert halls, in a wide variety of repertoire.

Sara will be succeeding fellow alum Susan Roper, who's stepping down after 15 years in post.

## 2019 IAD ARTISTS

**We're delighted to announce the six performers chosen to undertake our RNCM International Artist Diploma.**

Commencing in September, harpist Richard Allen, sopranos Mariya Irel and Yuliya Shkvarko, pianist Maxim Kinasov, percussionist André Nadais and violist Lilya Tymchyshyn will spend one year studying for the prestigious qualification, intended for artists on the cusp of international careers.

Dr David Horne, Head of our Graduate School, said: *'We are absolutely thrilled to welcome such a high calibre of performers onto the 2019/20 International Artist Diploma programme. Singers will be given major roles in the College's opera productions and instrumentalists will perform concertos with the internationally-renowned BBC Philharmonic. All the soloists will give recitals throughout the year in the College's programme of public concerts.'*

To read more RNCM stories, visit [rncm.ac.uk/news](https://rncm.ac.uk/news)



# KAREN HUMPHREYS

BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT







It was September 1978 when Karen Humphreys first arrived at the RNCM as an 18-year-old cellist with dreams of joining the Hallé. Today, the much-loved alum reflects on a 40-year relationship with the College, which includes two incredible decades at the helm of Junior RNCM and a well-deserved MBE for services to music education.

After seeing them perform in York at the age of 12, playing with the Hallé was going to be Karen Humphreys' goal in life. It was all she dreamed of. But studies at the RNCM swiftly brought other opportunities and a change of direction, and a career in music education beckoned.

*'Before I started learning an instrument I went for ballet lessons. I was not the daintiest of pupils,' she laughs, 'but I was the only one who could put their feet down in time, so the teacher said to my mother 'she should have music lessons, she's got a sense of rhythm,' which I think was aimed at turning me away from ballet as much as towards music.'*

It worked, and by the age of five Karen was mastering the piano before picking up the big red cello from the back of the classroom, at 10. After that, music, as she says, 'just fit', and with aspirations of joining the world's oldest orchestra at the forefront of her mind, she auditioned for a place at the College.

*'I remember playing the first page of the first movement of Elgar's Cello Concerto for the then Head of Strings, Eleanor Warren. She stopped me – in a cloud of smoke as it was in those days – and said 'yes, you're in'. I'm happy to say auditions are a bit different now.'*

But while her performing ability was never in doubt (Karen was placed in the Symphony Orchestra in her first year, which was a remarkable achievement), it was an unexpected love for academic studies that flourished, and before long she was asked to take on some teaching responsibility.





*'During my last undergraduate year I was in an aural group taken by Solfege guru Michel Brandt,' explains Karen, who completed undergraduate and postgraduate studies with us. 'Two teachers taught this type of aural training, Michel and Enid Ferguson. Sadly Enid went off with illness and so they asked me and another student to take over her classes a couple of hours each week. The other student didn't really take to it, so I taught some of hers too and it snowballed from there.'*

This early experience of teaching students at conservatoire level, despite still being a student herself, helped Karen to create a leadership style that would lay a solid foundation for the career that followed.

*'I'll freely say I haven't had any formal training, but my father was a teacher so I suppose I had a strong instinct. It was definitely strange to be teaching students in my own year, but it meant that I was working alongside them, trying to find numerous ways of sorting a problem, rather than dictating to them from on high.'*

And it is this nurturing approach – the idea of working together as part of a family – that underpins Karen's ethos for Junior RNCM.

Karen's involvement with our Junior department began in the mid-80s deputising for the great Ida Carroll and a permanent role teaching theory and aural soon followed. From there, with four years as our first International Officer and the completion of a two-year counselling course under her belt, she became Junior RNCM's Assistant Administrator, working with Shirley Blakey.

*'When I first started, Juniors was very much a separate entity,' she recalls. 'The Junior School at the Royal Northern College of Music had been formed in 1973 when Shirley Blakey took 25 students from the Northern School of Music and 25 from the Royal Manchester College of Music and put them together. The student numbers remained between 50 and 60 for many years, so it was a bit different then to how things are now.'*

Today, around 200 gifted young musicians aged eight to 18 attend Junior RNCM. Every Saturday during term time the College is their home; a place to study with exceptional tutors (many of which are Junior RNCM and RNCM alumni), perform with like-minded students 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.



These devastating events happened at Easter 1999, but despite them being two of the worst experiences of her professional and personal life, they also marked a significant turning point for both Karen and the department.

