

= Royal Philharmonic Orchestra =

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra ( RPO ) , based in London , was formed by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1946 . In its early days the orchestra secured profitable recording contracts and important engagements including the Glyndebourne Festival Opera and the concerts of the Royal Philharmonic Society . After Beecham 's death in 1961 the orchestra 's fortunes declined steeply ; it battled for survival until the mid @-@ 1960s , when its future was secured after an Arts Council report recommended that it should receive public subsidy ; a further crisis arose in the same era when it seemed that the orchestra 's right to call itself " Royal " could be withdrawn .

Since Beecham 's death the RPO has had seven chief conductors , including Rudolf Kempe , Antal Doráti , André Previn and Vladimir Ashkenazy ; from 2009 to the present ( at 2016 ) the incumbent has been Charles Dutoit . Others closely associated with the orchestra have included Sir Charles Groves , Sir Charles Mackerras , Peter Maxwell Davies , Yehudi Menuhin and Leopold Stokowski .

In 2004 the orchestra acquired its first permanent London base , at the new Cadogan Hall in Chelsea . The RPO also gives concerts at the Royal Festival Hall , the Royal Albert Hall and venues around the UK and other countries . From its earliest days the orchestra has been active in the recording studios , making film soundtracks and numerous gramophone recordings ; many of the LP recordings conducted by Beecham and others have been reissued on compact disc .

= = History = =

= = = Origins = = =

In 1932 the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham had founded the London Philharmonic Orchestra ( LPO ) , which , with the backing of rich supporters , he ran until 1940 , when finances dried up in wartime . Beecham left to conduct in Australia and then the US ; the orchestra continued without him after reorganising itself as a self @-@ governing body . On Beecham 's return to England in September 1944 the LPO welcomed him back , and in October they gave a concert together that drew superlatives from the critics . Over the next months Beecham and the orchestra gave further concerts with considerable success , but the LPO players , now their own employers , declined to give him the unfettered control he had exercised in the 1930s . If he were to become chief conductor again it would be as a paid employee of the orchestra . Beecham responded , " I emphatically refuse to be wagged by any orchestra ... I am going to found one more great orchestra to round off my career . " In 1945 he conducted the first concert of Walter Legge 's new Philharmonia Orchestra , but was not disposed to accept a salaried position from Legge , his former assistant , any more than from his former players in the LPO . His new orchestra to rival the Philharmonia would , he told Legge , be launched in " the most auspicious circumstances and éclat " .

In 1946 Beecham reached an agreement with the Royal Philharmonic Society : his new orchestra would replace the LPO at all the Society 's concerts . He thus gained the right to name the new ensemble the " Royal Philharmonic Orchestra " , an arrangement approved by George VI . Beecham arranged with the Glyndebourne Festival that the RPO should be the resident orchestra at Glyndebourne seasons . He secured backing , including that of record companies in the US as well as Britain , with whom lucrative recording contracts were negotiated . The music critic Lyndon Jenkins writes :

Naturally , it quickly became known that he was planning another orchestra , at which the cry " He 'll never get the players ! " went up just as it had done in 1932 . Beecham was unmoved : " I always get the players , " he retorted . " Among other considerations , they are so good they refuse to play under anybody but me " .

= = = Beecham 's orchestra = = =

Beecham appointed Victor Olof as his orchestral manager , and they started recruiting . At the top

of their list were leading musicians with whom Beecham had worked before the war . Four had been founder members of the LPO fifteen years previously : Reginald Kell ( clarinet ) , Gerald Jackson ( flute ) , James Bradshaw ( timpani ) and Jack Silvester ( double @-@ bass ) . From the current LPO they engaged the oboist Peter Newbury . Beecham persuaded the veteran bassoonist Archie Camden , who had been pursuing a solo career , to return to orchestral work . The cellos were led by Raymond Clark , enlisted from the BBC Symphony Orchestra . The principal horn player was Dennis Brain , who already held the same post in Legge 's Philharmonia , but managed to play for both orchestras . Jenkins speculates that as Beecham knew all Britain 's orchestral leaders at first hand he decided not to try to lure any of them away . His choice was John Pennington , who had been first violin of the London String Quartet from 1927 to 1934 , and had then had a career in the US as concertmaster , successively , of the San Francisco Symphony , Los Angeles Philharmonic and Paramount Pictures orchestras .

