



**ROYAL  
PHILHARMONIC  
ORCHESTRA**

**Guide for Applicants**  
Musicians



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## WELCOME

The RPO believes passionately that music has a timeless ability to inspire and fire our imagination, and that everyone should have the opportunity to experience and participate in orchestral music. The Orchestra has a committed team of musicians and staff who share this passion and we hope, through our recruitment, to attract new talents from a diverse range of backgrounds to contribute further to fulfilling our mission.

Along with a number of London orchestras, our work varies quite differently around the UK and the rest of the world, so this guide aims to explain some of the basics. The guide will provide you with key information about the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the application process and how to seek further information about the organisation should you have any questions. The guide is designed to supplement the description for a specific role, which will provide more detailed information on the skill sets and experience required for individual positions.

## FIND OUT MORE

About the Orchestra: <https://www.rpo.co.uk/about/rpo-information>

About RPO Resound: <https://www.rpo.co.uk/rpo-resound/in-action>



*The RPO at its 75th anniversary gala concert at the Royal Albert Hall, Sep 2021 (c) Ben Wright*

# WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN WORKING WITH THE RPO?

## The Orchestra

The RPO, along with some other London orchestras, is a self-employed, self-governing orchestra. This means that we (the musicians) all share holders in the organisation and our Board of Directors includes 7 orchestral musicians, elected by the orchestra. We all have responsibility for our orchestra meaning we contribute to the day to day running of the orchestra, the vision of artistic excellence, and the ethos that we want to showcase. Because we all have shared responsibility to the success of our orchestra, there is a great sense of commitment, community and camaraderie within the orchestra.

The RPO is a very friendly and inclusive orchestra - our freelancers/deputies often say that they love coming in to play with us for that reason. People are very supportive of each other and the challenges of work/life balance which may include family pressures and balancing living in London with a busy schedule. We have a reasonably equal gender balance and people from many nations, speaking many different languages (rehearsals are in English, but when touring other languages come in very handy!).

**What does the schedule look like?** Working in the RPO is extremely exciting, exhilarating and always varied. There is no such thing as a regular week. Different types of concerts have a very different feel: Performing to a sold-out Royal Albert Hall with 'Symphonic Rock', to returning the next day to begin a Mahler cycle. We love the varied nature of our work. An extensive symphonic season, studio and film/game session work, touring the world, non-classical/popular concerts, chamber music opportunities and a busy education department along with travel around the UK and abroad ensure that we are never bored.

### Concert Orchestra (RPCO)

The RPCO performs some of the orchestra's popular engagements, much of the repertoire includes film music, video game scores, music from the musicals, symphonic arrangements of classic rock and pop songs as well as new commissions and the traditional core classical repertoire, reaching a wide and diverse audience of over 170,000 live listeners per year.

### RPO Resound

Resound is the brilliant education department of the RPO. The projects undertaken are incredibly varied: From the Lullaby Project which gives mums and dads in challenging circumstances the opportunity to create bespoke lullabies alongside professional musicians, to STROKESTRA®, which is a pioneering stroke rehabilitation programme that harnesses the power of group creative music-making alongside professional musicians and clinicians to drive patient-led recovery in stroke patients and their carers.

While it is not a requirement of RPO membership to take part in Resound projects, all members are encouraged to do so - it is incredibly rewarding to be involved with an award-winning education team making a real and meaningful difference to the lives of so many people.



Tim Steiner leads a STROKESTRA session in Hull for RPO Resound, Oct 2015 (c) Nick Rutter



## Performing

**Dress code:** Concert Dress for all RPO work is a Tail suit for gentlemen and Long Black for ladies unless stated otherwise. Alternative dress codes such as white dinner jackets will always be made clear in a booking for work with the RPO.

The RPO supports players being comfortable expressing their gender identity. Any Member (or Extra Player) has the right to wear concert dress that they feel reflects their gender identity as long as it meets our general dress codes.