*'I recall saying to Shirley when she was retiring, 'I'm not sure I can do this.' She just said to me 'you'll grow into it.' And she was right. Unfortunately it took that crisis – two students passing away – for me to forge my own distinct path. I had to react on instinct and deal with the situation the best I could, which is where my counselling skills came into force. They gave me the confidence to lead the school; I was able to pull everyone together and I think this formed the basis of the very warm and friendly community that we now have.'*

The positive impact and influence that Karen's had on young musicians – whether as Head of Junior RNCM or as a teacher and counsellor – is staggering. So much so, that she was awarded an MBE for Services to Music Education in the Queen's New Year's Honours.

*'I had absolutely no idea that this was coming my way,' she says. 'I was nominated by a parent who has had four children train at Juniors and I think she wanted to do something special for me. I gather that she put the nomination idea out on social media and responses came flooding in, which I'm really moved by.'*

Karen was informed of the news on the day of our 2018 graduation ceremony, but says that administration errors meant it very nearly didn't happen.

*'It was graduation day and Rachael, who works in our office, said that someone was trying to contact me from the Lord Chancellor's office. In all honesty I didn't think it was anything for me – I just thought they were phoning up about an award for someone else and wanted me to contribute a few words.'*

*'I was told that if I didn't ring them back that afternoon it would be too late, so I shot upstairs as soon as the ceremony had finished and gave them a bell. The man on the phone asked me if I'd received a letter from them, which I hadn't, and then explained that I had to fill out a form that would go to the Prime Minister the next day before being passed to the Queen.'*

The announcement of Karen's MBE was made in December, a few days before New Year's Eve. Once news broke, social media lit up with celebratory comments from staff, students, alumni and parents wanting to congratulate a woman who's made such a significant difference to their lives.

*'Because I don't use social media I didn't quite realise what a big deal it was,' she laughs. 'I knew that word was spreading because I kept getting e-mails and text messages from all over the place, but it wasn't until I returned to the College after Christmas that it really sank in.'*

Karen received the award – a nod to the hard work and dedication she has given to the RNCM and education sector over the past 40 years – from Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace in February, with a very proud dad at her side. Early dreams of joining the Hallé might now be a distant memory, but it's fair to say that her unique leadership, hard work and personality have created a reality that will continue to inspire for many years to come.





# JOSEPH WARD

## THE EPONYMOUS HERO

1932 – 2019

We heard with great sadness news of the death of Joseph Ward, the inspirational founder of our Opera School and former Head of the School of Vocal Studies, on 27 April at the age of 87.

Joe was born in Preston in 1932, and started his musical journey as a baritone. His relationship with us began in 1951, as a student at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Upon graduating, he enjoyed a successful career on stage, performing with Carl Rosa Opera and touring Australia with his great friend, Dame Joan Sutherland.

Famed for his interpretation of Britten, he created the role of Starveling in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1960, and sang the composer's eponymous hero Billy Budd in the radio-broadcast première of the revised two-act version the same year. His Royal Opera House début as Principal Baritone came in 1962, where he created the role of Patroclus in Tippett's *King Priam* and recorded Sid in Britten's *Albert Herring*, conducted by the composer. Joe subsequently transferred to the tenor repertoire and became Covent Garden's resident Principal Tenor.

In the early 70s his career brought him full circle, and in 1972 he founded the Opera School at the newly merged Royal Northern College of Music, directing RNCM Opera's first production in 1973. Thirteen years later, in 1986, he became Head of Vocal Studies, driving forward the reputation of the School by inviting renowned singers and artists to give masterclasses, including Dame Joan Sutherland, Richard Bonyng, Sherrill Milnes, Dame Joan Hammond (televised by Granada TV), Norma Procter and the West End choreographer/producer, Eleanor Fazan. Joe retired in 1991 to pursue a freelance career as a producer, and a year later received an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to music.

Throughout his career, Joe earned tremendous respect from students, staff and fellow artists, as both a mentor, colleague and friend. He will be sadly missed by everyone at the RNCM, but his exceptional legacy will continue to impact our staff and students for many years to come.

