Bienvenue à *upbeat*...*

*Welcome to a special French-themed issue of Upbeat!*

This spring the RCM has been alive with French music. Our month-long celebration of all things French took in orchestral concerts, chamber music evenings, masterclasses, recitals and a five-day keyboard extravaganza, as well as providing a platform for some of France’s leading composers today – Pascal Dusapin and Jérôme Ducros.

A highlight of the festival was two Debussy world premieres given by the RCM Symphony Orchestra. RCM Professor Richard Langham Smith sheds light on their discovery in his personal account of Debussy on page 12. We also talk to two French professors Sophie-Véronique Cauchefer Choplin and Jean-Philippe Calvin about teaching at the RCM, and about musical life on both sides of the channel. To top it all off, we find out about the RCM International Opera School’s visit to the Musée d’Orsay last year to perform Gilbert and Sullivan’s much loved operetta Patience.

As usual, *Upbeat* is also packed full with news from around the College. So if you want to find out which RCM professor made her debut on *Strictly Come Dancing* then read on!

We’re always keen to hear from students past and present, so if you have anything you’d like us to feature in the next issue of *Upbeat*, send your news and pictures to news@rcm.ac.uk by Monday 7 May 2012.

NB: Please note that we cannot guarantee to include everything we receive and that we reserve the right to edit submissions.

*Upbeat online*
Did you know that *Upbeat* is available to read online at www.rcm.ac.uk/upbeat. If you’d prefer to read it in this way, do contact us at news@rcm.ac.uk and we’ll stop sending you a paper copy. If you’d like us to send you an email notification when *Upbeat* is published, let us know your email address too.

Front cover – The Royal College of Music

Inside front cover – A selection of images from ‘Rhythm of Life’, run by the Centre for Performance Science © Chris Christodoulou

Inside back cover – Images from the RCM International Opera School’s winter production of Bizet’s ‘Le docteur Miracle’ and ‘Djamileh’ © Chris Christodoulou

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Professorship for Vanessa Larche

Vanessa Larche, Head of Keyboard at the RCM, has been appointed to the additional title of Professor of International Keyboard Studies.

The RCM Director, Professor Colin Lawson, said: “I am delighted that Vanessa Larche has been appointed to a Personal Chair at the Royal College of Music. Her inspirational leadership and international profile have made our Keyboard Faculty a natural first choice for students from around the world.” Professor Vanessa Larche said: “I am absolutely thrilled to receive this prestigious appointment to a Personal Chair.”

Since Professor Larche took up her post as Head of Keyboard at the RCM in 2005, she has presided over a number of major success stories. These include the annual RCM keyboard festival, which she founded and which has expanded from a one-day event to a grand five-day celebration; incredible competition success, most recently at the 2011 Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition; piano masterclasses with world-renowned musicians; and increasingly strong links with other leading academic institutions across Asia and Europe.

Dorchester and Coworth Park hotels, and a private box at the Royal Albert Hall to hear Lang Lang.

The RCM is very fortunate to have the support of a very hard working committee led by Chair Lady Carr with Lady Middleton, Emma Rose, Judy Mowschenson, Anastasia Christou and Lady Walters. A short video giving a flavour of the evening is available at www.rcm.ac.uk/soireedor

The RCM thanks the following companies and individuals for their generous sponsorship and donations: British Gas, Champagne Taittinger, Dreweatts 1739, Finsbury, Fujitsu, Hildon, Jane Packer, L’Oreal, Mason Rose, Montezuma’s, Patriarche Wine Agencies, Paul Wayne Gregory, Sally Clarke Ltd, Steinway and Sons, Stephen Morris Video and Photography, The Dorchester Collection and Wilberforce Chambers.

Soirée d’Or 2011

On 7 December last year the RCM held its annual fundraising event, the Soirée d’Or at the V&A Museum. More than £150,000 was raised, which will be used to award substantial scholarships to talented RCM musicians.

A Taittinger champagne reception in the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries was followed by dinner in the impressive barrel-ceilinged Raphael Gallery. Junior Department alumnus Julian Lloyd Webber and alumna violinist Francesca Dego brought the audience to their feet with sparkling performances. Further music was provided by an RCM jazz quartet during the reception.

A lively auction followed with bidders competing for items including a baton personally signed by Ashkenazy, a private dinner with music at both the

Due to the limitation of the text extraction, the full content is not fully displayed. However, it is clear that the Soirée d’Or event was a success and included various highlights such as a Taittinger champagne reception, a dinner in the impressive Raphael Gallery, performances by Julian Lloyd Webber and Francesca Dego, and a lively auction with various auction items including a baton signed by Ashkenazy.

Strictly RCM

RCM movement coach Desiree Kongerod entertained more than 10 million people when she appeared on BBC1’s flagship entertainment show Strictly Come Dancing.

Desiree – who performs as a dancer and circus performer under the name ‘An Act Above’ – joined up with three fellow performers to create a spectacular aerial show as part of the programme last November.

When she’s not flying through the air with the greatest of ease, Desiree can be found at the Royal College of Music, giving movement classes to students in the RCM International Opera School.

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New Year’s Honours

We offer warm congratulations to the many musicians whose achievements have been recognised in the New Year’s Honours list. Among them are:

RCM Vice-President and alumnus Ian Stoutzker, a noted philanthropist who was appointed CBE for his services to music. Ian studied the violin with Albert Sammons at the RCM but later switched to the London School of Economics, which led to a successful career in banking. He is the chairman and co-founder (with Yehudi Menuhin) of Live Music Now.

RCM alumnus and inspirational trumpeter Clarence Adoo, member of the world’s first para-orchestra, who was appointed MBE for services to music.

The Revd Ronald Corp, Founder and Artistic Director of the New London Orchestra, who was appointed OBE for his services to music.

Ralph Allwood, lately Precentor and Director of Music at Eton College, who was appointed MBE for services to choral music.

Antonio Pappano, Music Director of the Royal Opera House, who received a knighthood for his services to music.

Launch of the RCM Piano Circle

In November the RCM launched a new Piano Circle at a reception following a masterclass with Alfred Brendel.

This new Circle of Patrons, which joins the existing Opera Circle, Chamber Music circle and patrons’ Circle, gives members the opportunity to enjoy a close involvement with our world-renowned Keyboard Faculty and to support the development of our talented young pianists.

Piano Circle patrons enjoy unrivalled ‘behind the scenes’ access to learn how each individual pianist is nurtured, and are invited to a programme of exclusive insight events. We are enormously grateful to our current Founder Patrons (two of them are pictured above with Alfred Brendel and RCM Head of Keyboard Professor Vanessa Latareche).