On 11 September 1946 the Royal Philharmonic assembled for its first rehearsal . Four days later it gave its first concert , at the Davis Theatre , Croydon . Beecham telegraphed a colleague , " Press virtually unanimous in praise of orchestra . First Croydon concert huge success " . Beecham and the orchestra played a series of out @-@ of @-@ town engagements before venturing a first London concert on 26 October . The Times then spoke of " a hall filled with golden tone which enveloped the listener " . Before its London debut the orchestra made its first recording , and within two years had made more than 100 .

Within a few months Pennington was forced to resign when the British Musicians ' Union discovered that he was not one of its members . He was succeeded by his deputy Oscar Lampe , " a man who eschewed most social graces but played the violin divinely " , according to Jenkins . In the early days the orchestra comprised 72 players all on yearly contract to Beecham , giving him first call on their services , subject to reasonable notice , but not otherwise restricting their freedom to play for other ensembles . A review of the London orchestral scene of the late 1940s said of the RPO and its main rival : " The Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic share a very serious disability : that neither is a permanently constituted orchestra . Both assemble and disperse more or less at random ... there is no style which is distinctively RPO or Philharmonia . "

Brain continued to play first horn for both orchestras ; otherwise , from the early 1950s , there was generally more stability of orchestral personnel . In particular the RPO became celebrated for its regular team of woodwind principals , in which Jackson was joined by Jack Brymer ( clarinet ) , Gwydion Brooke ( bassoon ) and Terence MacDonagh ( oboe ) . The Independent described them as " arguably the finest ever wind section ... [ they ] became known as ' The Royal Family ' " .

The RPO toured the United States in 1950 , the first British orchestra to visit America since the London Symphony Orchestra ( LSO ) in 1912 . This was a long @-@ cherished plan of Beecham 's , who had been unable to take the LPO to the US in the 1930s . He arranged 52 concerts in 45 cities in 64 days . The tour was described by Brain 's biographers Gamble and Lynch as a huge success . It began on 13 October in Hartford , Connecticut , and finished on 15 December in Bethlehem , Pennsylvania . The concerto soloists were the pianist Betty Humby Beecham ( the conductor 's second wife ) and orchestral principals : David McCallum ( violin ) , Anthony Pini ( cello ) , and the four members of the " Royal Family " . In The New York Times , Olin Downes wrote of " magnificent music @-@ making by Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic " . The following year , assessing all the London orchestras , Frank Howes , music critic of The Times , concluded that the RPO " comes nearest in quality and in consistency of style to the great international orchestras " .

The orchestra 's first appearance at the Proms took place in August 1952 , conducted by Basil Cameron . Beecham made his Proms debut two years later , conducting the RPO in a programme of music by Berlioz , Schubert and Sibelius ; The Times commented on " an evening of magnificent playing " . In 1957 Beecham and the RPO made a European tour , beginning at the Salle Pleyel in Paris and ending at the Musikverein in Vienna .

Beecham conducted the RPO in his last concert , given at Portsmouth Guildhall on 7 May 1960 . The programme , all characteristic choices , comprised the Magic Flute Overture , Haydn 's Military Symphony , Beecham 's own Handel arrangement Love in Bath , Schubert 's Fifth Symphony , On the River by Delius , and the Bacchanale from Saint @-@ Saëns 's Samson and Delilah , with

Delius 's Sleigh Ride as an encore . Beecham suffered a heart attack the following month , from which he did not recover ; he died in March 1961 .

== = 1961 ? 2000 == =

Rudolf Kempe , who had been appointed associate conductor in 1960 , became principal conductor in 1961 and music director in 1962 . Beecham 's widow ran the affairs of the orchestra as best she could , but some senior players including Brymer and MacDonagh were unhappy with the management , and they left . The orchestra reorganised itself in 1963 as a self @-@ governing limited company , but almost immediately encountered difficulties . The Royal Philharmonic Society decided not to engage the RPO for its concerts ; Glyndebourne booked the LPO instead of the RPO from 1964 onwards . The RPO was also excluded from the London Orchestral Concert Board 's schedule of concerts , which meant that it was denied the use of London 's main concert venue , the Royal Festival Hall . Kempe resigned , although he returned shortly afterwards . Helped by strong support from Sir Malcolm Sargent , the orchestra successfully mounted its own concerts at a cinema in Swiss Cottage , 3 @.@ 5 miles ( 5 @.@ 6 km ) to the north @-@ west of the Festival Hall . A 1965 report to the Arts Council by a committee chaired by Alan Peacock recommended that all four independent London orchestras should receive adequate public subsidy .