*'There is a thread of gold running through the history of the RNCM School of Vocal Studies and Opera: singers who were 'born' out of the support and encouragement from Joseph Ward. A kind, generous man with flare, energy and a fantastic sense of theatre.'*

Louise Winter (mezzo-soprano, 1983)

*'Dearest Joe taught me when I was at the RNCM. Such a generous man with both his time and knowledge. I shall always be thankful for his nuggets of musical insight and humour in lessons. He taught me everything I know about bel canto singing. Thank you Joe.'*

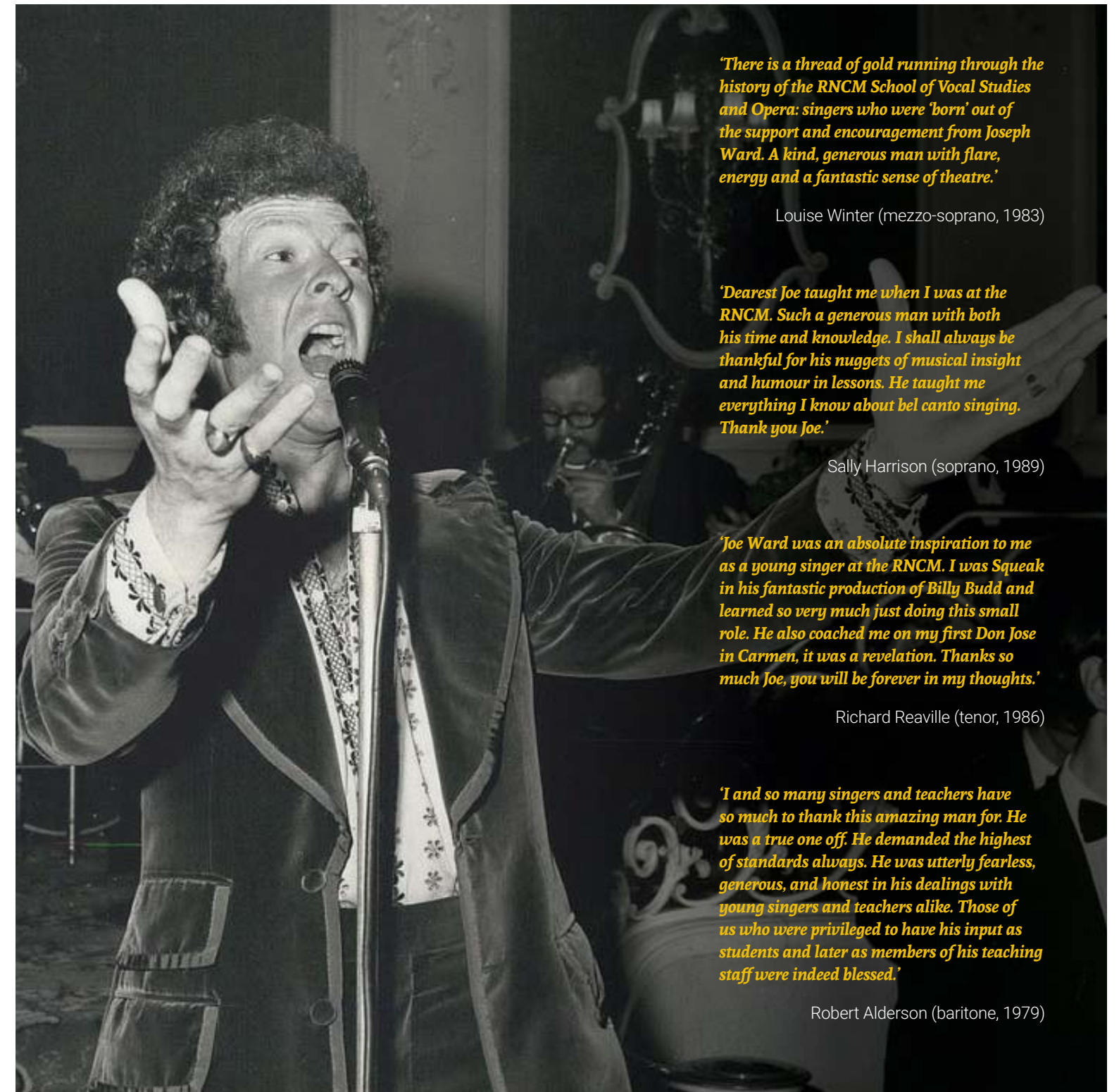
Sally Harrison (soprano, 1989)

*'Joe Ward was an absolute inspiration to me as a young singer at the RNCM. I was Squeak in his fantastic production of Billy Budd and learned so very much just doing this small role. He also coached me on my first Don Jose in Carmen, it was a revelation. Thanks so much Joe, you will be forever in my thoughts.'*

Richard Reaville (tenor, 1986)

*'I and so many singers and teachers have so much to thank this amazing man for. He was a true one off. He demanded the highest of standards always. He was utterly fearless, generous, and honest in his dealings with young singers and teachers alike. Those of us who were privileged to have his input as students and later as members of his teaching staff were indeed blessed.'*

Robert Alderson (baritone, 1979)





# Zero.

We've joined forces with our Students' Union to create a new campaign promoting a zero-tolerance culture regarding sexual harassment.