For a limited period we are inviting further supporters to join as one of 15 Founder Patrons for an annual donation of £5,000. For a donation of £10,000, we would also be delighted to award a scholarship in the name of your choosing.

For further information, please contact Joana Witkowski, RCM Development Officer, on 020 7591 4785 or joana.witkowski@rcm.ac.uk

The RCM welcomes universities minister

The Right Honourable David Willetts MP, Minister of State for Universities and Science visited the RCM in October last year.

During his visit the Minister sat in on a piano lesson, observed some opera coaching, attended a recording to screen being made in the Studios, visited the reconfigured Museum and enjoyed a trombone quartet in the Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall. Afterwards he attended a meeting with RCM Director, Professor Colin Lawson, and other UK conservatoire principals.

Professor Lawson commented: “We were keen for the Minister to witness the quality of the student experience at the RCM by meeting those who study and work here, and to understand the centrality of the UK conservatoires – and the RCM in particular – in sustaining the UK’s reputation as world leader in the performing arts.”
Living Song Project

A recent issue of the magazine of the National Association of Music Educators included a major article by David Sutton-Anderson, Head of Composition and Musicanship of the RCM Junior Department (RCMJD). The article outlined the ground-breaking project Living Song, a collaboration between the RCMJD and the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Living Song is a project which introduces RCMJD composers and singers to the tradition of folk song, with the aim of illuminating a different approach to composition and performance. Inspired by the work of Ralph Vaughan Williams, who studied and taught at the RCM, students are invited to make transcriptions of field recordings of folk songs, before transforming them into choral compositions which are performed by the RCMJD Chamber Choir.

The project continues to be a great success. One RCMJD composition student describes the profound influence the project has had on them:

“I had never heard the true sound of folk music before. Not only did it help me experience folk music in a new way, it opened my eyes to new ways of understanding and appreciating music in general — everything I have done musically since has been much influenced by that natural sound and open-minded philosophy that comes from folk music.”

The big thank you

In December the Royal College of Music participated in the 2011 Big Give Christmas Challenge to raise funds for our scholarship programme.

We are delighted to report that thanks to the extreme generosity of our donors, we have surpassed last year’s total raising a staggering £104,242 (including Gift Aid).

Every penny will go towards transforming the lives of talented young musicians.

We are aware that The Big Give website struggled to cope with the level of demand during the Challenge and that some donors were unable to give. The organisation has made an apology which can be read in full at www.thebiggive.org.uk. If you were unable to donate during the Challenge period but would still like to contribute to the RCM Scholarship Fund, please contact Heather Letley in the Development Office on 020 7591 4331 or heather.letley@rcm.ac.uk

Tales from the Stave

A recent episode of the BBC Radio 4 show ‘Tales from the Stave’ examined the manuscripts of two of former RCM Director Hubert Parry’s most famous works: I was Glad and Jerusalem.

RCM Librarian Peter Horton – a noted Parry expert – introduced listeners to the 1902 manuscript of I was Glad, which was recently published by the RCM. It is available to view virtually on the RCM Library website (www.rcm.ac.uk/parry) and in person in the RCM Library. The programme also included a performance of the anthem itself, recorded in the RCM’s Durrington Room.
Going Underground to Cut Carbon

The Royal College of Music is hoping to be part of a pioneering scheme designed to slash the carbon emissions of some of the UK’s leading cultural organisations. If funding can be found for this ambitious scheme – the largest of its kind in the world – then a pipe network 60 metres underground will be constructed, which will use natural chalk aquifer to store heat during the summer for winter heating, and help to cool the buildings during the summer.

This ground-breaking project is being undertaken by the 1851 Group: an alliance of institutions based around Exhibition Road that includes the RCM, the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal College of Art, Imperial College and the three national museums: the V&A Museum, the Science Museum and the National History Museum.

Richard Shennan, divisional director and engineer at Mott MacDonald – the firm behind the underground thermal energy storage concept, explains: “The key thing about this project is collaboration. Victorian buildings consume a lot of heat while modern buildings like those of Imperial College tend to need cooling. This will allow us to even out energy demand over winter and summer.”

If successful, the scheme could potentially stop 2.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere between now and 2050. It could also provide a template for the greening of the entire government estate which is crucial to the achievement of the UK target to cut CO2 emissions by 80% by 2050. Gregory Barker, Minister of State for Climate Change, showed the government’s support by attending the project launch at the National History Museum.

This is just the latest in a series of green initiatives from the RCM, which was named the UK’s greenest conservatoire in the 2010 and 2011 Green League.

Turtle Song

After four successful years at the RCM, in 2011 the acclaimed project Turtle Song began its nationwide roll-out, starting in Cambridge.

Over the course of three months, animateur Anna Jewitt, composer and RCM alumnus Russell Hepplewhite joined forces with a team of musicians from the RCM and Clare College. Each week, they helped project participants to create their own song cycle, Songs of the Sea. The project culminated in a fantastic performance of this entirely original 30-minute work on Friday 2 December in the West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge.

Turtle Song is a singing and song-writing initiative for people with memory problems and all forms of dementia and their carers. It gathers professional musicians, workshop leaders and music students to deliver a high quality, challenging and enjoyable experience.

Turtle Song is a partnership project with Turtle Key Arts, English Touring Opera and RCM Sparks. This project was funded by the Henry Smith Foundation.

Asimut from your smartphone

Asimut, the RCM’s new online room booking and scheduling system, is being rolled out to all RCM students. Asimut is the new software being used by the RCM to carefully manage all spaces, from concert venues to teaching areas and practice rooms. This is part of the RCM’s on-going commitment to providing the best possible environment to students.

Students will be able to book a room at any of the purpose-built stations in RCM, and even from their smartphones. So they can book a room wherever they are – on a bus, in bed or even on the beach...!
The Britten Theatre 25th Anniversary News

Celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the Britten Theatre have now started. Visit www.rcm.ac.uk/bt25 for details of activities going on and to read memories from past students, performers and audience members.

Director’s Dinner in the Britten Theatre

The Britten Theatre celebrations began with a Director’s Dinner on Monday 7 November 2011. Guests were invited for a Taittinger Champagne reception followed by a performance of excerpts of Richard Strauss’ Capriccio, ending with the famous invitation to dinner, at which point the theatre curtains opened to reveal the stage set for dinner.

Guests were seated at tables named after recent RCM opera productions and they relished the first ever opportunity to enjoy an evening in the Theatre from the point of view normally experienced by performers. Mr Leopold de Rothschild, who lead the fundraising to build the Theatre, was the Guest of Honour, while special guests Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and RCM alumnus Gerald Finley both spoke about the quality of the training to be found at the RCM. The Director Professor Colin Lawson thanked Mr de Rothschild and the members of the original fundraising committee who were able to join us, along with many of our current most generous supporters.