The severance of the tie with the Royal Philharmonic Society in 1963 turned out to be temporary , but for three years it threatened to deprive the RPO of the " Royal " in its title . The matter was resolved in 1966 , when on the advice of Roy Jenkins , who as Home Secretary had responsibility for such matters , the Queen conferred the title unconditionally on the orchestra .

The RPO celebrated its silver jubilee in 1971 . On 15 September the orchestra returned to Croydon , where it had made its debut 25 years earlier . The theatre in which it had first played had been demolished , and the anniversary concert was therefore given at the Fairfield Halls . The programme consisted of the overture to The Marriage of Figaro , Beethoven 's Emperor Concerto , and Holst 's The Planets . Sir Adrian Boult conducted , and Clifford Curzon was the soloist . Five members of the original orchestra were still in the RPO for the jubilee concert : Leonard Brain ( brother of Dennis ) , principal cor anglais ; Lewis Pocock , co @-@ principal timpani ; Ernest Ineson , double bass ; John Myers , viola ; and Albert Pievsky , violin .

The RPO gave Kempe the title of " Conductor for Life " in 1970 ; he stepped down from the orchestra in 1975 , the year before his death . He was succeeded as chief conductor by Antal Doráti , who held the post from 1975 to 1978 ; as in his earlier spells with the LSO and BBC Symphony Orchestra , he was not greatly liked by his players , but raised their standard of playing and imposed discipline .

In 1984 there was a new threat to the orchestra : a review carried out on behalf of the Arts Council by the journalist William Rees @-@ Mogg opined that England lacked " a great eastern symphony orchestra " : the suggestion was that the RPO should move to Nottingham . Another Arts Council report of the same period recommended that the RPO should supplement the LSO as resident orchestra at the Barbican Centre ; neither proposal came to fruition . During the 1980s the British government imposed strict constraints on public spending ; to make up for lost revenue , the RPO , in common with the other self @-@ governing London orchestras , was forced into increased reliance on business sponsorship as a primary source of funds . The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians , recording this , comments , " Such sponsorship is , however , subject to changing circumstances and thus less secure in the long term . "

Since 1993 the RPO has had a community and education programme , later given the title of " RPO Resound " . It aims to increase " access to and engagement with world @-@ class music @-@ making . " It has worked in venues including homeless shelters , hospices , youth clubs and prisons .

== = 21st century == =

The orchestra gives an annual series of concerts at the Festival Hall , and since 2004 has had a

permanent home at Cadogan Hall , a former church in Chelsea , converted into a 900 @-@ seat concert hall and rehearsal space . At the Royal Albert Hall in London the RPO gives performances ranging from large @-@ scale choral and orchestral works to evenings of popular classics .

The orchestra maintains a regional touring programme , taking in venues throughout the UK , and has established residencies in Aylesbury , Crawley , Croydon , Dartford , High Wycombe , Ipswich , Lowestoft , Northampton and Reading . The RPO regularly tours overseas ; since 2010 it has played in Azerbaijan , Canada , China , Germany , Italy , Japan , Russia , Spain and the US . In 2010 ? 11 and two subsequent seasons the RPO was the resident orchestra for a series of concerts in Montreux , Switzerland . In 2010 the orchestra toured England , with a repertoire preponderantly of Beethoven , including the Violin Concerto in which Pinchas Zuckerman was both soloist and conductor . In the same year , another tour featured Maxim Shostakovich conducting the music of his father , Dmitri Shostakovich . The RPO continues to feature at the Proms ; in the 2010 ? 12 Proms seasons the orchestra played works by Bach , Copland , Delius , Saint @-@ Saëns , Tchaikovsky , Bax , Barber , Bartók and Prokofiev .

The orchestra 's community and education activities have continued into the 21st century . In May 2013 six youth ensembles from London boroughs and a 3 @,@ 500 @-@ strong choir of children from local primary schools were given the chance to perform alongside members of the RPO at the Albert Hall . They played a piece composed by participants from all six musical ensembles .