Led by the Students' Union, RNCM Zero is a collaborative initiative designed to ensure that we set a strong example to our staff, students, alumni and the wider community of Greater Manchester.

Believing that everyone has the right to work and study, confident in the knowledge that they are fully respected by all members of society, RNCM Zero aims to educate on the definition of sexual harassment, improve the signposting and procedure for reporting instances of harassment and bullying, and challenge the culture in which sexual harassment exists.

To learn more and to see how you can get involved, visit [rncm.ac.uk/zero](https://rncm.ac.uk/zero)



# NORTH ERN

ALUM  
MAKES  
THE  
GRADE  
AT  
CHET'S

## **Congratulations to Tom Redmond on his appointment as Director of Music at Chetham's School of Music.**

The 2000 graduate and former Junior RNCM Tutor in French Horn was chosen for the role following an extensive search, and will take up the position in September.

Alun Jones, Chetham's Principal, said: *'Tom's knowledge of the contemporary classical music industry and orchestral repertoire, and his passion for music education, will prove to be major assets as we look ahead to an exciting future at Chetham's.'*

A former member of the Hallé, Tom has performed throughout Europe, Japan, Russia, South East Asia and USA with ensembles including the CBSO, Philharmonia and London Symphony. He is also widely recognised for his work as an animateur and is a regular presenter on BBC Radio 3.

He said: *'I'm delighted to be taking on the role of Director of Music at Chetham's. The students and staff are truly extraordinary and the school's place at the heart of one of the most exciting musical cities in the world makes it a very special place to work and study.'*

# HIGHLIGHTS

## NHS EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Our professional partner LIME Music for Health has won the NHS in the North Excellence in Supply Award for Patient Experience.**

Established by Ros Hawley (clarinet, 1993) and Mark Fisher, LIME Music for Health has delivered music across Central Manchester University Hospitals Foundation Trust since 2009. The organisation also trains RNCM musicians via placements at Royal Manchester Children's Hospital.





# NORTHERN HIGHLIGHTS

## NEWS FROM OUR HONORARY ASSOCIATE ARTISTS

In the last edition of *The Northern*, we introduced you to our new group of Honorary Associate Artists. This prestigious ambassadorial title is awarded to recent alumni due to their outstanding achievements after graduation.

We currently have 12 Honorary Associate Artists representing our Schools of Study, and here's a brief look at what some of them have recently achieved:

## YAURI OFFERED TRIAL WITH RPO

Andrés Yauri has been offered a trial as Principal Bassoon with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

The 2018 graduate has performed with orchestras in his native Venezuela and across Europe, including the Venezuela Symphony, Golla Symphony, the Orquesta del Conservatorio Superior de Música de Aragón, Manchester Camerata, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Sinfonia Cymru and BBC Philharmonic.

Kevin Gowland, Deputy Head of Wind, Brass and Percussion and Director of Woodwind, said: *'I'm delighted to hear that Andrés, a recent graduate of our prestigious International Artist Diploma, has been offered a trial with the RPO. He's a great ambassador for the work we're producing in the School of Wind, Brass and Percussion, and in particular the bassoon department, led by Stefano Canuti and his team.'*

## NEMTSOV JOINS FRANKFURT OPERA AND MUSEUM ORCHESTRA

Mikhail Nemtsov has been appointed Principal Cello with the Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra, commencing in September.

Hailing from St Petersburg, the 2015 graduate is currently Solo First Chair with the Mozarteum Orchestra in Salzburg, having also performed with leading orchestras and conductors worldwide as an established soloist.

## KIDANE TO OPEN LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS

*Woke*, a new work by Daniel Kidane (2012) has been chosen to open this year's Last Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall.

The piece will be performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sakari Oramo, on Saturday 14 September. Daniel said: *'The title 'Woke' relates to the music itself – exciting music that awakens and rouses listeners. It also, on a deeper level, refers to the word itself and the need for all to be woke – to be more aware of issues concerning social and racial justice in today's society.'*

## IN BRIEF

Soprano **Soraya Mafi** (2010), along with fellow RNCM alum **Mark Simpson**, (clarinet, 2007) took to the airwaves for *Take Five: A young artist takeover of Radio 3*, to share her views and experiences of what life is like for the next generation of classical music stars.