## Earning

Unlike many orchestras in the UK, we (along with a number of other London orchestras) are paid-per-service rather than by a salary. We are all self-employed individual musicians and are each responsible for our own tax affairs with HMRC. We all get very used to planning our lives accordingly and although it can initially be confusing, there are several benefits; during busy periods we are financially rewarded, and it allows a greater amount of flexibility for other interests such as teaching, chamber music, solo careers and, of course, a work-life balance. The RPO ask for a commitment from our members to cover a minimum percentage of the work offered to them.

**Musician Fees:** The orchestral managers are able to give you full details of the fee upon booking for a patch of work with the RPO/RPCO. Payments are made on or around the 15th of the following month and you will receive a remittance advice via email/post to keep for your records.

## Working in London

London is an amazing multi-cultural city that has an incredible vibrance, wonderfully enriched by the colossal variety of music and art that is established here. It is home to a very large number of orchestras, opera & ballet companies, theatres and internationally-renowned festivals such as the BBC Proms.

**Staying in London:** There is no shortage of hotels to stay in and around the city. Transport links are plentiful though so to avoid paying prices aimed at tourists it may be advisable to look for options outside of the centre.

**Travelling in London:** There is a huge network of trains, underground trains, trams and buses that make travel around the city very easy. If you're new to the city we advise you always leave yourself **extra time** to allow for any delays though as they are not uncommon.

All of these transport links within London are charged by tapping in and out with either contactless credit/debit card or Oyster card (available from most railway stations). Individual journey-specific tickets are available to buy from most stations also.

**Travel/Accommodation Costs:** The RPO unfortunately does not cover the costs of applicants travelling to/from London to work with the orchestra.

The RPO also does not provide transport to and from venues for its work around the country, however advice is offered for train travel and parking; many people share lifts and help out players who do not have their own transport. Furthermore, when the orchestra is working at one of its venues outside of London a travel subsistence payment is given at a per-mile rate from central London, with additional up-lifts for early starts, late returns and overnights.

**Rehearsal venues:** It is quite common in London for the orchestras to rehearse at a rehearsal space rather than the concert venue. This is true of the RPO and it's always a good idea to check the schedule carefully to make sure you go to the right place!

## OUR VENUES

The RPO is very fortunate to perform in a number of world-class spaces not only in London but around the globe.

### London Venues:

**Cadogan Hall:** This has been the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's home since 2004. Here it performs an annual season of concerts, many of which are subsequently toured to its seven principal residency venues.

**Royal Albert Hall:** The RPO is proud to be the Royal Albert Hall's associate orchestra and performs regularly throughout the year with a programme of both symphonic and popular music.

**Royal Festival Hall:** Each year the RPO presents a season of symphonic concerts on the bank of the River Thames at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall.



*Chloé van Soeterstède conducts the RPO at Cadogan Hall, Jun 2021 (c) Tim Lutton/ RPO*

### Further Afield:

The RPO promotes more than forty-five concerts each season at partnership venues across the country, several of which are in areas where access to orchestral music is very limited. These concerts represent part of the orchestra's key values and mission.

### Around the World:

As a respected cultural ambassador, the RPO enjoys a busy schedule of international touring, performing in the world's great concert halls and at prestigious international festivals. Last season's touring highlights include visits to Belarus, Slovakia and a three-week tour of the USA.



# HOW DO I APPLY?

## STAGE 1 - APPLICATION

All vacancies for musician positions within the RPO will be advertised on Musical Chairs ([www.musicalchairs.info](http://www.musicalchairs.info)), our website ([www.rpo.co.uk](http://www.rpo.co.uk)) and social media channels.

The application process will be via a form on Musical Chairs. You will be asked to enter your details, orchestral experience, education and any other relevant information. The form will then be anonymised to ensure everyone is treated equally, before a decision will be made by the panel whether or not you will be invited to audition.

Successful applicants will be notified by email of an audition offer in the weeks following the closing date for applications.