= = Players and conductors = =

Among the well @-@ known musicians who have been RPO principals in the mid @-@ 1950s and later , string players include Steven Stryk ( leader , 1957 ? 59 ) , Raymond Cohen ( leader , 1959 ? 66 ) , Alan Loveday ( leader , 1967 ? 71 ) , Erich Gruenberg ( leader , 1972 ? 76 ) , Barry Griffiths ( leader , 1976 ? 89 ) , Jonathan Carney ( leader , 1991 ? 94 ) and Frederick Riddle ( viola , 1953 ? 77 ) . Among the woodwind principals have been Geoffrey Gilbert ( flute , 1957 ? 61 ) , James Galway ( flute , 1967 ? 69 ) , Antony Pay ( clarinet , 1968 ? 78 ) and Michael Chapman ( bassoon , 1978 ? 99 ) . Principals in the brass section have included Alan Civil ( horn , 1952 ? 55 ) , Philip Jones ( trumpet , 1956 ? 60 ) , Elgar Howarth ( trumpet , 1963 ? 69 ) and Martin Owen ( horn , 1998 ? 2008 ) .

Chief conductors since Dorati have been Walter Weller 1980 ? 85 , André Previn 1985 ? 92 , Vladimir Ashkenazy 1987 ? 94 , Yuri Temirkanov 1992 ? 98 and Daniele Gatti 1996 ? 2009 . In 2009 Charles Dutoit was appointed artistic director and principal conductor . From 1992 to 2000 Peter Maxwell Davies was associate conductor and composer to the RPO . Other conductors with close ties to the orchestra have included Sir Charles Groves , Vernon Handley , Sir Charles Mackerras , Yehudi Menuhin , Gennady Rozhdestvensky and Leopold Stokowski . Grzegorz Nowak was appointed principal associate conductor in 2008 ; the following year Pinchas Zukerman became the RPO 's principal guest conductor . In 2015 Alexander Shelley joined Nowak as an associate conductor of the orchestra .

= = Recordings = =

From the RPO 's earliest days to the end of Beecham 's life , they made numerous recordings for His Master 's Voice , CBS and RCA . Among the works they recorded EMI chose several to be reissued at the end of the twentieth century in its " Great Recordings of the Century " series . They included a Delius programme ; a Grieg programme ; French ballet music ; short works by Bizet , Chabrier , Fauré and Saint @-@ Saëns ; Tchaikovsky 's Symphony No 4 and Nutcracker Suite ; Mozart 's Jupiter Symphony , Clarinet Concerto ( Brymer ) and Bassoon Concerto ( Brooke ) ; and Schubert 's 3rd , 5th and 6th Symphonies .

After Beecham 's death the orchestra made many recordings for Decca , sometimes under pseudonyms such as the " Beecham Symphony Orchestra " , the " London Festival Orchestra " and the " Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra " . Among the conductors with whom the RPO recorded in the 1960s were Sir John Barbirolli , Fritz Reiner , Charles Munch , Georges Prêtre , Kempe , Previn

and Stokowski . Soloists included Earl Wild , Shura Cherkassky , Alan Civil and Luciano Pavarotti .

Igor Stravinsky recorded his opera *The Rake's Progress* with the RPO in 1964 . Colin Davis made some of his earliest recordings with the orchestra , including Mozart and Rossini overtures , Beethoven 's Seventh Symphony , and Stravinsky 's *Oedipus rex* . From 1964 to 1979 the RPO was engaged by Decca to record Gilbert and Sullivan operas with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company . The orchestra has also recorded for Deutsche Grammophon , Lyrita , Philips , Pye and Unicorn .

In 1986 the orchestra launched RPO Records , claimed to be " the world 's first record label to be owned by a symphony orchestra " . Recordings available on the RPO label in 2013 ranged from core symphonic repertoire and Tchaikovsky ballet scores to film music by various composers , light music by Burt Bacharach and Richard Rodgers , and an album called " Symphonic Rock " , described as " Over 3 hours of classic rock anthems and pop tracks with an orchestral twist " .

= = Non @-@ classical work = =

As well as performing works from the classical repertoire , the RPO has recorded a number of film scores , including those for Powell and Pressburger 's *The Red Shoes* and *The Tales of Hoffmann* . Other scores recorded by the RPO are Olivier 's *Richard III* , *The Bridge on the River Kwai* , and *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* .

In 1987 the RPO established a sister ensemble , the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra , which plays lighter classics . It succeeded a similar group , the Royal Philharmonic Pops Orchestra .

RPO players have been involved with many performances away from the classical repertoire ; in the 1960s they pioneered the " mixed media " concert , appearing with The Nice rock band . Later non @-@ classical ventures included Yanni Live at the Acropolis , a concert held in Greece in 1993 , conducted by Shahrdad Rohani ; In 1992 UEFA commissioned the orchestra and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields chorus to record the UEFA Champions League Hymn .