**Kathryn Rudge** (mezzo-soprano, 2011) will make a welcome return to the Royal Albert Hall in August for Prom 26: Mozart's *Requiem*.

## SELAOCOE SIGNED TO INTERMUSICA

South African cellist **Abel Selaocoe** (2018) has been signed to Intermusica.

**The 27-year-old now joins their imagine portfolio; a space for exploring distinctive performance formats, diverse artistry, and ever-wider and more inclusive audiences.**

As a soloist and ensemble player, Abel explores the capacity of the cello across a range of genres, from collaborating with beatboxers and world musicians to giving concerto performances and classical recitals. He has performed with Johannesburg, KZN and Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestras and plays regularly with the BBC Philharmonic,

Aldeburgh Britten Pears Young Artist Programme and Multi-Storey. His love of improvisation and world music led him to co-founding Kabantu, a global folk fusion quintet whose success has led them to performances all over the UK, from the BBC Proms to Ulverston International Festival, as well as several broadcasts on BBC Radio 3.



# NORTHERN HIGHLIGHTS

## POLITICAL RECORDING IS BBC'S INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

*(Speak to me): New music, New politics* by alum and RNCM Lecturer Dr Adam Swayne (piano, 2003), was chosen as BBC Music Magazine's 'Instrumental Choice' of the month, receiving a blistering 5\* review for performance.

Released in January on the Coviello Contemporary label with support from an RNCM research grant, the album focuses on social and political issues. It includes première recordings of political piano music from the USA by Amy Beth Kirsten and Kevin Malone, alongside original interpretations of existing repertoire by Frederic Rzewski and Morton Gould.

Recorded at the College last August, the release was promoted via a concert in the Carole Nash Recital Room, which featured new works by postgraduate composers Athanasia Kontou and Aaron Breeze, written in response to themes on the CD.

## CHLOÉ VAN SOETERSTEDE (2017) IS THE 2019 - 21 MARIN ALSOP TAKI CONCORDIA CONDUCTING FELLOW

Established in the 2009/10 season, this unique programme offers the opportunity for female conductors to receive personalised artistic and career development mentoring by Marin Alsop and other industry professionals.

Rebecca Tong, our Junior Fellow in Conducting, was also recognised, winning one of three newly-established Taki Awards, which comprise a financial prize and support from Marin Alsop and the Taki Fellowship team.

Marin said: 'It is a privilege to be in a position to impact the lives of aspiring women conductors. I can clearly see what is needed to assist emerging conductors in the pursuit of their dreams and want to make the road easier and more rewarding for them.'

## ANNA HELPS TO BALANCE THE SCORE

Anna Appleby (2016) has been chosen to take part in Glyndebourne's new development scheme exclusively for female composers.

Now underway, *Balancing the Score* is a two-year initiative established to help address the under-representation of female composers in classical music.

Four composers were selected to take part, each having the opportunity to immerse themselves in life at the world-class opera house, where they will be introduced to commissioning opportunities, attend rehearsals and meet professional opera makers and performers.



# NORTHERN HIGHLIGHTS

## SOPRANO JOINS BAYERISCHE STAATSOPER OPERA STUDIO

Soprano Sarah Gilford (2016) has been accepted onto the Bayerische Staatsoper Opera Studio, commencing in September.

Founded during the 2006/07 season, the Bayerische Staatsoper Opera Studio (based at the National Theatre in Munich) supports highly talented young artists, preparing them for an international career through role studies, vocal lessons, acting and movement classes and language training. Young artists are also cast for small roles in productions on the main stage and take part in several concert projects, which they create together with Opera Studio pianists.

Sarah has been cast in five main stage productions, including *Papagena* in *Die Zauberflöte*, *Sandmännchen* in *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Echo* in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, as well as the title role in Thomas' *Mignon* for the Opera Studio.



## HYPERION RECORDING PROJECT

Laurence Perkins (bassoon, 1976) and Michael Hancock (piano, 1972) have been busy in the studio, recording the first stage of a major two-CD recording for Hyperion Records.

Focusing on 20th century music for solo bassoon, the recording features works by Saint-Saëns, Hindemith, Dutilleux, Richard Walthew, Herbert Howells and Richard Rodney Bennett and forms part of a larger project incorporating concertos with the CBSO and chamber music with the Carducci String Quartet.



## GRAZIE BILL

In November 2018 RNCM bassoonists came together to create a film celebrating the life and contribution of William Waterhouse; outstanding musician, bassoonist, teacher, mentor, writer and collector.