## STAGE 2 - AUDITIONS

RPO audition formats vary across different positions within the orchestra however it will usually be made up of orchestral excerpts and a concerto/solo piece picked by the panel. The panel will comprise of RPO members.

Some auditions may consist of two rounds and feature a recorded element (to be submitted by the candidate through Musical Chairs). If this is the case full details of the requirements will be given in your audition invitation. Furthermore, auditions may contain a screened element. Screened auditions are where the panel and applicant are unable to see each other. In this scenario the applicant is not allowed to speak to the panel during the audition so that anonymity is maintained.

**Accessibility:** For applicants who live both in and outside of the UK and are unable to afford the costs of travelling to an in-person audition, you may be offered a video audition. Please respond to your audition invitation explaining your circumstances if you require this. The RPO does not cover applicant travel costs to/from auditions.

**Feedback:** All candidates are welcome to ask for feedback from their audition.

## STAGE 3 - TRIALS


In the result of a successful audition you may be offered a trial with the orchestra along with a number of other candidates.

A trial consists of the offer of some work with the orchestra during which you will be assessed on your suitability for the position. The duration of a trial is not defined, however, triallists can expect to perform in a minimum of 2 different programmes.

**How long does a trial take?** The trial process can go on for a number of months to ensure all triallists are heard properly before the panel makes a decision on which applicant is to be offered the position.

**Feedback:** Triallists are welcome to ask for feedback during or after their trial.

**Over-seas applications:** It is your responsibility to ensure you have the 'right to work' in the UK and any appropriate visas. Since the UK's departure from the European Union this is a developing field and circumstances may change for applicants and members alike. We are happy to discuss any concerns and assist where possible but we are unlikely to be able to help with any additional finances or legal implications that may arise.



## INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

We aim to attract and appoint, in a fair and unbiased manner, the best players for positions in the RPO, based on artistic merit and ability to perform with the RPO.

We, at the RPO, value the diversity that exists in our orchestra and seek a pool of applicants as wide and diverse as possible while accepting that there are restrictions of right to work and visas for international players interested in coming to the UK.

The RPO recognises that there has been historic under-representation of people from ethnic-minority backgrounds and people with disabilities within the UK orchestral sector. In acknowledgement of this under-representation, the RPO is committed to offering a live audition to all applicants from these backgrounds with no experience but who hold current degree-level music qualifications.

In order to achieve this, part of the musician application form will include a Diversity Monitoring form.

**Application Support:** If you would like to speak to someone in the organisation for help with your application or any subsequent work please contact the Orchestral Manager in the first instance, or you may find more specific advice from [EDIMS](#) (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Music Studies) helpful. Unfortunately we are unable to help with actual audition advice.

The RPO will provide assistance to disabled applicants requiring reasonable adjustments during the recruitment and appointment process. Please contact Ann Firth ([firtha@rpo.co.uk](mailto:firtha@rpo.co.uk)) if you require any adjustments during the application process. If an offer of a position is made, the RPO will undertake an assessment and work with the new member to identify and implement appropriate adjustments as necessary.

## FIND OUT MORE

Read our Inclusion and Diversity Policy: <https://www.rpo.co.uk/inclusion-and-diversity-policy>



*Vasily Petrenko rehearses the Orchestra for the RPO's 75th anniversary at the Royal Albert Hall, Sep 2021 (c) Tim Lutton/ RPO*



## FURTHER QUESTIONS

You will be able to find out more information about the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra by visiting [www.rpo.co.uk](https://www.rpo.co.uk), via the Orchestra's social media channels, and on the Charity Commission and Companies House websites.

About the Orchestra: <https://www.rpo.co.uk/about/rpo-information>

About RPO Resound: <https://www.rpo.co.uk/rpo-resound/in-action>

Thank you for your interest in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. We really hope we have inspired you to want to develop your career with us, and to helping us towards a vibrant future.



*RPO musicians perform with spoken word poetry group WordUp in Wembley Park for Wemba's Dream, Sep 2021 (c) Tim Lutton/ RPO*

# JOIN THE JOURNEY

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