Finally, all those attending enjoyed further musical entertainment provided by students of the RCM International Opera School including songs by Bernstein and Rogers & Hart, and ending with “Brüderlein und Schwesterlein” from Die Fledermaus by Johann Strauss.

Britten Theatre Anniversary Fund

To ensure that we are able to offer our students the performance opportunities and training they deserve for the next 25 years, we are fundraising during this celebratory year. So far donations of £17,000 have been made which will help fund performance opportunities and training in the Britten Theatre.

We ask you to help us today:

- Donate to the Britten Theatre Anniversary Fund: £50 would buy 1 litre of stage blood and £100 is the cost of a new lighting gobo
- Support the Costume Appeal to dress the stage of the Britten Theatre in its 25th year
- Join us at Nuit Fantastique, (see below for details)
- Support a scholarship
- Sponsor the opera performances for schools

For further details about how to participate and events during the year, visit www.rcm.ac.uk/bt25 or contact the Development Department on 020 7591 4862 or bt25@rcm.ac.uk.

Nuit Fantastique Gala

Join us to celebrate 25 years since the opening of the Britten Theatre at a special event on Wednesday 2 May 2012.

Star alumni and current students will provide entertainment in the theatre, followed by a champagne and canapé reception in the Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall.

Tickets for this black tie gala are £100 each and are available from the RCM Box Office on 020 7591 4314 or online at www.rcm.ac.uk/nuitfantastique.
Patience in Paris

Following an enormously successful visit in 1999, the RCM International Opera School has recently been back to the Musée d’Orsay in Paris to present Gilbert and Sullivan’s much loved operetta Patience. Director of Opera Michael Rosewell talks to Upbeat about the visit.

How did your relationship with the Musée d’Orsay originally come about?
The Musée d’Orsay has for many years run a fascinating programme of music, concerts and recitals in conjunction with the exhibitions they present. Many distinguished singers, instrumentalists and chamber ensembles have performed in the theatre space of the museum. Back in 1999, the museum planned an important pre-Raphaelite exhibition and, having heard about the RCM’s reputation in terms of the standard of singing and opera productions, asked us if we would present some Gilbert and Sullivan. We took a double-bill of Cox and Box and Trial by Jury, which were surprisingly well received. More than a decade later when a similar pre-Raphaelite exhibition was scheduled, we were their first point of call to present some G&S.

Why do you think this Gilbert and Sullivan opera went down so well with French audiences and what did Donald Maxwell bring to the production?
Firstly, you can go anywhere in the world and there will be people who are passionate about G&S. In other words, there is always a potential audience for these works. That said, Patience uses deliberately flowery language and we were very unsure how much a Parisian audience would comprehend, especially with some rather limited surtitles. However, we found them warm and receptive. They completely understood the tongue-in-cheek tone of the piece, responded immediately to the verbal jokes and were genuinely astounded by the high standard of singing. In my experience audiences, French or otherwise, respond to quality and know when they’re seeing it! They were so enthusiastic; we actually had to add an encore following the first night. This was all in no small part due to Donald’s direction which helped the singers deliver the dialogue brilliantly and execute the physical gags perfectly, all with a real sense of flow, lightness and charm.

How is the theatre in Paris different from the Britten Theatre?
The Musée d’Orsay’s theatre is a multi-use space and unlike the Britten Theatre has no fly tower and no orchestral pit. So we needed to keep things simple in terms of the scenery and props. With subtle use of lighting, however, we were able to conjure up various moods and situations, and we made good use of the auditorium for certain key entrances and exits. As usual, our costumes were extraordinary. With no pit the players were fully visible and were dressed accordingly ‘Victorian’, adding to the visual impact of the evening.

Have you any plans for a third trip?
There are no definite plans as yet. The Director and main coordinator of the programme at the Musée d’Orsay made a return visit to see our production of Così fan tutte last summer, and happened to mention that Bizet’s Le docteur Miracle was a very popular opera. Perhaps they will give us the chance to take that production over to Paris to teach the French how to make omelettes. I’m sure Gilbert and Sullivan would be proud!

A French student in Paris

Paul Vialard, a French student at the RCM, tells Upbeat about performing Patience in Paris.

What role did you sing?
I sang in the opera chorus as one of the dragoon guards. There were actually only four of us in the chorus – two tenors and two baritones – which made for a special atmosphere.

What did the Director Donald Maxwell bring to the production?
He was amazing. He was very sharp and really brought his wit to the production. It was quite simple due to the amount of time we had to rehearse and the fact we were performing the opera in two venues, but it worked really well.

How did the theatre in Paris compare to the Britten Theatre?
Well for a start there was no pit for the orchestra and the backstage spaces were very different. There were no dressing rooms either – we just had to wait at the sides and keep very quiet!

What’s your most vivid memory of the production?
Getting very hot! As a dragoon guard, we had to wear these very tall hats and our costumes were made of thick wool. So within five minutes of being on stage, under the heavy lights, we were all perspiring quite heavily.

Why do you think it went down so well with French audiences?
I was curious to see the reaction too. To be honest, I think it was such a good production that everyone was really impressed by the quality and standard. It was also genuinely funny!

Did you enjoy being back in Paris?
Yes, I really enjoyed being back in Paris. It was the first time I’d performed opera in front of my family – I think about 50 family and friends came to see me!
RCM organ professor Sophie-Véronique Cauchefer Choplin is considered one of the best improvisers of her generation. As well as being organist at two of Paris’s most famous churches – St Sulpice and St Jean-Baptiste de la Salle – she gives regular recitals and masterclasses in Europe, the United States, Canada and Japan, and her recordings of Bach, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Franck, Rheinberger, Messian, Grunenwald and improvisations have gathered high praise.

How often do you visit the RCM?
I come to the RCM every two weeks during term time, about 14 to 15 times a year. This works very well for me as I can combine it with work at my two churches in Paris, and with my concerts in Europe and the US.

Why did you decide to teach at the RCM?
I think that it’s good to teach after so many years of giving concerts. I also think it’s much better for me to be teaching now than when I was 20 or 25, as I have so much more experience to draw on.

You are teaching a new course in improvisation?
Yes, I have five organ students and three pianists. For me it should be obligatory to study both interpretation and improvisation. We can understand music better when we are improvisers.

How do you introduce improvisation?
I begin with a simple chorale that I have written and I see if the student can make a good harmonisation or not. It’s not a problem if they make mistakes, but they must have a good ear and they must listen carefully.