'Bill' joined the Royal Manchester College of Music (RMC) teaching staff in 1966, and continued to be a valued member of the college community right up until his sudden death in 2007. He inspired and influenced a great many colleagues, audiences and students across the globe, including the Italian soloist Stefano Canuti, who honours his legacy as the RNCM's first William Waterhouse International Chair in Bassoon.

*Grazie Bill* was produced by Linda Begbie (Junior Fellow in Bassoon, 2014), and features contributions by Stefano, Sergio Azzolini and Roberto Giaccaglia.

# CON- GRAT- ULA- TIONS TO...

**Sally Beamish** (viola, 1978) and **Sir Harrison Birtwistle** (NSM) on their 2018 British Composer Awards;

**Alexandra Lowe** (soprano, 2017), winner of this year's Clonter Opera Prize and Audience Vote;

**Kate Richardson** (violin, 1987), who's celebrating 20 years with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra;

**Samantha Clarke** (soprano, 2017), signed to Askonas Holt for worldwide general management;


**Josh Cirtina** (2016), appointed Principal Bass Trombone with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra;

**Simon Dumas** (vocals, 2018), who performed on America's *Jimmy Kimmel Live* as part of Nashville six-piece King Calaway;

and the Olympias Music Foundation founder and current PhD student

**Jo-Yee Cheung** (piano, 2017) on securing £22,000 from Arts Council England to support a collaborative music education project exploring real-life migration stories by secondary school pupils.



A portrait of Le Yu, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark shirt. He is looking slightly to the left. The background is a gradient of dark red and black. Two horizontal yellow lines cross the image, one above and one below the text.

# WHEN EAST MEETS NORTH WEST

Honorary Associate Artist Le Yu has the RNCM running through his veins. Since joining in 2007, the 31-year-old percussionist has completed both undergraduate and postgraduate studies, including the International Artist Diploma – our most prestigious award for solo performance. Now, as our newly-appointed Deputy Director of Percussion, he's busy both home and abroad, building important connections in China and providing students with global experiences that will last a lifetime.



**When you came to the RNCM from China in 2007, did you have any expectations of what life in Manchester would be like?**

Honestly, before coming to Manchester I'd heard of the football clubs but I didn't really know anything else about the city. Of course, I had done some research about the RNCM and was really excited about joining the percussion department. The first morning I came to register I remembering thinking, *'Wow, what a friendly place'*. All the staff and students were helpful and even though my English wasn't so great in those days, I didn't feel like I'd just landed in a completely foreign place. I immediately felt at home. In the first few months I was completely focused on my studies but with time I started to explore the city more and learn about British culture. I quickly realised that Manchester is much more than just football clubs; it's also a cultural and arts hub. I ended up liking the city so much that after finishing my undergraduate degree I decided to stay on as a postgraduate, completing a Master of Music degree, Postgraduate Diploma in Orchestral Studies and International Artist Diploma.

**Over 12 years on, you're our Deputy Director of Percussion, International Tutor in Marimba, International Consultant for China and Honorary Associate Artist. Did you ever think your connection to the College would grow so strong?**

No, I never thought my relationship with the College would be how it is today. My original plan was to finish my studies and go back to China, but instead I was asked to become a tutor. I thought, *'Oh, this is such a wonderful opportunity, why not?'* In terms of building the College's association with China, this is something I felt I was qualified to help with. China is my home country but I call Manchester my home, so it's a very special feeling for me to be in between the two, building and facilitating the RNCM's relationship with Chinese conservatoires.

**You're Director of the RNCM Percussion Ensemble and are set to embark on another tour of China this summer. What does this opportunity mean for our percussion students?**

Yes, last year the RNCM Percussion Ensemble went to China and we were the first percussionists from a British conservatoire to do so. It was such a great experience for the students – they've all told me it was a life-changing trip that they'll never forget. We did four concerts, three in Beijing's Forbidden City Concert Hall and one in Wuhan, a sister city of Manchester. All the concerts were sold out and afterwards the ensemble went out and met the audiences and posed for lots of photos; it really gave them a taste of a celebrity musician's life!

During the trip the students also competed at the 13th

China National Youth Percussion competition in Shanghai. They did such a great job. I know they might have felt a bit nervous playing in front of other percussionists from all over China, but they ended up winning the Chamber Music category, which was absolutely fantastic. This year will be different. We have nine concerts all across China and this time I will be performing with the ensemble. China is such a big country that the culture, landscapes and even food changes a lot depending on where you are, so it will be great for the students to see the contrast between the different cities we visit.

