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James Williams announced as the next Director of the Royal College of Music

Managing Director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, James Williams, will join the Royal College of Music as Director on 1 September 2024

The Royal College of Music (RCM) is delighted to announce that James Williams has been appointed as its next Director and will take up the post on 1 September 2024. James will become the 11th Director of the Royal College of Music, succeeding current Director, Professor Colin Lawson CBE, who will retire from the role at the end of August 2024.

James Williams is Managing Director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO), a position he has held since June 2016. During this time, he secured a new Associate Orchestra partnership between the RPO and the Royal Albert Hall; established a new home for the Orchestra at Wembley Park and oversees an international touring schedule that has involved the RPO performing across the world including major tours of Asia, Europe and the USA. Prior to this, James worked for eight years at the Philharmonia Orchestra (London) responsible for the Orchestra's UK concert and commercial programmes working with conductors including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Lorin Mazel and Vladimir Ashkenazy. Additionally, James led several major audience development and digital programmes including iOrchestra, a virtual orchestra project which introduced orchestral music to over 200,000 people in the South West of England. With a background in music education and former positions including five years working at the Royal Northern College of Music as Programming Manager and a period running a regional branch of Yehudi Menuhin inspiring music education programme Live Music Now, James now holds voluntary Board positions with Metroland Cultures and music charity Mayfield Valley Arts Trust. He is also a member of the RCM Council and a Board member of the Association of British Orchestras.

James Williams, comments, "It is a great honour to lead the Royal College of Music into the next chapter of its development, building on the incredible successes to date and honouring the College's founding principles and commitment to its students for widening access, advocating strongly for the value of music education and upholding the RCM's unrivalled reputation for artistic excellence."

Lord Guy Black, Chairman of the Council of the Royal College of Music since 2017, comments, "We are delighted that James Williams will become the next Director of the Royal College of Music. This is a hugely exciting appointment following a global search. James is a much-respected member of the music industry and

his expertise, international outlook, powerful advocacy and knowledge of the music profession will be of enormous benefit to our students and the RCM's global reputation. I know James will support the RCM community - building on the outstanding achievements of Colin Lawson and his team - as a world-leading music educator, preparing our students for successful careers across the world."

Professor, Colin Lawson CBE, Director, Royal College of Music, comments, "I wish James every success and look forward to working with him in the coming months to ensure a seamless transition. It remains an enormous privilege to serve the RCM as Director, a role I will have fulfilled for almost twenty years."

In 2023 and 2022, the RCM was ranked as the global no 1 institution for performing arts in the prestigious QS World University Rankings by Subject. RCM professors are leaders in their fields, and under such expert guidance, RCM students regularly achieve remarkable success around the globe.

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About the Royal College of Music

Founded in 1882, the Royal College of Music (RCM) is a world leading music conservatoire with a prestigious history and contemporary outlook. More than 900 undergraduate and postgraduate students come from over 50 countries and are taught in a dynamic environment, leaving the RCM to become the outstanding performers, conductors, and composers of the future.

The Royal College of Music has trained some of the most important figures in British and international music including composers and performers such as Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, Michael Tippett, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Leopold Stokowski, Sir Hubert Parry, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Neville Marriner, Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Thomas Allen, Dame Sarah Connolly, Tarik O'Regan, Lord Lloyd Webber, Sir James Galway, Anna Meredith MBE, Louise Alder and Mark-Anthony Turnage. Regular visitors to the RCM include Sir Thomas Allen, Vladimir Ashkenazy, the late Bernard Haitink, Alina Ibragimova and Lang Lang. Our recent honorary doctorates include Sir Antonio Pappano, Jonas Kaufmann, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Bryn Terfel, Steve Reich and Maxim Vengerov (Polonsky Visiting Professor of Violin)