We begin with classical harmonies, but rapidly I mix in modal and atonal languages. Generally the students seem to prefer this because it’s much freer. In the UK, there is a strong tradition of the chorale, so students are familiar with this. But I think they find it easier to improvise within a modal language because you don’t have such strict rules.

How does this compare with training in France?
In France it is normal to become an improviser. At the Conservatoire in Paris you have two possibilities: you specialise in interpretation only, or you study both interpretation and improvisation. But even if you specialise in interpretation, you still study a little improvisation.

What other differences are there between France and the UK?
For me the first difference is that in France the students have a very rigid timetable, so every week you do the same number of hours. At the RCM it is totally different, it’s much more flexible and I have to adapt my teaching to the number of hours available.

The second difference is that here at the RCM I meet students who are already working in churches. Perhaps as an assistant, but they are working. And this seems incredible to me because in France it is more difficult to get a position. This is because there is not the same choral tradition and because we don’t spend a lot of time in church. We are just the organist at the weekend; if there are funerals or weddings we might go to the church during the week, but if there is nothing, we don’t go in.

There is another big difference, which is the instruments themselves. Is that why the annual organ department overseas trips are so important?
Yes. It’s very good when learning French repertoire to try out the country’s instruments. For example, to play the organ in St Sulpice helps them understand a lot of aspects of the music. I say to my students: “Now you can understand why we must breathe here and take some time, because we must go to the fourth keyboard, or the fifth keyboard, and it is impossible to arrive immediately! That is why I say to you: respiration is important, take your time.”

One thing that I enjoy about teaching at the RCM is that it is good for me to encounter and understand English music. I don’t play any English music myself – yet! But I enjoy finding about it, and how it fits with the performing tradition.

What repertoire are you performing at the moment?
I am learning some transcriptions, including some Mozart, and a transcription of César Franck’s symphonic poem Redemption by Marcel Dupré – this is a new piece to me, and is a very nice piece for organ. I love it during the winter, because that is when I spend a lot of time learning new pieces.

What are your other plans for future?
I am giving many concerts this year, as usual. For example, I am visiting Germany, the US, Denmark, Switzerland and Norway. I plan all my concerts for the year by myself, as I have no agent, and it is a lot of work! I spend a lot of time doing this.

Finally, I plan to see my grandson! I recently became a grandmother for the first time and the baby, Thomas, is four months old. It is wonderful for me and I try to see him every month, although I have to travel 600km to the Alps!

So my life is: concerts, RCM… and Thomas!
French composer, conductor and academic Jean-Philippe Calvin teaches a wide range of courses at the RCM, and is in great demand as a composer on both sides of the English channel.

What do you teach at the RCM?
I teach historical studies – music after 1945 – as well as orchestration, transcription and composition. I also teach the contemporary music course, and supervise a number of MMus critical projects and doctoral students.

What does the contemporary music course involve?
It brings composers and performers together; the composers produce pieces written specifically for the performers, and we present them at the end of the year. This is for the third and fourth year undergraduates, and I do the same thing for the Masters students, called Contemporary Music in Action, or CMiA.

What is your role?
I am the supervisor and “liaison officer” – I have to make sure that the collaboration goes smoothly, if they can work together and if they are matched correctly.

If it doesn’t, are the composers open to working with performers, and to make changes to their music?
Surprisingly, they are! Actually the composers are the more open-minded – though perhaps I’m just saying that because I am a composer! The performers may be a bit hesitant in the beginning, but we end up with wonderful results because most performers by the end are convinced that contemporary music is actually something good for them!

You have just founded a new ensemble at the RCM...
Yes, in fact the ensemble Variable Geometries was born out of the CMiA project – most people playing in the ensemble are on the CMiA course.

What was the thinking behind the ensemble?
The first concert was dedicated to John Cage – we wanted to do something to pay homage to this contemporary music genius. But the main idea of the ensemble is to perform works by RCM students and composers, and to put on performances based on musical research. The second idea of the ensemble is to promote the new; things that people haven’t heard before. And the final idea is that composers can perform within the ensemble. This is blurring another boundary between composition and performance.

What are the differences between education in France and the UK?
The institutions are structured differently; in France, everything is run and subsidised by the Ministry of Culture, which can be a good and a bad thing. In terms of the teaching, the only major difference I can think of is that in French conservatoires you pay more attention to your academic studies, such as harmony and counterpoint.

How about the new music scene? Ah, that’s the big difference! In France there is more possibility of hearing and performing new music. There are many more contemporary music ensembles, three or four world-renowned centres for electronic and electroacoustic music, and there is a lot going on all over the place – not just in Paris. I would say that in France there is more openness to new things – people are not afraid of going to hear new pieces, and presenters are not afraid of presenting them. They can take risks.

What about your own composition?
Next is the premiere in Paris of my new work Danses Concertantes for woodwind quintet and wind orchestra. I also have a project in May with a percussionist who is going to be playing a new piece of mine in Japan. I have a collaboration with Duo Contour – Steve Altoft and Lee Ferguson – for microtonal trumpet and percussion. I am writing a new piece for Jane Chapman for harpsichord solo and four percussionists, for the next Variable Geometries concert.

And my opera is also coming back! It is called The Bald Soprano, based on a play by Eugene Ionesco. It was commissioned in 2006 by the Royal Opera House and had its French premiere in 2009 at the Théâtre Athénée. It worked so well that they want to see it again, so they are bringing it back and they are taking it to Luxembourg as well.

Do you like to get involved with productions of your operas?
I do, and I have had the chance to work with very good stage directors – John Lloyd Davies here in London, for example, and François Berreur in France. You know, a collaboration between a composer and a stage director is like a marriage, and I think that both of my marriages worked successfully so far!

How do you compose?
I am not one of these so-called “breakfast composers” who can get up in the morning and say “ok, now I’m going to compose for two hours”? For me it is quite inspirational. The first thing to say is that I compose constantly in my head. The rest is just to find the proper time and moment to put what is in my head on to paper. I really like to compose late in the evenings, when everything goes calm and quiet.

You’re now based in London?
Yes, I’ve been living here for one year now, and I love living in London. Paris is a big, lively city, but in a way London is even livelier, there’s so much going on.

What do you miss about French life? Ah, the Food!! The Wine!! I have nothing against the English cuisine, and I love the Sunday roast and the puddings and so on, but I do love my French food. Of course I can easily get French cheese - from Borough Market, for example - and if I go home to Paris I bring back paté. So I manage to survive!
My interest in Debussy began just about at the time of the centenary of his birth in 1962. I was in my teens and my only aspiration in life was to play the music of Bach on a loud organ. My piano teacher was Helene Gipps (the mother of Ruth Gipps, composer and RCM alumna). The family business held annual competitions where all students came to play a piece of Bach with Ruth Gipps adjudicating behind a screen with a scratchy fountain pen scribbling about the last candidate. She rang a bell and it was time to launch into a Prelude and Fugue. I chose the D major from Book One of the 48 and somehow had learnt about double-dotting. It didn’t go down well and nor did the click of my fingernails, which she noticed. She deduced that I must be a girl and said so in her verbal commentary, given to all of the assembled players: revenge for the double-dotting and upper-note trills I surmised. Next time I put some coins in my pocket and walked in with them audibly chinking.