**You recently played a key part in the RNCM signing an exclusive UK partnership with X'ian Conservatory. Why are international relationships like this so important for us?**

We're recognised as an international music college so it's very important that we try and boost these global relationships and partnerships as much as possible. After all, music is an international language that's understood everywhere.

Before coming to the UK I studied for four years at X'ian Conservatory High School. Personally it was amazing to return recently to receive a Visiting Professorship and reunite with my old teachers. It was a real homecoming.


In addition to X'ian the RNCM has other music partners across China and I hope these relationships will grow even stronger in the future. The key is sharing and exchanging. For example, when I perform in China I like playing British music and when I perform in the UK I like playing Chinese music. I see myself as a bridge between the two.

**Are there any achievements you're particularly proud of and do you have anything on your list yet to be ticked off?**

My favourite memory is when my mum flew from China to watch me perform the UK première of the *Waves Impressions* marimba concerto by Keiko Abe, my former teacher. I was performing with the RNCM Symphony Orchestra and when I came back onstage to perform an encore I made a special thank you to my mum for making the trip from X'ian to be there – it was a special moment.

Another highlight was winning the Royal Over-Seas League with the Aurora Percussion Duo, made up of myself and Delia Stevens (2014). We were students at the time so had no expectations of taking home the top prize of such a prestigious competition – we surprised ourselves!

As for what's next. Summer will be busy; my concert schedule is filling up and I'll be working with new management in China and getting involved in some charity work with the UN. I'm really excited and feel very grateful to be doing what I love.



I SEE  
MYSELF AS  
A BRIDGE  
BETWEEN  
THE TWO



# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Boldly going where few professional companies have ventured, the Royal Northern College of Music last night launched its spring opera season with a magnificent production of Vaughan Williams's four-act 'morality' based on Bunyan's great allegory.

Requiring a large orchestra for the rich scoring, 41 individual singing roles and a double chorus, and lacking any operatic love interest, it is hardly surprising that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is rarely attempted. Yet, as Joseph Ward's glorious production proves so convincingly, the RNCM has the musical and artistic resources to meet the challenge triumphantly.

First of all, lavish praise to the team of Ward, designer Michael Holt and conductor Igor Kennaway (making his British opera debut) for such a wonderful realisation.

Holt's set, with its zig-zag path to the Celestial City springing from a walkway skirting the front of the orchestral pit, rich costumes and using the entire auditorium for projections and cast appearances, works well.



This visual splendour, excellently lit by Kevin Sleep, was matched by fine playing from the orchestra, thrilling chorus work and by soloists who revealed great talent.

Of these, Richard Whitehouse was outstanding. In his first major operatic role, this 22-year-old third-year student was equal to the demands made on him as *The Pilgrim*.

John Neale, with the most fascinating bare feet on stage, was a powerful Evangelist and Maureen Murphy, Claire Bradshaw and Alison Kettlewell were well balanced as *The Three Shining Ones*. Of the three roles sung by the admirable Stephen Chaudry – Timorous, the Angel of the Lord and Mr By-Ends – that of Mr By-Ends was the most successful.

Also deserving special mentions are chorus master Brian Hughes, John Marsden (Lord Lechery and A Celestial Messenger), Thomas Jackson (Woodcutter's Boy), Wyn Griffiths (Bunyan), Ian Waddington (voice of Acollyon), and Mary Pope and Ruth Peel (Heavenly Beings).

**John Robert-Blunn**

## PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Did you know that our December production of Vaughan Williams' *The Pilgrim's Progress* wasn't our first? The Northern School of Music presented it in 1970 before RNCM Opera brought it to the stage in 1992.

To mark both occasions, we've delved into the archives and picked a selection of images that we hope bring back fond memories for cast, orchestra and audience alike.

If you'd like to share your story, email [alumni@rncm.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@rncm.ac.uk) or call 0161 907 5377 and we'd be happy to include it either in the next edition of *The Northern* or on our alumni webpages.





# A LASTING LEGACY

Since his death at the age of 91, Thomas Jellis' staggering legacy has had a significant impact on the RNCM.

The modest and hardworking music lover bequeathed £2.5 million to the College in 2007, providing numerous scholarships and enabling us to create new string instruments.

A pacifist at heart, Tom worked in air raid shelters with the outbreak of the Second World War, before combining his creativity and mechanical skills in scenery and lighting at the travelling Adelphi Guild Theatre Company. A move to stage direction followed, but after his wife, the actress Valerie Gray, contracted multiple sclerosis his career took a back seat and he became a full-time carer.

During this time, Tom's love of music and theatre never diminished and in 1993 he was involved in fundraising concerts by the Dubrovnik String Quartet in aid of the Croatia Appeal. No doubt moved by current stories of war and conflict, he wrote to the Bursar of the College, informing him that the RNCM was a beneficiary in his will.

Tom saw us as a large, safe establishment which could use his money on projects close to his heart: instrument making and helping people from disadvantaged backgrounds. We're proud to say that to date, over 120 students have benefited from scholarships provided by the Jellis Bequest and expert luthiers have built over 20 string instruments.

To learn more about leaving a gift in will to benefit the RNCM and how you can make a difference, email **Petra van den Houten** at [petravandenhouten@ncm.ac.uk](mailto:petravandenhouten@ncm.ac.uk) or call **0161 907 5338**.

*'In this world of violence and hate it is stabilising to think of the College, as you are working for such very different ends by superior means.'* Thomas Jellis



In the last issue of The Northern, we interviewed alum Kathryn Williams (flute, 2015) about the support she received from the RNCM to help her complete her studies while dealing with health issues and the challenges of being a single mum.

There are ever-increasing demands on sustaining a career in music, and it is crucial that we train musicians to be equipped to deal with these. Our 2018/19 Annual Appeal has focused on raising funds to support student mental health and physical wellbeing, and the response has been fantastic. Not only has it been the most successful campaign to date in terms of funds raised, it's also sparked debate within the media and our colleagues in the sector about the importance of investing in student health and wellbeing.

**'Student life can be difficult, so investing in their health and wellbeing is vital'**

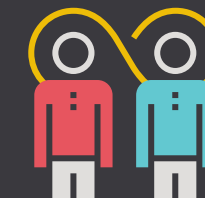
**'The issues students face and have to deal with, it is the least we can do to support them'**

# THANK YOU

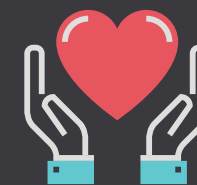
Your donations have helped to fund...



Training for 2 new  
Mental Health First Aiders



220  
counselling  
sessions



A range of events and  
resources to support topics  
such as healthy eating,  
sleep and preparing for  
life after conservatoire studies

So far...

**£11,000** has been raised  
15% of donors were alumni

With additional donations we could fund...



Performance enhancement clinics  
to reduce performance anxiety



A greater provision

The installation of  
a hearing booth  
to prevent noise  
induced hearing loss

of physiotherapy

We'd like to say thank you if you've already supported the Appeal, and if you'd like to get involved, it's not too late! Full details of how to support are available at [ncm.ac.uk/annualappeal](http://ncm.ac.uk/annualappeal).



*‘In 1993 we had rehearsals for Maid of Orleans in the opposite building and used to cross the bridge every day.’*

Nataliya Kompaniyets-Jouri (voice, 1995)



*‘Many walks over there to the Phoenix pub!!’*

Brian Gill (bassoon, 1985)



*‘I was there 1975-79... exactly as I remember it.’*

Colin Sneade (tuba, 1979)



For this issue we've chosen an iconic feature of the past – the concrete bridge leading from the College to the University Precinct – to stir up some of your memories.

Removed circa 2003 as part of the Oxford Road Wing redevelopment, the infamous 'bridge' led to a number of popular stop-offs for our students, including the legendary Phoenix pub, the sandwich shop, and Blackwells book store.

*‘I certainly remember those stairs and the stall in the precinct selling gala pie!!’*

Beverley Moore (voice, 1981)

Do these pictures bring back memories of your student days or do you have any of your own you'd like to share with us? If so, we'd love to hear from you. Visit page 2 for full contact details, and please note that we'll return any hard copies you send our way.





DO  
WHAT  
YOU  
LOVE

## ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

**Being part of the RNCM family doesn't end at graduation.**

Whichever path you choose, wherever in the world, remaining part of your life is really important to us. Our alumni network is integral to our DNA and we're continually impressed by the amazing things you achieve.

Whether you're performing in venues throughout the world, inspiring a classroom of children, making an incredible difference in hospitals and care homes or utilising your skills in a different industry, your stories define who we are today and inspire where we could be tomorrow.

**You're part of our story; let's share it together.**

There are lots of ways that you can get involved with RNCM life. To learn more email [alumni@rncm.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@rncm.ac.uk), call **0161 907 5377**, or visit our webpages at [www.rncm.ac.uk](http://www.rncm.ac.uk).

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