Eventually the chance arose, and I settled into an organ loft, played every Sunday and discovered a few other organ composers who were half-decent: Buxtehude, César Franck and Widor, for whose Toccata I used to charge marrying couples an extra guinea. Thank the Lord there was no music written by that French cissy, Debussy, for the organ.

At university I somehow changed course, gave up the organ, lost my faith in the Church of England, bought a second-hand copy of the Debussy Preludes (still in the bathroom cover) and read the books on Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser which were all about Baudelaire, Turner, Monet, Verlaine and had pictures of lots of beautiful women in some way associated with Debussy, mostly in nice ways I thought. I thought I’d write an essay on him and look into these literary people and the artists. Gradually I became hooked.

The other piece I discovered was the Prelude à L’après-midi d’un faune on an old LP whose sleeve-note told me it was about a fawn washing itself in a stream in the afternoon. Reading Lockspeiser, I realised there was something wrong here and got hold of the incomprehensible Mallarmé poem. There was plenty to say. I still love that piece, and my inaugural lecture as Research Professor at the RCM in February focused on it. There’s still more to say about it I think, and I feel I’m only now ready to say it. I still read howlers about its meaning, not least in wrong translations of its title. The best I’ve ever found came from the Portsmouth Gazette in 1930 which translated the title as An afternoon on a farm.

Apart from musing on why Debussy wrote so prominently for the note C sharp on the flute – as every flautist knows, a bummer – I’ve become increasingly interested in the younger Debussy. How did he get as far as this piece, rightly described by Boulez as ‘the birthplace of modern music’?

Before his centenary, Debussy was mainly known for his so-called Impressionist pieces, those of his middle period. Helped by his inheritors to hide his early pieces which he never published (among them, countless songs, several cantatas and half-theatrical pieces and a full opera, though not quite complete) the roots of his inspiration remained hidden even to his biographers at the time of his centenary. In this respect the past 50 years have gradually revealed Debussy’s educational pathway.

It began with a passionate and sexual affair with an older woman, one Mme Vasnier, a talented singer whose husband was an educated literary man with a particular interest in Classical Greek. With him, too, Debussy had
Performing Debussy today
When I think of what there is still to discover in Debussy’s works I think above all of performance, not wordy theory. The past 50 years has been a revelation with various CDs presenting us with his piano rolls. Less of a revelation to my mind has been recordings on pianos of his day, mainly Erards. His playing, according to one commentator, had a ‘narcotic, erotic quality’. How nice! Modern Steinways rarely give that either. I have a hunch that he needs an aliquot-strung Bluthner, which was the instrument he shipped all the way back to the French mainland from the Channel Islands at great expense, admittedly to his rich new second wife. It’s preserved in Brive in France but unfortunately not in a good state. Nor are any such instruments; difficult to re-regulate I’m told.

Nur do we have recorded performances of his orchestral music on instruments of his time, even though various orchestras have recorded both Ravel and Stravinsky in this respect. Think of the flute sound in the Prélude à L’après-midi d’un faune whose first flautist was Georges Barrère much later in life to be commissioned by Varèse for a solo piece entitled Density 21.5, the density of the platinum flute that he was by now championing. But at 18 years old, when he premiered Debussy’s piece, he must have made quite a different sound, and the orchestra with its gut strings, its natural string portamenti, and the wind sound of the Buffet clarinets and period oboes and clarinets, must have painted the piece in colours quite different from those we are used to today. It also went rather faster.

The Orchestra of the Enlightenment once held a study day trying out the piece, along with La Mer, with Lisa Beznozuik leading Faune from the flute. What she could do with that C sharp on her Louis Lot flute! It all seemed to fit with the poem.

Keep trying please: let’s hear that piece anew, afresh, with the varnish of later sentimentalisation peeled off. Debussy deserves it at least as much as Ravel and Stravinsky.
Meeting the supporters...

Diana Harris is a devoted friend of the RCM. Her late husband, Martin Harris, established a scholarship in his name which is still awarded to a singer, and Diana herself set up the Gandar Dower award to support a string player. These awards have benefited many RCM students over several years. Indefatigable, she reveals that music is just one of her many interests.

What do you remember of the College’s facilities at that time?
The original opera space, the Parry Theatre, was buried beneath the Concert Hall. It was dark, dusty, cramped and airless, quite unsuitable for opera. The new Britten Theatre designed by Sir Hugh Casson was perfect for the College’s talented students. The Gala opening was very special. Martin sat next to the Queen and I was next to Leo. It was lovely to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Britten Theatre in November last year, and to see that the space continues to thrive.

You have supported RCM musicians for over 20 years. Why did you choose this particular way of being involved with the College?
After the campaign, Martin continued his interest in the College by providing scholarships for singers. I didn’t want to be left out, so I began to support instrumentalists. My first student was Corina Belcea. From that marvellous relationship my interest in chamber music developed, and led to my supporting the Belcea Quartet. It has been wonderful to watch them develop and succeed internationally.

As well as the Belceas, I supported Anna Harpham and continued supporting some of Martin’s singers as well as some of my own, including Clint van der Linde, Alfie Boe, Clare Surnam and Jimmy Holiday. I have continued to be involved with students long after they have left the RCM and these relationships are important to me.

I really enjoy getting to know the students, and attending their concerts in London and further afield. I am a lifelong friend of the Yehudi Menuhin School, too, so I support young musicians even before they reach music college.

Music isn’t your only interest, is it?
I suppose not! I was politically active when my children were younger [Diana has four sons and eight grandchildren], culminating in a year as Mayor of Merton which gave me opportunities to meet all sorts of people and do interesting things.

I also travelled extensively with Martin [who was with Price Waterhouse and Reckitt & Colman] and vividly recall, for example, a fascinating visit to a factory in Brazil. Martin was Master of the Drapers’ Company and I am still involved in their activities. I also love football, and am a season ticket holder for AFC Wimbledon. I rarely miss a home match, and get to most of the away matches too!

How did your own interest in music start?
During the war, I was evacuated from Palace Gate to Sussex. There was a pianola and I remember hearing Chopin and Tchaikovsky. Later I attended many of Myra Hess’s famous National Gallery concerts which were superb.

While reading history at King’s College, London, I took piano lessons at the Guildhall. En route to my lectures, I would go in to the Guildhall early each morning to do an hour’s practice. I remember enjoying learning Mozart and Beethoven piano sonatas. I don’t think I was particularly good, but I got a lot of pleasure from it!

How did your relationship with the College evolve?
My late husband Martin was invited by Leopold de Rothschild to join the group of people who were raising money to build a proper opera theatre for the RCM as part of the centenary celebrations in the 1980s. Towards the end of the campaign he took over leadership of the group, which managed to raise more than six million pounds to build the Britten Theatre.

Welcome to new Friends and Supporters
We are delighted to welcome the following people who have recently made their first donation to RCM

Mr Jonathon Bond
Mrs Julie Burgess
Mr Peter Cave
Mrs Kate Charles
Mr Peter Dewey
Mr Vasilis Gialias
Mr Ken Goodwin
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Mrs Eirlys McNeil-Watson

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Mrs Karen Pilkington-Miksa
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Singing sensations...

Soprano Rosanne Havel has won the Robert Hendra Prize for most promising young singer at the Emmy Destinn Singing Competition... Soprano Abigail Mitchell has won First Prize at the Bellini International Vocal Competition in Sicily and First Prize at the International “Vokal Genial” competition in Munich with the Munich Radio Orchestra... Australian baritone Morgan Pearse has been awarded AUD 20,000 by the Australian Music Foundation, following his successful audition at Wigmore Hall. The Australian Music Foundation has provided financial support to exceptional Australian musicians in their studies in Europe for over 35 years.

String successes...

Violinist Molly Cockburn has won the prize for Best Interpretation of a Contemporary Piece at the Concours International de Violon d'Avignon “Ginette Neveu”... Violinist Kreeta-Julia Heikkila has secured the position of First Concertmaster at the Vaasa City Orchestra in Finland... Guitarist Johan Löfving has won First Prize in the Young Talents Concert at the Uppsala Guitar Festival in Sweden... Violinist Merel Vercammen has released her debut album Destination with her ensemble ‘trio42’. The recording features arrangements of works by Glinka, Franck, Shostakovich and Ibert for the rather unusual combination of harp, violin and saxophone. The CD is available on iTunes... Violinist Isabel Villanueva has performed at St James’s Piccadilly as part of the Concordia Foundation Concert Series with a programme that included works by Brahms, de Falla, Lysenko and Rimsky-Korsakov... Double bass player Antonio Romero has been awarded a prize by the Paideia Foundation in Spain... Violinist Emily Sun has performed Bruch’s Violin Concerto in G minor in The Domain, as part of the Sydney Festival in Australia.

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Composition congratulations…

Steven Daverson’s Escher’s Pharmacy, commissioned by the Huddersfield International Festival of Contemporary Music for Ensemble Recherche, has received its world premiere at the festival… Adriano Gaglianello has won First Prize at the Serocki International Composition Competition in Warsaw and also gained a special prize as the youngest winner. His winning work, Aldebaran for orchestra, was broadcast on Polish Radio.

Spotlight on…

The Gagliano Ensemble’s recent performance at the Victoria and Albert Museum ended on an unusual note when a mystery gentleman proposed to his fiancée to be.

The quartet, comprising Galya Bisengalieva, Robert Ames, Colin Alexander and Petr Limonov, were contacted by a mystery member of the public prior to the concert to ask if there would be a suitable moment to ‘pop the question’.

“We decided over email that it would work best as we played an encore”, violinist Galya Bisengalieva told Upbeat. “Robert, our violist told the audience as we came on stage for our final bow that somebody had a special announcement to make and that we had some suitable music for the occasion. We played the slow movement of Brahms’ Piano Quartet in C minor op 60 and watched as the mystery gentleman came to the front of the seats where he had sat his fiancée to be. He proposed successfully, the audience clapped and we finished our encore! It was a great ending to a very enjoyable concert.”

The Royal College of Music organises rush hour concerts at the V&A on Fridays at 6.30pm, supported by the Friends of the V&A.

For more information, visit www.rcm.ac.uk/events

William Dougherty has been chosen to take part in the 2012 Adopt a Composer Scheme with the London Chorus. The scheme enables voluntary music groups to have a new piece of music composed especially for them by some of the UK’s most talented up-and-coming composers… Allison Piccioni has composed Don Justino de Neve for a student animation at Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design. It was nominated in the top 12 video entries for the 2011 Virgin Media Shorts Competition and was featured in 200 cinemas across London… Ben Macdougall has won the International Film Scoring Competition at the Indie Gathering Film Festival.

Other news…

Will Kunhardt-Sutton has completed his first season as principal conductor of the Arensky Orchestra with a final concert marking Bahrain’s year as Capital for Culture… Clarinettist Daniel Broncano has been selected to perform at the Manchester Midday Concerts Society 2012/13 series. He has also been engaged to perform Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto with the Wimbledon Symphony Orchestra and Stanford’s Clarinet Concerto with Trinity Camerata… RCM JD student Elizabeth Thomas has won the Association of English Singers and Speakers Catherine Lambert Junior Recital Prize. This is the second year running that an RCMJD student has won the speech prize.

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Staff notes

Ingrid Pearson  Research Fellow in Performance Practice was joined by RCM colleagues Geoffrey Govier and Catherine Rimer as well as Kathryn Parry in presenting a lecture/demonstration at the recent RCM Brahms in the Home conference. They performed the Quartet op 1 by Walter Rabl for clarinet, violin, cello and piano, which was awarded first prize in a chamber music competition by Brahms himself. The quartet was performed on period instruments, making use of the RCM’s Steinway upright piano now housed in the RCM Museum.

Librarian Angela Escott’s book The Celebrated Hannah Cowley has been published by Pickering and Chatto. Hannah Cowley was an 18th-century British female dramatist whose plays were very popular in London, Europe and America. Many of the images in the book were supplied by the Centre for Performance History. Jools Osborne, RCM International Opera School Costume Supervisor, also recently supplied costumes for a run of Cowley’s play The Belle’s Strategem at Southwark Playhouse.

Jazz piano professor Mike Moran has been awarded an Honorary DMus by the Arts and Media faculty at Southampton Solent University. He has been a visiting professor there for three years and created an annual competition which links the music department to the film and television faculties.

Matthew Shlomowitz has been working with the choreographer Shila Anaraki on a one hour music theatre piece titled A to Zzz. It was premiered in February at Vooruit in Gent, with further performances scheduled in Leuven, Bruges and Brussels.

Fortepiano professor Geoffrey Govier has released the fifth and final volume of a series of CDs featuring Mozart’s Duo Sonatas for violin and piano with the violinist Catherine Mackintosh. The discs, featuring Duo Amadè, are on the Chandos label and have been well received critically, being twice recommended as Choice Discs by Gramophone magazine.

Vocal professor Janis Kelly has featured in a new ITV1 drama Endeavour singing extracts from Puccini’s Madame Butterfly. The detective drama followed DC Endeavour Morse investigating the disappearance of a missing Oxford school girl.

Soprano Patricia Rozario, harpist Ieuan Jones and violinist Susie Meszaros have performed at the Wigmore Hall as part of a concert celebrating the music of Sir John Tavener. The composer attended the concert that featured Anthems from The Veil of the Temple, To a Child Dancing in the Wind and Ypakoë.

Composition professors Huw Watkins and Michael Zev Gordon have been awarded prizes at the British Composers Awards, held at the 17th-century Stationers’ Hall in the City of London. Huw was recognised for his vocal work Five Larkin Songs and Michael for his choral piece Allele.

RCM Ensemble in Residence the Sacconi Quartet has performed its 10th anniversary concert at Kings Place in London. Their programme included Bartók’s extended single-movement quartet from 1926, some late Haydn and Schubert’s dramatic Death and the Maiden quartet. The ensemble also appeared on BBC Radio 3’s In Tune with Sean Rafferty to talk about their celebrations.
Head of Historical Performance Ashley Solomon has performed works by François Couperin with the RCM Ensemble in Association Florilegium and sopranos Dame Emma Kirkby and Elin Manahan Thomas at Wigmore Hall. The ensemble also recorded Couperin’s Les Nations, their 25th CD on the Channel Classics label, and at the same time launched their most recent CD of instrumental and vocal works by Vivaldi. This new recording includes the recently discovered flute concerto Il Gran Mogul with Ashley as soloist.

In April Head of Strings Mark Messenger is running his 7th London Marathon to raise money to support RCM musicians. One month after the London Marathon, at the annual RCM Super String Sunday on Sunday 20th May, 26 pieces will be performed to represent each mile of Mark’s musical marathon. To sponsor Mark visit http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/madviolinist.

Clarinet professor Janet Hilton has three tours planned for 2012: a trip to the USA where she will give recitals and masterclasses, a chamber music cruise to the Caribbean with alumni Jakob Fichert, Pavlos Carvalho, and Diana Galvydyte, and a coaching course in Norway with the young orchestra of the Bergan Opera. She has also recently joined the Pleyel Ensemble, a chamber music group based in Manchester.

Vocal Faculty Assistant Simon Davis has composed music for a TV advertising campaign for the Roberto Cavalli fragrance. He has previously created music for adverts for the Ford Focus, Rimmel Lash Accelerator and Sunday Times Style Magazine.

Rosie Perkins, Research Associate in the Centre for Performance Science, has completed her PhD at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. Rosie’s thesis explored the learning cultures of conservatores, considering how we can enhance teaching and learning. To find out more, get in touch with Rosie at rosie.perkins@rcm.ac.uk

Spotlight on…

Professor Colin Lawson has contributed to a new book Educated Tastes: Food, Drink and Connoisseur Culture (University of Nebraska Press, 2011), edited by Dr Jeremy Strong.

An important starting point for the volume was the recognition that the terminology of taste is frequently used in domains other than gustatory. In the arts, design, architecture, fashion, and in countless other forms of visual and verbal communication, ideas and particularly judgements may be couched in terms of taste.

Colin’s chapter ‘Nourishment, Body and Soul: Modern Performers, Diverse Tastes’ begins with the observation that music and food enjoy each other’s company to an enormous degree. He comments that: “While appropriate quality and quantity of food intake has often featured among advice for performers, not all singers of the 20th century have been encouraging role models. Students of historical performance may wish to reflect on Agricola’s observation in 1757 that before going on stage the castrato Farinelli was in the habit of eating an uncooked anchovy.”

Viol Consort Coach, Claire Bracher, has recently founded Musica Antiqua, a new Early Music Magazine. It concentrates on music from the 16th–18th centuries and includes articles written by performers and musicologists who are at the forefront of early music. The first issue included an impressive line-up of writers including Ton Koopman, Jordi Savall, Chris Gabbit. www.musica-antiqua.co.uk

Junior Department oboe teacher Sarah Francis and cello teacher James Halsey have recently released a CD of Lennox Berkeley chamber works on Regis Records. The CD includes several world premiere recordings.

Pianist Ina Charuashvili performed Liszt’s Second Piano Concerto with the Halesowen Orchestra at Cornbow Hall. Her performance formed part of the season-long celebration of the concert hall’s newly-installed Steinway grand piano.

Pianist Mary Wu performed a selection of Liszt’s piano works as part of a special event in Hong Kong to mark the 200th anniversary of his birth. She was joined by broadcaster Jonathan Douglas and together they shed light on the many facets of Liszt’s genius in performances of words and music.

Neil Ferris has been appointed Head of Choral Conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. As well as overseeing the choral activities of the college, his main responsibility is to teach the postgraduate Choral Conducting course, working alongside the International Chair in Choral Conducting, Simon Halsey.

Timothy Wakerell won Second Prize at the Carl Nielsen International Organ Competition. Held in Denmark, 20 competitors representing 12 different nationalities were chosen to compete over three rounds in St Hans’ Church, Odense Cathedral and Odense Concert Hall.

Anthony Inglis conducted three performances of the 25th anniversary concert of Phantom of The Opera at The Royal Albert Hall, with the final performance being broadcast live to cinemas worldwide. He also conducted (along with Valery Gergiev) the London Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall for a concert celebrating Mikhail Gorbachev’s 80th birthday.

Composer Simon Coleman has written music for Ade in Britain, a new ITV series featuring comedian and actor Ade Edmondson. The programme takes a culinary road trip around Britain revealing the eccentricities and characters of each region through their most celebrated dishes. Each of Ade’s funny and insightful journeys culminates in a scrumptious feast whipped up on his trusty mobile kitchen to celebrate each area’s unique food heritage.

Two recent graduates, sopranos Alexandra Hutton and Suzanne Shakespeare, have taken leading roles in high profile productions of Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte. Suzanne made her debut with Opera Australia singing the Queen of the Night, while Alexandra sang the role of Papagena at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, having won Second Prize in the Operetta round of the International Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition in Vienna.

The Françoise-Green piano duo, comprising alumni Antoine Françoise and Robin Green, has won First Prize at Le Concors Nicati, Switzerland. The competition is the largest for interpreters of contemporary music in Switzerland and takes place biannually at the Bern University of the Arts.

Mezzo-soprano Rosie Aldridge has been signed to Hazard Chase. Rosie has also been selected for the Jerwood Trust Young Artist Programme at Glyndebourne, where she recently played the role of Lady-in-Waiting in Macbeth conducted by Vasily Petrenko and covered the role of Baba the Turk in the revival of The Rake’s Progress, designed by David Hockney and conducted by Vladimir Jurowski.

Mezzo-soprano Anna Huntley has been awarded the Wigmore Hall / Independent Opera Voice Fellowship following her participation in the biennial Wigmore Hall / Kohn Foundation International Song Competition. Anna receives £10,000 and will be given guidance and support from Wigmore Hall mentors over the next two years, as well as a potential recital at the hall itself at the end of the period.

Pianist Warren Mailley-Smith has released his latest album with Sleeveless Records. Liszt Depiction features popular piano works of the 19th-century virtuoso extraordinaire Franz Liszt, including his Hungarian Rhapsodie no 2, Mephisto Waltz no 1 and Concert Studies.
Composer Michael Wolniakowski has been commissioned to write a setting of William Shakespeare’s Sonnet 73 (‘That time of year thou mayst in me behold’) for unaccompanied mixed voices. The US performance took place in mid-November with the Heritage Chorale of Oak Park conducted by Maurice Boyer.

Alistair Stout has been appointed Director of Music and Organist of the Pittsburgh Compline Choir. The mixed voice choir sing the Office of Compline weekly in Pittsburgh’s historic Heinz Chapel.

Soprano Danae Eleni has performed in Open Door Opera’s latest production of Humperdinck’s Hänsel and Gretel. Conducted by alumnus Kevin Lim, the opera received ten performances at the King’s Head Theatre in Islington.

Pianist Maria Marchant has performed Rachmaninov’s Piano Sonata no 2 op 36. Her programme included Scarlatti’s Sonata K 212 and Prokofiev, and was sponsored by the British Council NZ and the Royal Overseas League NZ.

Pianist Yoko Nakamura has performed in a New Year Gala Concert at Bunkyo Civic Hall in Tokyo. Her programme included Scarlatti’s Sonata K 212 and Rachmaninov’s Piano Sonata no 2 op 36.

The quartet, which consists of RCM alumni Anna Harpham (violin), Ciaran McCabe (violin), Anna Beilby (viola) and Rowena Calvert (cello), was awarded the position following a performance of Schnittke, Haydn, Webern and Ravel in the Holywell Music Room. They will be in residence in Oxford for a week each term over a period of two years to perform at free concerts for the public, and also to play ‘first runs’ of pieces composed by students from the Faculty. Undergraduates and postgraduates will also be tutored at an individual level by the musicians.

The quartet also saw success at two 2011 competitions, receiving First Prize at the Royal Overseas League and the ‘Special Prize’ at the Premio Paolo Borciani International String Quartet Competition. They are ambassadors for the European String Teachers Association and participants in the Countess of Munster Recital Scheme.

Composer Jeffery Wilson’s Timpani Concerto has been performed by the Docklands Sinfonia with soloist Scott Wilson at the Civic Theatre in Chelmsford. The concerto was written 30 years ago for Alan Cumberland and the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Alto flute specialist Carla Rees’ composition Quatraine 2 has received its European premiere at the Piccolo Festival in Slovenia. She also performed with her ensemble Rarescale in November, which marked her first concert since the loss of her instruments and music when her home destroyed by fire during the London riots last year.

Correction: In the previous edition of Upbeat we incorrectly entitled Philip Cannon’s choral symphony ‘Son of Man’ as ‘Son of God’. We apologise for our mistake.
Obituaries

Jaroslav Vanecek, who has died aged 91, was a long standing RCM violin professor and distinguished exponent of the Czech school of playing. Vanecek was one of the first Eastern European string players to bring a new style of teaching to London. His Russian-style approach emphasised discipline and the importance of technique; indeed, he is said to have insisted on a minimum of four to five hours of practice each day, irrespective of students’ other commitments! He soon attracted large numbers of students, many of whom are now well known performers: David Juritz, Erica Dearing and Dermot Crehan among them. Though loved and revered by his students and colleagues, he was also feared as an examiner, especially in the early years, for his uncompromising approach emphasising discipline and the importance of technique; indeed, he is said to have insisted on a minimum of four to five hours of practice each day, irrespective of students’ other commitments! He was never moody or out of sorts and was always particularly loyal to the people for whom she worked, maintaining friendships with them long after the official working relationship had ceased. She took a particular interest in the students, and was very friendly and helpful towards any who were having difficulties with their college work or with living in London for the first time.”

Hermione Oliver, the Director’s Secretary at the RCM from 1980 to 1998, has died. Angela Escott, RCM Orchestral Librarian remembers her well. “Hermione was always particularly loyal to the people for whom she worked, maintaining friendships with them long after the official working relationship had ceased. She took a particular interest in the students, and was very friendly and helpful towards any who were having difficulties with their college work or with living in London for the first time.”

Caroline Watts, who worked alongside Hermione, summed up her colleague: “Hermione was an amazing example of loyalty and selflessness.” Former RCM Director Michael Gough Matthews concluded: “Hermione was the perfect PA. She kept scrupulous records of letters, was never moody or out of sorts and when she retired (after me) she helped with anything I ever needed.”

Geraldine Connor, who has died aged 59, was an energetic theatre director and musician having studied at the RCM in the 1970s. She was particularly well-known for Carnival Messiah, a radical reinvention of Handel’s masterpiece, which she wrote, composed and directed. Born to Trinidadian parents, Geraldine devoted her life to nurturing cultural and educational links between the Caribbean and Britain.

The RCM’s first Personnel Officer, Frank Fitter, has died. His time at the RCM (1990–1995) saw him setting up and implementing new HR procedures. He also played an important role in meetings between unions and management, smoothing over any difficulties that arose in the negotiations. He will be remembered fondly as a founder member of the ‘Luncheon Club’, a group of staff who would meet up during their lunch break for a chat over their sandwiches. None was chattier than Frank, who was particularly eloquent on the subject of sport, especially his beloved Tottenham Hotspur.

Patrick Bashford, a distinguished guitarist and a professor for many years at the RCM, has died aged 82.

John Albert Wallen, who died a few weeks before his 92nd birthday on 20th October, worked at the RCM first in the Library and later as Head of Finance. Long-standing RCM Friend John Glover Wylie has died aged 86 after a long illness cheerfully borne. A family funeral was held at the Church of St Mary The Virgin in Drayton Beauchamp.

Marriages

RCM alumna Anna Harpham married Ben Warwick on 24 September 2011.

Births

Performance Manager Florence Ambrose and her husband Mark Ellison are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter Astrid Rose Ellison on 9 January 2012.